



Reading Successes Delivered

# Community Engagement Kit

Your easy, step-by-step guide to finding community partners and sponsors.



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## SECTION 1

### Why Community Involvement is Important

The summer reading slide is real, and children across the country are in literacy crisis. In his 2019 study, Dr. Geoffrey Borman found that using the KRN summer program...

**“Students attained the equivalent of over 3 months of learning,** or approximately one-third of the learning taking place over the school year.”

- *Geoffrey D. Borman, Ph.D.*

*Foundation Professor of Quantitative Methods and Education Policy  
Arizona State University Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College*

It's no secret that familial involvement is a critical component to student success, but did you know community involvement can make a positive difference as well? The benefits of partnering with your school's community are endless and community involvement is an integral part of sustainable fundraising for summer literacy and related events at your school.

Your community should be invested in your students' futures as almost 40 percent of people live in the same town their entire lives and 60 percent live within the same state ([Pew Research Center, 2008](#)). Investing time and money into childhood literacy can help your community take an active role in improving not only the students' lives, but the community and its future.

Whether it's your school's Kids Read Now reading program, Family Reading Event, Fall Celebration, or other event, your community can help! This Community Engagement Kit will help you identify potential partners and sponsors and schedule meaningful meetings that will lead to consistent community support.

Let's be reading champions for your students. Let's partner to eliminate achievement gaps and create a better tomorrow for your students. Let's build your community to invest in its future: your students.

Casey Wentz

Community Engagement Manager, Kids Read Now

## SECTION 2

### Partners vs. Sponsors: Who is Who and What Do They Do?

*Successful schools have both partners and sponsors, so what is the difference?*

#### **PARTNERS**

Community Partners are local residents, businesses, and organizations willing and able to donate time to fight the summer reading slide in your school district. Partners can help organize fundraising events, donate their time to help your students read and report books throughout the summer, and help coordinate special events like your Family Reading Event and Fall Celebration. While fundraising is a vital component of successful programs, do not overlook the potential of utilizing volunteers!

Does your school have a summer lunch program for students? Do you have a local community center for students in the summer? Where do your students hang out over summer break? Enlist volunteers at these locations to check in on students during the summer reading program. These volunteers can also read Kids Read Now books with students, discuss the Discovery Sheets in each Kids Read Now book, help report books for students, and remind parents to report the students' books.

Kids Read Now will provide Community Partner Kits (*see Section 5*) for your Community Partners! Community Partner Kits include information about the Kids Read Now summer reading program, a detailed explanation of the Discovery Sheets found in every Kids Read Now book, instructions on how to help students report books, and Kids Read Now Client Success contact information. Digital Community Partner Kits are available by emailing [Casey.Wente@kidsreadnow.org](mailto:Casey.Wente@kidsreadnow.org). Recruiting community partners is beneficial in every school district but can be particularly helpful in districts with low or limited parental engagement.

#### **SPONSORS**

Sponsors are both individuals and organizations in your community that donate money to your school to help support your summer reading program. Sponsors are willing to invest in the future of their community by making one-time or regular donations to support your Kids Read Now summer reading program. Having a sponsor is much more than just receiving money or putting a business' logo on your printed materials. Successful sponsorships work together to achieve a common goal, so it's critical that you convey the importance of summer literacy and the impact your students will have on your community's future!

Kids Read Now will provide a customizable Sponsor Certificate template for each of your sponsors and provide a customizable sponsorship letter template so you can include this information in each student's Family Reading Event materials. You can also invite sponsors to your Family Reading Event and Fall Celebration to generate positive media attraction and help encourage families to visit the businesses that invest in their children's futures. Please see the Sample Press Release in Section 5 to draft a press release to send to local news stations.

## SECTION 3

### Who is my Community? Deciding Who to Approach

One of the most important aspects of creating lasting, meaningful relationships with your school's community is deciding who to approach. You can partner with or be sponsored by individuals, businesses, and other organizations. It is important to identify partners and sponsors that understand and support your mission. Avoid creating partnerships/sponsorships with individuals or organizations that do not share the same morals as your school or that could damage the school's reputation. Consider posting about your search on social media or your school's web page! See the worksheet in Section 5 to identify potential partners and sponsors.

#### There are three main types of potential partners/sponsors:

- **First Degree**  
A potential partner/sponsor that you personally know and don't need an introduction
- **Second Degree**  
A potential partner/sponsor that shares a mutual acquaintance that can facilitate an introduction
- **Third Degree**  
A potential partner/sponsor that you do not know and have no mutual acquaintances

#### Ideas for Potential Partners and Sponsors

- Students' parents and relatives
- Retired educators
- Local businesses
- Local community leaders
- Chain businesses
- Bookstores and libraries
- Nonprofit organizations
- Faith based organizations
- Previous Donors

## SECTION 4

### Connect with your Community. Get the Word Out!

There are several ways to develop meaningful and professional partnerships and sponsorships with local businesses, organizations, and community members. Start by contacting First and Second Degree potential partners/sponsors. Try to schedule a brief meeting with the owner or a manager. You will need to prepare notes and it is advantageous to create a small flyer or handout describing your school's event/program and how you need the community's involvement. You can also present the Kids Read Now Community Guide, available in Section 5. If potential partners and sponsors feel a sense of community responsibility or investment in your cause, they are much more likely to partner with you and sponsor your students for years to come!

Be concise, direct, and prepared to answer questions during your meeting. It's important to give potential partners and sponsors options, such as different services or goods to donate. Not all partners and sponsors have the means to make large donations, but small donations and volunteer time can add up quickly! Many businesses are happy to help in exchange for free marketing. Before the meeting ends, ensure that you have direct contact information for your new partner or sponsor. Thank your new partner or sponsor by sending an email or small card after the meeting.

Please use the Community Partner letter in Section 5 to reach out to potential partners and use the Community Sponsor letter in Section 5 to reach out to potential sponsors. Make sure you print these letters on official school letterhead. One of the most important parts of forming lasting partnerships and sponsorships is maintaining contact and building rapport with your new partner or sponsor throughout the year. You can put them on your school's mailing list and schedule times in advance to call and speak with your partner or sponsor about how they helped your event and program succeed!

## SECTION 5

### Resources

#### Partner and Sponsor Worksheet

- Use [this worksheet](#) to identify partners and sponsors and track your communications with them.

#### Community Partner Letter

- Send [this letter](#) to potential Community Partners. Make sure you add your school's logo and personalize the letter with your information.

#### Community Sponsor Letter

- Send [this letter](#) to potential Community Sponsors. Make sure you add your school's logo and personalize the letter with your information.

#### Kids Read Now Program Overview

- Include [this flyer](#) with the Community Partner or Sponsor Letter to easily introduce the Kids Read Now program to potential Partners and Sponsors.

#### Sponsorship Calculator

- Use this easy [calculator](#) to determine Gold, Silver, and Bronze level sponsors based on number of students enrolled.

#### Sponsor Certificates

- [Gold](#)
- [Silver](#)
- [Bronze](#)

#### Family Reading Event Superintendent Sponsor Announcement Letter

- Use [this letter](#) to share with your families who all of the amazing sponsors are for that year's program. Be sure to personalize it with Sponsor logos and dollar levels.

#### Community Guide

- Hand [this flyer](#) out to volunteers with your program to provide them an overview of what to do when reading with the kids and reporting completed books.

#### The Kids Read Now Summer Reading Program: A Quasi-Experimental Impact Study

- 2018 [Summary](#)
- 2019 [Summary](#)
- 2023 [Impact Report](#)