



Books *for* Dessert

PROGRAM MANUAL

Guide to Implementing a Book Club for Adults with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Created by the Port Washington Public Library
Port Washington, New York

*“Education and the love of literature
should be a lifelong experience.
It should not be limited to those
who can conquer the written word easily.”*



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INTRODUCTION

Why Books for Dessert?

MISSION AND GOALS

Persons with developmental disabilities now have access to social activities, are taught life and vocational skills, but still have very few opportunities for intellectual stimulation. Our goal, indeed our mission from the very beginning, was to provide this stimulation and to create a map so that other communities and libraries could continue down this road, without having to reinvent the wheel.

We had high hopes and they were more than fulfilled. We found that there is no ceiling, that persons with developmental disabilities of any age could benefit and learn.

The following is a description of how the group was formed and how it is run, a manual full of resources and insight for others who wish to duplicate the program or develop their own. It's a work in progress — both the manual and the clubs, as we feel our way down a little-trodden path. We welcome your thoughts and suggestions.

Books for Dessert makes the riches of the public library accessible to individuals with developmental disabilities by sharing the joy of reading in a relaxed social and supportive environment. The Port Washington Public Library facilitates several other book clubs, but Books for Dessert is structured to serve the unique needs of the developmentally disabled population of Port Washington and the surrounding communities.

Persons with developmental disabilities over age 21 on Long Island — and indeed, throughout the country — are no longer eligible to attend public school, and have almost no other educational opportunities available to them other than those involving life skill training. However, they enjoy learning and are eager for opportunities to maintain and improve their literacy skills, which can improve their ability to communicate and function in the world around them.

Facilitated by educators experienced in working with persons who are developmentally disabled, each Books for Dessert group meets once a week for an hour and a half to read a portion of a book aloud, review vocabulary, and discuss the relationship of the ideas and themes of the book to real life events. At the end of each session, participants are encouraged to socialize over dessert and are led in discussions about the book.

Initially funded as a pilot program that began in fall 2003, Books for Dessert started with one group of eight participants on Tuesday evenings. This group has expanded to 13 participants, which we feel is the optimum number for an effective session. Two more groups began in 2004 on Monday mornings and Monday evenings and serve an additional 13 to 17 people each. Ages range from 21 to early 60's. Both evening groups have a leader and an assistant. The club that meets in the morning has a leader and relies on assistance from the day program activities coaches who accompany the participants.

The clubs have been extremely successful, growing in number and in scope. They've become an integral part of participants' lives, as well as having expanded their horizons (and their caregivers' awareness of their abilities and potential). All involved, from library administration and board, to caregivers and participants, have been surprised and delighted by the response. We've all learned to forget all the warnings about plateaus and inability to perform beyond a certain ceiling. We haven't found that ceiling yet.

There's nothing more satisfying than to hear a participant say to a friend or family member: "I'm busy tonight. I have Book Club."

NOTE: *Most of the time, we refer to our "Books for Dessert" participants as people with a "developmental disability," primarily because it's the term used by many of the agencies with which we deal. Some of our funders prefer this term as well, so we use it in our grant applications.*

The Books for Dessert Advisory Committee has gone round and round with the phrase and we feel the term developmentally disabled is odd, rather than inclusive and descriptive. The disabilities represented in our clubs are diverse. When asked, the participants themselves preferred to be called intellectually challenged or intellectually disabled. The proper term seems to be a moving target as some organizations are beginning to change their phraseology. As of this moment, our group is heading in the direction of "intellectual disability."

MOTIVATING FORCES

Nancy Curtin, Director, Port Washington Public Library

“When a door closes, a window opens.” The Library has always been a place of discovery. Whether one is enrolled in school or simply a student of life, the Library provides opportunities to grow. If those who participate in Books for Dessert no longer have an open door to public school, the Library is their window to the panorama of human thought and experience.

A founding parent’s experiences (Nancy Comer)

“Our son James, who has Down syndrome, started his education when he was six weeks old, in an early intervention program run by the Association for Children with Down Syndrome. Eventually, after five years there, then two years during which he was mainstreamed in kindergarten in our public school district, he went on to self-contained special education classrooms outside the district. When he was 14, at our urging, our school district developed an in-district program at the junior high school—in a self-contained classroom with occasional forays into regular classes. He, along with seven or eight other students at a similar functioning level, continued there through high school, aging out at 21. The district program was highly academic-oriented, relatively speaking, with 2-3 hours of homework a night, which he actually enjoyed. There was reading, math, social studies, biology, even some basic chemistry.

At 21, he entered a day-hab program four days a week, which provides life skills training, some recreational activities, some very basic math, and a lot of volunteering at places like Meals-on-Wheels and at nearby hospitals and nursing homes. But no reading or anything resembling academic or continuing education types of skills. No one offered a program that was even remotely intellectually stimulating. At 23 he moved, at his instigation, to a nearby group residence run by Community Mainstreaming Associates (CMA), which he adores. But though Port Washington has an excellent adult education program, there were no programs suitable for Jamie and his friends. Since our local library is known for its forward thinking and innovative programming, we, another parent and a representative from CMA approached the Port Washington Public Library director, and the result is this program.

“It sure beats television.”

Lee Fertitta, Director, Adult Services

“I was immediately taken with the idea of a book discussion group for adults with developmental disabilities. We designed the program around a state literacy grant initially,

creating a pilot based as much on what we wanted to provide as on what was required for the grant. We did receive the grant, and thus we began.

My job includes ordering the books, responding to meeting needs, correspondence, and secretary for the Advisory Committee. I work closely with the leaders and other librarians to promote and maintain the program. We have written grants, created a brochure (see addendum), garnered publicity and promoted the program at library conventions and programs across the state.

I have been amazed at how the program has been received, especially by the participants. During the summer break, I inevitably will receive several calls wanting to know when the club will start up again. Several individuals come to the library to check out other material on a regular basis — a goal met!”

