



# Planning & Participating in a Mayor's Book Club

December 2015

Dr. Vicki Cohen, Director, School of Education, Fairleigh Dickinson University, *Author*  
Mayor Timothy McDonough, Hope Township, *Editor*

EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION, INC.  
NJLM

## **Planning and Participating in a Mayor’s Book Club Table of Contents**

Preface.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Initial Planning.....	5
Applications and Follow-up.....	7
Selecting the Schools.....	9
The Opening Ceremony.....	10
Professional Development for the Teachers.....	11
Successful Implementation.....	12
Closing Ceremony.....	13
Appendix A: Letters and Helpful Documents.....	14
Sample Letter to School Districts.....	15
Mayor’s Book Club Application (to be sent with letter to districts).....	17
Sample Letter to Mayors.....	18
Sample Acceptance Letter to School Districts.....	19
Sample Non-Acceptance Letter to School Districts.....	20
Participant Permission and Book Log.....	21
Mayor’s Book Club Participants Form.....	22
Mayor’s Book Club Celebration Schedule.....	23
Best Literacy Practices for Parents.....	24
Helpful Hints for Reading Out Loud.....	25
Appendix B: Budget Suggestions.....	26
Budget Suggestions.....	27

**Preface**

Encouraging young students to read and connecting community members to the schools and their municipal leaders, the Mayor's Book Club program is a success story in building literacy and good relationships. The program has a proven track record of bringing Mayors into their school districts' classrooms to get them started on the journey to reading 1,000 books as a group by the end of the school year.

This publication, "Planning and Participating in a Mayor's Book Club," is an instructional manual funded by the NJLM Educational Foundation (NJLMEF) authored by Dr. Vicki Cohen, Director, School of Education, Fairleigh Dickinson University. She and her staff share their experiences and advice for successful Mayors Book Clubs.

Editorial credit goes to Mayor Timothy McDonough, Hope Township. Mayor McDonough was one of the original champions of the Mayors Book Club when the concept was introduced by the NJLM Educational Foundation in 2010.

On behalf of the Board of the NJLM Educational Foundation, we thank Dr. Cohen and Mayor McDonough and hope that other schools and mayors can use this guide to create lifelong readers in their own communities. We would also like to note the support of the Foundation's Board for this project, as well as staff from the New Jersey State League of Municipalities.

This and other papers are available on the Foundation's website at [www.njlmef.org](http://www.njlmef.org)

Michael F. Cerra, Secretary  
NJLM Educational Foundation  
222 West State Street  
Trenton, New Jersey 08608  
[www.njlmef.org](http://www.njlmef.org)

**About the Authors**

Dr. Vicki L. Cohen is the Director of the Peter Sammartino School of Education at Fairleigh Dickinson University, where she is the recipient of a distinguished faculty award for service.

Timothy McDonough is the Mayor, Hope Township and a Past President of NJLM. Mayor McDonough has worked in both the private and public sector for over 30 years. He is one of New Jersey's longest-serving mayors.

By Vicki L. Cohen

## **Introduction**

The beginning years of a child's life are critical to the development of those skills needed to succeed in school. Research evidence indicates that a pattern of school failure starts early and persists throughout a child's school career. Longitudinal studies show that there is an almost 90 percent chance that a child who is a poor reader at the end of first grade will be a poor reader in fourth grade, and will never be able to catch up to his or her peers or achieve grade-level reading proficiency. Children who struggle with reading grow to dislike it because they cannot do it properly and, therefore, read considerably less than good readers. This can have devastating consequences for children, families and the communities within which they live. Simply stated, children who read more have better results in school.

The Mayor's Book Club is a unique initiative within the State of New Jersey sponsored by the New Jersey League of Municipalities Educational Foundation, Inc. (NJLMEF) Its purpose is to provide opportunities for Mayors, municipal leaders, and their local educational partners to expose children and their parents to the importance of reading, and thereby increase the likelihood that children will read many different books and learn that reading is a fun and valued activity. The Mayor's Book Club has been implemented in many different counties throughout New Jersey with great success by the NJLMEF. One of its main goals is that it can be easily replicated and implemented in any town, promoting early childhood literacy development within local schools and communities.

