



COMMUNICATIONS RESOURCE GUIDE

for Library Power: Strategies for
Enriching Teaching and Learning
in America's Public Schools

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Dear Local Education Fund:

A new report by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, *Library Power: Strategies for Enriching Teaching and Learning in America's Public Schools*, says that school libraries have the potential to contribute significantly to teaching and learning in our public schools, and now we're planning for the national release of that report.

Why should you care?

In collaboration with other important groups, you've managed Library Power, nurtured its development, and put a lot of resources into its growth. Well, now it's time for you to realize the benefits of your investment! No matter what stage you are in with Library Power, you are in a position to reap the rewards for your hard work.

The national release of the Library Power report acknowledges everyone's contributions, affirms the LEFs' worth, and gives you **new and unique opportunities** in your community. If the Library Power model is not yet institutionalized in the community, the report will help you prove Library Power's value. If the program is institutionalized in the schools, the report is a tool that the library media specialists and others in the school system can use to reinforce the Library Power messages. You have worked diligently to pull together diverse groups in your community—by continuing to work with your local schools and community groups, and using the national messages, you will maximize your resources and reinforce the importance of your LEF.

There are some very important reasons that we should **celebrate** the national release of the report, and **you are one of the most important ones.**

- **Library Power's success means YOUR success.** Library Power could not possibly have accomplished so much without the sound management and leadership of the local education funds. LEFs have provided a level of accountability and consistency that has enabled the program to reach its goals—even when faced with shifting priorities and a lack of adequate and appropriately targeted resources. With education and community partners, LEFs have strengthened the investment that communities have made to ensure a high-quality education for their children.
- **Library Power is the perfect example of the positive impact that LEFs can have on your community and communities nationwide.** LEFs are needed in our cities, towns, and states. At no other time has your leadership been needed more—just when communities are looking for high student achievement and better accountability of school systems.
- **Library Power must continue.** You've worked hard to establish this phenomenal program, and its success is tied directly to LEFs. To ensure the survival of Library Power, you need to continue to support the program. Help the program soar, and you will soar with it!
- **Library Power is just the beginning.** How can LEFs, viewing their positive achievements, quit now? There is much to be done, and you are uniquely equipped to provide what our school systems so desperately need.

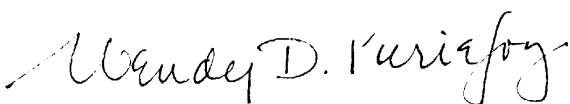
What will the next "LibraryPower" be?

You are leading the next tidal wave of social change in our schools. You will raise our expectations—and then help those expectations be met. **It is time for us to take the lessons learned from Library Power and move on to tell the story of local education funds.** We must challenge ourselves by moving to the next level and fulfilling the roles of change that uniquely belong to LEFs.

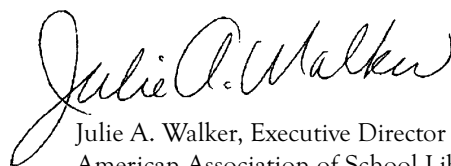
This resource guide will help you use the good news of Library Power to tell the larger story of LEFs. It's full of suggested outreach and educational activities. In addition, we have included sample documents for your use, customization, and distribution. Several copies of the new report will also be provided to you as soon as they are available.

Thank you for your strong leadership and continued efforts to make our public schools among the best in the world.

Sincerely,



Wendy D. Puriefogy, President
Public Education Network



Julie A. Walker, Executive Director
American Association of School Librarians

Library Power: What's the National Story?

Making libraries better . . . that was the dream of the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund (DWRDF) when the program began in 1988. Ten years later, we are celebrating the realization of that dream and so much more. Library Power has grown to become the largest investment in school libraries in more than 30 years.

We started with the **national goals of Library Power**, the program blueprint:

- Create new expectations for public elementary and middle school library programs and encourage new and innovative uses of the library's physical and human resources.
- Create exemplary models of library media programs that are an integral part of the educational process.
- Strengthen the role of the librarian as a teacher, information specialist, and learning facilitator who assists teachers and students in becoming effective users of ideas and information.
- Encourage collaboration among teachers, administrators, and librarians that result in

significant improvement in the teaching and learning process.

- Demonstrate the significant contributions that library programs can make to school reform and restructuring efforts.
- Encourage the creation of partnerships among leaders in school districts, public libraries, community agencies, business communities, academic institutions, and parent groups to improve and support school library programs.

These goals became a driving force to improve our schools and our communities, and now we know our work has succeeded. Early results of a multi-year, national evaluation of Library Power show that libraries have the potential to significantly contribute to teaching and learning in public schools. The evaluation conducted by the University of Wisconsin focuses primarily on how well schools have implemented the core components of the Library Power program and the outcomes. The results, like the program, are powerful. In anticipation of the national evaluation, DWRDF has completed a report that

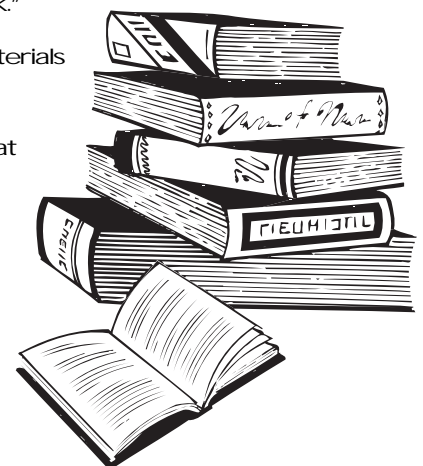
"The new library is super cool My library teacher, her friends and my friends, and I all had a part in making the library better with Library Power."

Glen Hereford, student
Charles Lake
Elementary School,
Cleveland Library Power

Early Findings

Emerging findings from the University of Wisconsin research show that libraries can move from playing a passive, supplemental role to becoming central to teaching and learning throughout entire schools. Evaluators have found that in Library Power schools:

- Library collections have become much better aligned with instruction and curriculum, and that change has enabled many teachers to use Library Power resources to "go beyond the textbook."
- Librarians and teachers collaborate to a considerable extent in the selection of materials and their use in support of instruction.
- Library Power has contributed to building the kind of "professional community" that supports improved instruction.
- The program is a powerful catalytic tool in advancing inquiry-based teaching and learning within schools moving in that direction.
- Library use has changed in character from required visits on a fixed schedule to more flexible access that promotes closer alignment between instruction and library use—varied learning activities, individual research, and spontaneous exploration of topics.



shows the impact of Library Power. The report discusses positive changes in four key areas: changes in the role of the library and of librarians; changes in teaching and learning; changes in the relationship between communities and schools; and implications of these changes on practice and policy in schools.

The report is encouraging and inspiring. DWRDF is now planning to share the Library Power story with other communities and school systems so they can benefit from our experience. While DWRDF will be disseminating this report nationally, we hope the LEFs will work to spread the word locally. By working together, our messages will be reinforced.

Here's a look at what will be happening nationally:

- The report will be disseminated nationally to many important groups who need to hear our message. These groups include:

Members of Congress, particularly those on education and appropriation committees

Educators, including department heads at top universities and graduate schools

National education organizations, including National Parent Teacher Association and American Council on Education

National/state school reform networks, including Coalition of Essential Schools and Accelerated Schools

Foundations/corporate givers, including the AT&T Foundation and the Ford Foundation

Policy makers, including the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities

Literacy advocacy/policy organizations, including the National Center for Family Literacy and The Reading Foundation

National minority organizations, including the National Urban League and National Council of La Raza

Library associations, including Friends of the Library, USA and Libraries for the Future

Businesses and key technology companies, including IBM and Microsoft

Business organizations, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Alliance of Business

Library Power community school superintendents

Library Power community school board members

- The report will be sent to the education trade and national general media. General media will include national and regional radio, national television, print, minority, and Internet publications/sites. Local Library Power sites may be tapped to discuss their experiences and offer insight. Even though DWRDF will be contacting national media, you are still encouraged to contact your local media to educate them and engage your community in discussion about your accomplishments locally.
- DWRDF staff will serve as ambassadors and spokespeople during the national dissemination of the report. Again, while they are working nationally, the LEFs have the opportunity to work locally.

