

The Winners Take All Community Read gets rave reviews. Families and educators have *always* given it the highest marks on the feedback forms. Families are happily surprised at how much fun they have sharing a book with their “older” children (kids in grades 3-5) Educators love it because it’s a fun, book-centered event.

In a nutshell, everyone reads the books ahead of time and then attends a school sponsored family discussion with the author Fred Bowen.

Below, you will find a timetable for sponsoring the program, helpful templates, and sample announcements and press release.

NOTE: This game plan can be adapted to serve any Community Read with any book and author. Fred lives near Washington DC. You may want to work with an author close to where you live to save on travel cost!

The Winners Take All Community-Read Game Plan

Before you begin

1. Think about the culminating event, which is the school-sponsored family discussion. Some things to consider.
 - Decide whether to supply the books for free to families. If you are going to supply them for free, you may want to seek grant money from local or national organizations.
 - Decide whether to have light refreshments or dinner. Either way works well. Providing dinner requires more planning, which is something to consider before taking the plunge. One school had sandwiches from Subway and litres of soda. Pizza works too.
 - Decorations (and door prizes) for the family discussion are not really needed – the event truly is fun enough— but if you have an enthusiastic PTA that enjoys making events more festive, you may want to contact your PTA.
2. If you would like to consider having the event covered by your local paper or TV station, there is a sample press release at the end.
3. Consider ways to promote the event. Families *always* love the Winners Take All Community Read (truly, no exaggeration) when they attend, but getting them to sign up can take some doing. To pull in as many families as you can, here are some ways to promote the event. (You can pick and choose - they are meant to be helpful, not overwhelming!)
 - Create bookmarks with the date and time of the event (see sample below).

- Get the PTA invested in the event. (It will lighten your tasks and beef up attendance.)
 1. Ask the PTA to help with the evening family discussion event – serving refreshments, checking in families, putting up decorations. Have the PTA assign some “jobs” to dads as a way of encouraging their attendance.
 2. Contact the editor of the PTA newsletter to ask about the deadline. See sample copy on the last page.
 3. Put an announcement (and reminders) on the PTA listserv. See sample copy below.
 4. Ask the PTA president to mention it at the PTA meeting.
- Get teachers onboard. Ask them to remind their classes. There is also a Classroom Guide for teachers who want to read the book aloud to their classes. That’s a long shot for today’s busy teachers, but the guide is on Fred’s website: www.fredbowen.com
- Contact the school website person to put a notice on the website.
- Include the event on the school’s morning announcement. See sample copy on second to last page.
- Announce the event during the children’s media center specials.
- If you have a school newspaper, have a student reporter call Fred Bowen to interview him.

Week one (which begins 5weeks before the family discussion date):

1. Invitation letters go home. See sample below.
2. Order books to have on hand when the registrations come in. Books can be ordered from us. (Contact Peggy Jackson at peggy@fredbowen.com). We will send a box of books to you so that you have books on hand to distribute as orders come. On the evening of the family discussion, you will return the unsold books along with one check made out to Fred Bowen for the books that you sold to families. *Tip: Don’t worry about keeping track of how many books you sell; you can just subtract the unsold books from the total sent to get that figure when you need to.*

Week Two:

1. Collect the registrations, and distribute the books along with confirmation form (it’s in the form of a bookmark that gets tucked in the book). See sample below.
2. If the registrations seem low in number, consider sending home a reminder notice about the event. You may also want to mention it on the morning announcements (see sample announcement below) and when the children come in for their library special.

Week Three – Week Five:

1. Everyone reads the book on his or her own. (Even better: some families will read it aloud together.)

2. Doublecheck about the reservation for the room (gym/cafeteria/library) and confirm the refreshments arrangements (PTA?)

Day of the event:

1. Check the room setup. Is a microphone needed? (Fred's preference is not to use a microphone unless it's truly needed.)
2. Have one check(s) ready for Fred's fee and books sold to families. Make checks to Fred Bowen.
3. Print the Discussion Questions(to help jumpstart the small-group conversations). They are printed below and also available online: Go to: www.fredbowen.com and click "Community Read" in the menu bar and scroll down to the Questions links.

Sample Schedule: 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm

(We can easily accommodate an earlier start time, just let us know.)

- [If you are planning to have dinner, it could be served from 6:30-7:00]
- 7:00 –7:20: Fred talks about why he wrote *Winners Take All*. (It's a very interesting story involving his beloved Boston Red Sox).
- 7:20 – 7:40: Families discuss the book together using the Discussion Questions card on their table to get the conversation going. Fred moves from table to table and joins in the discussions.
- 7:40 – 8: 00: Fred wraps up the evening and invites families to share some of the highlights of their discussions. He also takes questions. This is a very lively and interactive part of the evening.
- 8:00 – 8:30: Fred will sign the children's copies of *Winners Take All*. If you would like to have a book sale and book signing of Fred's other titles, we can arrange that. Just let us know.

Next Page: [Discussion Questions](#)

Then: [Helpful Templates](#)

Then: [sample copy for PTA newsletter, PTA listserv, and morning announcements](#)

Then: [Sample press release](#)

The Winners Take All

Community Read

Jump-Starting the Conversation

Here are some questions to get you thinking and talking tonight.

