



# Fundraising Toolkit

for Grants and Business Sponsorships



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# The Grant Writing Process



This section is to help schools create a grant proposal for funding Read to Them's family literacy programs. You will find tips to use before, during, and after writing and submitting your proposal, third-party studies, grant databases, sample proposal language, and sample supportive narrative. Feel free to use and modify the narratives and third-party studies for your grant proposal(s).

## Before the Application

- Reach out to the funder prior to submitting a proposal to establish a relationship and determine whether the project is a potential fit with the funder's priorities.
- If funding range guidelines are not provided, you can determine an appropriate request amount by looking at the funder's giving history on their annual report or on their Form 990, available for free at [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)
- Identify any board members of the funding organization that you know. It is frowned upon to contact board members while an application is under review, but it is permissible to contact them prior to submission.
- Identify project partners who are similarly committed to your work and be prepared to describe them. Collaborative partnerships could strengthen your case for support. Some examples include local literacy-focused nonprofits, public libraries, small businesses.

## During the Application

- Follow all application directions! This may seem simple, but it could be the difference between an award or decline.
- Do not procrastinate. Grant drafts should be prepared well ahead of the deadline to leave time to reach out to the funder in case of questions.
- If the funder has a particular geographic or programmatic focus, describe in detail the ways your program meets their priority areas and the impact on their targeted population.
- Make your evaluation plan clear, manageable, and realistic.
- Apply well ahead of the projected program start date to leave room for the funder's decision-making period. Some funders, for example, require 60+ days between the date of your application and your projected start date.

## After the Application is Submitted

- Follow up with the funder to let them know your proposal was submitted and to contact you with any questions.
- If the proposal is awarded, call to thank the funder and send a personal thank you letter from the school principal or lead administrator.
- Take the award as a chance to build a relationship with the organization/funder(s). Invite them to see the program in action: let them read to a classroom, have students make handmade thank you notes, etc. Creating a relationship with the funder can work in the school's benefits for future programs.
- If the proposal is rejected, follow up with the funder to identify ways to strengthen the proposal for the next application cycle.





# Third Party Studies of Reading Aloud, Achievement Gaps, and Literacy



Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third Grade Reading (2013)

- Importance of reading proficiency by third grade; Study by The Annie E. Casey Foundation  
<http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-EarlyWarningConfirmed-2013.pdf>

The Read-Aloud Handbook by Jim Trelease (2019)

- Book that goes in depth about the importance of reading aloud to children of various ages, backed by research.  
[Purchase here: Available in paperback and eTextbook.](#)

The Rise of Read-Aloud, from Scholastic's The Kids and Family Reading Report (2023)

- Study of reading aloud in families, how it affects children, and how to make it a priority  
<https://www.scholastic.com/readingreport/rise-of-read-aloud.html>

Reading Aloud: Children's Attitudes toward being Read to at Home and at School (2018)

- Study of students' attitudes toward being read aloud to  
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3781&context=ajte>

Read Alouds and Their Impact on Students' Literacy Development (2016)

- A read aloud study done on fourth grade classrooms  
[https://soar.suny.edu/bitstream/handle/20.500.12648/5881/ehd\\_theses/669/fulltext%20%281%29.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://soar.suny.edu/bitstream/handle/20.500.12648/5881/ehd_theses/669/fulltext%20%281%29.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

Access to Print, Low-Income vs. Middle Income Communities: An Ecological Study of Four Neighborhoods (2001)

- Study by Susan B. Neuman about accessibility to age-appropriate books based on income  
<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~sbneuman/pdf/AccessToPrint.pdf>

The Widening Academic Achievement Gap Between the Rich and the Poor (2012)

- Achievement gap in students based on family income  
[https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/CI\\_Summer2012\\_Reardon.pdf](https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/CI_Summer2012_Reardon.pdf)





# Grant Databases



Below are several suggested resources to aid your search for funding:

## Grant Station

- Provides two free newsletters, one of which lists US-based grant opportunities weekly
- Offers courses and webinars on grant writing, acquiring funding, branding, etc.
- Has a subscription service