You are an ambassador for Library Power as well and a catalyst for change in your community and schools around the country. The national dissemination of the Library Power report gives you a valuable opportunity locally to continue to build important relationships and support for your local education fund. By harnessing the momentum locally, you too have the power to energize America's schools.



Key Messages

The last 10 years of Library Power have been rewarding as well as challenging, and we have learned many lessons through national and local efforts. When planning local activities and outreach related to the Library Power report, consider using these key messages to help guide your communications. By holding conversations in your local community on the Library Power report, you will help disseminate these important messages and strengthen Library Power, public schools, and your LEF. (There is information on how to further adapt these messages for your local use on page 4.)

Libraries can be vehicles for school reform.

- Libraries are important centers for teaching and learning in schools.
- School libraries can help students develop reading, research, and critical thinking skills.

Library Power is enhancing teaching and learning.

- A new report shows that students, teachers, librarians, schools, and communities have benefited from Library Power.

- Library Power turns libraries into active places of learning.
- Students are likely to use the library more often when they have a comfortable and modern library environment.
- Library Power is a catalyst for expanded roles and collaboration among teachers and librarians, forging new partnerships, and enhancing professional development.

Local education funds are helping to improve public schools through programs like Library Power.

- Library Power helps LEFs welcome the community into public schools.
- LEFs use Library Power as a catalyst to foster community partnerships to leverage human and financial support for public schools.

Tapping Into the National Story: Planning Locally

Use the release of the national report to build or maintain relationships with your local media, political leaders, businesses, and other segments of your community.

Organize a Planning Group

Your first step to tap into the national report release is to assemble a planning group within your local education fund. You may choose to use your Library Power Advisory Committee or a subcommittee of that group. At the outset, the planning group should determine what specific activities the LEF will undertake, what human and financial resources those activities will require, and how the LEF will see the tasks through to successful completion.

Reinforce Key Messages

Throughout your planning, keep in mind the key messages presented on page 3. We hope you find these messages useful, and that you will adapt them for your local use. By reinforcing what's happening nationally, your communications efforts are likely to resonate more with your key audiences. Ultimately, the “conversation” about Library Power is a national one.

Team Up With Other Groups

A critical element to your program is collaboration with other organizations in your area. Simply put, when the education community stands together with a unified message, it makes an impact that no organization could easily achieve on its own. Work together with other groups such as Library Power schools, local public libraries, business sponsors, parents, and others who have supported you in the past.

Think Long-Term

Use the national Library Power report to build or maintain relationships with your local media, political leaders, businesses, and other segments of your community. These partnerships will yield important benefits in your future efforts and goals.

Develop Dynamic Dialogue

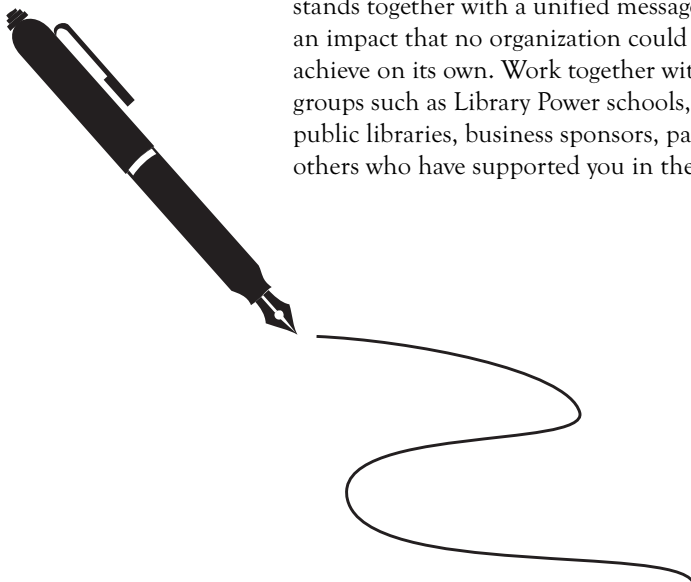
While you have already told your community about many of Library Power's great successes, you will want to develop interactive dialogues with various community groups to discuss your role as an LEF and how more schools, organizations, and individuals can become involved. This is your opportunity to “personalize” the report release in your community.

Craft Local Messages

Develop examples, anecdotes, and illustrations of how Library Power—and your LEF—has changed your local school(s), students, and community. It's great to report that Library Power has met its goals, but it's more interesting and compelling when you can illustrate that with a personal story. Using local examples will also facilitate interactive discussion. Stress your role as an LEF and that the Library Power goals could not have been met without collaborative relationships and your leadership. No matter what your final messages are, plan to refer to them each time you speak to a group, give an interview, or write a letter to the editor.

Choose Your Audiences

You have very important audiences in your community, including school administrators, teachers, parents, students, corporations, and more, with whom you will want to communicate. Make a list of these audiences by organization or individual name.



Select Channels of Communications

You have key messages and you want two-way discussion—how will you accomplish that? Match each message with an audience and a method of delivery! It's O.K. to have the same message for more than one group, or to communicate to more than one audience with an event. Choose methods that will favorably and directly deliver the story of LEFs. Review how you've communicated with audiences in the past and discuss what's been successful. Some options for initial contact include:

- Media
- Letter
- Phone call
- One-on-one meeting
- Group meeting
- Presentation
- Special event

Options for interaction include:

- attending a public meeting for face-to-face feedback;
- giving a media interview on talk radio to facilitate discussion;
- talking to interested callers;
- attending a popular school event, such as a soccer game, and talking about your LEF to parents;
- exhibiting at local events, such as a community bazaar;
- encouraging written feedback and providing suggestion sheets;
- hosting community events at the libraries; and
- holding tours and open houses.

There are as many options as you have audiences and needs—be creative!



Create a Timeline

To help you envision and organize a comprehensive initiative for your LEF that reaches beyond an initial news release, here's a timeline to assist you in turning your communications outreach into a nine-month effort. These activities are only suggestions, and you can customize your timeline when you choose your audiences and activities.

* These activities should be conducted monthly.

Pre-Launch Preparation

- Set up a planning committee and meet with them regularly.*
- Develop local goals for your LEF and Library Power program.
- Develop local materials.
- Plan and prepare for media/community event.
- Identify and recruit spokespeople.
- Fine-tune messages.
- Adopt a theme. This isn't necessary, but may make your messages more fun and memorable!
- Update list of public service directors.
- Update list of news media.
- Research appropriate Web sites and find out how to access local computer bulletin boards.
- Write news release.
- Compile media kits.
- Establish a budget for the campaign.
- Secure sponsors, if necessary.

Month 1—LEF Initiative Kicks Off!

- Send a local news release about the Library Power report and the crucial role of your LEF. Include overall results and local statistics, if available.
- Invite local media to visit a Library Power library.
- Follow up with media to secure interviews.
- Launch LEF campaign with a community event.
- Establish/promote speakers bureau.*
- Place announcements/information on computer bulletin boards.
- Monitor media for clips.*

Month 2

- Start writing letters to editors.*
- Begin to plan LEF presentation for Library Power schools. Plan to present on Parent's Night or some other major event.
- Begin to plan LEF presentation for teachers. (Note: It would be helpful to develop a PowerPoint or other type of presentation that you can customize for various groups.)

