

Education & Libraries + ESO

7.21.2025

Contact me with ideas - danajones64@yahoo.com

Supporting Education and Libraries

If you've tuned into any news outlet or social media recently, you may have heard of funding cuts to schools and libraries. Whenever this happens, our club members answer the call to help fill the gap in our communities. I hope your club will make this a priority, as many clubs "kick off" the start of a new club year.

The Community Connection Initiative for Education and Libraries for this administration is to support high-quality early learning programs. The club manual has many great ideas, but what do the programs in YOUR community need? It likely isn't the same for an urban area compared to a rural area of your state. Making contact with programs as they are doing their planning for the Fall can open a lot of opportunities to engage with the program and the families.

Whether your club members have a little time or wish to make a deeper commitment, there is a place for them. Some may prefer to buy needed supplies, while others may wish to volunteer their time each month or even each week. Perhaps the program has a special event, such as a fun fair or a fundraiser, that would benefit from extra hands. Maybe it is a clean-up day where members go in and sanitize toys to prevent illness.



As a former director of an early learning program, any of the volunteer acts would have been welcomed. If you are not familiar with an early learning program in your area, your local school would likely welcome your volunteerism just as much.

Our teachers are often underappreciated, underpaid, and overworked - so let's lend a hand and help lift them up as the new school year begins!



ESO Projects – It's more than how many books we read

For this administration I want to challenge you to think of ESO as a way to promote reading in your community. Your club and state ESO Award entry should be much more than how many club members read XX amount of books. What did your club members **do** to promote reading in your community? Some award entries may have these reported under Education and Libraries, but consider pulling out the reading specific projects and counting those as an ESO project. Here are some ideas to get your creative juices flowing!

Creating Access and Visibility:

- Little Free Libraries: Install small, publicly accessible book-sharing boxes in various neighborhoods.
- Pop-Up Libraries/Bookmobiles: Bring books to community events, parks, and underserved areas.
- Partnerships with Local Businesses: Encourage cafes, laundromats, or community centers to have a small selection of books for patrons to browse or take.
- Book Swaps/Donation Drives: Organize events where people can exchange used books or donate them to local schools, shelters, or community organizations.
- Culturally Diverse Literature: Ensure that available books reflect the diverse backgrounds and interests of the community.
- Beyond Traditional Books: Promote graphic novels, audiobooks, e-books, magazines, and newspapers to cater to different preferences and learning styles.

Engaging Events and Programs:

- Community Read-Alouds/Storytelling Hours: Host regular sessions at libraries, parks, or community centers, featuring local storytellers or community members.
- Author Visits: Invite local or regional authors to speak, read from their work, and engage with the community.
- Book Clubs for All Ages: Establish diverse book clubs – for adults, teens, children, and even specialized groups (e.g., genre-specific, parent-child).
- Literacy-Themed Events/Festivals: Organize events like "Winter's Tale" nights, "Mystery Night," "Shakespeare in the Park," or "Campfire Storytelling."
- Reading Challenges/Competitions: Create fun challenges with incentives (e.g., "1,000 Books Before Kindergarten," "Read Around the World").
- Book Bingo: Design bingo cards with reading challenges (e.g., "read a book by a new author," "read a book set in another country") with prizes for completed cards.
- "Touch a Truck" with Storytelling: Partner with local fire/police departments to combine vehicle exploration with themed story times.
- Seasonal Reading Programs: Implement "Fall into Reading" or "Spring into Stories" initiatives.
- "Battle of the Books": Organize quiz-bowl style competitions based on a pre-selected list of books.
- Holiday-Themed Story Times: Host special reading events around holidays (e.g., Santa story time, Easter egg hunt in the library).

Fostering Reading Habits and Culture:

- **Lead by Example:** Encourage community leaders, parents, and educators to visibly read and share their love of reading.
- **Create Reading Nooks:** Design inviting and comfortable spaces in public areas (libraries, community centers) where people can relax and read.
- **Promote Discussion:** Encourage informal conversations about books, ask "quick response" questions about what people are reading, and facilitate book discussions.
- **Student/Community Recommendations:** Create platforms (bulletin boards, online groups) for people to recommend books to each other.
- **"Drop Everything And Read" (DEAR) Time:** Encourage schools and workplaces to dedicate short, regular periods for independent reading.
- **Family Engagement:** Provide resources and tips for families to incorporate reading into their daily routines and encourage parental involvement in children's literacy development.
- **Volunteer Programs:** Recruit volunteers to tutor emergent readers, read to children in early childhood centers, or assist with literacy programs.
- **Collaborate with Schools:** Partner with schools to support their literacy initiatives and provide resources.
- **Celebrate Milestones:** Acknowledge and celebrate reading achievements, both big and small, through certificates, public recognition, or small prizes.
- **Connect Reading to Real Life:** Show how reading can expand horizons, fuel creativity, and provide practical knowledge (e.g., reading news, articles related to hobbies).

By implementing a variety of these ideas, a community can cultivate a vibrant reading culture that promotes literacy, fosters a love of learning, and strengthens community bonds.



GFWC ESO Book Club on Facebook

Are you one of the over 1,600 members of our GFWC ESO Book club on Facebook? If not, I encourage you to join us for some great conversations about our most recent reads, ESO project ideas, and some laughs along the way.

You must be a member of GFWC to join and answer two simple questions (in what State are you a member, who is your GFWC State President) along with agreeing to the terms of belonging. It's a great community to share a common interest.