

The Role of Community-Based Coordinators

Welcome to the **Birthday Books Project**, which provides free gift books to children attending Title I schools on their birthdays. Our **Community-Based Coordinators** play a key leadership role, as described below. (For a broader overview of how Birthday Books works, go to www.birthdaybooks.org.)

1 Coordinating with the school

In every Title I elementary school with a Birthday Books Project (“BBP”), the BBP is run cooperatively by two key leaders:

- The **Community-Based Coordinator (you!)**, a BBP volunteer who is primarily responsible for ordering and gathering the Birthday Books, setting up the BBP display area, and ensuring that the books are regularly replenished as needed; and
- The **School-Based Coordinator**, the school staff member designated by the school to hand out books to each child on their birthday and to coordinate with you about all aspects of the BBP.

Community-Based Coordinators play a key role in supporting the school’s important work. Title I elementary schools do a crucial job educating their students, often despite funding limitations and staff shortages. At BBP, we are proud and happy to help schools give students books — and our Community-Based Coordinators do much of the behind-the-scenes work to make it possible. To do so, you will stay in email contact with the School-Based Coordinator throughout the year, offering and bringing books as needed. *Total time needed is 5-10 hours a month (one year commitment), and reliability is essential.*

2 Gathering the Books

Book gathering is typically begun by the Community-Based Coordinator in the spring or early summer, so as to be ready in advance. In August, before the school year starts, schools will need a supply of books equal to about one-fourth of their total student body. After that, they’ll need to replenish their supply about once a month during the school year, each time with a number of books equal to about one-tenth of their student body. The school may also need extras in May for children with summer birthdays. By planning ahead, the Community-Based Coordinator can get the best books, stay in budget, and avoid a last-minute scramble.

The Community-Based Coordinator will typically have a modest budget to spend on books, provided by the main BBP, another community organization, or the school itself. The typical budget is \$1 per book needed, but great books may be available free or nearly free. (Note: if you can also do some modest fund-raising or donations, that’s terrific — but entirely optional and not expected.)

The BBP gift book may be a child’s only birthday gift, so:

- Every book must be new — and fun!
- There should be a mix of at least half picture books and the rest easy-to-read chapter books.
- Seek diverse titles which reflect a range of characters and cultures.
- Prioritize high-quality, hard-cover books, often available at no extra cost.
- Avoid books that are specific to one religion or holiday, or books which feature weapons or fighting.
- Above all, look for books that a child can enjoy and treasure.

Great sources (lowest to highest prices) include:

- **The Maryland Book Bank** (www.mdbookbank.org) in Baltimore provides unlimited numbers of free books to members who visit **in person**. While they provide both used and new books, BBP can only use high-quality new books, so choose carefully.
- **First Book** (www.firstbook.org) provides **online** ordering of free new children's books to book giveaway programs *at Title I schools only*, for just the cost of shipping, less than \$1 per book. Be sure to use the National Book Bank tab for the special Title I giveaway pricing.
- **Second Avenue** (www.2ndavestores.com), a local thrift store, often stocks remaindered (new) children’s books for **in person** purchase. Their picture book price is \$1.29, and they offer half-price of some books by color-coding every day. Again, please take care to avoid the many used books.
- **Book Depot**, (www.bookdepot.com), a for-profit company available to any buyer, offers **online** purchase of remaindered (new) books for as low as \$1 per book plus about \$.30 per book for shipping and taxes. Although the highest priced option, they have a great selection and more flexible ordering options.

Note that, for the two online options, First Book and Book Depot, you can have books sent to your home or directly to the school. If sending to the school, be sure to give a heads-up to the School-Based Coordinator, and ask if help will be needed unpacking the boxes and setting out the books.

3 Setting up the Birthday Book display area

Schools use a display area, often in their Front Office or Media Center, to store the books and allow each child to choose a gift book on their birthday. While the school provides the needed bookcase and chooses where to put it, you can help by offering to set up the area for them. Typically, this is done in August, during the week before school starts in the fall, after arranging a setup time with the School-Based Coordinator. Books should be arranged with the easiest books on the lowest shelf, the harder books up high, and all books arranged in an attractive, easy-to-see way. On the next page, there is a sign you can print, cut out, and tape at the top of the bookcase. Once the area is set up, you’ll need to replenish it about once every month or two — although, if the School-Based Coordinator agrees, you may be able to just order online and have the books shipped to the school.

Questions? Concerns? Ideas? Contact Marianne Warner at Director@birthdaybooks.org or 240-320-2666.



Happy Birthday

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