



READING IS LEADING HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

As members of Mortar Board, you will plan and participate in different activities that will benefit your campus and community. In the past, the National Conference has chosen a national project to last two years. However, in 2002, the conference delegates elected to have a permanent national project and chose "Reading is Leading". Thus, each chapter is asked to focus at least one project on promoting literacy. This guide has ideas and resources for your use, including project and fundraising ideas, and helpful Web sites. Best of luck with your "Reading is Leading" projects!

CALENDAR

July - National Conference

- Meet with section coordinator to discuss and review "Reading is Leading" materials.
- Brainstorm possible project ideas with other delegates at conference.

August/September - First Chapter Meeting

- Appoint a member/members to chair/co-chair a committee to research and implement at least one "Reading is Leading" project during the school year.
- Inform the committee of grants available from the National Foundation for "Reading is Leading" projects.

October

- The deadline to apply for a chapter project grant from the National Foundation is October 15.
- For more information about the process and the application, please visit www.mortarboard.org

February - Mortar Board Week

- Mortar Board Week is held in conjunction with the organization's anniversary, February 15.
- To celebrate the event, schedule an activity to gain recognition on campus and begin the membership drive for the coming year.

April

- Send a summary of your "Reading is Leading" projects to your section coordinator. Be sure to include information about whom the activity benefited, how many members participated, and the total number of volunteer hours.
- Begin composing information that would be helpful to next year's chapter for future "Reading is Leading" projects.

April/May

- Prepare a display promoting the projects your chapter has done during the year for the national conference.
- Once new member initiation is completed, share information about "Reading is Leading" with the new chapter. Pass along information regarding which projects worked well, who the community sponsors were, and what facilities you used.

Yearlong

- Throughout the year submit pictures and stories from "Reading is Leading" projects to the National Office for the Web site and publications. Please include pictures and do not exceed 300 words in your summary.
- Enhance your chapter Web site with pictures and stories of your "Reading is Leading" contributions.

THE ISSUE

How often do you depend on your ability to read? What would our lives be like if we were never taught vowels, consonants, and how they all fit together? Would you be a college student or a Mortar Board member? Forty-four million adults in the United States have a difficult time reading or cannot read at all. This statistic showcases the problem of illiteracy in the nation. Literacy issues and initiatives vary across the nation, giving Mortar Board many opportunities to make a difference.

GETTING STARTED

Determining where or how to fight illiteracy in your community is not an easy task. Your fellow Mortar Board members have many talents that will be useful in "Reading is Leading" projects. Appointing a specific member to organize activities and projects is a valuable asset. Serving your community through literacy activities benefits everyone. Make sure each activity your chapter sponsors is well advertised to maximize results and to improve your chapter's visibility on campus.

Read-a-Thons

Campus and community leaders, professionals, athletes and celebrities donate their time and voice for a day of reading. You will need a public venue in which to hold the event, chapter members to work the event, volunteers willing to donate half an hour of their time to read out loud to an audience, and materials to be read. These materials could be a favorite of the reader's or chosen for the audience. The purpose could also be used to increase literacy awareness or as a fund-raiser.

Book Drives

Collecting books is much like collecting canned goods. You will need chapter members to collect books, a venue in which to hold the collection, and an organization to receive the books. Past chapters have found success by distributing fliers door to door stating that they will be collecting books. If the household has any that they would like to donate, they may leave them near the front porch in a grocery bag on a specified date. Consider challenging other Mortar Board chapters or other student organizations to a friendly competition to see who can collect the most books.

Trick-or-Treat for Books

This seasonal event works much like a book drive. You will need chapter members willing to dress in Halloween costumes to trick-or-treat for books. Again, distribute fliers door-to-door saying you will be collecting books on a specific evening dressed in Halloween attire. This is best done a week before traditional Halloween trick-or-treat to minimize confusion.

Adopt-a-School

Partnering with a local school is an excellent way to find volunteer opportunities for all chapter members. Contact local schools to see what volunteer opportunities are available and what best fits your chapter's talents and schedules. Work with schools to create literacy projects if none exist.

Children's Hospital Reading

It is very easy for children in long-term hospital care to fall behind in their studies and literacy skills. Most local health care facilities welcome volunteers to visit and read with pediatric patients. Contact your local hospital's volunteer coordinator for available opportunities.