- What do you think is the worst part of Kyle faking the catch?
- Kyle almost told Claire that he had faked the catch. How do you think Claire would have reacted if he had? How would you have reacted if you were his teammate?
- Would Kyle have ever told the truth if Jason had never discovered the cheating and told Coach Rolfe about it?
- What if nobody believed Jason, and Kyle kept his cheating a secret?
- Honsey is a pretty cool grandmother. How did her baseball stories change the way Kyle was thinking?
- The Cubs players, coaches, and fans yell at the umpire when he rules against them and they lose the game. What do you think the umpire is thinking when everyone is yelling at him?
- Playing to win is exciting. And winning a tight game is especially thrilling. But did Kyle want to win too much? Is that possible?
- How does this famous expression apply to Kyle: Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive?

Sample invitation form

School Letterhead

Dear [YOUR SCHOOL] families:

We want to invite you to be part of a really cool reading experience: The Winners Take All Community Read.

Kids and grownups will read *Winners Take All* by Fred Bowen ahead of time and then come together for a Family Discussion Event at [YOUR SCHOOL on, DAY, DATE, at TIME] to talk about the book. The author will be here too! In addition to his sports books, Fred Bowen also writes the weekly sports column for kids in *The Washington Post*.

Winners Take All is a fun-to-read baseball story with lots of suspense to keep *everyone* turning the pages (... or listening to the audiobook). It also raises some tricky kid-sized moral dilemmas to get everyone thinking and talking.

How do you sign up for The Winners Take All Community Read? Just fill out the coupon below.

Join the **Winners Take All Community Read**

Yes, we want to sign up. We will read *Winners Take All* by Fred Bowen and attend the Family Discussion Event at [YOUR SCHOOL on DAY, DATE, at TIME]. Return this form by [DEADLINE].

Child's name _____

Grownup(s) name(s) _____
(Grownups read the book, too!)

Grownup's email address _____

Check one:

We will get the book on our own.

We need to have a free book provided by the school

We would like to purchase *Winners Take All* from the school. Enclose \$5 for each book.
Make check to [YOUR SCHOOL].

We would like to purchase a CD audiobook(s) read by the author. Enclose \$10 for each one.
Make check to [YOUR SCHOOL]. (The audiobook is a great way for families to listen together in car or at home).

Books will be sent home with the children.

[See next page for sample confirmation notice](#)

Confirmation notice.

The confirmation notice is in the form of a bookmark that is tucked inside the books that the children order (or given to the children who get the books on their own). Here is a sample bookmark.

You're on the Team!

See you at the
Winners Take All
Family Discussion

with author Fred Bowen!

at

Your School
Day,
Date,
Time

For
3rd, 4th and 5th graders
and
the grownups
who love them!

Read the book
(grownups, too!)
and be read to talk!

Bring your copy of the book
for the author to sign.

We will have his
other books for sale
and he will sign them too!

Sample copy for announcement in PTA listserv:

We have a really cool reading event coming up: The Winners Take All Community Read with author Fred Bowen. It's based on his book *Winners Take All*, which is a really suspenseful baseball story that boys and girls (dads and moms too!) love. Families read the book ahead of time and then come to **SCHOOL** on **DATE** at **TIME** to talk about it with the author. Fred Bowen is a lively and entertaining speaker. He will get you thinking and laughing. But most important, this is an incredible chance for your child and you to read a book and then talk to the author about it. To order a book and sign up for the family discussion, contact: PERSON AND EMAIL.

Sample copy for morning announcements at school:

Hey, have you ever read a book and wish you could talk to the author? Now you can. Read the really cool book *Winners Take All* and come to **SCHOOL** on **DATE** at **TIME** to talk with the author Fred Bowen. Yes, that's right. He will be right here at **SCHOOL**. Ask PERSON how you can sign up!

See next page for sample announcement for the PTA newsletter

Sample copy for announcement in PTA Newsletter:

Winners Take All Community Read

For 3rd, 4th and 5th grade families



If you have a child in the third, fourth or fifth grade, consider signing up for The Winners Take All Community Read. It's a chance to share a really cool reading experience with your child and other [Your School] families. It's also a unique opportunity to discuss a book with its author. Just read *Winners Take All* and come to [Your School] for the family discussion event on [Day, Date, at Time]. The author, Fred Bowen, will be there.

Winners Take All is a suspenseful baseball story about a good kid who gets tangled up in a cheating scandal. It's a lot of fun to read – you always want to know what's going to happen next — and a lot of fun to discuss!

Yes, we will read *Winners Take All* and attend the family discussion event with author Fred Bowen at [Your School on Day, Date, at Time].

Child's name _____

Grownup(s) name(s) _____; email: _____
(Grownups read the book, too!)

Check one:

We need to have a free book provided by the school

We would like to purchase a book. Enclose \$5 for each book. Make check to [Your School].

We would like to purchase a CD audiobook read by the author. Enclose \$10* for each. Make check to [Your school]

We will get the book on our own.

Books will be sent home with the children.

See next page for sample press release.

Sample press release to let local media know about your event and possibly send a reporter to cover it.

School Letterhead

Contact:
[Your Name
Your School
Address
Phone Number]

A Novel Way to Get Families Talking About Important Issues in Kids' Sports (and Life)

[YOUR SCHOOL] has found a fun way to get kids and grownups to slow down and talk together about big issues in the sports they play and the lives they lead. Students and parents will gather at the school on [DAY, DATE, at TIME] for a discussion the book *Winners Take All* by Fred Bowen. The author, who also writes the Thursday sports column on the KidsPost page of *The Washington Post*, will be there too. He's a dynamic speaker who passionately believes that sports is great hook to get kids reading and thinking.

We hope you will consider covering the event.

Winners Take All is a baseball story about a good kid who gets tangled up in a cheating scandal. The story raises interesting issues about keeping secrets, making excuses, and trying to do the right thing. It always triggers a lively discussion between kids and grownups.