The mission of the NJLMEF Mayor's Book Club is:

To engage municipal leaders and their local partners in the development of Mayor's Book Clubs that enhance early literacy and school readiness among vulnerable, young children. This innovative model holds great potential for reaching parents through an appealing, familiar, non-stigmatizing approach. At the same time, it provides mayors and other city officials an easily branded and replicated vehicle for highlighting the importance of early literacy.

The Mayor's Book Club initiative is designed to help communities provide concrete ideas and tools to implement early literacy plans. Key elements of this plan include:

- A scalable model that can be modified based on local needs and goals;
- Assistance with developing and implementing local literacy plans;
- Reaching out to educational partners, such as Schools of Education at local universities, librarians, and school districts;
- Opportunities to share ideas and best practices on literacy development;
- Distribution of educational materials to schools and children;

- Collaboration of local schools, parents, mayors, educational partners, and community members in the advancement of literacy practices for children;
- The engagement of Mayors and municipal leaders in local schools by visiting classrooms and encouraging reading as a fun and valuable activity;
- Engagement of the community at large through sponsoring local Mayor's Book Clubs.

In New Jersey, students who participated in the Mayor's Book Club needed to read a total of eight books over a four-month period. The town's Mayor was invited to the school and would read a book to the children. Each student who participated in the program received a book at the conclusion of the program. If the class read at least 1,000 books at the conclusion of the program, the school would receive \$1,000 to purchase more books for the classroom library. Faculty members from Schools of Education from local universities partnered with the mayors and the NJLMEF to help organize the program, as well as support the teachers in literacy development. This brochure will describe how to plan and participate in a Mayor's Book Club using New Jersey's model as developed by the NJLMEF.

### **Initial Planning**

To set up a Mayor's Book Club in New Jersey, a coalition of committed partners in a county or town needs to be formed. The NJLMEF has traditionally initiated this partnership, but community leaders, librarians, teachers, a university, or parents could initiate it, as well. The business community is also a critical partner via sponsorships and promotion. In many of the counties the NJLMEF partnered with a School of Education at a local university and a mayor who was interested in starting the Mayor's Book Club. Once the partners commit to implementing the program, they need to meet and discuss any issues, and responsibilities. They should decide what grade level the Mayor's Book Club will target; in many cases first graders were chosen, although this initiative has been successful with students in eighth grade, as well. The Mayor's Book Club is appropriate for all grade levels—from first through twelfth grade!

Each of the partners needs to know what the individual responsibilities entail and the timeline for each task. Some of the suggested responsibilities for the different partners are listed below.

The Lead Partner (could be higher education, Parent Teacher Organization, community leader, librarian, or any other organization that takes the initiative):

- Send out letters to all applicable mayors informing them of the purpose and goals of the Mayor's Book Club, and that if a school in their town is selected they will visit the school on several occasions and be a guest reader in the participating class(es);
- Contact and develop business partners and sponsors;
- Provide a book for the students at the closing ceremony;

- Provide \$1,000 for each school which satisfies 1,000 book reading requirement

The Mayors:

- Schedule and coordinate the Mayor's school visits;
- Promote literacy in the community through publicity for the school visits and final celebrations;
- Visit the classroom and read a book to the children at various times during a four-month period;
- Provide support and feedback to the partners by having a representative attend opening and closing ceremonies.

The School of Education (or other Lead Partner[s]):

- Write and mail letters to every district in the county informing them of the purpose and goals of the Mayor's Book Club. In addition, the letter should explain what each school will be required to do, and the letter should contain an application and instructions (See Appendix A);
- Organize and host a selection committee meeting;
- Work with partners to select schools that will participate;
- Notify schools that were selected and those that were not;
- Organize opening ceremonies by working with each school;
- Help coordinate site visits by the Mayors;
- Verify student participation by having students fill in book logs;
- Organize and coordinate teacher candidate visits;
- Assist schools in successful implementation of Mayor's Book Club;
- Develop an appropriate book list for the students that teachers can use;
- Coordinate closing celebrations;
- Provide professional development to the teachers to support the literacy need of their school community;
- Organize visits by teacher candidates to provide read aloud/small group instruction;
- Provide professional development certificates to the participating teachers.