TIMELINE

From idea to execution, the following is a rough 12-month timeline to create a Books for Dessert club, based on a September opening:

- Form Advisory Board, allow 6 weeks to 2 months
 - Develop budget with Advisory Board
 - Apply for funding from host/grants programs (1 to 3 months, and up)
 - Secure library administrative help
 - Secure funding
 - Develop and print brochure for participants
 - Recruit participants, allow 2–3 months
 - Book meeting rooms
 - Recruit and hire leaders and assistants, allow 2–3 months
 - Review books and materials, order first 2 sets per group of books to be read
 - Send welcome letters to participants
 - Launch program in September and meet through the year with a short break during the summer
 - Review program and measurement of success (month 10 or 11)
 - Secure funding for next year’s program
-

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee oversees the clubs by creating the initial program; selecting the leaders; collaborating with respective agencies and community organizations to find participants; shifting participants into different groups based on reading levels and availability; anticipating the needs of the clubs; developing the budget; helping to fundraise; continuing development of the program itself and determining the future objectives of the group. The committee consists of parents, library staff, and persons with knowledge of this population, as well as persons with fundraising expertise. During the pilot program, our advisory committee met monthly, but now meets three or four times a year.

At present, the Port Washington Public Library's Books for Dessert Advisory Committee consists of the following:

Heather Aylward

Director of Residential Operations,
Community Mainstreaming Associates

Lee Fertitta

Director, Adult Services
Port Washington Public Library

Nancy Axelrad Comer, Chair

Parent
PWPL Health Advisory Committee
Co-Founder, Port Washington Special
Education PTA (SEPTA)
Editor and writer

Trudy Friedman

Health Librarian,
Port Washington Public Library

Penelope Madry

Marketing professional
Grant writer and fundraiser

Nancy Curtin

Director, Port Washington Public Library

Evelyn Schonbrun

Books for Dessert group leader
Special Education teacher,
Schreiber High School

Annmarie Benzinger

Books for Dessert group leader
Elementary and Secondary Education
teacher, retired
Parent

Carol Trimarchi

Books for Dessert group leader
Special Education teacher, New York City
Dept of Education, P.S. 219

Georgia DeYoung

Parent of YAI/NIPD consumer and
community activist

LEADERS

Recruitment of leaders and assistants is challenging due to our requirements for the position. Special Education teachers with some experience in teaching older students are only available at night. We recruited a retired teacher for our day program. We ran the pilot program for a year before adding two more sessions; the two new leaders received training by working with the first leader and attending the first group.

Responsibilities:

- Work with and report to the Advisory Committee members (the library staff are on the committee), who oversee the program.
- Select books with staff and committee input.
- Develop session plans that include word games, vocabulary and questions to spark conversation.
- Lead group discussions, encouraging participation, and exploring related topics such as current events, film, life activities, while continuing to make progress through the material assigned for that meeting.
- Purchase cookies, fruit and juice for their session (for which they are reimbursed) and setting it up with coffee provided by the library

Educational background and compensation:

All the leaders have Masters of Education or Special Education degrees and have extensive teaching experience. All have worked with persons with developmental disabilities. The leaders are paid \$100 for a two-hour session (including setup) and the assistant (when we have one) is paid \$40 a session; these are New York State standards for consultants. The leader for each group reports weekly to the library staff on each session and submits lesson plans that include new vocabulary, word puzzles, and other learning tools.

Reporting and oversight:

Leaders also provide written reports on the progress of the group, how the participants behaved, and the level of the participants' literacy. The library staff and the Advisory Committee use these reports to anticipate when the groups will need new books, to consider program components and expansion and, if possible, determine if participants would be served better in another group. They use these reports annually to help determine the success of the new objectives of the program.

BOOK CLUB MEETINGS

Though each of our three leaders adapts and adjusts her program to her participants' skills and abilities and her own personality, the content is similar:

1. Each session begins with review of what has been read so far including major plot points and characters.
2. The participants read aloud, discuss the book and its relevance to current events in the news and in their lives.
3. Vocabulary from the book is defined (written on an erasable board) and reinforced with word games and exercises.
4. The group compares the book and a movie made from the book, when available, which stimulates discussion and reinforces comprehension of the reading material.
5. Each session includes a social note with refreshments.
6. Each group meets about 33 times a year, and each meeting lasts for an hour and a half.

Session/Lesson Plans

Due to the educational nature of the book clubs, lesson plans are created and shared among the leaders. The library staff researches appropriate books so the leaders have a pool of reading material to work with. Sample book choices include specially adapted versions of *The Prince and the Pauper*, *Ben's Gift*, *Black Beauty*, *The Call of the Wild*, and *Treasure Island*.¹

When a group completes a book, the participants take the book home to keep, and are given titles to choose from to decide what they will read next. The leaders adjust the pace of reading the book depending on the participants' abilities. The activity coaches from the day group take the vocabulary worksheets back to their hub-sites and are encouraged to work on the material with the participants.

Our Program In Action

Each of our three groups functions a little differently, depending on the time of day it meets, and the participants' preferences. Here's how it works, as reported by our leaders:

Evelyn Schonbrun

Leads the Tuesday evening group where the majority read at late third-, early fourth-grade levels, with a few non-readers. A very stable group; the majority were participants in the pilot program. They live either at home, independently in apartments or in group residences. Some travel on their own, others are transported by their caregivers.

¹ See pages 21 and 22 for books and publishers.

“When I first started working with adults with developmental disabilities, it became obvious that the pacing of our work time together was crucial. Although some of the participants were quite naturally slower at reading and comprehending than the others, a general basic pace had to be kept in order to keep everyone’s interest. The leader must get the “feel of the group” in order to establish a pace that works for everyone. This takes experience and is not easily taught. Within the parameters of this internal pacing, one has to allow for individual differences. Questions can be rephrased and repeated. The leader needs to be sensitive to the participant who is shy or reluctant to answer for fear of making a mistake.

Humor plays a very important role in these sessions. It helps to remove awkwardness and fear. As a leader one has to know which member can “take” a joke and which would be upset by it. It is very important to get to know your participants in this way.