Functional Literacy Workshops

Have you had trouble reading a bus schedule, comprehending a map, or understanding a complex government form? Millions of Americans have, especially those for whom English is a second language. Many community centers have workshops and programs to teach people these skills and other basic forms of functional literacy. These programs are always looking for volunteers and resources. Contact the local community center or your school's international student center for volunteer opportunities.

Lobbying Congress

Literacy organizations are suffering from the budget crunch and need more voices speaking on their behalf. Organize your chapter and other campus groups to start a letter writing campaign to state and national legislatures. Different national organizations offer help with this. Learn more about national literacy organizations on page 6.

Reading in Nursing Homes or Senior Centers

Take as many members as you can to a local nursing home or senior center and spend the day reading to the elderly.

Book Festivals

When one children's book or author has become very popular with children and their parents, you might consider organizing a festival to celebrate this book or author. Your festival can be held at a specific school or other local organization, or you can open it to the public. Think about games that the children can play or crafts they can make and prizes that can be won. You may also want to check with local bookstores to see if they will donate copies of this book for you to distribute to the children.

PROJECT EXAMPLES

Here is a list of fun and creative "Reading is Leading" projects that some chapters have had success with in the past:

- Mississippi College assisted inmates with selecting a book to be read to their children. The members then recorded the inmate reading the book, and both the book and recording were given to the children at Christmas.
- Otterbein College held a bake sale and used the money to buy books for Children's Hospital.
- The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire created Velcro books to be given to children with special needs.
- Wichita State University held a contest in which elementary students designed a poster based on their favorite book.
- Stephens College held a "Poems and Pets" project in which they took pets from an animal shelter to a nursing home and read poetry to the residents.
- Southern Nazarene University listened to kids read at a special needs school.
- Baylor University members volunteer weekly to teach Spanish-speaking Baylor housekeeping staff English.
- The University of Arizona helped local Sudanese refugees learn English.
- Colorado State University held a fund-raiser to benefit a library in Nicaragua.
- The University of Oregon members formed a reading circle at a local bookstore in which they read to children for free.
- University of the Pacific purchased and donated bilingual books to ESL children and families.
- University of Pittsburgh read to children at a local school for the blind.
- Knox College held a book drive to benefit a prison.

FUNDRAISING IDEAS

A lot can be accomplished with time, effort, and determination, but sometimes money is a factor in carrying out a "Reading is Leading" project. For each fund-raiser your chapter holds, be sure to advertise throughout the campus and local communities. Also, be sure to advertise exactly how the funds raised will be used. Here are some fundraising ideas:

Car Wash

During the warmer parts of the year, find a store manager that will allow you to hold a car wash in the parking lot of his/her store. You will need to provide buckets, towels, sponges, soap, etc. Be sure to advertise this event well, and choose a back-up date in case of bad weather.

50-50 Raffles

Holding a 50-50 raffle is a great way to raise money and reward some lucky individual. Choose a popular, well-attended event at which to hold your raffle. You will need a roll of tickets, chapter members to sell tickets, and a container in which to hold the ticket stubs. When the time comes, choose one winning ticket out of your container, and notify the owner of that ticket.

Karaoke Night

Hold a karaoke night on your campus. Borrow or rent sound equipment or find a DJ to play music for you. Set an admission price (we suggest \$5) for each person to pay upon entering. Also, find grocery stores or individuals to donate snacks and soft drinks to be served.

Care Packages

We all know how overwhelming finals can be. Why not create care packages for parents to send to their students? Find donations of candy, fruit, other snack foods, or goofy toys to be placed in the care package, or buy these items in bulk. These items should be appropriate for men and women. Send information to parents describing different packages, outlining contents and price. You may also wish to include a small and simple greeting card for the parents to sign to be included with the package. You may consider partnering with a commercial company that creates care packages for fundraisers.

Gift Wrapping

This event is especially effective during the holiday season. Collect gift wrapping supplies such as wrapping paper, boxes, tape, and ribbons or bows, or have them donated. Find a store that will allow you to spend an afternoon/day wrapping gifts for customers. Have each person give you a donation, or charge a set price for each package, depending on its size. You can also make this a "Reading is Leading" project. Bring as many members as possible to the event, have half of them wrap the gifts, and the other half read to the children who are out shopping with their parents.

Guessing games

We have all tried to guess how many objects are in a jar. Why not set up a similar activity on your own campus? Find a large jar or other clear, large container; choose something to fill it with (be sure to count the objects before placing them in the jar). Have each person who wants to guess pay a set amount of money. The person whose guess was closest to the actual number of items in the jar wins the jar or some other announced prize.

