

Annual Book Buffet

*Pfc. William J. Grabiarz School of Excellence
Buffalo, New York*

Hoping to encourage students to devour books long after their school days are over, the Pfc. William J. Grabiarz School of Excellence hosts a Book Buffet for its book club members and their guests at the end of each school year. Sixth graders invite their families, friends, and community members to a celebration of reading.

Parents and students fill the buffet with dishes they have prepared. If possible, they match the food to one of the books the students read. Before dinner, each club presents a summary of its favorite book. Presentations include displays, costumes and props, and excerpts from the books. Afterwards, students, families, and teachers enjoy the food and company.

Several sixth-grade book clubs meet throughout the school year. To kick off the clubs, six student leaders, representing three independent reading levels, each choose a book from a list compiled by teachers. They read the first chapter of their books and prepare questions and an advertisement to recruit students into their club. After all sixth graders have chosen a club, they read and write summaries of each chapter, which must be signed by a parent or guardian, and then discuss the book. The designated leader guides the discussion.

The leader also chooses a leader for the next book. The new leaders select new books from the library or the teachers' list. In keeping with the buffet theme, students are encouraged to sample different reading genres. Each club reads five or six books during the school year.

The clubs motivate students to read for enjoyment and select books at their reading levels, improve their verbal-communication skills, and enhance their ability to work in groups.

Teachers make sure that each student has copies of the selected books, which can be obtained from the library, through donations from business partners or community members, or using a teacher's petty cash account. The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) promotes the clubs and provides classroom incentives and individual rewards. Families are asked to monitor students' reading, and help them understand what they read.

More than 400 students, family members, friends, and school staff contributed to the clubs and attended the Book Buffet. Students enjoyed the celebration and benefited from the extra reading time. The adults seemed to enjoy themselves, as well. "Thank you for inviting me!" said one student's pastor. "This is so nice," added a parent. "I am so proud of my son!"

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