



# MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE

Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** ★★

## Project: Book and School Supply Drive

Literacy is one of the most important skills needed to succeed in our society. Access to books or the materials needed to learn is a challenge for some children in our community. There are five key steps to gathering an impressive collection of great books for many ages or school supplies to equip school children to excel.

- 1) First, decide whether you'll collect books or school supplies - or get ambitious and do both! Either way, you'll be donating essentials to children who lack access to them.

### **For a Book Drive:**

Contact national book donation organizations for guidance. Identify organizations in your community that need books and find out what exactly they are hoping to get. Great potential recipients include local libraries, preschools, elementary, middle and high schools as well as community organizations that serve children. As well, many pediatricians' offices or public assistance centers have children in their waiting rooms for long periods of time without any books to read.

Even if you aren't collecting books for a library, get in touch with children's librarians in your area for advice. Most libraries have grade or age-specific reading lists printed out for patrons.

### **For a school supply drive:**

Determine what grade level you seek to supply - lower grades such as kindergarten require different materials than upper grades do. Contact schools in your area and solicit their recommendations for incoming students of the particular grade you've selected. They probably have a ready-made list they send to parents in the summer.

Find an appropriate recipient for the supplies and get in touch with them about what it's best to deliver. Possible candidates include an elementary, middle or high school serving lower-income students, community center catering to youth, homeless shelter serving families or public assistance center.

- 2) Once you've decided what kind of drive you're doing and identified an exact recipient you'll need to assemble a motivated team, agree upon clear tasks, set reachable goals and act with inspiration and purpose.
  - Start off planning with folks you know and ask them to tell others to join your efforts
  - Meet regularly, especially as MLK Day approaches, and solicit input from everyone
  - Assign concrete tasks to keep everyone motivated and on track.
  - Talk about the parallels and differences between your effort to supply resources, encouragement and inspiration to students and those of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
  - Determine what kinds of supplies you will need for the activities you seek to do. This will depend, as detailed above, on the kind of drive you're conducting and the advice you've collected from librarians, teachers or other experts.



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- In addition to project-specific supplies, make sure to get materials for the notes you'll be including with the school supplies or in the books. This will include paper, pens, markers or crayons or decorative elements.
  - Solicit funds from team members and/or others as well as in-kind donations from business for the supplies you'll need. Be persistent and creative. Book publishers, for example, may have remainder books they're happy to give away, book stores may provide goods, and local business may provide funds.
  - Purchase needed supplies prior to the service day and have them ready to go.
  - Set goals for yourselves, such as number of books or school supplies collected, number of kits or backpacks assembled, number of organizations supplied.
  - Record these goals and make sure you can meet them. If your initial assessment turns out to be too ambitious or not ambitious enough, revise the goals to something the whole team can agree on.
  - [Post your project](#) on our site so that people in your area can join your efforts
- 3) Now it's time to gather the school supplies and/or sort and deliver the books.
- Make sure project leaders or coordinators are at the site early, ready to greet team members and participants as they arrive
  - Officially welcome everyone and talk about the purpose of the day - collecting books and supplies, encouraging reading and serving each other in honor of Dr. King.
  - Sort school supplies into predetermined groupings placing each in set containers (backpacks if you have them or other bags)
  - Group books according to their destinations, if you're dropping off at multiple locations
  - Craft short handwritten notes to put in with the school supplies or books. Solicit ideas from the team and be sure to turn to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life and words for inspiration.
  - Head out on foot, by car, bus or train to deliver the supplies you've assembled
- 4) After the project take some time to consider what worked and didn't so that you can take what you've learned about student needs, age appropriate book choices and organizing a team to make your future efforts an even greater success.
- Host an official debriefing meeting for team members after the service day
  - Examine the goals you set for yourselves and consider which you met, exceeded and didn't quite get
  - Who did your work impact? What did you accomplish? How did it feel?
  - Ask everyone for their honest assessment of what went well and how to improve for next time
  - Consider what doing this work on MLK Day, in particular, meant to you
- 5) We know you don't like to brag but...please do! You may inspire others to do a book and school-supply drive once they hear what you accomplished. [Share your service story](#). We're listening and want to know what you did and how you feel about it.