The School:

- Fills out the application (by either principal or lead teacher);
- Contacts Mayor about application;
- If selected, sends letter home to parents informing them of the purpose and goals of the Mayor's Book Club;
- Organizes with Lead Partner when the opening ceremony will take place;
- Invites community, administrators, parents and Mayor to the opening ceremony;
- Sets a reading goal for each student (it can be eight to 10 books or more);
- Sets a reading goal for the whole grade level (it can be 1,000 books or more);
- Works with the Lead Partner to ensure all procedures are being followed;
- Has the students read books and fill out book logs;
- Allows teachers time for one professional development session given by a School of Education faculty member or other literacy professional;
- Invites the Mayor to read to the students;
- Provides a book list or book to the mayor for the read aloud session;
- Organizes with the Lead Partner when the closing ceremony will take place;
- Invites community, administrators, parents, and Mayor to the closing ceremony.
- Works with the Lead Partner to provide certificates to the students for reaching their reading goal.

### **Applications and Follow-up**

The Lead Partner (who is often a School of Education, although it could be a library, school, or other educational partner) will send out a letter to every district in a county (or a town if the intent is to initiate this project in one town). All district information including superintendents and schools for every district in New Jersey can be found on the New Jersey Department of Education website (<http://www.state.nj.us/education/>). This information can be downloaded into a spreadsheet. The letter can be generated through a mail merge with the information from the spreadsheet. The letter should have an explanation of the Mayor's Book Club including its purpose, what it will entail for each school that applies, what the school needs to do to apply, and a timeline of events. The application should be included in the letter and instructions as to where to send it. A copy of a letter and application that can be sent is in Appendix A.

The Lead Partner should send out letters to all applicable Mayors at the same time as the letters to the school districts go out. A list of Mayors and addresses in New Jersey can be downloaded from <http://www.nj.gov/dca/home/mayors.html>. The letter should explain the purpose of the Mayor's Book Club, what it will entail for the Mayors, and what the Mayors need to do to support the Mayor's Book Club and the application of the school. A copy of the letter can be found in Appendix A.

The letters should be sent at least three to four months before the beginning of the Book Club. That means that if the Mayor's Book Club is to start in January, letters should go out no later than September, with an application deadline of November 1. A sample of a timeline for a spring Mayor's Book Club is below.

### ***Mayor's Book Club Timeline***

#### **Late August – early**

#### **September**

Letters are sent out to districts and mayors in one county (or town)

**November 1** Application deadline

**December 2** Six selected schools in the area will be notified

**January 19-26** Mayor's Kick-Off event held at participating schools

#### **February 1- May**

Students read books

Mayor visits the grade(s) as a guest reader

Lead partner collaborates with the teacher(s) to provide professional development

Teacher Candidates assist and support teacher(s) and students

#### **Mid May**

Literacy Celebration held in the school's library

Certificates, awards, and refreshments are provided

Once the letters are sent, The Lead Partner should start receiving applications as the deadline approaches. The Lead Partner should maintain a list of schools that apply and keep the Mayors updated with the list of applicants. It should then verify that the Mayor of each town has also expressed interest in applying, as well. The Lead Partner should acknowledge each application by email or phone call, confirming that the application was received.

A common question asked by many schools is how many students can participate—is it only one classroom or can all students in a grade level be involved? This is up to the school and the partners involved. Funding might influence the number of children who participate from each school. In one Mayor’s Book Club, a school had 22 first graders participating, while another had 206! Therefore, that decision is up to the partners involved in implementing the initiative.

### **Selecting the Schools**

The selection of schools can be a difficult process, only because so many different schools applied, and there is a limit on how many can participate. It would be great if all schools that applied could be selected! A selection committee should be comprised of the Lead Partner(s), other partners, and a representative mayor (this is optional if seen as a conflict of interest). Criteria for selection should be clearly articulated. Suggested criteria are listed below, but it really is based upon the goals and purpose that the selection committee develops.

Suggested criteria might be:

- The depth and description of the school’s literacy program described in the application;
- The population of students that the school serves, preferably from high needs schools;
- The relationship of the school with the Lead Partner (such as when a School of Education has a professional development school or has a special relationship with it);
- The number of student teachers placed in the school;
- The relationship of the Mayor with the Lead Partner or NJLMEF;
- Location of the school, preference going to the school that is located in the Lead Partner’s hometown.

