First Book
for Generation to Generation

A Toolkit for Nurturing Literacy in Your Community
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This toolkit is provided by First Book. Learn more at www.fbmarketplace.org.
The Goal of this Toolkit

First Book is proud to be a nonprofit partner of Encore.org’s Generation to Generation campaign to lift-up opportunities for adults over 50 to make a positive difference in the lives of children and youth. This First Book and Gen2Gen Reads Toolkit provides actionable ideas on how to get involved in creating equal access to quality education in your community.

About First Book

First Book is a nonprofit social enterprise that transforms the lives of children in need. Through a sustainable, market-driven model, First Book is creating equal access to quality education — making everything from brand-new, high-quality books and educational resources, to sports equipment, winter coats, snacks, and more – affordable to its member network of more than 375,000 educators and providers who exclusively serve kids in need.

Since 1992, First Book has distributed more than 170 million books and educational resources to programs and schools serving children from low-income families in more than 30 countries. First Book currently reaches an average of 3 million children every year and supports more than one in four of the estimated 1.3 million classrooms and programs serving children in need. With an additional 1,000 educators joining each week, First Book is the largest and fastest-growing network of educators in the United States exclusively serving kids in need.
About Gen2Gen Reads

Gen2Gen ([http://generationtogeneneration.org/]http://generationtogeneneration.org/), a five-year campaign powered by Encore.org, aims to inspire people over 50 to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable children and youth, because every child deserves a web of support and every older person has something to give.

First Book and Gen2Gen share a mutual commitment to the value that older adults can bring to the well-being of young people across the country and achieving educational equity by giving educators and kids the resources they need to succeed. This partnership begins in Fall 2017 with Gen2Gen Reads, which mobilizes adults 50+ to help young people thrive by increasing access to books and educational resources for children in need in their community.

The ideas in this toolkit will inspire you to:

- Connect educators in your community with First Book so that they have ongoing access to free and low-cost resources for their classroom or program

- Volunteer with local Team First Book affiliates around the country

- Support fundraising efforts to benefit schools and programs serving kids in need: ([https://support.firstbook.org/campaign/gen2gen/c141285](https://support.firstbook.org/campaign/gen2gen/c141285)

- Put your passion into action to improve the lives of young people who need champions through the additional suggestions in this toolkit.

Why Access to Books and Resources Matters

Book and educational resources are critical but scarce for kids in need. Lack of access to adequate resources is the single greatest contributor to educational inequity in the U.S. and recent research has identified vast “book deserts” concentrated in low-income communities across the U.S.¹ This lack of access deprives kids of the tools they need to be successful.
During their first four years, children in need:

- Engage in just 25 hours of one-on-one reading compared to the 1,000 to 1,700 hours received by their higher income peers. ²

- Are exposed to just 13 million words compared to children from upper middle class families who encounter 45 million words. ²

Access to books and resources changes the story for kids in need. Every child deserves to know the joy of reading and the promise books bring for success in school and in life. Giving kids books leads to more shared reading between parents and children as well as more independent reading.⁴ In addition:

- Kids from homes rich in books expressed more enjoyment of books, reading, and learning. In addition, they are 19% more likely to complete college than children without a home library. ⁵

- Kids who are read to at least five times a week are better able to understand the oral and written language of others – an important foundation for the comprehension skills that will develop in the coming years. ⁶

- Books and reading help kids learn new words they might not otherwise hear. In fact, children’s books contain 50% more rare words than prime-time television or even college students’ conversations. ⁷

Educators are on the front line of ensuring children in need have access to books and resources. The average teacher spends approximately $500 of their own money each year on necessary...
supplies for their classroom or program. Seventy two percent of educators in the First Book network report spending their own money on books and supplies.

Gen2Gen Reads mobilizes volunteers like you to bring books to kids who need them most, provide families the opportunity to read together, and ensure teachers have the critical resources to make sure that every child has the tools to be successful.

Five Ways to Inspire a Love of Reading

Here are five things you can do to create impact as a Gen2Gen volunteer.

1. Register with First Book to Access Resources

Whether you volunteer through a civic group, church program or work for an organization serving kids and families in need, you are eligible to join the First Book network! Go to www.firstbook.org/Gen2Gen to register. You can register with First Book if you volunteer for a program based in:

- a Title I or Title I eligible school
- a Head Start center
- a federally qualified health center
- a library with an e-rate of 90
- or any other community program that reaches kids in need

More information is available at http://www.fbmarketplace.org/eligibility-faqs/

After you register, share First Book with your friends, co-volunteers, and program leadership. Here’s a sample message you can share:

Hi, [Friend]!