Most important, the participants must be treated with respect. You are not the teacher as much as an equal partner in an intellectual search. Everyone’s opinion is equally important. If they do not want to participate, they do not have to. One person speaks at a time to keep order. Everyone gets to read at every session. If, as a leader, you are aware of a person’s problems with reading, start them off slowly with only a few words. Help the reader by supplying clues or parts of words. Sometimes one has to give most of the words in a kind of shadow reading. It may seem unbelievable, but these people will all eventually read.

The material chosen has to be within the parameters of the group’s abilities. Certainly, this can be relatively difficult as the group’s abilities may vary greatly. Generally, it is best to aim for a middle ground. You can raise the bar several times during the year, but be prepared to give some of the group extra assistance. One of the best places to find materials is a publishing company’s catalogue. These can be gotten through the neighborhood schools or libraries. If one has some idea of publisher’s names, they can certainly be found online. The company will be happy to send you one. Be specific and tell them that you want books that are adapted for your population and are on a particular grade level.

We use films to compare and contrast how different media present stories, background, characters and ideas. We discuss how films either add or subtract from their vision (impressions) of what the book was like for them, and whether the film characters were the same as they imagined them.

If people arrive at different times, it helps to start with some vocabulary work on a board. This focuses everyone and gives the latecomers something to refer to. Sessions can also begin with a general question or a review of the previous week’s work and characters. Puzzles or

short games using the vocabulary are also very helpful.

There should also be time set aside to socialize, during which the group and the leader share things that are going on in their lives. As each week passes the leader has more insight and understanding of the members of the group and can make the best choices of reading material. It is also a very good idea to bring a few works of literature to a session and ask the group what they would like to do next. The books we read become the property of the members of the group as they are completed and are greatly valued.

It is a great pleasure to be a leader of such a group. The members are kind, caring and appreciative of all we do. **Education and the love of literature should be a life long experience. It should not be limited to those who can conquer the written word easily.”**

Carol Trimarchi

Leads the Monday evening group, which has a very mixed range of readers; we think their average reading level is a bit below second-grade. Some read more independently than others and their decoding is better than their comprehension. They tend to lose focus when they are not doing the reading. Some don't really read at all, but follow along and add to the discussion. They live either at home, independently in apartments or in group residences. Some travel on their own, others are transported to the program by their caretakers.

“Since my group is made up of weaker readers my story selections need to be easy, preferably at a second grade comprehension level, yet the content needs to be interesting for them and not too child-like. I gravitate to Classic stories since these are interesting for a variety of reading levels and age groups and often they are stories the group members are also familiar with. We discuss choices of a few titles before we begin each selection so they are included in the decision process. The group members feel important and they truly get excited about what they will be reading. Keeping the books we read once completed is something they look forward to.

My group's book selections are often made based on ones that have a movie version, though not a cartoon. After we finish each book we watch the movie and discuss the similarities and differences. The group members tell which version they like more and why.

Session Format

1. Students arrive gradually, so they help themselves to coffee and engage in casual conversation while we wait for other group members to arrive.
2. We begin each meeting by introducing new vocabulary words from the chapter we will be reading that evening. Words are put on the board so we can refer back to them as we read. Members take turns reading each word, defining it and putting it in a sentence.
3. We summarize the main events of the story or sequence the events up to this point as a review of the story since we meet only once a week.
4. We make predictions about what they think the story will be about.
5. We read the story together discussing it, clarifying main events, and group members answer questions to make sure they understand information presented. Since I have varied reading levels within my group, I move around from reader to reader needing my help. Stronger readers read independently, whereas I usually choral read the selection with my weaker readers. In the beginning some of my members would not even read aloud. Now they all eagerly participate regardless of their reading ability. I also vary the length of the passage members read according to their reading ability.
6. Our follow-up activities vary each week. We are using a storybook-workbook format so our follow-up activities are included in each chapter. They include a comprehension check, vocabulary check, and some type of word puzzle. I also make word puzzles using a free online web site: www.puzzlemaker.com
7. We end each session with our dessert and social time. This time can be cut a little short depending on how early we can get started each week.

As I plan my sessions each week I try to be consistent so the group members are familiar with their format. Since they know what to expect, they feel very comfortable with our activities. They look forward to our weekly meeting and are disappointed when we do not meet.

My goal with Books for Dessert is in line with the philosophy of our program and that is to provide group members with exposure to literature with opportunities to read and improve skills in a social, nonthreatening atmosphere. This has given our members opportunities that would otherwise not be available to them since they are no longer in any educational settings, having aged out of school programs.”

Annmarie Benzinger

Monday morning group leader. Participants are in three local AHRC (a local agency for persons with developmental disabilities) day habilitation programs who are brought in by their activities coaches (who sit in on the

club meetings). Primarily older participants whose average age is 40; many were not in early intervention programs. Participants change from month to month and sometimes week to week.

“Based on my teaching experience, *I recognized from the start that to make the participants comfortable in the group I would have to develop a structure for our meetings that I adhered to consistently.* The participants’ day at AHRC starts at approximately eight o’clock in the morning and our group meets on Mondays at ten. I plan our meetings as a mid-morning break in their routine. We open each meeting with our “dessert.” Participants arrive, always excited to meet with each other and with me. We have refreshments and while we sip our coffee, tea or hot chocolate each of us shares an event, activity or thought that has occurred since the last time that we met. Each group that comes to our discussion comes with a counselor who is also invited to share his or her thoughts. Participants look forward to hearing about their counselor’s activities. I encourage interaction and the discussions are usually lively. Members know that they can pass if they do not wish to talk. Everyone participates and we are all addressed by our first names. One technique I use to help the group bond is to celebrate each person’s birthday with his/her permission. Everyone signs a birthday card and we celebrate.