Restaurant Take-Over

Some restaurants allow groups to come in and “take over” for an evening in exchange of a certain percentage of the profits and all of the tips. Have members work as servers, bussers, and dishwashers, etc. for the cause. This works best in small restaurants.

Yard Sales

Collect unwanted items from the community and hold your own public yard sale. Be sure to advertise this event well, and consider holding it indoors in case of bad weather.

President-for-a-Day Contest

We have all wondered exactly what a university/college president does in his/her daily work. Why not give a lucky member of the student body a chance to find out by stepping into the president’s shoes for the day? You will need to contact the president’s office (if the president is unavailable, consider the provost or athletic director) to see if they will participate. Once you have their support, begin selling raffle tickets (in some states raffles are illegal, please research your state laws). Ask each chapter member to sell ten tickets, and publicize that the lucky winner will spend a day “working” with the president.

Sales

Try a twist on the traditional bake sale. Pick a popular spot on campus and sell an unexpected item. In the fall, grill hot dogs, in the spring, tempt students with Popsicles. There are always the tried and true favorites like candy and flower sales. Consider contacting your athletic department to see about staffing a concession stand for ball games in exchange for a percentage of the sales profit.

5K Run

On your mark, get set, go! Organize a 5K run open to students and community members. Although this event will require detailed planning and organizational work, it is a popular event that could become a yearly favorite. You will need a clear course route that has been approved by campus police, chapter members to staff the event, a line judge, and trophies or medals for the award winners. If possible, find local businesses willing to sponsor the event to help offset costs and provide t-shirts to the runners. Other possible sports activities could include 3-on-3 basketball tournaments, volleyball matches and golf scrambles. Contact your athletic department to ask if they will loan the athletic equipment needed and provide you with their support.

Student Auctions

Who would not enjoy having a personal assistant, even if it were only for an hour or two? Recruit chapter members, student leaders and other high profile students to volunteer a few hours of their free time for the cause. You will need a public venue to hold the auction, a set of agreed upon ground rules for what the person will and will not do, an emcee and chapter members to staff the event.

ADVERTISING

Now that you have everything in place for a successful project, it is time to notify the media. Publicity for your community service project is a way to reward your members and is beneficial for recruiting new members in the spring. Public service announcements should be sent to area radio and television stations; the wording needs to be precise. The fact

sheet can accompany both the news release and the PSA to provide background information. Compose a media guide for your Mortar Board chapter to use all year, include the name of the paper or radio station, the phone and fax numbers, and the name of a contact person. When writing news releases and PSAs, consider who your audience is and what you want to tell them. The most important information, such as time, date, and place of the event, need to be in the first paragraph.

The National Office is interested in your accomplishments. Be sure to send your news releases, photos, and a 300-word summary of the event to be placed in Mortar Board publications. Also include detailed accounts of “Reading is Leading” projects in your Chapter Annual Report, due May 15.

MORTAR BOARD WEEK

Each year Mortar Board celebrates its founding date of February 15, 1918. Planning a “Reading is Leading” activity to celebrate the anniversary is a great way to gain recognition on campus and begin the new membership drive. A week before the scheduled activity, prepare and send a news release and fact sheet to local newspapers. Include information about Mortar Board’s national project and the organization’s history. Also include who is eligible for selection, your chapter’s application timeline, and whom potential members should contact if the timing is right for your membership drive.

ALUMNI

Great resources right at your fingertips are the many Mortar Board alumni. There are active alumni chapters throughout the country. If there is an alumni group in your area, consider asking them to join you for an activity. You can contact the National Office for information about alumni chapters or alumni in your area. Alumni information can also be found on Mortar Board’s Web site.

TRANSITION

The experience you have gained from your year as a Mortar Board member is a wealth of knowledge that incoming members will need to know. Keep a record of what worked and what did not work for your campus and community, contacts you made, local organizations in need of volunteers, and the best ways to organize your members. This information is vital to a smooth transition of membership. Prepare all information pertaining to “Reading is Leading” for the incoming chapter. Make sure to include this in the installation of chapter officers after initiation has taken place.

PARTNERSHIPS

Better World Books

Have you had a textbook that the bookstore would not buy from you at the end of the year? That one textbook that you no longer need can be used to support literacy initiatives locally, nationally, and around the world. Better World Books collects unwanted textbooks by recruiting student groups to hold book drives on their campuses.