Each member should bring a list of the top schools to select. At a selection committee meeting, each member should discuss his/her top choice and then vote on each one. The top schools are the ones that are selected. This is the time to decide how many students in a particular grade level from each school can participate, or if there is no limit.

After the schools are chosen, the Lead Partner needs to contact the schools that will participate and inform those that were not selected. The Lead Partner needs to make sure that the teacher(s) understand what is expected—that the students will read many books during the next four months and that they must keep track of this by recording all books that every child reads in a book log. Any books that the students read are fine—at home with a parent or guardian, at school by the teacher or student, or books read independently. Release forms from the parents must be obtained so that the parents know about the Mayors Book Club. Book logs should be distributed to all selected schools (see Appendix A).

At this point, the Lead Partner needs to start arrangements to schedule Opening Ceremonies at the selected schools.

### **The Opening Ceremony**

The Opening Ceremony is a festive event that introduces The Mayor's Book Club to the students, their teachers, parents, and community. The school should organize the event at a time that the Mayor can attend, as well as the Lead Partner. It can be held in the library, the school gymnasium, the auditorium, cafeteria or classroom, depending on the number of students involved. Invites should be sent home and to the Mayor of the town. This is also a time to invite the press, especially from local community papers.

At the Opening Ceremony, students will be brought to the room and sit on the floor or chairs arranged around a staging area. The Mayor, Lead Partner and other appropriate partners will sit in the front. Parents, superintendents, educators, and press will be seated in the rear of the room. The principal, lead teacher, or education representative will start the ceremony by introducing everyone. The Lead Partner will talk to the students and explain what they will need to do in the next few months—read lots of books! An important part of this ceremony is to get the students engaged and excited about reading and to see that reading is fun. Some schools have had the teachers present a Readers Theatre presentation to the students, at other schools the Mayor read a book to the students, and at others student teachers from the university read a book. The Opening Ceremony focuses on the students and having them understand what they are expected to do in the next few months, which, as previously stated, is to read as many books as they can. It is also an opportunity for them to learn who their mayor is, and what a mayor does in the town. At this time, the principal or lead teacher will announce what the reading goal for each student is, and what the reading goal for the total grade will be.

A suggested agenda is below:

#### Opening Ceremony Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Explanation of Mayor's Book Club, and its purpose to the students
3. Discussion with students about why reading is important
4. Discussion with students about what a mayor does in their town
5. Expectations of students, teachers and parents
  - a. Release Form must be signed
  - b. Book log filled in for all books every student reads

- c. Read books with child at home and school
- 6. Mayor (teacher, student teacher) reads a book to students
- 7. Good Literacy Practices for Parents (handout)
- 8. Introduction of key partners
- 9. Conclusion: Reading Is FUN!

The Lead Partner should prepare a schedule of Opening Ceremonies for all participating schools including:

- Date and time of the ceremony
- Name of the school
- Address of the school
- Phone number
- Principal's name
- Mayor's name
- Lead teacher(s)
- Number of students participating

This schedule helps to organize the information needed when visiting each school and who the important contacts are. It should be distributed to the partners and to all participating schools so they can verify the date and contacts. It also helps to have the address to enter into a GPS to locate each school.

### **Professional Development for the Teachers**

As part of the Mayor's Book Club, the School of Education or other literacy professional can offer professional development in literacy practices to the participating teachers. This may become an optional offering to the schools, depending on the school's schedule. During the spring semester, many schools become involved in standardized testing of their students and find it too difficult to schedule these sessions. Some schools may elect to offer the professional development after school hours so as not to provide release time to the teachers, although union contracts may limit the hours a teacher can attend after-school sessions. Other schools may opt to hold a professional development session during the school day and provide substitutes for the teachers so they can be released from their classrooms.

Depending on the teachers' needs a two-three hour session is sufficient.

The session should focus on the teachers' needs and a simple survey assessing what the teachers would like to cover is very helpful in setting up an agenda. Some topics that elementary education teachers may want to cover are:

- Core Common State Standards (or state standards) in Literacy
- Read Alouds
- Motivating and Connecting books
- Narrative and Informational books
- Vocabulary: tier 1, 2, and 3 words
- Word Study and Phonics
- Higher order questions, activities: inferencing, comparing & contrasting, referencing the text
- Guided Reading
- Differentiation
- Flexible groupings
- Centers
- Leveling of books

Some teachers would like recommendations for a book list that is appropriate for their grade level, especially if they are receiving funding to purchase new books for their libraries. The lead partner can work with the teachers to develop a list of books that focus on the specific skills and topics that fit their classroom objectives.