After refreshments, I move into the more formal part of our meeting. Each week I prepare vocabulary work sheets, vocabulary Bingo (with prizes), crossword puzzles and a word search. I work on developing sight vocabulary and word meaning with a special emphasis on the multiple meanings of the same word. The work sheets are created on the computer using the edHelper² program. We start to read orally after the new vocabulary has been introduced. When using a graphic book, the reader assumes the role of the character in the picture. Our group thoroughly enjoys this.

Everyone is given the opportunity to read if they wish. Most of them want to try. For participants who really cannot read, I read a phrase and they repeat it after me. Each person who participates this way gains the satisfaction of having ‘read it.’ Each takes pride in doing this.

All of the members enjoy our work sheets. We do them slowly and everyone helps. On their own, they have set up partnerships so that a more able performer helps a friend who needs help. Everyone wants and takes homework. I also give the counselors work sheets and they work on them on Monday afternoon at their hub-sites.

² edHelper provides a variety of games, puzzles, extensive vocabulary programs and lesson plans online that can be downloaded for about \$20 to \$40 a year. Go to www.edHelper.com

I expect each member to participate and to respect the integrity of the group, and they do. It is wonderful to watch them work, helping one another to reach a level of understanding about the story that we are reading. It is a joy to observe their excitement about taking a book home once we have completed it.

The most important considerations in selecting a book are the quality of the story and its readability level. It is important that you don't go in with preconceived ideas of what participants are capable of reading, and that the content is not compromised too much to compensate for the limitations on vocabulary and comprehension. It is also important to select stories that are appropriate for adult learners. We have a collection, primarily of classics, from which to choose. I introduce three books to the group members and allow them to select the story they wish to read.

Group members compare similarities and differences in plot and character development between the novel and the film version of the story. Participants are also encouraged to discuss how they had visualized the setting and the characters of the novel and to contrast that to the movie version. Questions like 'what did you think a specific place — Birtwick Park in "Black Beauty," for example—looked like before you saw the movie? Did Quasimodo ("Hunchback of Notre Dame") look the way you had imagined as we read the novel?'

The discussion of "Around The World In Eighty Days" was the most exciting because the group was anxious to see some of the places and the events that occurred in the story, especially the suttee in India and the Sioux in the United States. The group tends to prefer reading and acquiring a new book to watching a video, so the option is offered upon completion of the novel and the group votes on it.

RECRUITMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS OF LEADERS

Our Advisory Committee had the advantage of already knowing the three leaders before approaching them to lead the groups. Once they were confirmed, we advertised in local papers for the assistant.

Job Descriptions and Qualifications

Job Title: *Leader of the Book Program*

Qualifications:

1. Masters Degree in Special Education
2. Several years experience working with a developmentally delayed population at the high school level or above
3. Adaptable and giving personality

Responsibilities:

1. Liaison with the Library Staff
2. Literature selection
3. Lead program sessions
4. Lead pre-reading discussions with the program members in key vocabulary and themes in the literature to be read
5. Make decisions, depending on the facility of the group members in decoding and comprehension, as to which sections of the literature will be assigned to be read and which will be read to the group
6. Make decisions about reading progression, either chapter by chapter or thematically
7. Prepare a guide for the group members that will assist them with their day to day reading
8. Lead all group discussions
9. Supervise the assistant to the leader of the program
10. Meet with the assistant to discuss the program and their specific duties in the next session
11. Maintain attendance logs and report in writing on each session

Job Title: *Assistant to the Leader of the Book Program*

Qualifications:

1. Preferably a graduate of a special education degree program (recent graduates would be acceptable) or a student in the second half of such a program if a graduate cannot be found
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Responsibilities:

1. Assist the leader of the program
 - a. Distribute materials
 - b. Aid individual program members with reading to the group
 - c. Circulate among the group rendering individualized assistance to group members as needed
 - d. Meet with the Group Leader to discuss the program and their specific duties in the next session
 - e. Look to the Group Leader for supervision and direction
 - f. Purchase, and/or help set up meeting refreshments

RECRUITMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

To find participants for the clubs, community agencies, group homes, parent groups, churches and synagogues were contacted and fliers were distributed at the library and various local venues. A recruitment announcement was placed in several issues of the monthly library newsletter. Additionally, the project was publicized on our library's web page, and by repeated announcements in our library's newspaper including an article and a photo of a group in session. Brochures were printed and sent to the Nassau County Library System, various organizations related to our target audience, local religious organizations, and they were displayed and distributed at the library and in the community. We have also worked with reporters from local newspapers to write articles with the hope of reaching a wider audience. But we have found the most effective method of reaching our target audience is through word of mouth.

Our participants are 21 to 60-plus, and live with their families, in group residences, supported living apartments, or independently.

Once prospective participants have expressed interest, the agencies that provide housing and the day programs partner with the library to ensure the groups run smoothly. Participants are sent a welcome letter; attendance is taken, and they are asked to be responsible for notifying the leader when they will be absent.

Participant reading levels vary from practically none to about the 4th grade. One group alone, the morning book club, has a range of participants: from non-readers to 4th grade level reading. The Committee initially tried to limit each group to a particular reading level, but in the end, availability won out, and "the little red schoolhouse system" seems to be

working quite well. We also concluded it wasn't feasible or proper to test reading levels. The Committee and the leaders do consult regularly regarding participants' reading ability and appropriateness, and after five years the system is still working.

SAMPLE BUDGET

These numbers represent the cost of producing Books for Dessert for one group of about 13 people for 25 meetings, which would span about 10 months.