Month 3

- Begin feature story pitches.
- Start writing and placing op-eds.*
- Begin planning your community events for the next few months (see activities section).

A timeline can help you envision and organize a comprehensive initiative that reaches beyond an initial news release.

Month 4

- Set up editorial board meetings.
- Conduct mailings to and meetings with local businesses and foundations.

Month 5

- Conduct a survey of parents about what school problems are most pressing and/or worrisome.
- Begin to schedule and give the presentations that you planned in Month 2.

Month 6

- Conduct a Town Meeting with parents, teachers, students; invite local cable TV to cover it. Discuss results of parent survey and address how your LEF can help address their concerns.

Month 7

- Conduct education “fair” or other activity in your local mall.
- Hold open meetings at local libraries.

Month 8

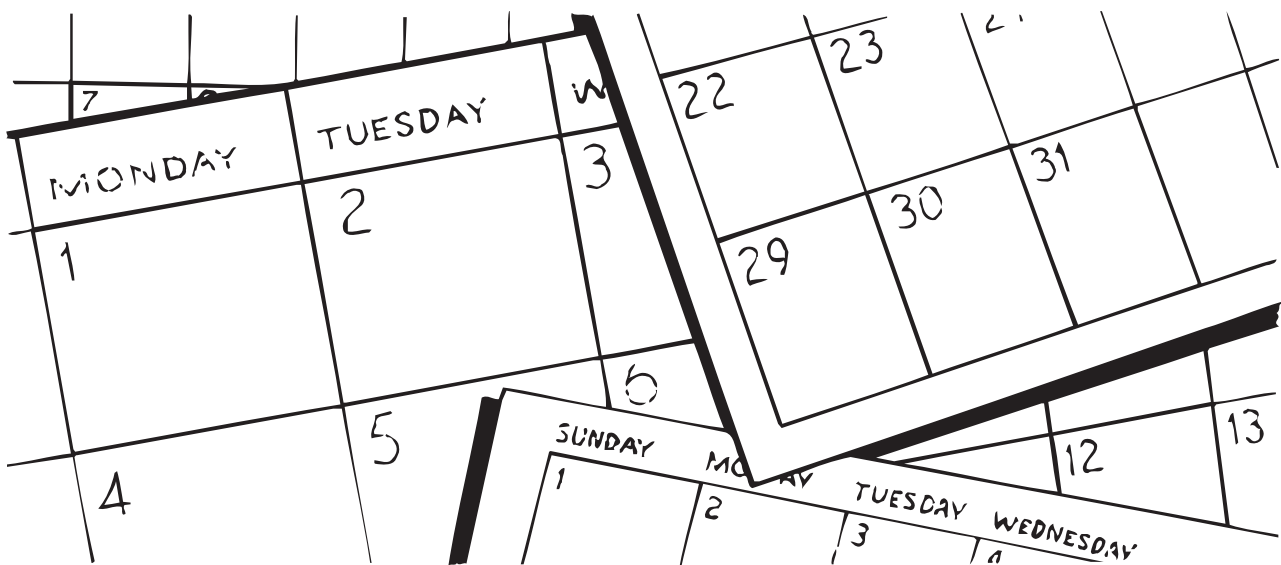
- Declare Local Education Fund Month.
- Hold a Policy Maker Roundtable.

Month 9

- Distribute certificates of appreciation to those who have supported your LEF.
- Hold a luncheon for your volunteers.

Post-Campaign Activities

- Evaluate and assess campaign results.
- Update LEF database with new contacts.
- Prepare a “to do” list based on your results and feedback.
- Report your progress to PEN!



Increase Your Reach With Creative Activities

There are many tools that can help you gain and maintain positive relationships with your key audiences. Here are some ideas to add to your communications arsenal.

Engage the Media

Presenting your message through the media in a concise, organized fashion is one of the best methods of communicating with your audiences, but you will also want to “engage” your local media in Library Power and other school reform issues. Meet with key editors and producers to discuss local issues and ask a media representative to sit on your board. Don’t encourage “one-shot” stories, but work to interest journalists in an education series. Make the media partners in your efforts and always look for new and interesting ways to tie local news into what you’re doing.

Your LEF is unique, and you have a lot to say. First, learn as much as you can about your local media, especially the reporters who cover education, and observe these **general tips**:

- Before you ask the media to talk to you, it’s important to decide who will talk to *them*. Choose spokespeople who are familiar with your LEF, its programs, and general local and national education issues.
- Know the deadlines reporters must meet to file stories.
- Approach reporters covering your “beat,” i.e., education, business, or lifestyle. Think of different angles a reporter might take to cover your issue (such as the costs to business due to a poorly educated workforce) and approach the appropriate reporter (here, the business reporter).
- Be aware of past relationships with and attitudes toward your LEF.
- Contact reporters early in the day before they’re on deadline and too busy to talk to you.

- Contact reporters early in the week, when they’re still looking for story ideas.
- Make sure your spokesperson is articulate, well-informed, polite, and interesting.
- Always be completely honest. Know your facts, and stick to them.
- Do not be intimidated by reporters. If you don’t know the answer to a question, admit it. Tell the reporter you’ll find the answer and call him or her back. Always call back before the reporter’s deadline.
- Feel free to make friends with reporters, but always honor their professionalism first. *Never* take advantage of the friendship by asking them to write a story as a “favor.”
- Treat *all* members of the media with respect and interest. Today’s cub reporter may be tomorrow’s editor or producer.
- You can initiate informal meetings (breakfasts or lunches) with reporters to discuss your ideas and story angles, but be patient. Sometimes it takes months to establish a relationship.
- Do not be a pest. Try to ensure that your first contact with a reporter is about something that is truly newsworthy.
- Flooding the media with releases on non-news events will hinder your organization’s credibility.
- A good story will establish you and your organization as an important news source.
- Avoid telling a reporter things you don’t want to see in print the next day, no matter how friendly the reporter may seem. The reporter’s job is to tell the news as he or she sees it.
- Think carefully before complaining about a “negative” story. Many times it only serves to attract unfavorable attention to your LEF. Do correct inaccurate information with a polite letter to the editor and to the reporter who wrote the story.

“Engage” your local media in Library Power and other school reform issues.

Make the media partners in your efforts and always look for new and interesting ways to tie what you’re doing into local news.

- *Always* remember to thank reporters when they run a story on your organization or quote you in an article.

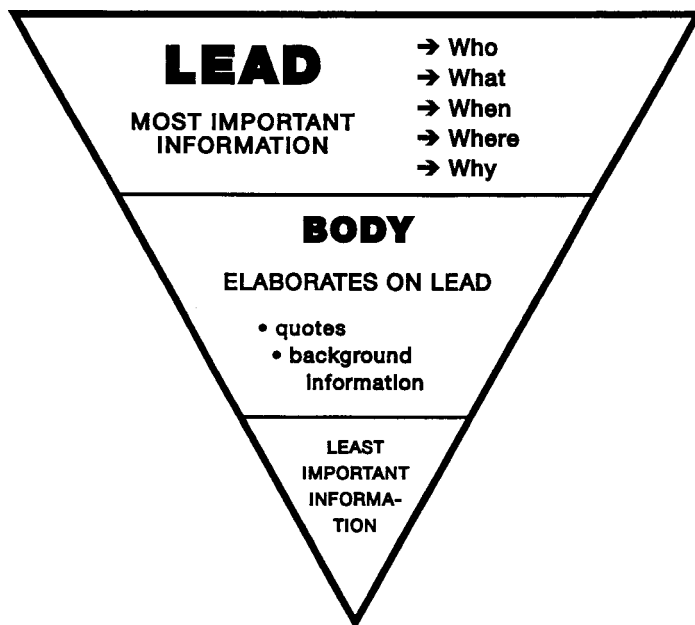
Write It Up in a News Release

Be sure that the writing and distribution of a news release is necessary. News releases can be written to:

- issue a statement or take a stand on a news development or issue;
- provide background information or to supplement late-breaking news; and/or
- announce other news, such as the findings of a study, the results of a poll, recommendations in a report, or a special event;

When writing a news release, be sure to format it correctly. If the release looks professional, reporters will be more likely to read it.

