

International First Year Experience Conference, Dublin Ireland

Common Reader Implementation Strategies—Ball State University

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Sample book support materials attached

Sample passport attached

**Presented By Melinda Messineo, PhD
Ball State University**

Detailed Summary

This presentation will provide materials and discussion designed to assist a university in implementing a common reader program. The presentation will begin with a description of Ball State University's common reader program inception and current goals. The majority of the time will be spent taking participants through a "typical academic year" beginning with how one might solicit titles, continuing through the formation of the selection committee, the first

round elimination, the actual reading and assessment, the solicitation of community feedback, the final selection, the author contact, the book ordering, the creation of support materials, the on-line discussion, the book distribution, the discussion groups, the fall programming and finally ideas on how to structure the author's visit. This presentation will address challenges and discuss how the program has changed over time and why.

This presentation will include "decision points" where participants will be alerted to alternative approaches that might also be considered. There will be time for participants to ask questions and share their own insights. The materials provided include sample title solicitation wording, a timeline of the process, an assessment tool for the selection process, a sample list of titles, a discussion group leader survey, sample book support materials, and more.



<http://www.bsu.edu/freshmanconnections/>

Calendar Decision Points

August/September

We solicit volunteers to serve on the committee from past committee members, past discussion group leaders, and past freshmen connections team members. We work to have full time and contract faculty, academic advisors, library staff, residence hall staff, community members and students represented.

DECISION POINT – Think about your constituents. Who has a stake in the process? Who should you include?

We then send out first title solicitation via e-mail.

DECISION POINT – How will you get the word out? What is the best way to seek community feedback?

October

We then send out second title solicitation via e-mail.

DECISION POINT – Do you have enough titles after second request? Is there a more effective venue to solicit titles? Publishers now have booklets of titles they recommend, sites also have lists.

Next we compile the suggested titles.

DECISION POINT – What information do you want to include for consideration?

We then compare the list to the selection criteria. You can send the criteria with title solicitation to help recommenders.

DECISION POINT—What are your program goals and objectives? What criteria are necessary to reach these goals and objectives?

Next we present this reduced list along with synopsis and links to reviews to the committee for review.

The committee members identify their top picks.

DECISION POINT – How will this decision be made?

The top picks are compiled into a list. The number of finalists depends on the committee, the list, and where natural breaks in the voting occur.

Confirm author availability, affordability, and book price and availability. Sometimes titles are removed at this point because they no longer meet the criteria. The list is posted on an online discussion board.

DECISION POINT – What is your budget? Are there other groups that might co-sponsor a speaker as well?



Decision Points cont.

November/December

This list now represents the books to be read. We assign 3 books to each member for a thorough read. Copies of all of the books are made available to everyone on the committee at OTLA for check out. The committee is asked to read the first part of these books so they are familiar with all of the books.

DECISION POINT – What is the minimum number of people (or percent of the committee) that you want to

be experts on any given book? Often it comes down to people voting on books they have not read entirely.

Sometimes committee members have already read a number of the books so we assign them unfamiliar titles.

January

After everyone reads, we gather together to select the finalists. This may take any number of rounds as people discuss the pros and cons of each book.

DECISION POINT – In addition to number of votes, you also will want to measure placement so you need to weight the responses accordingly.

The committee then selects 3 titles to send to the Freshman Connections Coordinating Council. This list of three is again posted on the discussion board for comment.

DECISION POINT – Will you have an oversight committee that makes the final selection? Who will the members be and why? What will they base their final decision on?

Think about your constituents. Who has a stake in the process? Who should you include in the selection process?



Decision Points cont.

January cont.

The Coordinating Council now makes a more official contact with the agents of all of the books to work out the potential logistics of each visit. Again, books may be lost at this point because dates or contract amounts can not be negotiated.

February

The committee makes a final selection. The book is announced to the community. The books are ordered.

DECISION POINT – Will the institution pay for the books or will students buy them? How will you make them available to students? Orientation? Mail them to students? Contract is finalized with author.

DECISION POINT – your institution may have a unit on campus who is the only area authorized to make contracts. Find out the process before you begin. Things to ask agents: Will the author also have public meals with students? Does this include Q and A session? A book signing session? What are The author's transportation requirements? Are they negotiable?

