

Second graders say reading together is more fun

If they must read over the summer, they may as well read together.

So thought Paige Wilkinson, an Immaculate Conception School, Towson, second-grader who created the idea to begin a book club with her classmates, much like the one in which she watches her mother participate.

Immaculate Conception's requirement for second-graders is to read three books during the summer and write one book report.

Lined up on two chocolate-colored sofas at the home of the Sudanos, 10 sets of flip-flopped feet stuck straight off the couch, too short to touch the floor, as the second summer book club meeting commenced.

The girls' high-pitched voices recited the Hail Mary, and alternately read aloud special intentions: "Dear God, thank you for the gift of reading ... for friends ... books ... moms and dads ... and bless us in second grade."

Mae Wilkinson, Paige's mom, facilitated the discussion, centered around two titles: "Junie B. Jones Loves Handsome Warren" and "Winter of the Ice Wizard." Her handmade poster portrayed how a manuscript is broken down into character, setting, plot, predicament, conflict and resolution.

"It's fun," said Libby Sudano, "because all our friends are here and we read a lot of books."

Dressed in colorful summer clothes with bright headbands, each girl held an identical blue folder with colorful stickers spelling their first names on the front. Their number two pencils scribbled notes as they listened to Mrs. Wilkinson.

Some moms looked on from the kitchen: Jennifer Caine, Kate Sudano, Theresa Volpe and Laura McMillen; the last two participate in book clubs monthly with groups of girlfriends.

"She likes the social aspect of it," said Mrs. Volpe of her daughter Elizabeth. She had to explain to her daughter how a book club can help her to better understand books.

"She's more excited about doing the reading, because everyone else is reading it, too," Mrs. Volpe said.

As a group, the second-graders select the books.

Madison Dorn thought a book club was all about strictly "reading a lot of books, but not talking about it." Now she knows different and likes it "because we're reading a lot of fun books and we're together."

The book club will continue in the fall with moms and daughters both reading children's classics such as "Little Women," "Heidi," and "Charlotte's Web."

The 12-member group includes: Maggie Caine, Madison Dorn, Alexandra Fava, Kaitlyn Hunsinger, Kristina Lysik, Meredith McMillen, Sarah Oliver, Molly Ridgely, Sarah Sudano, Libby Sudano, Elizabeth Volpe, and Paige Wilkinson.

"It's a great idea," said Mrs. Wilkinson, "because it keeps kids reading. They might not want to later. They want to do everything at this age. This is perfect."