Teachers find it helpful having the chance to talk to each other and discuss their literacy practices in the classroom. Just being a facilitator is very helpful by leading the discussion to areas that teachers may find challenging and those areas in which they are having success. By holding the professional development, the teachers have a chance to share best practices, discuss problems with specific students, and express their thoughts. Professional development certificates should be given to each teacher who attends.

### **Successful Implementation**

An important part of successfully implementing the Mayor's Book Club is to stay in contact with the key contacts at each school and to keep the key partners informed as to what is occurring. Because principals are extremely busy, especially during the spring when standardized testing occurs, a teacher or literacy coach can become the contact for the school. The school should be

in contact with the Mayor and set up a schedule as to when the Mayor will read to the children and provide the Mayor with appropriate books. The Lead Partner should act as the central organizer of the initiative, sending out reminders via emails, setting up opening and closing ceremony schedules, and organizing and offering professional development sessions at schools.

Student teacher candidates can also be involved in the successful implementation of a Mayor's Book Club. Student teachers can be placed into classrooms of schools that are participating, but this is often difficult as the placements are made many months in advance. Student teacher candidates can read to the students, and help in the professional development sessions. They can offer their services for tutoring and classroom support when available.

### **Closing Ceremony**

The closing ceremony takes place after approximately four months. Its purpose is to celebrate that each student has reached his/her reading goal (approximately 8 books each), and that all the students have reached their reading goal (1,000 books). It is very helpful for the Lead Partner to develop a schedule of each event including time, date, school, address and how many children participated. Like the Opening Ceremony, the Mayor, parents, educators, community, and the press should be invited. It can take place in the library, auditorium, cafeteria, gymnasium, or classroom. The Lead Partner and other partners will attend. At that time, the principal or lead teacher will announce how many books the students read and congratulate them. Each student will receive a certificate and, if possible, a book. The certificate can be printed by the Lead Partner or by the school. The book can be provided by the funds from the sponsors or by the school. Each student's name can be announced so that he or she can come forward to receive the certificate and a book. At that time, the Mayor can congratulate the students and stress the importance of reading. The Mayor might want to read another book to the students at this time.

Students enjoy having refreshments after the ceremony, which makes it very festive and reinforces that reading books is a valuable and special activity. Some schools order pizza or cookies and milk, depending on what the healthy food policies are for that district.

The Lead Partner should collect from the teachers all the book logs that each child completed. If the teachers participated in a professional development session, certificates should also be handed to each. Refreshments can be served and pictures taken at the end of the ceremony. It is a time to remind the students that it is very important to read, read, read, and that reading is fun!

## APPENDIX A: LETTERS AND HELPFUL DOCUMENTS

Sample Letter to School Districts

Mayor's Book Club Application (to be sent with letter to districts)

Sample Letter to Mayors

Sample Acceptance Letter to School Districts

Sample Non-acceptance Letter to School Districts

Participant Permission and Book Log

Mayor's Book Club Participants Form

Mayor's Book Club Celebration Schedule

Best Literacy Practices for Parents

Helpful Hints for Reading Out Loud

## Sample Letter to School Districts from Lead Partner

<Date>

Dear School Administrator,

The Mayor's Book Club is about to begin! As a new partner in this regional endeavor, <Lead Partner > is thrilled to be involved in this innovative project. We are committed to the program and the support it will provide to <> grade students in <> County. The <Lead Partner> and <> are collaborating to highlight mayors and their school districts in promoting wide reading, literacy engagement, and achievement. We are inviting you to nominate your < -- grade> students to participate in the program. < -- number of > schools will be chosen to participate in <> County.

The cornerstone of this initiative will be to engage mayors and their local partners in the development and maintenance of a Mayor's Book Club that enhances literacy achievement for <> graders. This innovative model connects the school, parents, community members, university faculty, and teacher candidates. Mayors, faculty, and teacher candidates become involved in the local schools to highlight the importance of early literacy and organize an array of strategies that promote literacy achievement and collaboration.