March

Committee members assist in creating the support materials. These go to students, discussion group leaders and faculty.

DECISION POINT – What do you want to include? How will these materials be used? Who is your audience? What is your budget and timeline?

April

We begin to solicit discussion group leaders in mid-spring.

DECISION POINT – Will you run discussion sessions? When? Where? How will you get students to attend? What is the goal of the session? How will you measure success?

We begin planning fall programming in mid-spring.

DECISION POINT – Will you have additional fall programming? What will the theme for the semester be? How will you choose additional events? What is your budget? Time-frame? Are there others on campus you would pool resources with to sponsor programs?

May

We begin the on-line discussion.

DECISION POINT – Do you have a site to post a discussion board? How will students know about and access the site? Who will monitor the site? What will the role of faculty/staff be in engaging in the discussion?

book distribution to leaders

DECISION POINT – Will leaders buy their own books? How will they get them?

June/July

We begin the book distribution to students.

We prepare discussion group leaders in late summer.

Learning teams meet to plan for fall.

August

We hold the discussion groups and other fall programming.

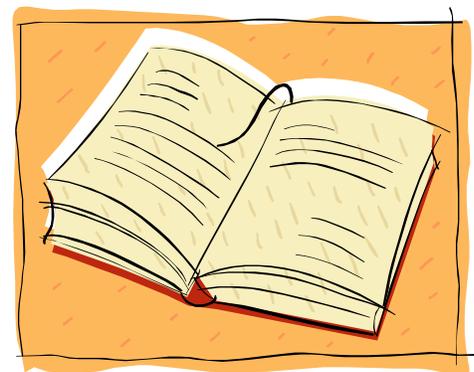
September

The author visits campus.

the process begins again....



How will the support materials be used? Who is your audience? What is your budget and timeline?



Timeline of Process

<u>August</u>	<u>September</u>	<u>October</u>	<u>November</u>	<u>December</u>
-Select Committee	-Solicit Titles	-Committee selects short list -Confirm feasibility of each title	-Distribute books to committee to read -Committee reads	-Committee reads

<u>January</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>May</u>
-Committee meets to select top three -Community invited to comment on top three - Feasibility confirmed	- Select final book - Announce book - Order books - Finalize contract with author	- Design support materials	- Solicit discussion group leaders - Begin planning fall programming - Spring assessment of fall experience	- Begin book distribution to leaders

<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>August</u>	<u>September/October</u>
- Distribute books to students - Learning communities begin team planning - Continue planning fall programming	- Distribute books to students - Learning communities finalize team planning - Continue planning fall programming -Prepare discussion group leaders	-Prepare discussion group leaders - Book discussion groups (- Select next committee)	- Author visit - Additional programming (- solicit titles for next year)

Sample Title Solicitation Wording with Criteria

Greetings!

The Freshman Connections Coordinating Committee invites you to recommend a title for the 2008-2009 Freshman Common Reader. Please forward titles you would like to have considered to Melinda Messineo at mmessine@bsu.edu.

This is the second and final e-mail request for titles for the 2008-2009 Freshman Common Reader.

The selection committee will soon begin the review process. The University Community will then be invited to provide feedback on the resulting short list of titles as soon as it is available.

Thank you to everyone for your recommendations and involvement in this process.

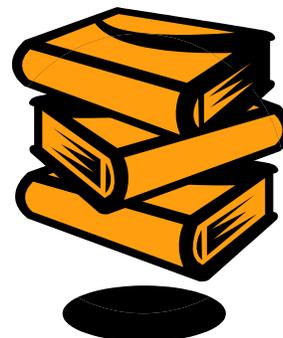
The deadline for submissions is Friday September 23rd at 5pm.

The goal is to have to program reflect a diversity of authors and disciplines.

Selection Guidelines

There are a number of parameters to consider when making a recommendation.