Better World Books supports literacy by selling these books online at or donating them directly to their partner organizations. Books that cannot be sold or donated are recycled.

Better World Books employs Regional Directors who assist student groups with their book drives. Your Regional Director will attend one of your chapter meetings, help you organize your book drive, and provide you with all materials needed to run a successful book drive. Better World Books will even cover the cost of the shipping!

Mortar Board is a partner of Better World Books in an effort to expand “Reading is Leading” and all chapters are encouraged to consider holding a book drive with Better World Books. This partnership allows Mortar Board chapters to receive \$.50 for every qualifying book that is collected in their drives. Each chapter may choose how to use this money.

Many of the books collected in your book drive will be considered “qualifying books.” These books generally include:

- College textbooks and study guides with all pages intact and that are no more than five years old
- Any book used in a college class
- Workbooks with all pages intact
- Books that cover college subject matter

Your chapter may also choose which partner of Better World Books you would like to benefit. These partners are:

- *Books For Africa* collects, sorts, ships, and distributes books to children in Africa. Better World Books has become the single largest source of funding for Books For Africa and their largest source of post-secondary books.
- *Room to Read* builds schools, libraries, computer and language labs; funds long-term scholarships for girls; and publishes local language children’s books.
- *National Center for Family Literacy’s* mission is to help all U.S. families gain the literacy skills needed to survive in a constantly changing world. NCFL works with family literacy programs across the country to provide materials and training to people most in need.
- *The World Education and Development Fund* (a.k.a. Worldfund) is an organization dedicated to reducing poverty in Latin America by supporting high-quality education for impoverished children.

First Book

First Book is a non-profit organization with a single mission: to give children from low-income families the opportunity to read and own their first new books. Through hundreds of local advisory boards, the First Book National Book Bank, and the First Book Marketplace, the organization provides an ongoing supply of new books to children participating in community-based mentoring, tutoring and family literacy programs. First Book has provided more than 50 million new books to children in need in thousands of communities nationwide.

Mortar Board chapters can collaborate with First Book by starting a new First Book Campus Advisory Boards or partnering with an existing board at their college or university, holding fundraisers to benefit First Book local or national efforts, and by identifying worthy programs in their own community and encouraging them to register for First Book resources. Mortar Board chapters may also be eligible to purchase books from the First Book Marketplace for their “Reading is Leading” projects. By working with First Book, Mortar Board chapters can play a critical role in enhancing the quality of literacy programs nationwide.

NATIONAL LITERACY ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to First Book and Better World Books, there are many other national organizations that have volunteer opportunities available or have activity ideas specifically for different regions of the nation. Take the time to visit their Web sites to see what activities you can volunteer for in your region.

Doctors for Orphans

Doctors for Orphans formed in 1999 as a high accountability organization: 99 percent of their funds go to program and they have earned a reputation as honorable and of high integrity. The organization’s mission is combined health, education and literacy initiatives to resource poor children and their communities. The group’s orphanage program focuses on orphanage communities in the developing world who are struggling to bring literacy and health services to their neediest children, living in extreme poverty. Your chapter can donate funds, collect Spanish, Italian, Russian or other foreign-language books (not language textbooks) to donate for use in orphanage libraries. Visit www.doctorsfororphans.org for more information.

The Heart of America Foundation

The Heart of America Foundation’s “Books from the Heart” program provides books for schools located in low-income areas. Chapters can implement a Books From the Heart book drive on their own campus to benefit a low-income school located in their area. The Heart of America Foundation also accepts monetary donations. Visit their Web site at www.heartofamerica.org for more information.

The National Institute for Literacy

The National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) is a federal organization that provides information about literacy and supports the development of high-quality literacy services so all Americans can develop essential basic skills. The Institute serves as a focal point for public and private activities that support the development of high-quality regional, state, and national literacy services. NIFL’s goal is to ensure that all Americans with literacy needs have access to services that can help them gain the basic skills necessary for success in the workplace, family, and community. For more information about how your chapter can volunteer and participate in NIFL activities, please visit their Web site at www.nifl.gov.

Operation Paperback

Operation Paperback recruits volunteers to collect used paperback books to send to American troops deployed overseas. Those who do not wish to collect books may make a monetary donation to Operation Paperback. Visit www.operationpaperback.org for more information.