Books	\$ 600
Videos	26
Postage & Admin	20
Library Staff 2 PTE	— In kind
Leaders	2500
Assistant	1250
Transportation	50
Publicity	100
<u>Refreshments</u>	<u>186</u>
Total	\$4722

Budget items include:

- Low level, adult content books at a cost of about \$5 per copy are purchased and distributed to each member of each group. Additional copies of the reading materials are maintained and available to check out in a special collection in the library.
 - Videos and DVDs are purchased to enhance interest and understanding of particular books.
 - Meeting refreshments (cookies, fruit, coffee, juice, etc.) are served to create an atmosphere of social activity, which is important to motivate this special group. Cost is about \$20/session.
 - Transportation will be provided by local taxi for those who are not able to come to the library on their own, in an agency van, or with a parent or caretaker.
 - Announcements, articles, publicity in the local media to publicize the program.
 - Teachers/Leaders are paid \$100 per session including preparatory time. The Assistant, who only assists in the evening groups, is paid \$40 per session including preparatory time. Activities coaches from AHRC who arrive with their participants assist the day group. Fees for leaders and assistants are calculated based on local salary rates for teachers and librarians. In some cases, retired special education teachers can facilitate one or more sessions on a voluntary basis.
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- Two staff librarians work with the leader and assistants implementing the program. The expense has been calculated at 2% of their combined library salaries, which is provided for by the library. Each staff librarian devotes approximately two hours per week to the program.
- Design and printing of flyers and posters for recruitment of the appropriate audience.
- Postage includes notices, mailings and correspondence.

FUNDRAISING

While the Port Washington Library is funded by tax dollars, many of their programs are supported by a variety of donations. A common challenge for non-profits and programs is finding funding, and Books for Dessert is no exception. We do not charge participants for membership, and the books they read are given to them. We have raised funds from state and local governments and foundations, and we receive private donations. It is a regular effort during the course of the year to identify funding sources, and then to apply for and secure the funding. The Advisory Committee works in tandem with the library's fundraisers, but raising money is an important function of the group.

LESSONS LEARNED

Taking Book Club seriously

We want to foster a sense of responsibility that book club is not to be taken lightly, that it is a commitment they have made, just as with other types of book clubs. Most of the participants are strongly committed, but occasionally outside forces conspire to woo them away. The administrators of the group residences need periodic reminders to not schedule competing events, whenever possible, on the night book club meets, for example.

Calling in about absences

All participants are strongly encouraged to call in if they are not able to come to a club meeting. They are given phone numbers for a library staff person and for their leader. The leaders constantly reinforce this, not only with members, but with their caregivers, who must remind the participants (and who often need to be reminded themselves).

Tardiness

This is a challenge that you will face. Some members or groups come as late as 45 minutes. Most participants rely on others to transport them. We have not yet solved this difficulty, other than the leaders issuing constant pleas and reminders, and reviewing or repeating

activities and remarks with each new group of arrivals.

Fallback planning for when the leader is absent

When notified in advance, some of the leaders and one of the committee members have substituted for a leader. But the hosting library (or organization) needs to have a plan in place for last-minute, emergency absences, as we learned when one of our leaders was injured in a car accident on the way to Book Club (and her assistant had told only her that she was ill and not coming in that night). In our case, the reference librarian on duty that night kept the group more or less together for an hour or so until the leader was able to get a message through the phone system that she would not be there.

MEASURING SUCCESS

Books for Dessert serves two purposes: it provides literacy education for individuals with developmental disabilities and it is a social club for those adults. While testing the participants may be the best way to measure their educational progress, it contradicts the social spirit of the program. *Progress is measured in a more qualitative manner through the group leaders noting the difficulty of the material covered and the pace at which each group can progress.* Group leaders report weekly to the library staff on each session including attendance, and submit lesson plans that include new vocabulary, word puzzles, and other learning tools. They also comment on the progress of the group, how the participants behaved, and the level of the participants' literacy.

The library staff who oversee the program and the Advisory Committee use these reports to anticipate when the groups will need new books and, if possible, to determine if participants would be served better in other groups depending on their reading level. In addition, attendance is a considerable indicator of success because if the participants don't enjoy it, they won't come. Attendance is voluntary.

EXPANDING INTO HOMES

We've found that, for many reasons, it would benefit the book clubs and participants to teach others about the program. So we're just beginning to develop a program that parents, residence managers and day hab staff can carry out at home and at hub sites to reinforce literacy beyond the once-a-week club meeting. This will involve preparation of instructions packets, homework, etc., as well as bringing managers, staff and caretakers into the library for training sessions.

CONCLUSION

Special education classes have evolved over time, but there hasn't always been a focus on reading books — even now. People who attended special education classes in schools 20–30 years ago weren't regarded as capable of reading books. But through this club, our members now have the opportunity to explore the joy of reading as well as meet their full potential.

Books for Dessert has had a huge impact on its participants. Their reading comprehension and vocabulary have improved immensely. Many have read books no one thought they would have the opportunity or ability to read. Both staff and participants continue to be amazed at the capabilities exhibited in the groups.



BOOK LIST

These books are almost all adaptations of the originals, with adult content and a reading level between 1st and 4th grade. They are called “hi-lo” books because the interest level is adult, or high, while the reading level is elementary, or low. Many have illustrations. They have worked very well in our groups. The name after each title is the distributor or publisher from whom the title was purchased, and is listed on the next page. Titles without a name, such as “The Red Pony,” are read in the un-adapted version available from most book distributors or from the publisher.

Around the World in Eighty Days
(Saddleback Educational, Inc.)

Ben’s Gift (New Readers Press)

*Bermuda Triangle:
Strange Happenings at Sea*
(Rosen Publishing)

Bigfoot and Other Strange Beasts (Rosen)

Black Beauty (Delta Systems)

The Call of the Wild (Saddleback)

The Chocolate Touch (Saddleback)

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Saddleback)

Dracula (Delta Systems)

The Gift of the Magi
(Miller Educational Materials)

The Great Adventures of Sherlock Holmes
(Saddleback)

Great Expectations (Saddleback)

Hana’s Suitcase (Rosen)

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone
(Saddleback)

Heidi (Edcon Publishing)

Huckleberry Finn (Edcon)

The Hunchback of Notre Dame (Saddleback)

The Lottery, short story by Shirley Jackson
(original version)

The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood
(Saddleback)

The Pearl (Saddleback) original version

Pride and Prejudice (Saddleback)

The Prince and the Pauper (Saddleback)

The Red Pony (original version)

The Secret Garden (Saddleback)

Surfer (Miller)

Swiss Family Robinson (Edcon)

A Tale of Two Cities (Delta)

The Three Musketeers (Saddleback)

The Time Machine (Saddleback)

Tom Sawyer (Edcon)

Treasure Island (BMI Educational Services)

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (Saddleback)

UFOs: Alien Abduction & Close Encounters
(Rosen)

The Wizard of Oz (Delta)

Book Distributors

“Hi-Lo” Books

These distributors frequently have the same books. They are usually found in their catalogs under high-interest, low-reading level sections and will be divided into reading levels with adult interest.

