

Book Grabbers—A Book Club for Fourth Graders

*Steeple Run Elementary School
Naperville, Illinois*

Book Grabbers, an after-school book club for fourth graders, was created when two parents wrote and presented a proposal to the Building Leadership Team. A group of parents met with the school's reading specialist and the fourth-grade teachers to compose a list of grade-appropriate books. Once the book list was agreed upon, the administration provided funding to purchase the books, allowing every interested child to participate. Parents supervised and facilitated the after-school book club.

Book Grabbers supported Steeple Run's school improvement goal to improve student literacy performance. The book club built a community of readers that promoted reading confidence and creativity. Its comfortable, literacy-centered atmosphere gave students a chance to participate in a safe and productive after-school activity.

Once every two weeks, the club's fourth graders met after school with a parent volunteer to discuss the book they read. The students received a reading guide before the meeting. During the first 10 minutes, they participated in an introductory activity and enjoyed a snack related to the story. For example, for the book "Fourth Grade Weirdo," students snacked on jelly beans, ginger snaps, and carrots, which the main character loved to eat. After the introductory activities, students discussed the book in smaller groups. Each small group was given a fabric cube with pockets on each side containing a discussion question. Students tossed the cube from person to person, taking turns choosing and answering questions such as, "Who in the book are you most like

and why?" and, "What does this book teach you?" Following the discussions, the students engaged in an activity related to the story.

At the end of each meeting, students filled out a book critique and gave feedback on the book club meeting. "I think it's just so awesome to be doing this with my friends," commented one student. Another noted, "I like reading more than I used to."

After all three sessions, parents completed a separate questionnaire. Parents found that the book club enabled their children to read and discuss books with peers and parents in a new way. "It was wonderful to see kids enjoying themselves and having fun all because they had read a book! This is great," reported a parent.

Teachers noticed higher interest in and enthusiasm for reading among the book club's students. They also appreciated the parent volunteers' energy, talent, and commitment, which made the Book Grabbers Book Club such an enriching program for young readers. Book Grabbers worked so well for fourth graders that Steeple Run plans to expand the after-school book clubs to additional grade levels.

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