

Great Stories Club

Tips for implementing a Great Stories Club program

- Prior to meeting with program participants, read the book you are discussing carefully — often it requires two readings. Keep notes on characters and plot so that if there is a question or someone needs reminding you can fill in the gaps.
- If you can choose the time when the discussion is taking place, try to pick a time of day when participants will be alert and active.
- Think of a fun way to have participant introduce themselves and get to know you.
- Introduce simple rules and expectations that the group will follow (e.g. read and finish the book, raise your hand to speak and wait to be recognized, respect each other’s opinions). If working with a detention facility, make sure that your rules are in line with the institutional rules.
- Try to create a comfortable, open atmosphere. Remember and remind participants that the discussion is not a test and they won’t be judged or graded.
- Food encourages informality and conversation. Check with the staff where you will host programs to see if food is allowed. If the food becomes a distraction, serve it at the end.
- Set up the room so that all participants can see each other.
- Use open-ended, personal questions (e.g. how did it make you feel, what do you think about ... , what would you do if ...), in addition to the humanities discussion questions prepared for each GSC series.
- Steer away from purely personal digressions and avoid questions that can be answered with a yes or no.
- If discussion has completely stalled, or if students haven’t read the book, try reading a passage or chapter out loud and discussing just that section.
- Using the Great Stories Club discussion questions provided for your series, consider allowing group members each ask and facilitate a question. This activity will encourage participation and take the focus off you.
- Your role is one of facilitator: keep the discussion rolling and keep it on track. Don’t let yourself become a “leader” or “teacher”; remain a guide.
- Incorporate a writing exercise, activity, craft, or fun quiz that is related to the book. Sometimes busy hands help get the mind working. Check to see what is allowed in the setting where you are working.
- If you are able to continue the GSC program with the same group, be prepared with several read-a-likes for the book(s) you discussed. See the related reading list for your GSC theme for titles that may inspire participants to read more on their own, or to explore together as a group. Expedite access to these related titles through your library.