

Paula Phillips' 10 Tips for a...

SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL LIBRARY BOOK DRIVE!

- 1) **SET A GOAL** → Not only is it extremely helpful to set a goal of the number of books you want or need to collect, but people generally LOVE to work together toward a goal. Setting a realistic, achievable goal – and excitedly sharing it – will start your project off on the road to success! Also, set a target DATE. It is important that people know when the books are needed – otherwise your project could draw out for months. With good project organization, you can realistically have your entire school library filled within two to three weeks!
- 2) **MAKE YOUR PARAMETERS CLEAR** → If you can only use hard cover books for your library, make that known in a nice way. Most often, people will be respectful of your specific requests. If people do donate other books, I suggest still accepting them graciously. Unless someone dumps 10 boxes of ripped, old, funny smelling books at your doorstep, try not to turn them away. “Extras” that don’t fit with your library needs can be used for classroom libraries or give-aways to students in need.
- 3) **DEVELOP A VOLUNTEER NETWORK** → The easiest way to make a large project like a book drive happen, is to garner the support of a lot of people. Ask for parents’ and teachers’ permission to be included as part of your Volunteer Network, and make sure people know that there is never any pressure to participate if they are not able to. It is amazing how many people want to and WILL participate when their time, talents, and gifts can come from the heart without feeling pressure to participate. They will often in turn reach out their own, which like ripples in a pond, automatically expands the Network!
- 4) **ASK FOR VOLUNTEERS’ E-MAIL ADDRESSES** → E-mail is the easiest way to communicate with many people quickly and effectively. Getting people’s permission to use their e-mail assures they will be aware of and probably read your communications right away – instead of putting them off or tossing them in the trash.
- 5) **COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY AND SHOW YOUR GRATITUDE** → Keep your communication e-mails short, to the point, and from the heart. And keep supporters apprized of the project’s progress with weekly update e-mails. If people see you are 200 books away from your goal, they may be inspired to round up another box of books! At the same time, be respectful. If people receive ten e-mails from you a week, they will probably be less likely to respond. When someone responds with help, thank them with a personal e-mail or note right away.
- 6) **BE RESPECTFUL OF SUPPORTERS’ TIME** → Typically, supporters like and are able to give a couple hours of service support at a time. If someone has

gone out of their way to donate 100 books and then are *expected* to participate in other ways, it may be off-putting. Of course, they absolutely may want to help more, but be in tune to boundaries. It is important that a few people not feel that a whole big project is “dumped” on their shoulders.

- 7) **DETERMINE AN EASY DROP-OFF LOCATION** → It is amazing how quickly donated books pile up – and they get heavy! If they can all be brought to one centralized location, it will save a great deal of time and energy moving books from place to place in the long run.
- 8) **ORGANIZE BOOKS AS THEY COME IN** → Keep things organized from the start. If books are coordinated and boxed as they come in, the whole project is much easier to manage than if 2,000 books are left to simply pile up over two week’s time.
- 9) **MAKE PLANS FOR BOOK CATALOGING** → The last thing you want after a successful book drive is to have hundreds – or even thousands – of books just sitting in boxes for months and months because the library cataloging process has not been considered. The librarian may very well not be authorized for the overtime hours it may take to coordinate and manage this important job. Coordinating PTA volunteers for this specific task is a good place to start if that is an option at your school.
- 10) **PLAN AN EXCITING KICK-OFF ASSEMBLY OR EVENT** → Once you have met your goal, it is important for all – the children, school, teachers, book donors, and project volunteers – to CELEBRATE together! Plan a short, fun, and to the point all-school assembly or other event that shares the joy of working together, of what the success of the book drive means to the school and to the children, and the significance and wonder of reading!