The mayors associated with the selected schools will meet with you to explain the details of the program and select the date it will begin. <> graders who would like to participate will have to read or be read a total of 8 (eight) books over a four-month period from February through May. Each child must have parental approval to become a member of the Mayor's Book Club. Mayors from each of the participating districts will host a kick-off event in the school during the weeks of January 19<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup>. Mayors will visit the schools on several occasions to read to the students. Students will keep a log on the Mayor's Book Club Log Sheet. Parents and teachers will be responsible for recording the books read. Each school will collect and verify the total number of books read.

At the conclusion of the program each student will receive a book. Additionally, each school that has read at least 1,000 books will be given \$1,000 to be spent on books for their <> grade classroom libraries. The main purpose of the Mayor's Book Club program is to motivate and engage students to read widely and be exposed to a wide variety of texts.

This initiative is an exciting project for the municipal leaders, the school districts, college literacy faculty, and teacher candidates at <> University. This program is a model for how municipal government, school districts, and an institute of higher learning can collaborate to provide and enhance literacy and achievement. If you are interested in participating in this initiative, please fill out the attached application and email it to <> or send it via postal mail to the address below by <>. We look forward to receiving your applications!

Sincerely,

***Mayor's Book Club Timeline***

<b>November 1</b>	Application deadline
<b>December 2</b>	Six selected schools (or the number decided) will be notified
<b>January 19-26</b>	Mayor's Kick-Off event held at participating school
<b>February 1- May</b>	Students read books Mayor visits the grade(s) as a guest reader University literacy faculty collaborates with the grade teacher(s) to provide professional development Teacher Candidates assist and support teacher(s) and students
<b>Mid May</b>	Literacy Celebration held in the school's library Certificates, awards, and refreshments are provided

**Mayor's Book Club Application**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_  
School: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_  
Principal: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

In 200 words or less, tell us about your school and how you see (the Lead Partner), your students, and the town's mayor partnering to engage and encourage your students to read widely as they acquire literacy proficiency.

**Sample Letter to Mayors from Lead Partner**

Dear Mayor:

<Lead Partner> is proud to announce the < > Annual Mayor's Book Club. The <Lead Partners> are collaborating to highlight Mayors and their school districts on a regional basis in promoting wide reading, literacy engagement, and achievement for students. We invite you to participate in this program.

The selected municipal and school officials we are working with this year are in < > County. < -- number of > schools will be chosen to participate.

The purpose of this initiative is to engage municipal leaders and their local partners in the development and maintenance of a Mayor's Book Club that enhances literacy achievement for students. This innovative model connects the school, parents, college faculty, and teacher candidates. Mayors become involved in the local schools to highlight the importance of early literacy, and organize an array of strategies that promote literacy achievement and collaboration.

If a school in your town is selected, <the Lead Partner> will meet with you and your school's principal to explain the program in detail. You will then select a date during the weeks of January 19th and January 26th to kick off the program. You will also visit the school on several occasions and be a guest reader in the class.

At the conclusion of the program each student who participated will receive a book, and each school that has read at least 1000 books will be given \$1,000 to spend on books for their classroom libraries. The main goal of the Mayor's Book Club program is to motivate and engage students to read widely and be exposed to a wide variety of texts.

This initiative is an exciting project for the municipal leaders, the school districts, university literacy faculty, and teacher candidates. This program is a model for how municipal government, school districts, and an institution of higher learning can collaborate to provide and enhance literacy and achievement. Please indicate your interest in participating in this initiative by contacting < > no later than November 3.

Sincerely,

## Sample Acceptance Letter to School District from Lead Partner

Dear Ms. <>;

Congratulations! I am pleased to inform you that <> School has been chosen to participate in this year's Mayor's Book Club. Mayor <> will be participating in a kick-off celebration at your school in mid-January 20 . Please see the timeline and book log sheet for use with each of the students who are participating.

Please let me know the names and grade level of the teacher(s) and principal who will participate and their contact information—phone number and email. We will need to set up time in December or January that we can meet to start our planning for your participation.

Students who participate will have to read or be read a total of 8 (eight books over a four-month period from February through May. Each student must have parental approval to become a member of the Mayor's Book Club. Your mayor will visit the classroom to read to the students. Students must keep a log on the Mayor's Book Club Log Sheet. The teacher and/or parents will be responsible for recording the books read. You will collect and verify the total number of books read.