- Use LEF letterhead.
- List a contact person and his or her phone number in the upper right-hand corner of the page.



- Write “FOR RELEASE [date, time]” in the upper left-hand corner of the page.
- For news releases issued in advance of breaking news, write “EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL [date, time]” in the upper left-hand corner of the page.
- Come down almost a third of a page and center the title of the release.
- Be brief—one to two pages typed with wide margins and double-spaced. Although we all want to save paper, avoid printing front and back.
- Write in the **active** voice and use short sentences and paragraphs.
- If longer than one page, type “-more-” at the bottom of every page that continues. In the upper left corner of each subsequent page, put an identifying phrase and page number. (Pages can easily get separated in a newsroom.) Type “###” at the end of the final page.
- Proofread your release. It should contain no typos, misspellings, or cross-outs.

Although every news release is different, there are some basic guidelines to help you develop content. Here they are:

- Use inverted pyramid writing style and state facts in descending order of importance. (See graphic.)
- Include *at least* two to three of the five W’s (Who, What, Where, When, and Why) in the lead (first) paragraph. Summarize the climax in the lead. It should “hook” the reporter into reading the rest of your release.
- The second paragraph should answer the other W’s.
- Identify your LEF spokesperson no later than the third paragraph.
- Use quotes to make an emotional point or state an opinion. A good release usually contains two to four quotes.
- Include background information about your organization in the last paragraph (major purpose, membership size, programs).

- Double-check names, dates, places, numbers, and quotes for accuracy.

(Use the sample news release on pages 12-13 to customize for your local use.)

Talk It Up on Radio and TV

Radio is a valuable medium for reaching the public. Talk show hosts love to have professionals talk about current issues, and education is consistently high on the priority list for most communities. Try to get a local radio placement for your LEF spokesperson by following these recommendations:

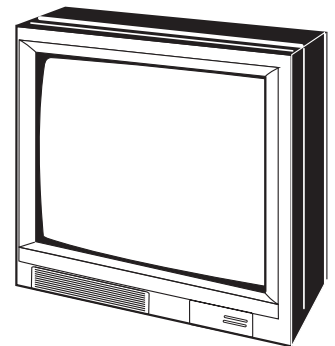
- Call your local radio station(s) and find out who the appropriate producer or talk show personality would be for this subject.
- Send a personal “pitch” letter to the contact(s), telling him or her about your LEF and the amazing things you are doing for education in your community. Mention the success of Library Power and stress that more community involvement is needed. Mention statistics, if available, for your community, and facts from the report. (A sample radio pitch letter is on page 14.)
- In your letter, pitch people to interview and explain why they are interesting and appropriate for the radio program. In addition to your LEF spokespeople, possible interviewees include library media specialists, city/county council members who advocate school reform, corporate funders, and students with compelling stories.
- If you don’t hear from your contact, place a follow-up phone call approximately a week after you send the letter. Be prepared with the “30-second pitch.” Journalists don’t always have a lot of time, and you want to restate your case for being interviewed quickly but convincingly.
- If you are invited for an interview, be prepared to talk about local education issues and share statistical information.

Practice keeping your answers relatively short (30 seconds can seem like an eternity on the radio!) and try to end all answers and the interview on a positive note.

Pitching an education story to the broadcast media is an ambitious endeavor, but one that can be achieved with some research and preparation. A story that raises community education issues and presents your LEF’s point of view can have a tremendous impact.

Broadcast journalists and talk show hosts rely on solution-oriented stories that present a problem and offer a resolution. The stories must be credible and interesting, and offer viewers an opportunity to relate personally to the information being given. Because television airtime is limited, stories should consist of several short pieces so that they can be broken into segments. To increase your chances of a successful pitch, follow these recommendations:

- Call your local television station and get appropriate contact names, including the news director who makes story assignments and the talk show producer for talk show bookings. Contact him or her and be prepared to pitch the story quickly and concisely. Often reporters and producers want something in writing. If that’s the case, mail a pitch letter and media kit and then follow up again by phone.
- Offer local experts or researchers who will share their knowledge/findings and offer treatments or resolutions to education issues. Prepare them for interviews by reminding them to speak in short sentences, limit use of “jargon,” and remain calm and flexible.
- Offer real people—students, parents, library media specialists, teachers—who are willing to tell their stories and respond to questions.
- Provide the news director or interviewer with your LEF’s name and telephone number so viewers can contact you if they want to follow up or receive additional information.



Sample News Release

FOR RELEASE:
[date]

CONTACT: [name]
[telephonenumber]

Opening the Books: Report Finds Library Power Program Greatly Improves Local School Libraries, Student Involvement

Work of [name of local LEF], nonprofit education fund,
needs increased local commitment now

[CITY, State] — A new report finds that a [\$] grant received in [year] from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund's (DWRDF) Library Power Program has resulted in a major revitalization of [number] elementary and middle school libraries in [site], prompting students to make much greater use of the expanded facilities while also enhancing cooperation between teachers, librarians, and school administrators.

The report, *Library Power: Strategies for Enriching Teaching and Learning in America's Public Schools*, prepared by DWRDF, notes that interim evaluation data compiled by researchers from the University of Wisconsin at Madison reveals that the allocations of Library Power grants by [local LEF] and similar local education funds around the country has led to "substantial" upgrading of school library collections, physical space, media programs, and student use.

"These changes [nationally]... are helping draw more students into the library [and are] having a noticeable impact on how they make use of the materials," according to the report. In some Library Power schools around the country, circulation of books has doubled or even tripled, and students everywhere are learning a "vitaly important skill" called "information literacy," or knowing how to access, evaluate, and use information from a variety of sources, the report says.

Now marking its 10th anniversary, the Library Power Program—funded by \$40 million from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, plus another \$25 million generated in public and private money—constitutes the largest investment in the school libraries of low-income communities in more than 30 years. It currently operates in 19 communities across the country, serving more than 425,000 students in more than 700 schools—including [number] youngsters in [school names] in [site/communities].

With the [\$] Library Power grant, plus [\$] in local funding, the libraries in these local schools have [brief description of local improvements; initiatives].

-more-

“Our school libraries have undergone a significant transformation,” said [local LEF spokesperson] of [local LEF name], the local education fund that has administered the Library Power grant here. “Now [number] of our elementary and middle school libraries are bright, exciting centers where students, parents, and even teachers are finding that there is much more available to them and many more ways to learn than they imagined.”

In order to participate in the Library Power Program, local school districts agreed to match the DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund contribution for book purchases, as well as hire full-time media specialists for the school libraries. Local benefactors for the program have included [list names]. To increase community involvement and sustain support for Library Power, DWRDF chose to fund the program through local education funds, which are members of the Public Education Network (PEN), based in Washington, D.C. PEN provides technical assistance and programmatic support to each LEF involved in Library Power.

Library Power encourages the creation of even more such partnerships among the business community, local government agencies, academic institutions, parent groups, public libraries, and leaders in the school districts in order to provide the support necessary to continue the school library improvements Library Power has initiated, [local LEF spokesperson] explained.