1. Topic of book needs to be related to the theme (selection committee may select the theme as titles are selected).
2. Book needs to be accessible to high-school graduates just beginning their college years. (consider length - around 250 pages, reading level, topic, relevance, etc.)
3. Book needs to be affordable. (typically paperback)
4. Book is applicable to many disciplines.
5. Author is living and available for a campus visit
6. Overall program reflects a diversity of authors and disciplines. (We have used Life on the Color Line, Night, Hunting for Hope, A Woman in Amber, and Nickel and Dime, Fast Food Nation, Tipping Point, First They Killed My Father, The Color of Water and Field Notes from a Catastrophe.)
7. If possible, book should motivate a large enough group of discussion leaders to volunteer.



Sample Assessment Tool for Selection Process

Book Review Form

Name of book reviewed _____
 Author _____

Reviewer Name _____
 Department Affiliation _____

These are the original guidelines:

We have a number of parameters to consider that will contain our choices a bit. The Freshman Connections Coordinating Committee has revisited each of these parameters and considers them to be a priority.

Topic of book needs to be related to the theme (we may select the theme as we proceed).

Book needs to be readable by high-school graduates just beginning their college years. (consider length, reading level, topic, relevance, etc.) Book is affordable. (we need to buy 4,000 copies)

Book is usable in many disciplines. Author is available for a campus visit (and affordable)

Overall program reflect diversity of authors and disciplines. (We have used *Life on the Color Line*, *Night*, *Hunting for Hope*, *A Woman in Amber*, *Nickel and Dime*, *Fast Food Nation*, *Tipping Point*, *First They Killed My Father*, *The Color of Water* and *Field Notes from a Catastrophe*)

If possible, book will motivate a large enough group of discussion leaders to volunteer.

What themes could we use with this book?

Rate the book on the following items on a scale from 1 (low) - 10 (high)

	Low									High
Readability	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Interest to Students	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Versatility for classroom use	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Reflects Diversity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Overall Appeal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Overall Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

What are the strengths of this book for use in the Freshman Connections program?

What concerns do you have about using this book?

Other comments?

Sample Titles Suggested in One Year

2008 Freshman Common Reader –
Partial List of Recommended Books

1968: The Year That Rocked the World by Mark Kurlansky

90 Minutes in Heaven: A True Story of Life & Death by Don Piper

A Brief History of Neoliberalism by Dave Harvey

A Columbine Survivor's Story by Marjorie Lindholm

A Girl Named Zippy: Growing Up in Small Mooreland, Indiana by Haven Kimmel

A Hatred for Tulips by Richard Lourie

A Heart Divided by Cherie Bennett and Jeff Gottesfeld

A Hope in the Unseen: An American Odyssey from the Inner City to the Ivy League by Ron Suskind

A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier by Ishmael Beah

A Man Without a Country by Kurt Vonnegut

A Monk Jumped Over a Wall by Jay Nussbaum

A Time to Kill by John Grisham

A Whole New Mind by Daniel Pink

A World Without Us by Alan Wiseman

Above the Cry of Battle by Charles Holsinger

Abraham: A Journey to the Hearts of Three Faiths by Bruce Feiler

Across the Wire: Life and Hard Times on the Mexican Border by Luis Alberto Urrea

An Ordinary Man by Paul Rusesabagina
Ana's Story: A Journey of Hope by Jenna

Bush

Angela's Ashes by Frank McCourt

Angry Black White Boy: A Novel by Adam Mansbach

Another Country: Navigating the Emotional Terrain of Our Elders by Mary Pipher

Arabian Jazz by Diana Abu-Jaber

Barrel Fever by David Sedaris

Behind the Veil: An American Woman's Memoir of the 1979 Iran Hostage Crisis by Debra Johanyak

Between a Rock and a Hard Place by Aron Ralston

Black and Blue by Anna Quindlen

Black Like Me by John Howard Griffin

Blink by Ted Dekker

Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking by Malcolm Gladwell

Born on a Blue Wednesday: Inside the Extraordinary Mind of an Autistic Savant by Daniel Tammet

Brand New World by Aldous Huxley

Burn Journal's by Brent Runyon

Burning Bright by Tracy Chevalier

Catch Me if You Can: The True Story of a Real Fake by Frank Abagnale

Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger

Confessions of an Economic Hit Man by John Perkins

Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things by William McDonough and Michael Braungart