BMI Educational Services
P.O. Box 800
Dayton, New Jersey 08810-0800
1-800-222-8100
www.bmiedserv.com

New Readers Press
P. O. Box 35888
Syracuse, NY 13235-5888
1-800-448-8878
www.newreaderspress.com

Delta Systems Co., Inc.
1400 Miller Pkwy.
McHenry, Ill. 60050-7030
1-800-323-8270
www.delta-systems.com

Orca Book Publishers, Inc.
P.O. Box 468
Custer, WA 98240-0468
1-800-210-5277
www.orcabook.com

Edcon Publishing Group
30 Montauk Blvd.
Oakdale, NY 11769
1-888-553-3266
www.edconpublishing.com

Rosen Publishing
29 East 21st Street
New York, NY 10010
1-800-237-9932
www.rosenpublishing.com

Miller Educational Materials
(now out of business, but books
sometimes available from alibris.com)
P. O. Box 2428
Buena Vista, CA 90621
1-800-636-4375
www.millereducational.com

Saddleback Educational, Inc.
Three Watson Saddleback Educational, Inc.
Three Watson
Irvine, CA 92618-2767
1-888-735-2225
www.sdlback.com

SAMPLE SESSION PLANS USED FOR PILOT GROUP

SESSION #1 9/23/03

I. Introduction (first half of session)

- A. Introduction of self and participants (where they live, their jobs, if any, etc)
- B. Describe nature of book club
- C. Gather information on each participant (name, address, phone number)
- D. Begin with adaptive longer novel or Saddleback novel/workbook combination³

II. Book introduction “The Prince and the Pauper”

- A. Vocabulary (pulled from Chapter 1 itself rather than list given at end of chapter) written on board as they watch and define the word
 1. awaited - to wait for
 2. royal - kingly
 3. imagination - things you think of - make up in your head
 4. wandered - roam without purpose
 5. learned - schooled
 6. gloomy - sad
 7. snatched - grabbed
 8. national importance - important to the country
 9. hooted - shouted

III. Read aloud alternately, if time (first chapter only)

IV. Social time (members report on what they did over the summer) and snack (no more than 20 minutes).

SESSION #2 9/30/03

The Prince and the Pauper Chapter 2

I. Introduction-review facts and plot of previous session.

- A. Vocabulary (on the board)
 1. protest - argue, say against
 2. sacred - holy
 3. commoners - everyday people, not royal
 4. farthing - English money like a penny

³ Some books are part of an educational series and come with vocabulary lists, workbooks, etc. See publishers list for Saddleback.

5. twinkle - shine dimly
6. fetch - to get or bring
7. admired - liked what is seen
8. merciful - kind, not hurtful
9. wits - brains
10. marshall - a position of power

B. Review what is a good idea - hopes, fantasize, etc. Compare their own dreams if they had money, like Tom Canty, with what might be the reality. What was it like to be rich vs responsibility of being rich.

C. One of their wishes was to take a special trip to visit far-off places. Relate to what a trip means to you and what its inconveniences and difficulties can be. Make connections between their world and the world of the novel.

- II. Read chapter 2 aloud and stop for questions, comments and interpretations.
- III. If time, do puzzles created by the leader. See ⁴Edmark fill-ins, definitions, word search, crossword puzzles, etc.
- IV. Social time (each report on what they did the past week or weekend) and snack

SESSION #3 10/7/03

The Prince and the Pauper Chapter 3

- I. Introduction
 - A. Review who the characters are:
 - Tom Canty
 - Prince Edward
 - King Henry, the VIII
 - John Canty
 - Lady Jane Grey
 - Marshall
 - Father Andrew
 - Offal Court
 - B. Lady Elizabeth, his half sister
 - C. Earl of Hereford (uncle to prince)
- II. Vocabulary - Chapter 3
 1. suite - group of rooms (fancy)

4 The Edmark Reading Program teaches basic reading skills to “the most struggling readers and non-readers” and is available online from various sources for \$200 and up.

2. presence - where a person is
3. banquet - large dinner party
4. dismissed - made to leave by a royal order
5. treason - an offense (bad act) for which death is the consequence
6. impolite - not correct by custom
7. escorted - someone comes over with you
8. armor - iron protection knight wore
9. seal - stamp

III. Discuss - “Clothes Make the Man” - What does that mean? Where is the great seal?

IV. Read Chapter 3 aloud

V. Dessert and social time (go around the room and ask each one)

SESSION #4 10/14 /03

The Prince and the Pauper, Chapter 4

I. Intro (Review)

- A. What happened to Tom? (Chapter 3)
- B. What happened to Edward? (nothing)
- C. Vocabulary

1. meddle - to interfere with
2. hag - an old, dirty woman
3. den - dark place
4. dramatic- full of emotion
5. pigs - (animals) used to criticize humans
6. palm - the bottom of the hand usually turned down
7. darted - ran off
8. gallant - brave
9. grim - sad, serious
10. tempered - made softer

II. Discuss main plot ideas: based on “the rule of blood is ended! Long live Edward, King of England.” Other themes: truth, lies, etc. Do you ever tell a lie? Is there such a thing where a lie is allowed?

III. Read chapter 4 aloud—every participant takes a turn to read, no matter the length

IV. Teacher-made fill-ins, either vocabulary or fact oriented. (for example: Create sheets with sentences leaving a character's name out next to a box with all possible choices)

V. Conclude with a summary

SESSION #5 10/21 /03

The Prince and the Pauper, Chapter 5 - The Prince and His Friend

I. Intro - Recap the previous week.

A. Questions:

1. How was the prince treated at Offal Court?
2. Why do they run away at the end of the chapter?
3. Who is Miles Hendon?
4. What did he (Miles Hendon) do for the prince?

