

## BE A LITERACY ADVOCATE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

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Help to shine a spotlight on children's literacy, spreading awareness, and inspiring action. Below are some ideas to get you started in your advocacy and outreach.

1. **Submit a letter to the editor** of your local paper describing your personal experience with the literacy crisis we face today and call on local leaders to invest in children's literacy. Sharing your story can have real, meaningful impact and help key officials understand the effects when students aren't reading on grade level, lack books at home or at school, or lack reading support at home or at school.
2. **Write to your Member of Congress** and tell them children's literacy matters. Visit <http://www.capwiz.com/rif/issues/alert/?alertid=69178626&type=CO> to send an email with one click and ask the federal government to invest in vital children's literacy programming like the U.S. Department of Education's Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) grant program.
3. **Use social media** to amplify your message. Tweet at your elected officials with a brief message to encourage their engagement around the issue of childhood literacy. Share national or state literacy statistics (you can find some at [rif.org/literacy-network/facts](http://rif.org/literacy-network/facts)) or news articles that call attention to the matter.
4. **Engage local, state, and national officials in a discussion** on the issue. Whether at a town hall or official meeting, help stakeholders understand the local narrative around children's literacy, the key statistics about the challenges and impacts, and how they can act to help provide resources to support local literacy efforts. Find your representatives by clicking here: <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>.
5. **Invite decision makers** to experience first-hand the difference dedicated volunteers can make in addressing our nation's literacy crisis by extending to them the opportunity to visit you at your volunteer site. Through a tour or special event, officials will be able to witness the difference we can make for children together.

## **Sample Talking Points for a conversation or letter addressing childhood literacy:**

- RIF is the leading champion for children’s literacy, empowering millions of children to read, learn, and grow.
- Since 1966, RIF has provided more than 412 million books to 40 million RIF kids.
- RIF creates innovative literacy solutions to ensure all children have the opportunity to read and succeed.
- There is a significant literacy crisis in America today. Many recognize there are issues around literacy, but do not see it as the massive, systemic and generational problem that plagues our society.
  - 93 million adults in the U.S. read at or below the basic level needed to contribute successfully in society.
  - 65% of 4th graders read below grade level, contributing to 8,000 students dropping out of high school every day.
  - 43% percent of American adults are functionally illiterate.
- Every child deserves an opportunity to own books, learn how to read, and obtain the fundamental building blocks to achieve their highest potential. Reading is critical to all of life’s essential skills.
- Tell your personal story as a parent, educator, or community volunteer and the hurdles you’ve seen children face due to obstacles around their literacy skills.
- Call on officials to bring literacy to the forefront of their agenda with a greater focus on literacy programs, literacy resources and support materials as well as literacy funding for solutions that help prepare students for college and careers. Our nation depends on a skilled workforce.
- Close your meeting or message with a ‘thank you’ and offer to be in touch with further information and new developments.