## Candid

- Has a large database of funders, providing access to foundations without websites and easy contact
- Has different forms of paid subscriptions
- 400 public locations via libraries across the US, free of use

## Candid Foundation Directory Online

- Is the same as Candid, but it requires a paid subscription between \$49.99 - \$199.99 per month
- Has access to over 200k grant opportunities and 224k US foundations

## Grants for US

- Provides funding for different nonprofits, from agriculture to education
- Provides a free email newsletter
- Has a Premium Membership costing \$49.99 annually

## Grant Gopher

- Offers US-based organizations free basic searches/access to details of first 5 search results
- With free registration, you are given access to a free newsletter with open grant opportunities
- Specifically for nonprofits, schools, etc.
- Annual subscription is \$99 a year

## Philanthropy News Digest

- A service of [Candid](#)
- Includes philanthropy news and job postings
- All materials, newsletters, and RFP announcements are accessible for free

## Open Philanthropy

- Dedicated to sharing key information and eliminating barriers between philanthropists and the communities they are aiding
- Free access to grant information, current research and an in-depth look at a number of focus areas in which Open Philanthropy is working

### US Government (USG) Grants

- Best place to find USG grant opportunities
- Free service
- Opportunities posted by 26 federal agencies and 12 independent federal agencies

### United Philanthropy Forum

- Offers access to organizations that are based in grantmaking
- Has free links to United Philanthropy forums/contacts for almost every state
- Membership offers discounts, technical assistance, networking, and more
- Pay based on your operating budget: dues found here

### GrantScope

- Offers access to grant opportunities including over 9,000 active grants with over \$46 billion in total funding available
- Individual grant seekers cost \$29 month/Team cost is \$179 month (subscription info here)

### GrantAdvisor

- Offers access to reviews of individual funders and foundations
- Database is free

### GuideStar

- Offers free information including a database of form 990s
- Free registration and basic access, with possibility for paid upgrade

### Foundation Search

- Offers resources for grants, fundraising education, and grant development services
- Subscribe and contact Foundation Search for a quote (it requires a service fee for use)

### Donors Choose

- Platform for teacher fundraising, free to use
- Provides access to other fundraisers with search tool that enables users to fine tune their searches and/or their posting





## Grant Proposal Language

**Note:** The following pages reference *One School, One Book* as the program described for which funding is sought. If you are seeking funding for an alternate **Read to Them** family literacy program, please substitute the appropriate program name in whatever content you choose to copy, borrow, or include.

### About the Organization and Mission

Founded in Richmond, Virginia in 2004, **Read to Them** partners with schools and districts in all 50 states to promote family literacy. Their literacy programs engage with families, schools, and communities as partners in encouraging children to read and in creating a culture of literacy in every community.

*One School, One Book* is a multi-week, school-wide reading event, where students and their families, faculty, and staff read the same book together. The school hosts a kick-off assembly to build excitement among students to participate. Each student, teacher, and staff member receives a copy of the title, chosen by the school. The principal invites parents to read the book aloud to their children for at least 15 minutes every night. Teachers integrate the content of the book into their lesson plans through skits, book-themed activities, trivia questions, and a variety of other materials, all created by **Read to Them**.

### Program Description (Use the highlighted blue text to personalize)

The *One School, One Book* program is packaged for easy implementation. Schools can select vetted titles, use tailored resource packets for parents and educators, and choose supplemental activities to reinforce the content of the book.

(Your School) will buy the *One School, One Book* program books and resources from **Read to Them**. When the books are received, (Your School) will distribute a copy of the book to each child, as well as faculty, administration, and staff. (Your Principal) will invite parents to participate by reading the book aloud with their children for 15 minutes every night. Students will take home their copy of the book along with a reading schedule to follow along. All program participants – students, families, faculty, and staff – will read along at the same pace, with supplemental school and community activities reinforcing the content of the book.

