

## TOOLKITS

## Education: Read With Children

**SUMMER READING****THE FACTS**

*Children who are not engaged in learning between school years suffer from “summer learning loss.” Many of the achievement gaps that continue to exist for disadvantaged students today result not from students falling behind during the school year but rather losing out on chances to learn over the summer.*

*Did you know that if a young person reads only **five books** over the summer, the effect “is potentially large enough to prevent a decline in reading achievement scores from the spring to the fall?”<sup>1</sup>*

*Did you know that if a young person is read to at least **three times a week**, that person is twice as likely to score in the top 25% of reading?<sup>2</sup>*

*This summer, commit yourself and a team of your friends, family, and neighbors to help young people close the summer learning gap by joining United We Serve. This tool kit will give you the basics to start a reading program from scratch, recruit a team, organize your group, and make an impact this summer.*

**GETTING STARTED**

While no two projects will be the same, successful projects will share a few common practices. We encourage you to incorporate the following elements into your service project:

- Create a team with your friends and neighbors to share the effort;
- Set outcome-based goals and track your progress to those goals;
- Celebrate your successes together.

***The Challenge:*** Many community-based organizations do not have enough capacity to manage a large number of volunteers, so they need you to organize yourself in coordination with them. This tool kit is designed to either help you organize a group and be a positive addition to a community-based organization, or, if such an organization does not exist, to be a well-organized independently-run group that fills a needed gap in the community.

A step by step guide to getting started and executing service activities follows. Please let us know how your project goes and what you learn by telling your story at [Serve.gov](http://Serve.gov).

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<sup>1</sup> Kim, Jimmy; (2004): '[Summer Reading and the Ethnic Achievement Gap](#)', Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 9:2,169 – 188

<sup>2</sup> Children's Reading and Mathematics Achievement in Kindergarten and First Grade, NCES, p. 16, p. 20

**STEP ONE: IDENTIFY LOCAL PARTNERS**

Check out the organizations already doing good work in your area. Many existing service groups have identified community needs and built the expertise to provide solutions. Every reading volunteer can contact the local library to plug in with a summer reading program.

- CONTACT YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY OR [Click here](#) to search for national and local literacy organizations and ask them about volunteer opportunities.
- [Get a guide to finding local partners](#)
- If no literacy organizations exist in your community, contact local child care centers, libraries, or summer camps to begin a reading club.

**STEP TWO: BUILD A TEAM**

Teams can help share the work, motivate members and hold each other accountable. Teams build community. Ask your family, friends, colleagues, faith group members, and book club devotees to serve with you.

- Host a house meeting or potluck to choose a project, set goals, recruit volunteers and plan next steps.
- [Get a guide for hosting a house meeting](#)
- Register your service activities on [Serve.gov](#) to recruit new volunteers.

**STEP THREE: SET A GOAL**

Set a service goal for June 22 – September 11 and hold yourself accountable. Commit as individuals and as a team to reading a certain number of times each week to children. Set your goals high to stretch yourself. Then keep track of how you are doing and designate someone to be responsible for updating the group on how you are progressing toward your goals. You'll be surprised at how much you can do when you commit, focus, and follow through.

- [Get a goal-setting guide](#)

**STEP FOUR: SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY**

The key to effective service is planning. Organize your materials, make confirmation calls and, if you have time, read supplemental materials before you volunteer.

- [Get a tip sheet for your service activity](#)
- LEARNS, a Corporation for National and Community Service sponsored technical assistance provider, provides tips to help you plan your [summer programs](#).

**STEP FIVE: REPORT AND CELEBRATE SUCCESSES**

Your team members, the community, and the President want to know about your successes and hear your stories. Share your accomplishments by reporting your results. We will highlight the best stories throughout the summer. Tell us about your successes and what you have learned, or just tell your story of service at [Serve.gov](#).