Crashing the Party: Taking on the Corporate Government in an Age of Surrender by Ralph Nader

Crimes Against Logic by Jamie Whyte

Dandelion Wine by Ray Bradbury

Dante's Inferno by Dante Alighieri

Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy by Kevin Bales

Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim by David Sedaris

Enrique's Journey by Sonia Nazario

Everyday Enlightenment: The Twelve Gateways to Personal Growth by Dan Millman

Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close: A Novel by Jonathan Safran Foer

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change by Elizabeth Kolbert

Finding Darwin's God: A Scientist's Search for Common Ground Between God and Evolution by Kenneth R. Miller (pg. 162)

For One More Day by Mitch Albom

Framework for Understanding Poverty by Ruby Payne

Freakonomics by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner

From Beirut to Jerusalem by Thomas L. Friedman

Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story by Ben Carson

Highway 61: A Father-and-Son Journey Across Middle America by William McKeen

Homeless Bird by Gloria Whelan

How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie

I Hope They Serve Beer in Hell by Tucker Max

In the Name of Honor: A Memoir by Mukhtar Mai

Into the Wild by John Krakauer



Sample Review Session Outline

Freshman Common Reader 2008

Field Notes from a Catastrophe

By Elizabeth Kolbert



Discussion Group Leader Review Session

July 20th, August 9th and 11th, TC 411

1. Welcome! Thank you for volunteering! Every leader is *extremely valuable*.

2. The Discussion Group Process

- If attending Convocation, please arrive at Emens **no later than 1:15pm** to sign in and pick up your room assignment. If you arrive later than 1:15pm you will not have enough time to sign in and then line up for convocation. Following convocation proceed directly to your room. (If possible, please keep all items with you on stage so you are ready to go to your room immediately following convocation.)

- If not attending Convocation, please arrive at Emens **no later than 1:45pm** to sign in and pick up your room assignment. Please be in your room no later than 3:00pm. Students or a runner with information will arrive shortly.

- When you arrive at Emens, look for the sign up table off to the side inside the entry/lobby area.

- The sign-in will be divided alphabetically by your last name.

- You will be handed a card with a room number in black ink. (If the card you receive does not have black ink, please bring it to the attention of the staff assisting with sign-in.)

- **2:00 pm is crucial!!!** At this point we receive a crowd count, which we compare to our signed in discussion leaders, and then we select group size.

3. Things to know about the book selection process

- A committee of nine members including faculty, staff, students, and emeriti faculty narrowed the list from over 85 to eight that were read by additional students and the committee after which the final selection was made.

- Process begins in late fall, book is typically selected in January. Please let me know if you have any suggestions or interest in serving on the committee.

4. Discussion about how to run the sessions

5. Discussion about the book at BSU discussion site: www.bsu.edu/freshmanconnections

6. Thank you reception and debriefing will be held in AJ near the coffee shop following discussion sessions.

We will have gifts for all participants.

Each leader is extremely important! For each leader who cancels we need to relocate 20-25 students.



Caption describing picture or graphic.

Sample Discussion Group Survey

Please take a few moments to respond to the questions below.



Deciding to Volunteer

How did you hear about the opportunity to be a discussion leader?

- ALLBSU e-mail personal contact
 Freshman connections team involvement
 Update Article Other _____

What was your primary motivation for participating?

Please provide any suggestions you have for recruiting volunteers in the future.

Preparation

How did you use the support materials provided (4page packet)?

Did you look at or participate in the online discussion?

- Yes No Did not know about it.

Did you attend one of the 3 discussion group leader review sessions?

- No Did not know about it.

If Yes

What did you find helpful? Which part of the session could be eliminated?

Would you recommend that we continue the sessions for future

- books? No Yes

Please provide any suggestions you have for the discussion group leader review sessions in the future.

Signing-In

How would you rate the ease of the sign-in process?

- Very easy Somewhat easy
 Confusing/Problematic (Please elaborate)

Did you receive enough information at sign-in to get you to the right room?

- No If no, please explain what change could be made to assist with this process.
 Yes

Please provide any suggestions you have for the sign-in process below.

