



## BE A RIF ADVOCATE TOOLKIT

Thank you for your commitment to the cause of children's literacy and interest in taking action with Reading Is Fundamental (RIF)! This toolkit provides several ways you can engage with RIF and use our resources to Be A Literacy Influencer. As a RIF Literacy Influencer, you have the ability to conduct outreach with us to drive discussion around our nation's literacy crisis and the solutions RIF offers. Your help to support issue awareness and advocacy are critical to RIF's work and help us shine a spotlight on the cause, drawing additional supporters to our mission and deepening support.

### ***Issue Awareness***

**Who:** We are excited to team up with YOU to showcase the need for continued awareness related to the national literacy crisis and use your social media channels to join our call to action.

**What:** By reinforcing the importance of reading and the impact that books and literacy resources can have on a child's life, you will help to support RIF's mission to inspire a passion for reading among all children. You will help us celebrate the lifechanging power of literacy while also helping your network understand its critical importance to opportunity and educational success.

**Where:** Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and blogs! Make sure to use the hashtag #readingisfundamental

**Instagram:** @readingisfundamental

**Twitter:** @RIFWEB

**Facebook:** @ReadingIsFundamental

**Website:** [www.rif.org](http://www.rif.org)

**When:** It's important to have a consistent awareness all year round. Some particularly key times to rally around are the back-to-school timeframe, March for National Reading Month and summer reading.

**Why:** You and your community can help RIF create a more literate America, one child at a time. We believe every child has a right to the opportunities literacy provides - and you can help!

**How:** Use some of our suggested messaging below or share your own story about how the power of literacy, books and reading has impacted your life or a child in your life. You can also use RIF's sample social media posts to help people understand the literacy landscape.

Starter Messages:



Did you know? 25 million children in the U.S. cannot read at a proficient level. Learn what @RIF is doing about it. [www.rif.org](http://www.rif.org) #readingisfundamental

63% of fourth graders read below grade level. That adds up in a big way: 8,000 students drop out of high school everyday. Learn more about solutions at [www.rif.org](http://www.rif.org) #readingisfundamental

Only 37% of high school students graduate at or above proficient reading levels. Our workforce of tomorrow depends on strong readers. #readingisfundamental

Books made me the <occupation/profession> I am today. Because I'm a reader I can <activity/function>. #readingisfundamental

I'm a @RIF volunteer who knows the meaning of books for kids. When my students/children read, they <fill in the blank> #readingisfundamental.

### ***Issue Advocacy***

There's even more you can do to spread awareness by conducting targeted outreach to key decisionmakers and education policy professionals. Below are some strategies you can use to reach out to elected officials and advocate for increased attention and funding for the children's literacy cause.

#### **Letter to the Editor:**

Submit a letter to the editor of your local newspaper 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 as an educator, parent, or local literacy advocate 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. It's helpful to anchor your message around a key timeframe like March for National Reading Month or summer reading to provide context and urgency for your message.

#### **Congressional Advocacy:**

Write to your Member of Congress and tell them children's literacy matters. Enter your zip code and with one click, you can look up your federal elected officials and craft a message to them to let them know that it's vital to invest in children's literacy programming like the U.S. Department of Education's Innovative Approaches to Literacy (IAL) grant program, a key funding stream for library and literacy non-profit organizations. Visit <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials> to find your elected officials.



You can also use social media to amplify your advocacy messaging. By reaching out via Twitter or Facebook or direct messaging elected officials, you can ensure your voice will be heard. Share national or state literacy statistics or news articles that call attention to the matter. Visit [<insert link to The Issue page>](#) to access RIF's Literacy Facts Map as well as the most recent articles and data on the topic.

### **Site Visit Invitations:**

Nothing can help a lawmaker understand the issue better than a first-hand experience and visit to understand the issues. If you will be part of a literacy volunteer activity, it's always a good idea to invite a local elected official to join you as you read with kids, distribute books or host a book drive so they can understand the issues that face their community and what is being done to address it.

### **Starter Messages:**

- 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 415 million books to 50 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.
- Highlight local impact and/or local solutions.
- 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.

**Source:** Reading Is Fundamental

**Last Modified:** April 2019