**FOLLOW UP****SPREAD THE SERVICE**

- After every event, thank your volunteers and sign them up for the next event.
- Share best practices at [Serve.gov](https://www.serve.gov).

**FINDING LOCAL PARTNERS: READING**

Check out the organizations already doing good work in your community. Many existing service groups have identified community needs and built the expertise to provide solutions. Get plugged in with them!

It will be helpful to provide background on the local service landscape to the attendees of your house meeting. A few phone calls can produce all the information you need to know your options.

For Reading programs:

- [Click here](#) to search for national and local literacy organizations.
- Ask them about volunteer opportunities (see sample phone script below).
- If no literacy organizations exist in your community, contact local child care centers, libraries, or summer camps to begin a reading club.

**SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT:**

- Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm interested in volunteering with your organization. May I speak with your volunteer coordinator?
- How can a volunteer best serve your organization?
- If I organize a group of my friends to volunteer with me, how many volunteers can you take?
- How many days per week do you need volunteers?
- Do your volunteers read to young people one-on-one or in a group?
- What age group(s) do you work with?
- What kind of training/background check do you provide?
- Are you the best person for me to contact?

Remember to keep track of who you have contacted so you can follow up as necessary. You can use the chart below or create one that fits your project.

Group name	Contact name	Contact number	Days to volunteer	# of vols needed

## House Meetings

### **Purpose:**

House meetings are a valuable tactic for recruiting volunteers and building a team. House meetings allow community members to share their concerns and join together to work for progress. Within the room, you already have all the tools you need to enact change on a local level. Every attendee can contribute time or resources or leadership abilities.

Your house meeting will help you identify your leadership team. The people that are committed enough to come to your house meeting should be considered potential leaders of the initiatives being implemented in their communities.

As a house meeting host, invite people from your social network to participate in a discussion about your community, pressing needs, and potential solutions. House meetings often engage people new to service and unclear about next steps. Serving with the support of a team will increase the ease and comfort of many new volunteers.

Building community through house meetings is a critical step toward the President's ultimate goal, which is to support everyday Americans in a grassroots effort to improve lives and strengthen communities.

### **A House Meeting**

#### **Goals**

- Choose and plan a service project for the summer.
- Set measurable group and personal goals for your United We Serve project.
- Identify 5 attendees to be team leaders.
- Plan the next meeting of the leadership team and identify next steps for each leader.
- Obtain commitments from all attendees to volunteer on a regular basis from June 22 – September 11.

#### **Host Duties**

- Before
  - To have **20** people attend, you will need to invite **50**. Brainstorm a list of **50** people to invite. Include your friends, family, members of your faith group, colleagues, book club attendees, etc.
  - Make calls to the **50** people on your list to invite them to your house meeting. Remember that phone calls are much more effective than a mass email.
  - Post your house meeting on Serve.gov and invite local residents interested in volunteering to attend.
  - Browse Serve.gov to see what needs in your community aren't being met and which organizations you might be able to partner with. Take some preliminary steps to identify local partners already working in the community.
  - Prepare necessary materials.

- During
  - Be prepared to give a short explanation of why you became involved/what inspired you to serve.
  - Consider how you most want to serve your community. President Obama has identified four target areas for summer service: health, education, community renewal, and energy and environment. What does your community most need?
  
- After
  - Thank attendees and get their pledge to serve this summer.
  - Organize a follow-up volunteer leadership meeting with your new team to take next steps.

**House Meeting Planner**

Use this brainstorm sheet to think of those you want to invite, including those who have never volunteered before or may be new to Untied We Serve.

Name	Phone #	Invited (Y/N)	Committed (Y/N)	Confirmed (Y/N)	Notes
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
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49.					
50.					

**Name:** Please print the invitee’s full name.

**Invite:** Please mark **yes, no, maybe** or **left message (LM)**. This will help you track who you need to contact and who you should be calling for confirmation. The only real invitations are when you speak with someone directly.