B. Vocabulary

1. (a) terror - a bad, violent person
2. wonderment - disbelief
3. muttering - repeated low sounds
4. foreign - another country, strange
5. fox-hearted - sly, crafty, not kind
6. humor - do what or go along with what someone wishes
7. nobility - kings, queens, princes, princesses, duke, earl, knight (Sir or Lady)
8. wit - cleverness
9. trembling - shaking
10. grumbled - argued, didn't want to

II. Read Chapter 5 aloud together

III. Summary together and do a word search (teacher-made or from ⁵edHelper.com)

V. Social time – Asked two members to share trips

SESSION #6 10/28 /03

The Prince and the Pauper, Chapter 6 - Tom as King

I. A. Review previous week

1. Who is Miles Hendon?
2. How does he help Edward?
3. How does Edward act that let's you know he was a real prince?
4. Where do they stay?
5. What happens at the end of the chapter?

B. Vocabulary

1. commands - things that must be done
2. woe (is me) - sorry
3. "captive in a palace" - not to go anywhere freely
4. "went forth" - to go out of the place you are in
5. "whipping boy" - someone who gets hit for you
6. wits - mind
7. regal - king-like
8. savagery - to act like a savage to, extreme cruelty, inhuman things (boiled in oil)
9. deed - act
10. prospect - idea (in the future)

II. Read the chapter together, pausing for clarifications and comments

III. Puzzles

IV. Social time

SESSION #7 11/4 /03

The Prince and the Pauper, Chapter 7 - Edward and the Villains

- I.
 - A. Review happenings of the previous chapter
 1. Tom as King
 2. How he thinks it's a dream, only to discover that it is not
 3. He pardons the women, girl whom he knew as Tom Canty
 - B. Vocabulary for Chapter 7
 1. disguise - costumed
 2. sprawled - lounge about
 3. spirits - alcohol
 4. branded - hot iron on you
 5. taunting - teasing
 6. ruffler - leader of the tramps
 7. hermit (holy) - someone who lives all alone and prays to help others
-

8. disbelief - not to believe
9. horror - a painful emotion of fear
10. revenge - to damage or hurt in return for damage or hurt

- II. Read aloud - pause for clarification
- III. Do questions in the book at the end of the chapter
- IV. Social time, dessert and start some puzzles to be finished at home

SESSION #8 11/18/03

The Prince and the Pauper, Chapter 7 - Trouble with the Law

- I. Review characters; plot of Chapter 7
 - A. Where does Hugo lure Edward/Tom?
 - B. When he wakes what does he see?
 - C. What does he learn about slavery from the tramps?
 - D. What does he say he will do about it as King?
 - E. What (who) does he find in the hut? - What was he going to do to Edward?
 - F. Who saves Edward? - How? What happens at the end of the chapter?
 - II. New vocabulary
 1. Bundle - bag
 2. Protest - argue
 3. Property - what you own
 4. Crafty - clever
 5. Flogged - beaten
 6. Blackmail - hold something over someone for your advantage - or to get illegal money
 7. Choking - something caught in your throat
 8. Imposter - someone who pretends to be someone else
 - III. Read aloud
 1. Comment on the events - allow participants to discuss major themes
 - A. Revenge
 - B. Identity
 - C. Cruelty
 - D. Power
 - E. Freedom
-

IV. Social time, dessert and puzzles

SESSION #9 11/25/03

The Prince and the Pauper, In Prison

- I. Review of previous chapter
 - A. 1. How does Miles Hendon arrange for the release of himself and Edward?
 - 2. Where do they go after they leave?
 - 3. What happens at Hendon Hall?
 - 4. Who is Hugh?
 - 5. What is he like?
 - 6. Does Edith really know Miles?
 - 7. What does she say when asked?
 - B. Vocabulary - Chapter 9
 - 1. Put in chains - shackled
 - 2. Predicament - bad position you find yourself
 - 3. Insults - bad things to call a person
 - 4. Desperate - not able to do anything positive
 - 5. Astounded - shocked
 - 6. Gracious - kind in a noble way
 - 7. Inmates - prisoners
 - 8. Stake - post to which one is tied before being burned
 - 9. Stocks - holders of wood you were locked into
 - 10. Earl - a high position of nobility
- II. Reading aloud.
- III. Social time, dessert, etc.

SESSION #10 12/2/03

Chapter 10 - The End

- I. Recap all other threads woven in this piece.
 - A. Freedom vs Imprisonment
 - B. True identity vs Pretense
 - C. Behavior vs Clothes Makes the Man
 - D. Slavery vs Freedom
 - E. Justice vs Injustice
 - F. Truth vs Lies
 - G. Rich vs Poor
-

H. High vs Lower Social Class

II. Vocabulary

1. Decent - of good character and behavior
2. Jostling - pushing
3. Shame - embarrassed
4. Muttered - spoke under his breath
5. Forbid - do not allow
6. Scoundrel - evil person
7. Armor - iron suit
8. Flung - thrown
9. Claim - to say something is true
10. Harsh - difficult

III. Discuss what lessons did Edward learn? What did Tom Canty learn?

IV. Read aloud

V. Hand out papers - discuss film viewing and the difference between reading a book and seeing a movie as far as story, characterizations and reality.