### Now is the time to give school-specific information describing:

- Specific plans for implementing the program at your school (i.e., trivia boxes to collect student answers, daily classroom readings, video and/or audio of chapters, activities, etc.)
- Why this program is important for your school (See SAMPLE NARRATIVE: WHY ONE SCHOOL, ONE BOOK?)
- Any potential collaborations with businesses, nonprofits, and/or other area schools
- How you plan to keep the families and/or community involved
- Community leaders you plan to have support the program (i.e. City Mayor, City Council, Fire Department, Community Influencers, etc.)



## Narrative: Why One School, One Book?

The premise of the **One School, One Book** program is to get families involved with student reading. Programs that engage families in supporting their children’s learning at home are linked to higher student achievement.<sup>1</sup> Benefits include higher grade point averages, improved attendance, and better social skills and adaptation to school. In short, children with strong family involvement stay in school longer, perform better, and enjoy it more.

All students, from Kindergarten to 5th (or 6th grade), will spend between two and four weeks reading the same title, on the provided reading schedule with their families. Families will be encouraged to read at least 15 minutes a night. From the 15 minutes of nightly reading, students are more likely to have:

- A positive attitude and desire to read
- An increased vocabulary (for speaking, reading, and writing)
- A reading role model
- A positive bond with caregivers

As students get older, reading aloud often stops in the home. However, there is value in reading aloud to all children from lower to intermediate grades. When younger students (in grades K-2) are read to, they are exposed to new and expansive stories, topics, vocabulary, and characters. When intermediate students (grades 3-5 or 6) are read to, they are exposed to the rules of grammar, structures of writing, and complex stories to improve reading. For all grades, students who are read aloud to are constantly improving their literacy skills.

**One School, One Book** will surround students with a culture of literacy. By having families, teachers, school faculty, and administration participate in reading together, the importance of literacy is exhibited. Through reading together, students gain a positive influence of reading and books, making it more likely for students to continue their literacy journey and keep their skills proficient.

### **Specified Topics to Expand on if it Applies to Your School:**

- If you have a high student poverty rate (you can discuss correlation of literacy, poverty, and high school graduation rates)
- If a majority of your student qualify for free or reduced lunch (you can discuss correlation of literacy, poverty, and high school graduation rates)
- If there is any community involvement (collaborative efforts and community involvement are favored by funders)
- If there is a low proficiency rate in literacy for your school or district (reading together with families and aloud improves literacy skills)
- If family involvement is low (the premise of **One School, One Book** is to get families involved)

A few third-party studies are available for research use on page 4.

<sup>1</sup> The Annie E. Casey Foundation. “Early Warning Confirmed: A Research Update on Third-Grade Reading.” Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013. Accessed Feb 5, 2018. <http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-EarlyWarningConfirmed-2013.pdf>.



# Evaluation

**Read to Them** currently does not offer a parent/family survey for the **One School, One Book** program. However, if you receive funding for your proposal, funders may have a requirement to show the effects of the program. The best way to measure this is to send home a survey with your students for parents to fill out or create an online survey through a free platform (such as Google Forms). You can find sample parent survey questions below. Make sure when you make your family survey, it is personalized to your school.

Additionally, please feel free to share any data you find for your school with **Read to Them**.



## Family Survey Questions

Child(ren)'s Grade(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Classroom(s): \_\_\_\_\_

1. What was the frequency of your participation in **One School, One Book**?
  - Daily
  - Every other day
  - At least once a week
  - We could not participate at this time
2. Did you read with your child(ren) for 15 minutes per night?
  - We read for more than 15 minutes per night.
  - We read for about 15 minutes per night.
  - We read, but for less than 15 minutes per night.
  - We started the book, but we did not finish it.
  - We did not read at all.
3. What impact did **One School, One Book** have on your child's attitude towards reading?
  - Great impact – I saw a big change.
  - Good impact – I saw an improvement.
  - Some impact – I saw a slight improvement.
  - No impact – My child's attitude did not change.
4. How would you rate the resources for the **One School, One Book** program? \_\_\_\_\_

1	2	3	4
Needs Improvement	Fair	Good	Excellent
5. Will you read more books at home with your child(ren) after participating in the **One School, One Book** program?
  - Yes
  - Maybe
  - No I don't know

6. My child was exposed to a new topic or author during **One School, One Book**.

Yes  No

If yes, please share what that topic was: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Would you take part in another program like **One School, One Book**?