I just learned about a great organization called First Book that can help us get more books and resources for the kids in our community. First Book is a nonprofit social enterprise that provides
new books, educational resources, and other essentials to kids in need. There are two ways we can get great low-cost books:

- **The First Book Marketplace** ([www.fbmarketplace.org](http://www.fbmarketplace.org)) has more than 6,000 diverse, award-winning titles for kids birth through young adults for an average price of just $3.00 per book. Shipping is free on orders over $75.00.

- **The First Book National Book Bank** ([www.fbbookbank.org](http://www.fbbookbank.org)) has FREE brand new, carton quantities of books. We just cover shipping and handling which is about $.55 per book.

Joining is free and takes less than 10 minutes. Go to [www.firstbook.org/Gen2Gen](http://www.firstbook.org/Gen2Gen) to sign up!

### 2. Volunteer with Team First Book in Your Community

Team First Book is a community-based volunteer program within the national First Book network. Team First Book groups are led by dedicated volunteers who raise funds locally to provide books and educational resources to First Book educator members in their communities.

Through activities from golf tournaments to children’s book themed galas to volunteer reader programs, Team First Book groups have collectively raised nearly $3.7 million, distributed more than 1.5 million books, and provided resources to more than 1,000 schools and programs serving kids in need.

Team First Book groups will be posting community-based opportunities on the Gen2Gen opportunities board as they arise. Learn about opportunities to volunteer with Team First Book in your community via Gen2Gen’s Opportunity Finder ([http://generationtogeneration.org/volunteer-opportunities/](http://generationtogeneration.org/volunteer-opportunities/)), which enables older adults in your community to easily find volunteer opportunities focused on helping kids thrive.
3. HelpGen2Gen Reads Donate Books

During the 2017 Gen2Gen Reads Campaign, First Book and Gen2Gen are teaming up with the National Head Start Association to provide books to kids in Head Start programs in high-need communities across the country. Here’s how you can help:

- Make a donation at [https://support.firstbook.org/campaign/gen2gen/c141285](https://support.firstbook.org/campaign/gen2gen/c141285)

- Share the fundraiser with your network on social media. Here are some examples:
  - **For Twitter:** I support #Gen2GenREADS powered by @FirstBook and @EncoreOrg to get #bookstokids! Donate at [https://support.firstbook.org/campaign/gen2gen/c141285](https://support.firstbook.org/campaign/gen2gen/c141285)
  - **For Facebook:** I donated to #Gen2GenReads, powered by First Book and Encore.org, to get books to kids. All donations will go to put books in the hands of kids in Head Start programs in high-need communities. Will you join me? [https://support.firstbook.org/campaign/gen2gen/c141285](https://support.firstbook.org/campaign/gen2gen/c141285)

4. Engage Your Local Civic, Faith-Based, or Professional Groups

Are you a member of a civic group like Rotary, AAUW, or Urban League? What about a faith-based group like your local JCC or church group? How about a professional group like your local Chamber of Commerce or your employers’ retiree group?

Plan a project with First Book! First Book’s low-cost, high-quality books and resources are perfect for meeting your organization’s local goals and supporting the national Gen2Gen campaign. Here are just a few ideas:

- Conduct a drive to get eligible educators in your community registered with First Book.
- Host a fundraiser and donate the proceeds to the Gen2GenReads online campaign.
• Adopt a local Head Start program and provide great, brand-new books and resources from First Book as well as volunteer readers.
• Create a “Care Closet” at a local Head Start program. In addition to great books, the First Book Marketplace also offers low-cost school supplies, winter coats, clothes, and other essentials to help lower barriers to education. Put the items in a designated space at the center that can be accessed by teachers and staff for the kids they serve. Volunteers can ensure the closet stays stocked and organized.

5. **Invite Education Stakeholders and Leaders in your Community to Connect with First Book**

Be an ambassador for First Book and equal access to books and resources for kids in need in your community. Consider which stakeholders are invested in educational equality and introduce them to First Book. Friends, family, co-workers, fellow volunteers, and others in your network can help make introductions to these leaders on your behalf.

Here are a few ideas of people to contact:

- Superintendent of your school district
- City or County government officials
- Nonprofit or social service organization leaders
- Local Head Start program administrators
- Public Education Fund leadership
- Local foundations
- Local business leaders (especially from companies with corporate giving or volunteering)

**Five More Ways to Keep the Momentum Going!**

Keep the momentum you’ve built going. Here are 5 more ways to promote equal access to books and resources in your community.
6. Follow First Book on Social Media

Stay up to date, share, and retweet the latest news First Book news on Facebook and Twitter. Share with your social network news and information about First Book.