“We cannot return to the old days of underfunded, obsolete public school libraries. If we want our children to succeed, all of us must give them the educational resources they need to do so,” [local LEF spokesperson] said.

The report on Library Power’s accomplishments notes that the American Association of School Libraries (AASL), a division of the American Library Association, has been one of the coordinating agencies for Library Power and developed the guidelines for improving school libraries in a document called Information Power, which Library Power was the first to put into practice throughout the country.

This year, the AASL plans to release a revised set of guidelines, Information Power II, which will “reflect Library Power’s influence on learning and teaching, information access and delivery, and program administration,” the report says.

[Add closing descriptive paragraph on your LEF.]

###

Sample Radio Pitch Letter

Dear :

You may remember a big sign in your old school library that warned Quiet!—but the exciting changes in our [site's] school libraries are something you'll want to shout about on the air.

[Spell out number] of [site's] elementary and middle school libraries are in the forefront of one of the most promising educational initiatives in decades: The Library Power Program. We think your listeners will want to hear about the program as well as the innovative local education fund (LEF) that has managed it.

Now marking its 10th anniversary, the Library Power Program—funded by \$40 million from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, plus another \$25 million generated in public and private money—constitutes the largest investment in the school libraries of low-income communities in more than 30 years. It is fostering more than just extraordinary changes in once-dull, out-of-date, poorly used libraries; it is promoting impressive, overall improvements in our school system. With better, more current and relevant books, supplemental materials and the latest information technologies, librarians, teachers, and administrators alike are learning how to collaborate to create innovative library programs.

All of the Library Power money has been distributed through [LEF name], the nonprofit, community-based local education fund that has made improvement of [site] schools its mission. If we want our children to succeed, we must give them the resources to do so, and your LEF and school district are making that possible. Your listeners can learn the inspiring story of the Library Power Program's success in [site] from [local LEF representative] and what other programs and resources are in store from the LEF. We would be happy to arrange a time when [he/she] could appear on your program to describe what we have done and to answer questions about it.

We will be calling you to see about setting up an opportunity for [LEF representative] to appear on your program to discuss the remarkable achievements of [Area's] local education fund—and how we can ensure the continuance of its successes.

Sincerely,

Sample Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Without a well-educated public that can read—and is interested in what is going on in the world—the future of your newspaper is as dim as the prospects for our community.

Although [local LEF name] agrees emphatically with the Newspaper Association of America that reading is something that will serve children for the rest of their lives, we also believe that the traditional concept of literacy—the basic ability to read and write—is no longer sufficient.

As noted in a new report, *Library Power: Strategies for Enriching Teaching and Learning in America's Public Schools*, the modern explosion in information technologies mandates that students today be taught information literacy—where to go for information, how to use it, and how to communicate it—in order to succeed in life.

That is exactly what [number] students at [names of schools] in [site] are learning now, thanks to [LEF's] strong management of a [\$] grant from the Library Power Program of the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, which is marking its 10th anniversary this year.

With our Library Power grant, [LEF] saw to it that previously underfunded, understaffed libraries have [brief, 15- to 25-word description of local initiatives].

Library Power has helped to build the capacity of the LEF and advanced [LEF's] mission to revitalize our educational system. In order to participate in Library Power, our school district had to match the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund contribution for book purchases, as well as hire full-time media specialists for the school libraries. Our local benefactors have included [list names].

[LEF] hopes that the Library Power example will encourage the creation of even more such partnerships among the business community, local government agencies, academic institutions, parent groups, public libraries, and leaders in our school districts to provide the support needed to continue the school library improvements Library Power has fostered—and to embark on further widespread educational initiatives.

Our school libraries have undergone an inspiring transformation. They now are bright, exciting centers where students, parents, and even teachers are finding that there is much more available to them and many more ways to learn than they imagined. We cannot return to the old days of underfunded, obsolete public school libraries or disconnected school systems. If we want our children to succeed, all of us must give them the educational resources they need to do so.

Sincerely,

Get Your Kit Together

It is helpful to have a media kit on hand as you begin to engage your local media in a dialogue about Library Power and your LEF. A media kit should be compiled as a concise, attractive package of background information about your local education fund, Library Power, and local and national education issues relevant to you.

Prepare enough kits to send to your local media and then keep them on file to send to reporters who request one. This same kit could also be altered and used as a general information kit for speakers bureau pitches, those calling for general information, potential funders, volunteers, etc.

Kits should include:

- news release;
- fact sheets on Library Power and LEFs, including specific information about your LEF's work and the national report;
- your mission statement and goals;
- backgrounders that highlight the history of your LEF;
- any brochures, newsletters and other outreach materials;
- staff profiles (executive director, coalition members);
- a Question and Answer piece, which provides answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about LEFs;
- glossy black and white photographs of spokespeople, 5"x7" or 8"x10" with short

Additional Tips

- Never flood reporters with too much information. Let them know that when they get an envelope from your organization, it is worth looking at.
- Every time a new education reporter takes over, send him/her a package of background information on your LEF.
- Make it easy for the reporter to get the information for an article. The less difficult it is, the more likely he/she will call on you in the future.

bios, or photos of a Library Power library (optional); and

- sample articles that have appeared in the media (optional).

These materials are usually assembled and contained in a two-pocket folder. If your kit includes a news release, it should be placed on the right-hand side, in front, to ensure visibility. Remember to include a business card. All materials should be dated. It is not necessary to have a glossy, expensive media kit. The media is interested in brevity, clarity, and the newsworthiness of the kit's content.

Tell It to the Editor

Another effective way to bring education issues to the spotlight is to submit a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Since newspaper editors appreciate receiving exclusive pieces, limit your letter to one newspaper in your area, preferably the one with the largest circulation. If the paper does not print the letter, send it to the next largest paper. (A sample letter to the editor is included on page 15.)

To improve your letter's chance of placement, follow these recommendations:

- Call the newspaper and ask about the paper's policies concerning letters to the editor, if you are not already familiar with them. Follow instructions for submission carefully.
- If you choose to use the letter provided in this kit, tailor it to the concerns of your community. Use personal stories or other specifics whenever possible to draw local attention.
- Praise the reporter or paper, if appropriate, for its presentation of education or LEF issues in the past.
- If the letter doesn't appear within two weeks, follow up with a phone call to the editor. Ask if there is additional information you can provide.

Give Your Opinion

Like letters to the editor, opinion articles present well-defined issues and rational solutions to problems, and serve as effective tools for reaching the public. Readers respond to human-interest stories and experiences they can relate to. When submitting an editorial, follow the same recommendations that are made for letters to the editor. (The sample opinion article on pages 18-19 can be customized or you can use it as a starting point for your own story.)

Call an Editorial Board Meeting

Each newspaper has a section of short, non-bylined pieces written by a variety of staff reporters that comment on current issues and hard news stories. These pieces carry a lot of weight because they express a point of view from the newspaper itself. You can request a meeting with the editorial board of a newspaper to share information on Library Power and other work your LEF is doing. If you follow the guidelines for other media recommendations above, you can present a concise, compelling case for your LEF in a personal meeting and request that attention be drawn to the vital work you're doing.

More Ideas

Calendar Listings Most newspapers and magazines include some type of calendar in which you may include any LEF activities open to the public and news media. Check with the publication to determine deadlines, proper format, and the appropriate contact person. Send notification of your event well in advance to ensure inclusion and call to make sure the contact received the information.

Billboards Many times, outdoor billboards go vacant for lack of business. Check with your local outdoor advertising company about donating space for your LEF. Create a design based on Library Power or come up with a general LEF message and approach a printer about supplying complimentary or at-cost services.

