

# Creating a Library Club for Children

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April 2009

Four years ago we decided to try to form a club for children ages seven through twelve to encourage them to retain connections with books and with the library. It seems that around ages seven or eight the avid readers separate greatly from the not-so-avid readers until more and more children become reluctant readers. First, we determined that children that age still like to and need to listen to books being read to them. So, we stressed the idea with all Summer Library Program finishers that they can be and should be listeners as well as readers, no matter what their age. Taking that idea a step further, we decided that a club that always involves a book being read aloud could encourage that habit and could help children fill in their summer folders. We created a club format to include refreshments, a meeting opening with club symbols (see below), a book and an activity, all within one hour. There is definitely a one-room school quality to the atmosphere because of the age range. We meet for eight weeks in June and July, the eight weeks before Thanksgiving, and the eight weeks before spring break on Wednesdays, 3:30-4:30 p.m.

Each year we name the club based on the Summer Library Theme. Over the years the organization of the clubs evolved to include a logo, motto, a mission, a password, a secret knock, a hand signal and a mascot.

## Unicorn and Dragon Club

from Dragon, Dreams and Daring Deeds

## Safari Club

from Paws, Claws, Scales and Tales

Logo: The planet Earth

Motto: Life is an EXPEDITION.

Mission: EXPLORE, EXPERIENCE, EXPAND.

Password: (based on clipart letters to spell Safari on our sign)

Seahorse, Alligator, Frog, Alligator, Rhinoceros, Iguana

Mascots: Parrot, Snake

## Sleuth Society

from Get a Clue at Your Library

Logo: Magnifying glass with eye inside (clipart)

Motto: Mystery is everywhere!

Mission: Follow the evidence. Find the secret. Figure out the solution.

Secret knock: XXX XXX (based on six letters in SLEUTH)

Hand signal: Spell SLEUTH in American Sign Language

Entry Response Code: Who? 7 double O 2 (2007 backwards)

What? What about it?

Where? Here and there

When? Time and again

Why? Why not?

How? That's the mystery!

Mascot: Bloodhound

## Chrysalis Club

from Catch the Reading Bug

Logo: Butterfly made from clipart letters to spell Chrysalis Club

Motto: SURPRISE emerges all around!

Mission: Connect with the energy. Capture the excitement.

Create the UNEXPECTED!

Passwords: Outside in. Inside out.

Cycle code: Butterfly, egg, caterpillar, chrysalis (can start at any point)

Sound signals: Knock: XXXX X XXXX

Finger snap: right hand XXXX, both hands X, left hand XXXX

Hand signal: Cup one hand over other, connect thumbs, create butterfly

Mascot: Monarch butterfly

At each one hour meeting we usually begin with refreshments, (Capri Sun because I do not like to deal with spills, goldfish crackers, graham cracker sticks, pretzels, raisins, etc. Sometimes we have special food, such as apples, donuts, cheese that may relate to the book or activity. We have the meeting opening and the book reading and activity introduction while the children are eating. In the summer the snack may not be quite so important, but during the fall and winter most of the children come directly from school are hungry. We clean up the refreshments and start the activity.

We try to find illustrated books that are interesting and challenging for children this age. At the Lawrence Public Library we have a collection designated as Picture Books for Older Readers. Many of our books selections come from this group, but we also use a number of non-fiction books, everything from science to history to folklore.

We try to find an activity that relates to the book. Sometimes it may be a rather loose connection but no one seems to mind! We have done art projects, played charades, done water experiments, worked with sand and clay, created plastic plate sized Zen gardens, learned string figures, made drums for a drum circle, decorated heavy cardboard boomerangs, participated in story circles, played board games, made photographic collages, When we do any activity involving reading, we make sure that each younger reader or pre-reader has a reading partner, either in one of the older children or a staff member or volunteer. About once each eight week session we invite a guest to come teach us something or demonstrate or perform for us. Any community is full of wonderful people who have much to offer, and the children are always a responsive audience. We have had a suggestion box out every now and then for children to offer activity ideas and have made use of those occasionally when we can.

During the summer we attempt to design programs that stay connected to the summer theme and club name, but after that we branch out. We always send home a handout cover sheet that features our logo and lists the book we read and others we suggest on the subject. We often have further information or activity ideas attached. Our idea is to have the library and the club be a catalyst for exploration for children and their families.

Please feel free to contact us for further information and to share your ideas with us.