**Commit:** Please mark **yes, no** or **maybe**.

**Confirm:** Please mark **yes, no** or **left message (LM)**. You’ll need to call every invitee who said yes or maybe, and every invitee who only got a left message. Please do not assume that **anybody** will come without a confirmation the day before your meeting. It can’t hurt to give people a quick reminder, and you need to know how many people will be at your meeting to make that meeting as effective and enjoyable as possible.



## House Meeting Agenda

**\*\*\*Before starting the meeting, have everyone sign in and appoint a timekeeper who will keep each section running on time.\*\*\***

- 0:00-0:10 **Host welcome and introduction**
- Host of the meeting introduces themselves and welcomes attendees.
  - Host shares why (s)he was inspired to organize the house meeting and the purpose of the meeting.
- 0:10-0:25 **Attendee introductions**
- Go around the room and ask each person to introduce themselves and share their reason for wanting to serve this summer.
- 0:25-0:45 **Choose a project**
- Host introduces three or four project ideas and opens up the room for discussion.
  - Discuss what projects will work best in your community.
  - Group votes on project choice.
- 0:45-0:55 **Set goals and identify leadership**
- Ask which attendees are interested in being volunteer leaders – they should stay after the meeting for 15 minutes and commit to a weekly planning meeting from June 22 - September 11.
  - Ask each attendee to consider personal summer goals and make a realistic but ambitious summer commitment.
- 0:55-1:00 **Conclusion**
- At the end of the meeting, the group should have:
    - At least one project to commit to for the summer.
    - A leadership team.
    - Pledges from each attendee to participate.
- 1:00-1:15 **Leadership team meeting**
- Meet with volunteer leaders to set weekly meeting and divide responsibilities.
  - Fill out attached worksheets.

## Leadership Team Worksheet

The members of my team include:

Name	Phone Number	Email

Our weekly leadership meetings occur every \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

Who are 5 other friends and family members who you will call to enlist in your group's project? Make these calls during the leadership team meeting, if possible:

Name	Phone Number	Email

## Setting Goals and Tracking Progress

### Breaking Down Your Goal

What is your group's project?

Who are your local partners?

What is your group's goal? (ie, how many lbs of donated food will you secure, how many hours will you spend reading to kids, how many homes will you audit?)

How many weeks do you have until the National Day of Service and Remembrance on September 11<sup>th</sup>?

What will you have to average per week between now and September 11<sup>th</sup> to reach your goal?

How many volunteers will you have to recruit on average per week to reach that goal? How many hours would you guess they have to work? If it's not clear at first, you should be ambitious and then adjust your recruitment goal as you go.

### Tracking Progress to Goals

Our team will report progress to goals every \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ will share our progress to goals with all team members by email/phone calls every \_\_\_\_\_.

We will also share our story and accomplishments at [serve.gov](http://serve.gov).

## SETTING GOALS: SUMMER READING

Over the summer, young people who are not engaged in continued educational activities lose much of what they've learned over the previous school year. This is commonly referred to as the "summer learning loss."

If a young person reads only **five books** over the summer, the effect "is potentially large enough to prevent a decline in reading achievement scores from the spring to the fall."<sup>3</sup>

If a young person is read to at least **three times a week**, that person is twice as likely to score in the top 25% of reading.

### What will you do to help young people succeed?

#### SET CONCRETE GOALS

Setting goals helps you be accountable to yourself and also increases accountability within a group. Clear goals at the beginning of a project will also help you determine how your project will work and what role group members can play. Once goals are set, you can track your progress, compare your results with other group members, and figure out what works best so everyone can meet (or exceed) their goals.

Set a service goal for June 22 – September 11 and hold yourself accountable. Commit as an individual and as a team to read a certain number of hours with children this summer. Then keep your commitment. Let's see what we can do together!

- As an individual, I will commit to reading with children at least \_\_\_ times a week.
- As a team we will commit to reading at least \_\_\_ times a week with children.
- As an individual, I will commit to reading at least \_\_\_ different books with children over the summer.
- As a team, we will commit to reading at least \_\_\_ different books with children over the summer.