Public Transit Public bus, subway, and train systems offer excellent opportunities to educate captive audiences about your LEF. They may provide public service advertising free of charge, on the interiors and exteriors of their vehicles. Contact your local public transit authority to find out if they have this type of program and obtain their display guidelines.

Be Creative Be creative in getting your messages out to your community. Approach the managers of your local movie theaters and ask if they will use LEF public service advertising before the main movie feature. Ask an advertising specialty company to print your LEF's message and phone number on pencils, mugs, caps, or other items so you can hand them out. Explore new options and be open to unique ways of interacting with your community.

Sample Op-Ed with Alternative Headlines (choose one)

The Power of Possibilities:
Revitalizing Our School Libraries

School Library Power: Silent No Longer

Speaking Out for School Libraries

As detailed in a new report, *Library Power: Strategies for Enriching Teaching and Learning in America's Public Schools*, many of the elementary and middle school libraries in communities such as [site] used to fit the dismal profile often found in low-income areas across the country: They were understaffed, underfunded, bleak repositories of obsolete books and research materials. They were not considered central to the schools' mission of teaching or learning. Sometimes they simply served as a place to park students while their teachers were on a break. In some locations, they even were closed.

Thanks to the commitment of [local LEF name] and its management of a [\$ amount] grant from Library Power Program of the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, all that has changed now in the libraries of [school names or number of schools] in [site]. Setting as its goals the restoration and revitalization of library services in low-income public elementary and middle schools, as well as recognition of the libraries' role as a focal point of our educational system, Library Power joined forces with [local LEF name] and other nonprofit, community-based local education funds around the country. Together they have had a profound impact on more than 425,000 students attending more than 700 schools in 19 communities nationwide—including [number] children in [site].

Overall, the Library Power Program has contributed \$65 million to this initiative, the largest investment in our public school libraries in more than 30 years. Using that money, [local LEF name] has transformed once-dingy, uninspiring places into bright, inviting, interactive centers where children become immediately engaged in the enormously exciting opportunities available to them through research and learning. They are gaining vitally important skills that will help them advance throughout their schooling—and in life.

[In one paragraph of 50 words or less, briefly describe key changes your LEF has initiated in your school libraries.]

[Local LEF's] revitalization of the libraries in turn has fostered a remarkable improvement in [site's] school system. The learning hasn't been limited to students. Teachers, library media specialists, and administrators alike are

discovering how to create innovative library-linked programs that have become key components of their school's educational efforts. A more collegial atmosphere is being developed, with teachers collaborating together with the library media specialists to determine how best to support classroom learning.

If we want our children to achieve, we must give them the resources they need to do so. Now is not the time to retreat from the advances we have made.

The Library Power Program served as a catalyst, providing a hook that [local LEF name] used for securing additional public and private resources for our schools, as well as a better allocation of existing public money.

In order to participate in the Library Power Program, [site's] school districts were required to match the contribution from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund for book purchases, as well as promise to hire and pay the salaries of full-time media specialists in the libraries.

In all, the \$40 million in Library Power money provided by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund has leveraged another \$25 million in public and private money. These new resources range from the \$5 million endowment from the Vincent T. Astor Foundation to create the Astor Center for School Libraries in New York City, to the \$105,000 the Public Education and Business Coalition in Denver has received from AT&T and US West, to the decision by the New Haven public schools to raise the district's allocation for developing library collections from \$2.25 per student to \$10 per student.

In [sites other than New York, Denver, and New Haven], we have received [give brief description in 50 words or less of local support].

Immensely grateful as we are for this support, we know that even more is needed. It is imperative that we not go back to the days of underfunded—or closed—public school libraries or disconnected school systems. The real force behind the Library Power Program has been local education funds such as [local LEF name] and the educational possibilities it embodies.

[Add any specific need or initiative you may have here.]

Through its pioneering work in our elementary and middle school libraries, [local LEF name] has shown us how crucial a revitalized public school system can be to giving our children the skills they need to fulfill their potential.

###

Set Up a Speakers Bureau

A speakers bureau will help you connect with your community.

A speakers bureau offers a proactive way to place speakers at meetings, events, and other functions in your community. A speakers bureau can be a very effective outreach tool. It can: increase awareness of your LEF and the work it's doing; engage your community in conversations about education and related topics; serve as a relationship builder with key audiences and organizations; and communicate to the LEF what additional events and topics are important to community members. Follow these steps to set up your speakers bureau:

1. Determine what you want to say to your community.

Since you will be asking people to speak on behalf of your LEF, you'll need to tell them exactly what messages to convey. If you are clear about what you want to say, your speakers will be clear about what to say.

2. Identify persuasive speakers who have a strong connection to your LEF.

LEF staff members are obvious speaker choices, but do you know of an active Library Power parent who is a respected businessperson in the community? Think about your LEF and Library Power schools and identify 20-25 people who would be good speakers. Try to identify people who can speak at various times (afternoon, evening, weekends) and people who come from various backgrounds and disciplines.

3. Invite speakers to participate.

When you have your potential speaker list, develop an invitation letter. Tell them how important they are and clearly outline how and why you'd like them to participate in your program. The number one reason people refuse to volunteer is lack of time, so make your letter friendly and brief. Assure your potential speakers that they will only be needed once a quarter or whatever schedule you arrange.

4. Create a repertoire that is strong and varied.

Your speakers might be addressing a Young Presidents Club one night, and a Young

Mothers Club the next. Not every group will have the same interests and needs, so be sensitive to your audience. The more you have to offer in topics and tone, the more successful you will be in placing your speakers. Some sample speech titles are:

Why Local Education Funds are the Key to [Community's] Future (business-oriented)

[Your Community's] LEF: Making School Reform a Reality (education-oriented)

Helping Every Child Achieve: The LEF Advantage (parent-oriented)

5. Make a list of potential speaking engagements.

Think about school, professional, government, civic, and fraternal groups in your community. You might need to make initial calls to find out if certain groups have events with speakers, or if they allow speakers from outside their group. Start to make a list with names of organizations, addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers, and contact names. (See page 22 for a list of potential groups.)

6. Develop speakers bureau logistics.

This should begin as soon as you start to identify your speakers. Decide who will take inquiry calls, interact with and book the speakers, confirm arrangements with the organizations that book a speaker, and handle presentation details such as audiovisual needs. Doing everything by phone in the beginning is fine, but once the final arrangements are made, short letters of agreement for the speaker and the booking organization is a good idea. This helps confirm all the details and avoid misunderstandings.

7. Pitch your speakers.

Send a letter to the groups or individuals who are responsible for booking speakers. If you have identified 100 or more organizations, send these pitches in very small groups. (There would be nothing worse than all the groups saying yes and your LEF

not being able to meet the demand!) Make an “A” list of organizations that are the most important to your LEF and contact them first. See page 23 for a sample speaker pitch letter.

8. Follow up with phone calls to place speakers.

A week or so after you mail the letters, call your contacts. Discuss the topics you have to offer and how they are relevant to them. Offer to mail more information on the program or stop by in person if they would like to discuss your LEF, Library Power, or other education-related issues. All contacts are good—if they don’t book a speaker now, they may become a partner later! Enjoy networking.

9. Evaluate the presentation.

You can randomly attend a speaker event to evaluate the presentation yourself, offer evaluation sheets to the audience, or both. Evaluation is important! You want to keep the presentations fresh and relevant and make sure you are offering what you promise to your community.

10. Send thank-you notes.

After a presentation, send a thank-you note to the speaker and to the person who booked your group. Also send a thank-you to anyone who was particularly helpful in booking the presentation or someone who went above and beyond the call of duty on site.

