

# BookSpeak™

## **The parents' book club devised by award-winning author Krista Bell**

As the author of twenty one titles for young readers, and with almost thirty years experience in the book world, including fifteen years as an ABC Radio book reviewer, Krista travels extensively around Australia visiting schools, giving talks and writing workshops to students, teachers and parents.

From her travels Krista became aware not only how keen teachers and librarians are to promote literacy, but how restricted they are by school budgets, so she devised an innovative solution: BookSpeak, a school-based book club for parents to read and discuss the books that are available for young readers with the aim of nurturing a reading culture both at school and at home.

Krista believes that many parents are out of touch with what's available for their children to read and have no idea what their child should be reading, could be reading, and, in some cases, whether they are actually reading for pleasure, or are only reading the required texts.

BookSpeak is a book group for parents which is based in school libraries and aims to foster the reading culture both at school and at home, so that parents can knowledgeably discuss books with their children. An added bonus is that, because it uses pre-existing school library facilities, BookSpeak doesn't require an additional budget.

Krista's concept involves the school librarian, head of English, or enthusiastic class teacher co-ordinating BookSpeak as an informal gathering, inviting parents to come along twice a term to share news and reviews of books for young people in a friendly, supportive environment: their child's school library.

Ideally, the group should be led by an in-house expert who works with the books and the students, knows the library stock and can identify which books the students currently enjoy. The books discussed should be a mix of literary and popular titles, traditional and modern classics, new and backlist titles, and be suggested by both staff and parents.

The structure of BookSpeak is based on the adult book club scenario and the only on-going cost involved would be if the school would like to provide supper, but that's not mandatory. It's not a food and wine club, and it's not a literary competition. The emphasis should be on parents enjoying spending quality time with other parents from their school community, with the advancement of their children's literacy as their common interest. Through BookSpeak parents can borrow and read the books that are available to their children, then share ideas about those books with their peers, as well as benefiting from the expert guidance of the teaching staff.

In time, by being part of their own BookSpeak group, the parents will come to know what books are available to their children through their school library and through bookshops, what books are appropriate for each individual child, what books students

are reading, as well as what books they could read, rather than what books they should be reading.

BookSpeak is not prescriptive, but rather an informative, empowering forum, which will give parents a broad literary knowledge as they become familiar with a wide variety of authors and titles of books for young people. As a natural flow-on, parents will be able to confidently model reading at home as well as enjoy casual discussions about children's books and adolescent literature with the most important people in this whole scenario, their young readers.

To facilitate your setting up BookSpeak group in your school, there is a Starter Kit available for \$25 + GST which outlines the aims and benefits of the program, the suggested format of the sessions, and provides some useful hints and resources to ensure your success.

If you'd like to learn more about BookSpeak and how it can be implemented in your school, please contact Krista directly via email: [krista@kristabell.com](mailto:krista@kristabell.com) or phone Melbourne literature consultant and booking agent Bronwen Bennett at Show and Tell on 1300 732 339 or email Bronwen at [bronwen@showtell.com.au](mailto:bronwen@showtell.com.au)