Yes  No

8. Would you like to share anything about your experience with **One School, One Book**?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Will you read more books at home with your child(ren) after participating in the **One School, One Book** program?

Yes  Maybe  No I don't know

10. My child was exposed to a new topic or author during **One School, One Book**.

Yes  No

If yes, please share what that topic was: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Would you take part in another program like **One School, One Book**?

Yes  No

12. Would you like to share anything about your experience with **One School, One Book**?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Business Sponsorships



Local businesses have a vested interest in sponsoring a read aloud event at an elementary school in their community. On the surface, reading aloud to children helps to develop their literacy skills and to instill a love of literature, which has a direct correlation to long-term academic achievement. This creates an educated, productive community that can contribute efficiently to the workplace and in life.

In addition to nourishing a love of learning, sponsoring a read aloud event is an opportunity for a local business to demonstrate its commitment to the community. It can also serve as an effective marketing technique that will draw the attention of current and potential customers. When a business sponsors a positive community event, it is showing its commitment to fostering relationships with the residents, and it is seen as a reliable source for products or services.

Finally, local businesses can receive a significant tax write-off when sponsoring read aloud events at schools. Tax deductions make it financially sensible for local business owners to support community events, particularly when it involves activities to help school-aged children.

Besides giving back to their communities, banks especially appreciate the chance to sponsor reading events when school select books that contain financial literacy. Supporting financial literacy in the community help banks meet Community Reinvestment Act requirements along with gaining service hours by partnering with their local schools to help teach literacy skills to students. Beyond the sponsorship itself, banks can decide how much more they want or can be involved with the program.

It is for these reasons that local businesses should consider sponsoring a read aloud event at a community elementary school. This type of event will encourage the nurturing of literacy skills, demonstrate a commitment to the community, gain the attention of customers, and provide a financial benefit in terms of reduced tax liability.

While many locally-owned businesses have an interest in supporting their local schools, don't forget to approach some of the national chains that have a presence in your community. For instance, Dollar General offers grant dollars to local nonprofits and schools that specifically provide youth literacy and summer reading programs. See the following pages on their website:

- <https://www.dgliteracy.org/grant-programs/?#youth-literacy-grants>
- <https://www.dgliteracy.org/grant-programs/?#summer-reading>
- <https://www.dgliteracy.org/faqs/>

The following provides sample language for a letter you can write to local businesses. You may find that speaking directly with the owner or manager and leaving your letter for reference increases your success in receiving a donation versus just sending your letter in the mail.



## A Letter to Local Businesses

Dear [Name of Business],

We are writing to invite [Name of Business] to partner with [Name of Elementary School] in a read aloud event called One School, One Book held at our school and in homes throughout our community. This event is intended to celebrate reading by having both members of the community as well as students and their families reading the same book at the same time.

This event will provide our students with a unique experience that will not only bring the community into the classroom but will also inspire our students to think more deeply about the books they are reading and the world around them. By having members of the community participate in our reading event, we can cultivate a strong sense of togetherness and provide our students with a powerful and memorable learning experience.

**ONLY USE THE BLUE TEXT if your book contains the theme of financial literacy. Consider adding the following paragraph to letters sent to local, community banks:**

Besides giving back to their communities, banks appreciate using the **One School, One Book** sponsorship to meet Community Reinvestment Act requirements along with gaining service hours by partnering with their local schools to help teach literacy skills to students. Beyond the sponsorship itself, banks can decide how much more they want or can be involved with the program.

In return for [Name of Business]'s participation, we will be able to recognize your organization as a sponsor on promotional materials and social media posts leading up to the event. Additionally, this can be used to boost recognition of your business and show our community the impact your organization is having on childhood literacy.

We look forward to hearing back from you and discussing the possibility of [Name of Business] sponsoring our read aloud event. If you have any questions at all, please feel free to reach out to me directly.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]  
[Your Role in the School]