Part of setting good outcome goals is thinking about how you will achieve them. As a group or an individual, think about process-based goals to map out how you will hit your goals above:

- I will recruit \_\_\_ volunteers to join our service group to read with children over the summer.

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<sup>3</sup> Kim, Jimmy; (2004): '[Summer Reading and the Ethnic Achievement Gap](#)', Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 9:2,169 – 188

**TRACK PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS**

- Set a weekly or biweekly deadline to report progress. For example, "Our team will report progress every Friday. The person responsible for reporting results for your team is \_\_\_\_\_."
- Make sure every group member is in the loop. Designate a group member to track and share the results. For example, "Our team will share our progress with all members by email/phone calls every week. The person responsible for sharing progress is \_\_\_\_\_."
- Keep track of your progress. Score sheets like the one below can be helpful.

Week	# hours reading as individual	# hours reading as team	# books read as individual	# books read as team	# volunteers active
June 22					
June 29					
July 6					
July 13					
July 20					
July 27					
August 3					
August 10					
August 17					
August 24					
August 31					
September 7					
<b>Total</b>					

## TIPS: BEING A GOOD READING VOLUNTEER

*The following guidelines will help maximize the time you spend with the children. As a volunteer you want to make sure the children remain engaged in the session and in the materials, and the following tips will help you do so.*

- Begin the session with limited and age-appropriate choices – children will benefit most from materials they do not consider too easy or too difficult.
  - The additional resources (below) include information on selecting age-appropriate materials.
- Have a plan and communicate it. Give the child the opportunity to add to the plan.
  - “We have three books to read today. Which one do you want to start with?”
  - Write down a list and let the child check things off as they get done - this will give them a sense of accomplishment and serve as a visual representation of their progress.
- Vary the sessions.
  - Don’t hesitate to bring in outside materials or engage in literacy-enhancing projects.
- Communicate with the children you work with about their interests and hobbies and *respond* to them.
  - You might bring in books about football or animals, depending on their responses.
- Acknowledge when things aren’t going well. Assume that when the child doesn’t understand something, you have to find a better way to explain it.
  - “This is a hard book. It’s ok. We’ll work through it together.”
- If a child is having continued difficulty understanding, move on.
  - Focusing on one point makes the child anxious, and children learn best in an environment they perceive to be safe.
- Acknowledge the child’s feelings.
  - If a child comes to reading obviously upset or angry, ask him/her if he/she wants to talk.
- Be mindful of and react to specific issues for the child. Be sure to articulate these issues and explain your responses. Remember that reading is a language-based skill. Any time spent talking with a child is helpful.
  - “I have noticed it takes you a while to settle down. Let’s spend the first few minutes talking about your favorite TV show or sport.”
- When a child is pressing your buttons, be an actor and don’t let on.
  - Once you are in a power struggle, you have lost – even if you might win.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

- **Information on selecting age appropriate materials:**
  - Ask your local library!
  - Check out internet resources.
  - <http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/practices/17224>
  - <http://school.familyeducation.com/literature/reading/34576.html>
  - <http://www.pkwy.k12.mo.us/panda/subjectlinks/elemreading.html>
  
- **Guides for working with children 3-5 years old:**
  - <http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/learns/literacy-developmentally>
  
- **Guides for working with children Kindergarten-3<sup>rd</sup> grade:**
  - <http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/learns/tutoring-programming>
  
- **Guides for working with middle school students:**
  - <http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/learns/guidelines#middle>
  
- **Guides for working with high school students:**
  - <http://www.nationalservicerresources.org/learns/guidelines#high>

**CELEBRATE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Your work this summer matters and should be celebrated. Remember to go to [Serve.gov](https://www.serve.gov) and tell us your summer story of service.

Also, be sure to keep track of what worked for you this summer and what could be improved. You can learn from this service project when you organize your next service project!