

# FREE-RANGE *Kids* DISCUSSION GUIDE

Welcome, educators! Thank you for thinking about what “Free-Range” means for teachers, students and schools.

When kids are trusted to do some things on their own – including plain old play – they discover their interests, make friends, solve problems. Independence turns the key in the ignition. Let Grow, the non-profit that grew out of Free-Range Kids, is dedicated to making all that happen.

As for this guide, you can – obviously – pick just a few questions, or meet over and over and OVER to chew on every last one. Discuss in small groups, a big group – heck, who am I talking to? You do this all the time. So jump in, start talking, and enjoy!

I’d love to hear your insights and ideas!

– Lenore ( [Lenore@LetGrow.org](mailto:Lenore@LetGrow.org) )

## DISCUSS!

- In one or two words, describe the impact of the book on you.
- What did you LOVE doing as a kid...that you don’t see kids doing today?
- What did you get out of “just playing”?
- Do you remember a time something went wrong when you were a kid and your parents weren’t around? How did you deal?
- Think back on a time you felt incredibly competent and proud as a kid. Were you with an adult?
- Does it help or hinder students to treat them as if they are easily hurt?
- Are you doing any tasks for your students that they would probably feel proud to start doing on their own?
- Is there a practice that involves over-protecting or over-helping students that you no longer do? Tell all!

- Have you ever been amazed (in a good way) by what you saw students doing on their own in another classroom, or country? How could you do the same?
- Is there some wise, helpful advice you'd give another educator about how to make students less passive?
- How would you explain to a parent that some free, unstructured time is good for their child?
- The Let Grow Project gives students the assignment, "Go home and do something new on your own." When kids do something independently, especially outside, who do you think changes more: the students or the parents?
- The Let Grow Play Club has schools stay open before or after school for mixed-age free play. What do students get out of playing with kids older or younger than them?
- Does your school want to consider the "Wait till 8<sup>th</sup>" program, where everyone pledges to try to wait till 8<sup>th</sup> grade to give kids a phone?
- What's different about playing a game run by adults and a game that students organize themselves?
- When were you most surprised by a different and wonderful side of a student you had not previously seen?
- Would you want to be an elementary or middle-school student today? Why or why not?
- Would you want to grow up the way today's kids are growing up? Why or why not?
- Has this book already inspired you to take action? Let's hear! (And drop me a line! [Lenore@LetGrow.org](mailto:Lenore@LetGrow.org) )



Has this book — or conversation — inspired you to do something new? Let's hear! Please send me, Lenore, your stories, insights and any new questions you come up with:

[Lenore@LetGrow.org](mailto:Lenore@LetGrow.org)

# TAKE ACTION

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Which of the following Free-Range activities might you do?

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- – Have your class, school, or district do The [Let Grow Project](#). Students get the assignment: “Go home and do something new, on your own. Walk the dog, make a meal, run an errand...” This project breaks the ice of fear in both generations. (One teacher told us that after she had her students do The Project twenty times in a single year, a boy wrote to tell her he was now off his anxiety meds!) Here’s [a 2-minute video](#) of 7<sup>th</sup> graders who did The Project. And here’s [a 3-minute video](#) of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders at a Title 1/high poverty school who did it, too. Download [The Let Grow Project Implementation Guide here](#). (LetGrow.org/Programs) It’s free!
- – Have your school start a [Let Grow Play Club](#): The school stays open before or after school for mixed-age, device-free, loose-parts free play. Adults are present, but they don’t organize the games or solve the spats. They’re more like lifeguards at the beach. Research on The Play Club (published [here](#), and also [here](#) on page 229) found participants developed new empathy, problem-solving, friendship and creativity. Said one of the teachers interviewed: “They take on a whole new level of maturity.” [Download the Play Club Implementation Guide here](#). (LetGrow.org/Programs once again) It’s free, too!
- – Come up with another great idea and send it to me, Lenore. I’ll add it to this guide! [Lenore@LetGrow.org](mailto:Lenore@LetGrow.org).
- Also, please let me know how The Project or Play Club work at your school, and any clever ways you modify them. Most of “my” ideas come from other people – I just share them. We’re all in this together!



Send me your insights and any more questions you  
come up with!

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