At the conclusion of the program, each student who participates will receive a book. If your school has read at least 1,000 books, you will receive \$1,000 to be spent on books for their classroom libraries. The main purpose of the Mayor's Book Club program is to motivate and engage students to read widely and be exposed to a wide variety of texts.

Once again, congratulations and we look forward to working with you in the upcoming year! I will be contacting you in the near future to start arrangements.

Sincerely,

## **Sample Non-acceptance Letter to School Districts from Lead Partner**

Dear ;

Thank you very much for your application to the Mayor's Book Club. Our selection committee enjoyed learning more about your school and literacy program. We received many excellent applications for this program, which made the selection of the schools in particularly difficult. Although we did not accept your application, <the lead partner>would like to keep in contact with you.

If you are interested and able to do so, we encourage you to organize your own Mayor's Book Club. Please contact your mayor and other community members who may be interested in participating in this exciting initiative that is a great benefit to your students. You may want to plan and conduct a Mayor's Book Club using the instructions found at <http://NJLMEF.org>. Click on "Planning and Participating in a Mayor's Book Club."

Sincerely,





**Mayor's Book Club Celebration Schedule**

Date:  
School:  
Address:  
Phone:  
Mayor:  
Principal:  
# of students:

Date:  
School:  
Address:  
Phone:  
Mayor:  
Principal:  
# of students:

Date:  
School:  
Address:  
Phone:  
Mayor:  
Principal:  
# of students:

Date:  
School:  
Address:  
Phone:  
Mayor:  
Principal:  
# of students:

Date:  
School:  
Address:  
Phone:  
Mayor:  
Principal:  
# of students:

### **Best Literacy Practices for Parents**

1. Read to your child as often as possible. Even if your child is old enough to read independently, continue reading with your child. Have him/her read to you and then do shared reading.
2. Provide a quiet time for your child to read independently.
3. Provide your child with the opportunity to read books by having a print-rich household available like magazines, books, brochures, and articles.
4. Show an interest in what your child is reading. Discuss what he/she is doing in school and what he/she is reading.
5. After reading, ask your child specific questions that focus on “why” or “how.” Try to ask questions that do not have a “yes” or “no” answer.
  6. Encourage problem solving and higher order thinking. Why did a character do that? How might the character have done something differently?
7. Have your child infer what is not explicitly stated in the text. Have them predict what will happen next, or what did the author mean?
  8. Try to connect what the child is reading to his/her own background knowledge of the subject, and to his/her own personal experiences. Connections are very important—to his/her own life, to other books or TV shows he/she saw, to experiences he/she might have had.
9. Play word games with your child. For example, for a first grader, ask him/her what rhymes with “bear”? “pleat”? Or how many syllables in “hospital”? Or what letter does the word “ball” start with? End with? With older students, play word games such as scrabble or crossword puzzles or “find this word” with your child. Work with prefixes and suffixes, such as how many words can you think of that end in “tion” or begin with “re-”?
10. Watch TV or a video together and ask about the characters, setting, plot, problem, and resolution.
11. Make reading fun, enjoyable and a special time together.

### **Helpful Hints for Reading Out Loud**

There are many benefits to reading books out loud to students of all ages. Everyone likes to listen to a good story! For younger children reading a book in a shared literacy experience teaches them about concepts of print (who is an author, who is an illustrator, that print tracks left to right, that words are comprised of letters, that words and pictures have meaning), about the meaning of words (vocabulary), about fluent reading, and that reading is an enjoyable and fun experience that can be shared with others. For older students reading aloud teaches them about fluent and expressive reading, about content that they might not read themselves, about text that might be above their own independent reading level, and that reading is an enjoyable and fun experience that can be shared with others.

When reading aloud you should try to make the experience as interactive as possible, with text-based discussions that help students understand and use academic language. Students should use and practice the new language or concepts introduced in the book, allowing for deeper processing of the language and ideas connected to the book.

A few tips to facilitate a successful Read Aloud are given below.