The Actual Discussion

How long did you wait in your room for your students to arrive? _____ minutes

Do you feel you waited too long for your students to arrive?

- No Yes

How large was your group? _____ students

How would you respond to the following statement?

“The discussion was positive experience for both me and the students in the group.”

- strongly agree disagree
 agree strongly disagree

Please elaborate on why you selected the response you did below.

Please provide any suggestions you have for the discussion process below.

The Follow-up/Debriefing

Did you attend the follow-up/debriefing session?

- No Yes Did not know about it.

Would you recommend continuing to hold the follow-up/debriefing session?

- No Yes Not applicable.

Please provide any suggestions you have for the follow-up/debriefing session below.

General

What recommendations do you have for the process in general? Any other comments?

What recommendations do you have for the process?





Sample Passport Incentive Guidelines

Freshman Connections 2005-2006 Connect with your Community Passport

Guidelines and Incentives

Goal:

The goal of the “Connect with your Community Passport” is to encourage students to experience community events and activities as well as make connections between these events and class material.

Eligibility:

All 2005-2006 first semester Ball State Freshmen are eligible.

What you need to get started:

All you need is a “Connect with Your Community Passport” and a desire to learn and explore! Most of the eligible events are free of charge.

Incentives:

In some classes you may use the passports for extra credit or assignments. Check with your instructors for details. Keep in mind that not all of your classes are part of the Freshman Connections Program.

All first semester freshmen are eligible to submit their cards into a drawing for gift certificates to local bookstores. There will be two drawings:

- First Drawing October 15th for those who have at least 3 events
- Second Drawing December 5th for completed cards

How to Document your Attendance:

There are a number of ways to document your attendance. Please contact your professor for information on how events for class credit need to be documented.

Residence Hall Events: Your residence hall director, freshman connections assistant, Freshman Connections faculty member, or academic advisor can initial your passport for official Learning Community Events.

Events with Assigned Seating: Your ticket will serve as documentation.

Open Seating events with Programs: Your program will serve as documentation.

Other Events: Many events will announce how attendees can obtain documentation. If you are unable to obtain documentation, a one-page typed write-up will serve as documentation. The write-up needs to include the following points: a detailed description of the event, a reflection on what you thought about the event and how it influenced you, 3 questions that you would have liked to have asked the presenter.

Feedback from Student Survey 2007

1. About how many pages of the Freshman Common Reader “The Color of Water” did you read before today’s discussion? (n=1632, 63%) (2600 attended convocation, 3000 attended author visit)

I finished it.	More than 250	201-250	126-200	1-125	None
55%	7%	5%	10%	17%	6%

2. If you did not finish the book, are you more likely to finish the book after participating in to day’s discussion? (n=811)

Yes	No	Not sure
54%	18%	28%

3. Would you recommend this book to other schools considering it for their reading program?

Yes	No	Not sure
63%	12%	25%

4. How would you evaluate the quality of the Book Discussion Experience?

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Mean Score
18%	48%	17%	5%	3.02



BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY.

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E-mail: mmessineo@bsu.edu

Sample Passport Incentive Guidelines, cont.

Submitting Your Passport:

First Drawing:

To qualify for the first drawing, bring your passport to the front desk of the Freshman Advising Office or the Learning Center, both located on the 3rd floor of North Quad. If you have 4 events documented, these offices will submit your name to the first round drawing. Winners from the first round are still eligible for second round incentives.

Second Drawing:

Submit your passport with documentation to Melinda Messineo in North Quad 200 by December 5th 5:00pm for the final drawing. If you are submitting your card for course credit you can still submit your card to the final drawing. Please let your instructor know that you would like your name forwarded to freshman connections captains. Your instructor will keep the documentation. Your names will be added to the other eligible names. Good Luck!

Eligible events:

Any event selected by a FC faculty member for class credit purposes is eligible. The faculty member will designate how attendance will be documented.

Any film from the Ball State University film series.

Any residence hall event selected by the teams.

Athletic events (1 per passport)

Dance performances

Art museum lectures.

FALL University Theater Events (Your ticket stub is your documentation)

If you would like to know if an event is eligible, contact Melinda Messineo, mmessineo@bsu.edu.