7. Host a First Book “Friend-Raiser”

Collaborate with a local business or civic group to host a First Book “Friend-Raiser.” A “friend-raiser” is a great opportunity to show appreciation for educators and others serving kids in need in your community while introducing them to First Book. Provide food or snacks, have a sample of First Book books and resources available as well as registration information. If funding allows, provide a few books for each teacher to take back to their classroom. You could even have a fun theme like Tacos for Teachers or BBQ for Books!

8. Throw a First Book House Party

Invite your friends and neighbors to learn more about how they can support kids in need and educators in their community through First Book. Host a potluck, dinner party, or cookout. Share what you’ve learned about First Book and how important access to books and resources is to children in need. You could even share one of our impact videos:

- Care Closets in Baltimore City, MD- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjCZ8YKNR5g
- Book Bus in Davis County, IA- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjCZ8YKNR5g
- Smart from the Start in Washington, DC https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwNEydJ7nCs

9. Advocate for More Resources for Kids in Need

In addition to introducing education stakeholders and leaders to First Book, you could also advocate for more resources for kids in need by sharing examples of projects other educators and organizations have created using First Book resources. Here are a few examples:

- Care Closets: In addition to great books, First Book also offers low-cost school supplies, winter coats, clothes, and other essentials to help kids succeed. Put the items in a
designated space at the center that can be accessed by teachers and staff for the kids they serve.

- **Diversify home, school, and classroom libraries:** Through the Stories for All Project™ ([http://www.fbmarketplace.org/stories-for-all-project/](http://www.fbmarketplace.org/stories-for-all-project/)) First Book’s is providing books featuring diverse content and characters to children in need.

- **Social and Emotional Learning libraries:** ([http://www.fbmarketplace.org/sel-hub/](http://www.fbmarketplace.org/sel-hub/)): Social and Emotional Learning teaches kids how to handle emotions, develop empathy and positive relationships, set goals and make good decisions. Many of the titles in this collection include free downloadable reading guides to help educators teach students to develop these critical skills for success.

**10. **Support Disaster Relief Efforts**

During times of crisis, books not only offer a chance to learn, they also mean stories at bedtime with family members, the chance to travel to faraway places in your imagination, and a welcome return to normalcy during what can be a very difficult time.

From Hurricane Katrina to Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, First Book has distributed over 5 million books to families affected by hurricanes and other catastrophic events. From these experiences, First Book has learned how to work with first responders—and later schools and libraries as they re-open their doors—to get the right resources in the right hands at the right time. During times of crisis, in addition to books, these items are in high demand:

- Essential Needs Items – hygiene kits, dental care, socks, underwear, small blankets, etc.
- Backpacks and school supplies – including low cost e-reader tablets
- Early learning toys, games and puzzles for all ages

Schools and programs in affected areas can register with First Book for a provisional 3-month First Book membership. They simply need to select “disaster” as their eligibility criteria. This will trigger access to First Book resources for 3 months. Sharing registration information with
educators or raising funds for resources can help rebuild damaged home and classroom libraries, ease the anxiety of educators wondering how to replace what was lost, and help restore a sense of normalcy for kids.

How to Access First Book Resources

Educators, librarians, providers, community volunteers, and others serving children in need can join the First Book network. Joining is free and takes less than 10 minutes!

Staff and volunteers at organizations or programs where at least 70% of the children served come from families in need – for financial or other reasons are eligible to register with First Book and join the network.

First Book members can access brand new, high-quality books and educational resources in two ways:

- **The First Book Marketplace** ([http://www.fbmarketplace.org](http://www.fbmarketplace.org)) is an award-winning low-cost e-commerce site – available exclusively to the First Book network – that provides access to over 6,000 educational resources curated in direct response to member input. The First Book Marketplace addresses the barriers to education and attendance for kids in need from birth to age 18, including a large collection of relevant diverse and Spanish/bilingual books, school supplies, digital devices, food, clothing, and personal hygiene kits, as well as free teacher resources.

- Originally launched in 1998, the **First Book National Book Bank** ([http://www.fbbookbank.org](http://www.fbbookbank.org)) was the first — and remains the only — centralized distribution system for large-scale donations of children’s books from publishers to schools and programs serving kids in need. Today, the First Book National Book Bank distributes more than 13 million books annually.

For more eligibility information, visit [http://www.fbmarketplace.org/eligibility-faqs/](http://www.fbmarketplace.org/eligibility-faqs/)
Thank You!

We hope this toolkit gave you some great ideas on how you can help build a book- and resource-rich community for kids in need where you live. Your efforts will ensure kids have access to great, high-quality, diverse books and other essentials they need for success. If you have additional questions, please contact First Book at 1-866-732-3669 or help@firstbook.org.

Sources: