



FACILITATING A PARENT BOOK CLUB with
Anytime Reading Readiness:
Fun and Easy Family Activities
That Prepare Your Child to Read
by Cathy Puett Miller

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Tips for success:

- ✓ **As facilitator, read the book yourself before you begin your group.** You can draw families back into specific points in the text and have ready comments if you are familiar with its contents.
- ✓ **Encourage participants with the idea that everyone can contribute.** Have refreshments or a meal and ask everyone to bring something. And remember that just because you are the “leader” doesn’t mean you need to do all the talking. Use the guide questions to start the ball rolling. If there are still no comments, rephrase your question or ask it from a different point of view. No round-robin—everyone takes a turn. Draw out quieter members later in the meeting by asking their opinion. Aim for an informal, back-and-forth discussion among everyone.
- ✓ **Ask families the best time to meet.** The benefit of physically being together is that attendees interact face to face. They can practice fun activities with each other before taking them home.

Too many packed schedules? Try a virtual book club format to squeeze into busy schedules if all your members are Internet savvy and have access. Set up a free blog (on a site like www.blogger.com) where individuals can comment on a facilitator’s questions or portions of the book they intend to use with their child. Identify a time window and announce it to your members. *In either case, you must think BENEFIT if you expect parents to come back.*

- ✓ **Choose the best format for *your* book club.**
 - *A traditional book club.* Your members all purchase the book and read a designated part before each meeting. The meeting is focused on discussing what was read in an informal, “here’s what I think/let’s try it out” atmosphere.
 - *An “Anyone and Everyone” book club for families with lower levels of literacy.* Your organization purchases several copies of the book for the members who are comfortable reading on their own and distributes them at the first meeting. Partner those members with others in your group who may struggle in their own reading or be unable to read or speak English. Have pairs share a small segment, part of a chapter, or whole chapter if they like, and then discuss leading questions as in the traditional version at the meeting. You may also simply read aloud from the book without any expectation for families to read it at home. Stop from time to time to discuss. If you have attendees who cannot understand English, be sure a translator attends.
 - *A parent/child book club.* The children can listen to a story time and play through related activities in another area of the facility while your book club meets. Allow 15 minutes or so at the end for the families to come together and practice what was learned. This fits well into Head Start and Even Start PACT (parent and child time) events, for example.

- ✓ **If mom or dad can’t come, ask who else in the family might be a part of this group.**

Are you ready for your first book club meeting? Let's go!

- **Don't Forget to HAVE A PLAN.** Quotes are scattered in the margins throughout this book. Use one as a prompt for discussion. Remember that your main goal is to give families a reason to want to come back from week to week or month to month because they personally took something away from the discussion.
- **Go with the flow.** Let your families talk, but keep the discussion targeted on the three big ideas from the book and language and literacy learning in general. Steer gently back if the conversation is straying too much. Mark pages with a sticky note or jot down a list of page numbers for reference.
- **Try this ice breaker idea.** Give all members an index card or piece of paper with several colored markers or crayons. Ask them to think about their child and his/her talents and abilities, personality, and passions. Then have each member draw a picture of his or her child (stick figures and cartoons are OK). After a few minutes, each person shares the picture and one fact about his or her child. Parents love to talk about their kids. Formally planned activities may not be as necessary after your group starts to relax.

Possible questions for discussion

1. What did you find surprising or new among the main ideas in this book's introduction (preschoolers learn best through play, rapid brain growth in preschool years, the development of a child's speech and oral language is related to reading, different children have different paces of learning/the idea of a spectrum of growth)?
NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR: Break these into several separate questions if you like, and follow up with "Do you agree or disagree?" and "Why?" Refer back to references to research in the book as evidence.
2. When is the best time to start preparing your child to read?
NOTE TO THE FACILITATOR: This may come initially from parents' opinions or what is outlined in the book. If it comes from the former, refer to Chapter 1 and the charts to help your families learn about the developmental spectrum.
3. You may want to use part of your book club meeting to ask parents to do "for your eyes only" evaluations of where their child is at the present time (see the age-level checklists in Chapter 1). Checklists also appear in Chapters 2 (home environment) and 3 (chat quality).
4. What did you find most helpful or interesting (in Chapter 2) about your home environment helping your child get ready to read? Did you find or think of new ideas? What can you do?
5. What reason for talking with your kids stood out to you as most important?

6. What was different about the read-alouds Ms. Miller discussed and what you do with your children or what you've seen librarians or teachers do? Which of the techniques she outlined would you want to try at home with your child?
7. Which *Anytime Reading Readiness* activity we reviewed tonight was your favorite?
8. How do the definitions (one at a time) in Chapter 6 help you know what your child is ready for?
9. What did you learn from this book to aid you in talking about your child's literacy growth with his/her teacher (preK or K)?
10. How can we as parents promote positive learning with our child and avoid "over-pressuring" or pushing too hard? What does that look like at home?