The Parent-Child Home Program

The Parent-Child Home Program is a research-based and research-validated early childhood literacy and school readiness program. The program successfully strengthens families and prepares children for academic success through intensive home visiting. They also provide books and educational toys for their program participants. Volunteering is a good option for those chapters located near a program site. Other chapters can assist the Parent-Child Home Program by providing donations of books, educational toys, school supplies or art supplies. Visit www.parent-child.org for more information.

The Prison Book Program

The Prison Book Program collects used paperback books to donate to prisons. Chapters can also donate gift cards, mailing supplies, paper and money to the Prison Book Program. There are also volunteer opportunities available at the Prison Book Program office. Visit www.prisonbookprogram.org for more information.

ProLiteracy

ProLiteracy is an international organization that sponsors educational programs that help adults acquire the literacy practices and skills needed to function more effectively in their daily lives. For more information about how your chapter members can be literacy volunteers, please visit the ProLiteracy Web site at www.proliteracy.org.

Reach Out and Read

Reach Out and Read promotes early literacy in childhood by making books and reading routine parts of pediatric care. During well-child visits, parents are encouraged to read aloud to their children. Children between six months and five years old are given new, developmentally appropriate books, which are theirs to keep. There are also volunteers who read to children in waiting rooms, demonstrating techniques for parents to use when reading to their children. For more information about how your chapter can volunteer for and participate in Reach Out and Read, please visit their Web site at www.reachoutandread.org.

Reading is Fundamental

Reading is Fundamental (RIF) motivates children to read by providing free books and literacy resources to the children and families that need them most. RIF runs programs in communities where children are at the highest risk of educational failure, as well as in other communities all over the nation. RIF is the national project of the Education Honor Society Kappa Delta Pi; consider partnering with a chapter on your campus for a joint project. For more information about how your chapter can volunteer and participate in RIF's activities, please visit their Web site at www.rif.org.

LOCAL LITERACY ORGANIZATIONS

Many different literacy organizations service only particular regions or states. If the national organizations are not compatible for your community, consider researching an operation closer to home. Listed below are a few operations that may be closer to home, categorized by region of the country. Your school's office of service learning or office of community service would also be able to help you find where literacy volunteers are needed in your area. Some organizations that your chapter could benefit include:

- Schools
- Daycare centers
- Nursing homes
- Children's homes
- Battered women's shelters
- Food pantries
- Homeless shelters
- Hospitals and clinics
- Prisons or jails

National organizations

NEA's Read Across America - www.nea.org/readacross
Literacy.org - www.literacyonline.org
National Institute for Literacy-LINC - www.literacynet.org
Volunteer Solutions - www.volunteersolutions.org
Literacy Connections - www.literacyconnections.com
VolunteerMatch - www.volunteermatch.org

Northeast organizations

Connecticut's Commission on Children - www.cga.ct.gov/coc
Indiana Literacy Foundation - www.indianaliteracy.org
Cleveland (Ohio) Reads - www.clevelandreads.org
Project Read (West Ohio) - www.project-read.org
Ohio Reads - www.ohioreads.org
Illinois Literacy Resource Development Center - www.ilrdc.org
Michigan Literacy - www.michiganliteracy.org

Southwest organizations

Hawaii Literacy - www.hawaiiliteracy.org
Arizona Literacy - www.literacyvolunteers-maricopa.org
California Second Start Adult Literacy - www.oaklandlibrary.org
Literacy Instruction for Texas - www.lift-texas.org
Houston (Texas) READ Commission - www.houread.org
Literacy Austin (Texas) - www.literacyaustin.org
Corpus Christi (Texas) Literacy Council - www.ccliteracy.org
Literacy Kansas City (Missouri) - www.literacykc.org

Northwest organizations

Oregon Literacy - www.oregonliteracy.org
Colorado Literacy Connections - www.cde.state.co.us/literacy
Minnesota Literacy Council - www.themlc.org/
The Iowa Literacy Resource Center - www.readiowa.org
Wisconsin Literacy - www.wisconsinliteracy.org

Southeast organizations

Mississippi Governor's Office - www.ihl.state.ms.us/gol
Virginia Literacy Foundation - www.valiteracy.org
The Literacy Council (Alabama) - www.literacy-council.org
Literacy Council of Southwest Louisiana - www.literacyswla.org

CONCLUSION

We hope that each chapter will participate in a "Reading is Leading" project each year and we hope you will use this guide as a valuable resource. "Reading is Leading" projects can take many forms, so be creative when planning your projects. Also, remember that your section coordinator, Mortar Board alumni, and the National Office are all available if you need assistance. And most importantly, have fun!