If the demand for your speakers bureau exceeds your expectations, congratulations! The same principles of organization still apply, but on a larger scale. As you grow, consider the following:

- Charge a fee for speaking. Although minimal, the additional funds will help your LEF.
- Charge for expenses. If you begin to travel outside of your area and incur airfare, ground transportation, food and beverage, hotel, or other costs, don’t forget to ask the booking organization in advance to reimburse you.
- Develop promotional materials. A brochure, flier, or packet of information would serve as an excellent tool to book speeches, but also to garner support for your LEF. Include your speech titles, brief bios of your speakers, and additional facts on your LEF.

Tips For Scheduling Speeches

DO:

- Find out exactly how long you or your representative is expected to speak.
- Prepare a short biography or talking points about the speaker to give to the person introducing him/her.
- Make sure you know the name of the contact person at the event; this person will greet your speaker, answer questions, and troubleshoot at the event.
- Know in advance about the parking situation; if it’s a hotel or public hall, ask the host organization to make arrangements for you.
- Ask if there is an information table at the event where you can leave LEF materials and copies of the speech. Make copies of the speech on LEF letterhead, NOT plain white paper.
- Be aware of the specific timeframe of the event so that you know where your speaker’s remarks fit in.
- Know in advance if there is a public address system. Does your speaker need one? What other audiovisual needs does your speaker have, including type of microphone?
- Find out if there are opportunities for audience questions and answers. Prepare the speaker for questions in advance.
- Ask if media is expected.
- Bring extra copies of the speech for the media and the host organization.
- Write a short news release to accompany the speech if there is media at the event and the speech is newsworthy.
- Take pictures of your presenter for your photo files. You may want one for your own newsletter or other future use.

DON'T:

- Forget to arrange for the proper AV equipment to suit your speaker’s needs.
- Get lost on the way to the event; ask for specific directions.
- Forget to confirm the time of the speech a few days in advance; schedules change.
- Be on too tight a schedule; it’s important to allow your speaker time to linger and show the sponsoring organization that an appearance at their function is important.
- Let your speaker tell a joke that is even remotely offensive to either sex, any ethnic group, any profession, any region of the country, etc. If in doubt, try the joke out on a few close friends or colleagues. (Many a politician has wished he/she followed this advice.)
- Mispronounce or forget the name of the organization or person sponsoring the event. Pronunciations should be written on cards and rehearsed with the speaker ahead of time.
- Be oblivious to the mood, makeup, and atmosphere of the audience. Adjust the tone and length of the speech accordingly.
- Leave right after a speech; audience members may seek out you or the speaker for more information.

Pick Up a Mike and Pitch New Partners

With little effort you can probably think of dozens of organizations in your community that might host an LEF representative at a member function. Here's a list to get your creativity going! Make your own list with the help of friends, family, and colleagues.

Professional

- Chamber of Commerce
- Business societies or groups
- Toastmasters Clubs
- Junior Achievement of America (local board of directors)
- Realtors
- Formal networking groups
- Other organizations, such as the media, hospitals, adult education centers, and community centers that sponsor informational seminars open to the public

Civic

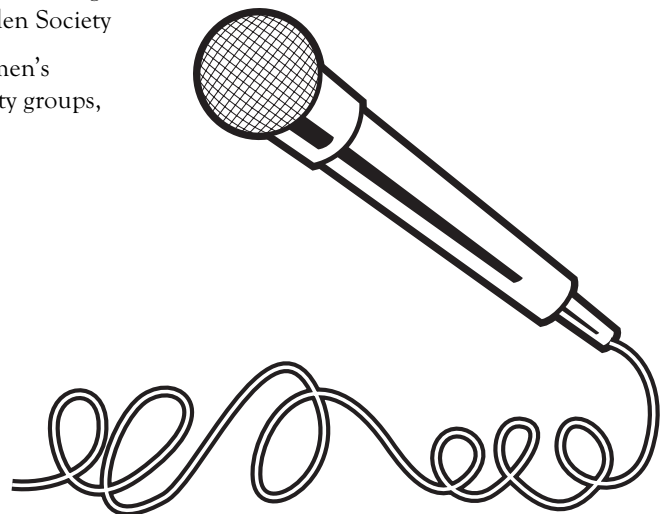
- Churches
- Junior League
- Historical societies
- Foundations
- Societies or associations of nonprofits, e.g., The Cheekwood Botanical Garden Society
- Special interest groups, e.g., women's groups, religious groups, minority groups, issue-oriented groups

Education

- Parent-Teacher organizations
- Teacher unions
- School support groups
- Public meetings
- Government
- City council
- County council
- State legislature
- Activist groups
- Standing issues committees
- Public hearings

Fraternal

- Sororities/fraternities at local colleges and universities
- Rotary Club
- Fraternal Order of Police
- Knights of Columbus
- Moose Lodge
- Elks Lodge



Sample Speaker Pitch Letter

Dear :

Even though you and the other members of [organization] are among the best informed, most actively engaged citizens in our community, you may not be aware of the quiet revolution going on in our schools. We would greatly appreciate having an opportunity to tell you and your members about the [Area] Local Education Fund (LEF) and the role it is playing in community-based school improvements.

A decade ago, many of the school libraries in [Area] reflected the sad conditions found in many communities nationwide: They were understaffed, underfunded, uninspiring places stocked with obsolete books and research materials. They were not considered central to the schools' mission of teaching. Sometimes they were little more than somewhere students could be parked while teachers took a break.

All that has changed now in the libraries of [school names], thanks to the [\$ amount] in grants we have received as part of the remarkable \$40 million Library Power Program initiated in 1988 by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. Because of Library Power, administered by the [Area] LEF, our elementary and middle school libraries now are in the forefront of one of the most exciting educational revitalizations in decades. And a newly released national report confirms the achievements of Library Power! [Put local results here, if available.] This successful program should be duplicated in other schools in the area.

Naturally, we want our children to succeed academically and in life. It is imperative that we give them the resources to do so, and the [Area] LEF has played a key role in that effort for [number of] years. But we cannot do it without the community, including the members of [organization]! We hope that you will help us arrange for an LEF representative to address [organization] so we can tell your members about the magnificent educational opportunities our LEF embodies and how you all can be more involved with our "education revolution."

I will telephone you next week to see about scheduling a speaking appearance. We believe the remarkable changes in our schools represent an extraordinary new chapter in our community's history that your members will want to hear about—and help us write.

Sincerely,

Go the Extra Mile: Special Events to Engage Your Community

Don't forget to build in two-way dialogue. People most often remember a message when it is delivered in a clever way and affects them personally.

What changes have taken place in your community as a result of Library Power and where does your LEF stand in your community? Do you have little, some, or great support for Library Power? Does your LEF enjoy the support of parents, teachers, and local businesses, or is your LEF struggling to survive? When planning your outreach activities and special events, gear them to your *immediate* needs. Focus on reaching the segments of the community that are the most critical to your survival, then look outward.

Don't forget to build in two-way dialogue. Even if you're holding an event at the mall, you can schedule organized conversation or ask for written feedback!

People most often remember a message when it is delivered in a clever way and affects them personally. Public education affects a lot of people personally, so it's your job to engage the community by being clever. These are just a few event suggestions organized by audience type. Brainstorm with your planning committee and come up with ways to discuss and promote the new report and your LEF that will really make it an affair to remember!

Parents

Parent Power Night. Host a seminar for parents on fun, interesting, and unusual ways they can be more involved with their children's education. Make it interactive and make an impression.

History Night. Think your libraries are modern and that your LEF is making positive changes? Take parents back to the turn of the century—or any other time in history—and show them what typical resources would have been available for students then. Compare that with one of your Library Power libraries. Ask students to be tour guides or even put on a skit.

