

# Host an African American Read-Aloud

Interested in holding a Read-Aloud at your school? Here are tips to make it a success\*:

**Organize and communicate with volunteers** – Email or call volunteers a week before to confirm participation. Send out reminders the day before the event with a simple schedule describing what to expect.



**Schedule a half-hour window of time for your volunteers to arrive (and then some!)** – Many volunteers may never have visited your school before. If parking is an issue, please share helpful information ahead of time.

**Create a festive atmosphere** – Greet volunteers as they enter with a welcome table of snacks and beverages: coffee, tea and orange juice with bagels, fruit and snacks. This is a great way to say thank-you to volunteers without a lot of fuss. Allow some time for staff and volunteers to mingle briefly with one another before going into classrooms.

**Keep things simple, yet organized** – When volunteers walk in the door, have them sign in and get a name tag and assign them a classroom number. Assigning volunteers as folks arrive allows for flexibility without a lot of advance planning. Use a simple clipboard chart listing teacher names and classroom numbers with a space to write volunteer names as they enter.

**Let your volunteers choose books** – Enlist your school librarian to help you set up and decorate a “book table” in your welcome area. Allowing volunteers to choose from a wide array of books helps ensure their comfort and success. Where possible, help them choose books that are engaging for students at their grade level. The more choices the better! A book display also adds another festive visual element to your event.



**Plan a simple welcome speech to kick off the event** – After most of the volunteers arrive, (about 20-30 minutes from the start of the event) Present a simple, informal welcome and then send volunteers on their way. Be sure to leave time to explain where various classrooms (and adult bathrooms) are for folks who are new to the school.

**Make volunteering easy** — Once volunteers are done reading, thank them, take their books and allow them to get on their way! All in all the whole event from start to finish requires little over an hour of volunteers' time. By scheduling the event in the morning, folks with 9-5 jobs can hustle along and arrive a bit late to work without taking off a whole day. This makes volunteering easier which allows for a wider array of folks to participate, and makes it easier for folks to volunteer more often.

**Follow up afterward** – Be a great host by following up after the event. Email, or mail (cards are even nicer!) thank you's to volunteers as soon as possible. If you can involve students in writing thank you notes, even better! When volunteers feel warm and fuzzy about this school, they are bound to want to volunteer at the next event.

\*From Desiree St. Louis, John Muir Elementary. Written up by Alison Collins sfpsmom.com (copyright 2016)