VI. Social time

SESSION #11 12/9/03

“The Prince and the Pauper” - Video

- I. Reviewed comparisons between books and movies.
- II. Showed old, black and white version of The Prince and the Pauper (like better than newer versions—truer to the book)—watched in two parts over two weeks.
- III. Short discussion during social time and dessert of their thoughts on the comparisons

SESSION #12 12/16/03

- IV. Reviewed what was seen last session.
 - V. Showed second part of film.
 - VI. Short discussion during social time and dessert of their thoughts on the comparisons. Asked which they preferred and why.
-

SAMPLE LETTERS, FORMS AND MATERIALS

Sample Welcome Letter to Advisory Board Members

May 8, 2003

Ms. Barbara Smith
54 Main Street
Port Washington, New York 11050

Dear Ms. Smith:

It was a pleasure meeting you at the library last month. We are happy you have agreed to join the Advisory Board of the project for adults with developmental disabilities. We are fortunate to have someone with your experience and expertise, and look forward to working with you.

Since we last met, we have been working hard to finish writing the grant proposal for the May 1st deadline. We believe in the program and are hopeful for a positive response. We plan to move forward in any event.

Our next Advisory Board meeting has been scheduled for Thursday evening, June 5th at 6:00 pm in Nancy Curtin's conference room. We look forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely yours,

Trudy Friedman
Coordinator, Health Information



Phone Information Form

Name

Address

.....

.....

Phone #

1. Do you live with your family?

2. What kind of books do you like to read?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Are you 21 or older?

4. This is a weekly evening program.

Can you come to the library in the evening?

Comments:

.....

.....

.....

.....



Sample letter to participant.

A variant is sent each fall at the start of our year.

James Smith
Main Street
Anytown, USA

September 1, 2004

Dear James,

The Port Washington Public Library is delighted to welcome you to “Books for Dessert,” a book discussion group.

There are six people in your group, led by Mrs. Carol Trimarchi and her assistant, Ms. Allison Marks. At each session, you will do some reading, some talking and have some dessert. The sessions will be held on Monday evenings from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in the Hagedorn Meeting Room on the top floor of the library.

You will be reading a number of exciting books, and then discussing them in your group. Some will be fiction stories, others will be non-fiction. You will have a copy of each book to take home with you, as well as the opportunity to select other books and movies from the library during your get-togethers.

We look forward to seeing you on Monday evenings!

Sincerely,

Nancy Curtin, Director
Port Washington Public Library

Nancy Comer, Chair
Books for Dessert Committee

Sample letter to an agency sending participants.

Ms. Jane Jones
AHRC
Bethpage Road
Plainview, NY 11803.

September 1, 2005

Dear Ms. Jones,

The Port Washington Public Library is delighted to welcome you back to “Books for Dessert.”

The book club, led by Mrs. Annemarie Benzinger, will be meeting on Mondays from 10 to 11:30 a.m. in the Hagedorn Meeting Room. The first session will be Monday, September 19. There is a list of scheduled sessions enclosed with this letter. We’d like to request that the same people attend from September through December, so that continuity can be achieved in the reading and comprehension of the books.

As before, please notify the library if you will not be sending a group to a session. You may leave a message by calling 883-4400, ext. 136. The person who answers the phone will take your message. If the group is coming but will be arriving late, please let us know that also. It is our understanding that the Great Neck, Sea Cliff and Glen Cove programs will be participating again this year. Please don’t hesitate to contact Lee Fertitta at 883-4400, ext. 135 if you have questions or concerns.

If any program leaders or family members would like copies of the books being read, please let us know. We can provide the books at no cost.

We are looking forward to another year of reading and talking about books!

Sincerely,

Nancy Curtin, Director
Port Washington Public Library

Nancy Comer, Chair
Books for Dessert Advisory Committee



PORT WASHINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

One Library Drive, Port Washington, NY 11050-2794

BOOKS FOR DESSERT

PHOTO/VIDEO PUBLICITY RELEASE

Name:

I, the Parent/Guardian/Correspondent, hereby give permission to the Port Washington Public Library to use the photograph(s) and/or video of the above names individual for the purposes of publicity, education, training, fund raising and in any and all publications and other media without limitations or reservation.

.....
Signature

.....
Signature
Parent/Guardian/Correspondent

.....
Print
Parent/Guardian/Correspondent

ADDENDUM

Additional Resources

The **Edmark Reading Program** teaches basic reading skills to “the most struggling readers and non-readers” and is available online from various sources for \$200 and up.

edHelper This website is dedicated to providing teachers a single shop for educational resources. Ed Helper provides a variety of games, puzzles, extensive vocabulary programs and lesson plans online that can be downloaded for about \$20 to \$40 a year.

Go to www.edhelper.com

www. puzzlemaker.com Online forms for free, do-it-yourself puzzles

Publicity and Promotion

Brochure

Newspaper Articles- Newsday, Port Washington News, Library newsletter

Library Web page: www.pwpl.org/BooksforDessert.html

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the "Books for Dessert" page. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.pwpl.org/BooksforDessert.html>. The website header includes "PORT WASHINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY" and navigation links for "About Us", "My Account", and "Contact Us". A search bar is present with the text "Find it Fast". The main content area features a photograph of a group of people, with the caption "Books for Dessert Reading Club". To the right of the photo is the heading "Books for Dessert" and a paragraph of text: "The library hosts 'Books for Dessert,' a book club for adults over 21 with intellectual disabilities, who live or work in and around Port Washington, and who have little or no reading ability. The book club meets to enjoy and discuss books – and life – weekly from 7 to 8:30pm. The group is looking for new members. If you know anyone who may be interested, please call Lee Fertitta at 883-4400, Ext. 135." Below this is another paragraph: "Why reinvent the wheel? Our book club is in its fifth year and is a very successful program. The groups have read books and stories of all kinds in adapted versions - from 'The Prince and the Pauper' to Shirley Jackson's 'The Lottery.' If you are an organization or individual interested in replicating this program in your community, let us know. We are preparing a program guidebook which will be available soon. Please contact Lee Fertitta by phone: 883-4400, Ext. 135, or e-mail: fertitta@pwpl.org for more information." The footer contains "About Us | My Account | Contact Us", the library's address "The Port Washington Public Library - One Library Drive - Port Washington - NY 11050", and the slogan "Made possible by the Friends of the Library" with a logo.



PORT WASHINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

One Library Drive, Port Washington, NY 11050-2794