



# Motivating Parents and Staff to Attend Family Literacy Events

## *School Library Access Minigrants*

Many families with school aged children are “underserved” library patrons, which means that for various reasons they are not likely to attend school library events or programs. In order to motivate them to come to your event, here are some tips and recommendations:

### Planning and Promotion

- If the school already has a family event planned, such as a STEM night, music performance, etc., you can do something special in the library to help educate parents and caregivers about the importance of having lots of great books at home to read, and how important it is for children to be read aloud to. If there are any slides or handouts from ICfL’s SLA Minigrant Training that you would like to share, please contact Jeannie.
- Consider collaborating with your public library to plan and promote the event and encourage someone from the public library to attend. They can bring library card applications and programs/services information, and they are eligible for ICfL outreach resources such as books for giveaways.
- You don’t need to host a school-wide event; your event could be for a target group, such as preschool parents, or K – 2 parents, etc. You could tack on to a Book Fair and host a “Moms and Muffins,” or “Dads and Donuts.”
- Make your event as comfortable and welcoming as possible, and provide incentives for attending: food, door prizes, etc. Find a “hook” for your target group and use it in promoting the workshop.
- Carefully consider the timing of the event: month, day of week, and time of day. What will work best for your families?
- Consider the needs of your families: childcare, transportation, work schedules, family responsibilities, etc. Is there any way to address these needs in planning your event?
- Make sure you give families plenty of advance notice and put it on every calendar you can. If the parents see the information several times and, in several places, they will be more likely to conclude that the event is important to attend.
- Put reminders in your school’s communication tools, on social media, on the bulletin board, and at least one other postcard, invite, or flyer for “Friday folders” or however your school sends information home.
- Personalize invitations to classes and let them know what the library will be doing for the event. Something like, “The families in Ms. Smith’s class are invited to attend...”
- If possible, do a reminder robo call the day before or the day of your event, or put reminder stickers on children’s shirts or coats.



- It works well to involve the kids-- from displaying their artwork in the library to involving them in a group activity that you can highlight during your event. Include child's first name and age on the art and mat it with construction paper or tagboard frames.



## Family Events

- Costumed book characters seem to always be a big draw for families (see Resources below).
- Bring local “celebrities” on board, such as the school principal, classroom teachers, high school or college athletes, authors/musicians/artists, political figureheads, etc.
- Literacy or Learning Stations: Consider setting up stations for your family event. Begin with a 10-minute Early Literacy Skills introduction, then turn families loose to experiment and interact for 40 minutes or so. If possible, pull everyone back together for 10 minutes at the end to debrief and share experiences. Use a passport or menu card to keep track and offer rewards for completing at least two stations. Or leave stations set up for a week or two and allow families to come back in to complete the passport/menu for prizes.
- Many libraries have called upon teen volunteers to help with the family event. Teens can prepare and facilitate activity stations, man the refreshment table, and other tasks that free the librarian to work with parents.
- Consider partnering with partner, United Way, school district, etc. to host a Ready!™ for Kindergarten workshop: <https://idahoaeyc.org/ready-for-kindergarten>
- Put the emphasis on fun!

## Resources

### ***Planning:***

- **Calendar** - Compare the school library calendar with the school district calendars (Back-to-School/Open House Nights, parent-teacher conferences, holidays, special events), as well as community calendars (athletics, festivals, fairs, holiday celebrations, special events).
- **Location** - If space is not available in the school library, alternative locations could include the school lobby, the gym, hallway space outside the library, or the cafeteria. You could also consider hosting your event at the public library, community centers, and Boys and Girls Clubs.

### ***Promotion:***

#### • **Incentives to attend:**

- **Paperback books**- you can spend up to 20% of your grant funds for this event, including purchasing give away books. If you partner with your public library they may be able to bring some giveaway books as part of ICfL's Outreach to Underserved Children program. <https://libraries.idaho.gov/rtm/underserved-program/>

**Low-cost or free books:** See this link to find other ways to provide free books: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/rtm/underserved-program/> (Under Program Resources)

- **Rewards** from community businesses or organizations

- **Meals/snacks:** PTA/PTO/PTSO, local grocers/restaurants, or the school district.
- **Title One Schools:** If your school is a Title One school there may be funds available to support your event if the focus is specifically on family literacy. Connect with your school principal to discuss this possibility.
- **Costumed Book Characters:** Having a favorite book character at the event has proven to be an effective way to bring families into the library. Costume Specialists, Inc. in Ohio is one company that provides children's book characters on behalf of several publishers. The only cost is second-day air shipping to send the costume to its next event. The company has a great selection of storybook characters. For more information about booking a costume visit [www.costumespecialists.com/index.html](http://www.costumespecialists.com/index.html).



**For your event:**

- **Read to Me's Idaho Family Reading Week:** This is a special week in November each year to celebrate and emphasize the importance of family reading time. Consider hosting your event during this week, or the month of November.

Resources for each year's theme are available on the ICfL website:

<https://libraries.idaho.gov/rtm/idaho-family-reading-week/>. ICfL typically provides books and resources to public and school libraries that register. Registration information is shared on LibIdaho and in the Scoop (see subscription information below).

- **Support Materials:** The ICfL's *Read to Me* program has a wide variety of publications and support materials to distribute to parents and children during your events. Ordering is easy and free: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/rtm/> - select "Free Outreach Materials – Online Order Form" button on the right-hand side of this page.
- **Jump Start Kindergarten:** If you are working with preschool families, you can use this event to participate in RTM's Jumpstart program, in which you can distribute the Jumpstart book, Bingo cards, and more: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/rtm/jumpstart/>
- **Talking Points:** Here are some succinct talking points to share with parents and caregivers at your event: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/rtm/underserved-program/> (Under Program Resources)



**Be in the Know!**

**The Scoop:** Make sure you are signed up to receive ICfL's youth services e-newsletter, *The Scoop*: <https://libraries.idaho.gov/publications/scoop/>

**LibIdaho:** Library listserv for Idaho library staff. ICfL uses this to post resources, funding and program opportunities, dates and deadlines, etc. <http://idaholibraries.org/libidaho>