1. If possible, choose a book that the students can relate to and make connections to their own lives. That allows the students to be motivated to listen to the book and connect to what it is saying.
2. If you choose a book that is “outside” of the students’ current knowledge or experience be sure to provide some background information and discussion about what the book will be about before starting the reading.
3. Preview the book before reading so that you know what it is about and won’t stumble over any words or phrases.
4. Before reading the book, try to select vocabulary and/or concepts that you wish to stress. You may want to introduce the selected vocabulary words before you start reading. It is best to choose only a few selected words, depending on the age of the students—one or two for very young children, not more than three or four for older children, and five or six for middle or high school students.
5. Think of the Read Aloud as having 3 stages: Pre-reading, During Reading, and Post-reading. During the Pre-reading stage introduce the book, show the cover and ask, “What do you think this book is going to be about?” to encourage prediction. Introduce the vocabulary words and try to have the students anticipate connections to their own lives. In the During Reading phase, pause occasionally to go over concepts and vocabulary words. Do not interrupt the reading too much as this will interfere with comprehension. During the Post-reading stage, have the students summarize the story, have a discussion about the book, ask questions to the students about the book, and point out important themes or content that was introduced.
6. Be sure to read slowly, with expression and loudly so all students can hear you.
7. Be sure to show the students the pictures, if it is a picture book.
8. Make the Read Aloud interactive. Involve the students.

## Appendix B: Budget Suggestions

### Budget Suggestions

## Budget Suggestions

The total budget required depends on how you structure your Mayor's Book Club. Some sample budget numbers are provided to offer an example.

Expense	Item
\$1,000	Given to each school whose students complete reading 1,000 books
\$xxxxx	Set aside for refreshments at Opening and Closing Ceremonies
\$xxxxx	Set aside for Lead Partner expenses, i.e., certificates, mailing, paper, etc.
\$xxxxx	Set aside to buy one book as a gift for each student at Closing Ceremony
\$	TOTAL

Sources of possible sponsorships:

Local corporations and businesses

PTO or PTA

“Angel Funders” (private donors)

## NJLM Education Foundation

### OFFICERS

**Arthur R. Ondish**, President  
Mayor, Mt. Arlington; Past President, NJLM

**Michael J. Darcy, CAE**, Treasurer,  
NJLM Executive Director

**Jun Choi**, Vice President  
Former Mayor, Edison

**Michael Cerra**, Secretary,  
NJLM Assistant Executive Director

### STAFF

**William Kearns, Esq.**, Legal Advisor  
Helmer, Conley, & Kasselmann

### TRUSTEES

**Paul Anzano**, Trustee,  
Mayor, Hopewell Borough  
(Mercer)

**James Benton**, Trustee,  
Executive Director, NJ  
Petroleum Council/API

**Robert L. Bowser**, Trustee,  
Former Mayor, East Orange;  
Past President, NJLM

**Charlene Brown**, Trustee,  
Regional Vice President,  
AT&T External Affairs

**Danielle Capozzoli**, Trustee,  
Corporate Attorney, United  
Water

**Hon. BettyAnn Cowling-  
Carson**, Trustee, Mayor,  
Magnolia

**Susan M. Coan**, Trustee,  
Region Vice President,  
Atlantic City Electric

**Sam Delgado**, Trustee, Vice  
President of External Affairs,  
Verizon

**Ken Gardner**, Trustee

**Jim Hughes**, Trustee, Dean,  
EJ Bloustein School of  
Planning & Public Policy,  
Rutgers, The State University

**Mark Jones**, Trustee, Vice  
President, External Affairs  
Jersey Central Power & Light  
Company

**Linda Kellner**, Trustee,  
Chief of Staff, New Jersey  
Resources

**Paul Matacera**, Trustee, Past  
President, NJLM,

**Monica K. McCormack-  
Casey**, Trustee, Senior  
Government Banking  
Relationship Manager; TD  
BANK

**George Sous**, Trustee,  
Director, External Affairs,  
PSE&G

**Brian Turano**, Trustee, Vice  
President of Government  
Banking, Investors Bank

**Jesse Tweedle, Sr.**, Trustee,  
Mayor, Pleasantville City

**Kevin Watsey**, Trustee,  
Manager, Government  
Affairs, NJ American Water

**Louise Wilson**, Trustee, Past  
President, NJLM Education  
Foundation

### SPONSORS

AT&T  
Atlantic City Electric  
Investors Bank

Jersey Center Power & Light  
New Jersey American Water  
New Jersey Natural Gas  
Public Service Electric & Gas

South Jersey Industries  
Target  
United Water  
Verizon