Read for Life. Host an intergenerational reading program so parents and grandparents can get involved with students. Offer book signings, readings, challenging reading lists, fun activities, and rewards for participation.

Backpack Tidbits. Almost every school in America distributes a newsletter or information packet to parents via their children's backpacks. With the approval of school administrators, send information on Library Power and your LEF and challenge parents to become involved.

Block It Off. Hold an old-fashioned Block Party in your Library Power school neighborhood(s). Try a barbeque, potluck supper, or box lunch, but get people out in the streets and talking about education.

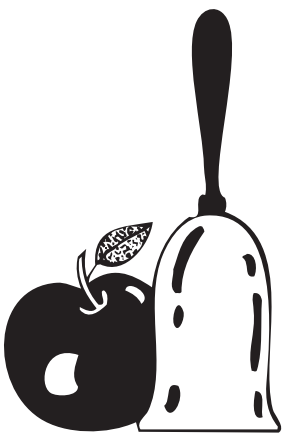
Can We Be Friends? Organize a group of active parents called "Friends of [Your Area's] Local Education Fund." From educating the community on your activities to fundraising, this group could be a real help. They would also be able to provide a unique "parent to parent" viewpoint.

Be Direct. Direct mail is an excellent and inexpensive way to reach a large group at once. From a simple letter on LEF letterhead to a printed piece, mailing to parents will introduce or reinforce your LEF messages.

Teachers

Roundtable Discussions. What are teachers' concerns, wants, and needs for their students in your school system? For themselves? Host a couple of roundtable discussions where teachers are free to speak and search for solutions as a group. Include a panel that has at least one parent, student, LEF member, and school board representative.

Teacher Appreciation. Teachers are special! Host "Teacher Appreciation Days"—the activity possibilities are endless. Ask local businesses to donate goodie packs for teachers, including discounts and coupons. Launch an essay contest among students on "Who's my favorite teacher and why" and top it off with an awards banquet. Give them ribbons to wear for a week. Whether a large budget—or hardly any budget at all—you can find ways to creatively and publicly say thank-you.



Power Meeting. Host a one-time meeting for all area teachers where you announce and discuss the results of the Library Power report. Find out what their reactions are and how you can get them more involved.

Students

Around the World in 80 Days. Books can take you anywhere in the world—set up an “LEF World Tour” by book title and challenge students to race around the globe. The student(s) who win should receive an appreciation certificate and maybe a bookstore gift certificate or a world map.

Athlete of the Week. Honor academic achievement and excellence in other areas by honoring an “Athlete of the Week.” You can work with a local television station to announce it during the local news, or just ask the school to announce it during halftime at the game. If you don’t want to emphasize athletics, you could choose “Student Achiever of the Week.”

Holiday Celebrations. Most communities have safe options, such as parties at community centers for school-age children on Halloween, Christmas/Hanukkah, and other holidays. Create an active presence in those celebrations and sponsor fun-filled activities that students will appreciate.

Schools

A Banner Idea. It’s simple, but effective. Put banners, whether made of paper or a more expensive material, in the lobbies of schools. A simple message works best, such as “[**Your Area’s**] local education fund loves [**school’s**] students!” or “Support your local education fund.”

For the Art of It All. Sponsor an art show with educational themes at local schools and invite children to create art work for the show. Feature local adult artists too, if possible.

PolicyMakers

What’s Your Agenda? Meet with local politicians face-to-face to find out their education policies (if you don’t already know), what they’re planning for the future, and introduce them to or update them on your LEF. Leave something special—like a poster or information packet—behind.

Proclamation. Ask a public official in your community to sponsor a proclamation. Issuing a proclamation to increase awareness of your LEF and its accomplishments offers an opportunity to garner additional support from public officials and generate media attention.

Candidates Debate. Sponsoring a debate between candidates for public office is an excellent way to bring attention to education issues. Invite the candidates to discuss their viewpoints on education. Keep the event nonpartisan to better focus attention on the subject matter.

Businesses

Satellite Presentations. Offer to present more information on your LEF and the education revolution you’re leading! Whether at a board meeting, employee meeting, or lunch break, ask for an audience and hook them on what you’re doing.

Statistics, Anyone? What is the graduation rate in your community? What was it five years ago? What will it be five years from now with LEF intervention? How is your LEF having a positive impact on businesses in your community? Prepare a document—letter, chart, or report—and send it to local businesses.

The Business of Improvement. Invite local businesspeople to tour the Library Power schools and discuss how they can play an active role with your LEF in the improvement of local schools.

LEF Ambassadors. Invite prominent business people to be ambassadors for your LEF and to



let the community know how important it is to “Stand Up for Education.” These business people can be an entree into other local businesses for presentations, discussions, or sponsorships, and some of the group members may become part of your speakers bureau.

Insert Message Here. Ask local businesses that mail bills, such as the telephone, utility, and cable companies, to print an LEF message on bill inserts. You’ll reach a large audience while establishing a relationship with those businesses.

Media

15 Minutes of Fame. Ask local media for pro bono advertising space or air time to thank your strongest supporters publicly. Businesses and individuals love to be recognized for their work, so this would reward them as well as provide exposure for you. If you have the budget, you can buy this space, getting better placement and better exposure. (At the very least, ask for a reduced ad rate.)

LEF Sponsorship. Many media outlets choose to partner with community nonprofit groups to spread the word about a particular issue or need. Contact the public service director at a local television station or daily newspaper and ask if they will take on public education as their cause. Work with them to develop creative promotional events, such as a summer picnic, concert, or school fair.

Host Your Own Show. Contact your local cable television station(s) and ask for airtime to discuss education issues and your LEF. Whether it’s a one-time show or a regular series, your LEF will be in the spotlight.

Read All About It. If you have the budget, buy ad space in your local paper to toot your LEF’s horn. Include information on the national report. Daily newspapers can be expensive so don’t forget to check out urban and suburban dailies, weeklies, and monthlies whose ad rates will be lower. Ask for complimentary space first!

General Public

Take Me Out to the Ballgame. Host “LEF Day” at a local sporting event. Whether it’s the Knicks in New York or the Sounds in Nashville, look at professional, semi-professional, college, and high school athletic events to showcase your LEF. Another great idea is to approach sports organizations to put an LEF message on tickets, programs, or the scoreboard.

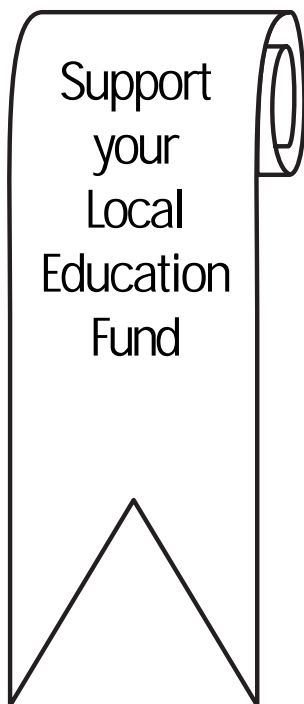
Put Your Name in Lights. Many downtown buildings will hang banners or spell something with their lights at night. If you have that option, put “SUPPORT YOUR LEF” in lights!

The Time of Your Life. Create a large timeline physically showing the improvements, progress, and impact of your LEF on local schools. Display it in a prominent public place, such as a mall or town square. You can also put a copy of the timeline in schools, government buildings, or businesses.

Hooray for Hollywood. Invite a local celebrity or national celebrity from your area to raise awareness of your LEF. You can choose an educator, actor, musician, athlete, prominent business person, politician, or any other person who got his/her start in your local school system.

The Greatest Show on Earth. Does the community think your school system is a three-ring circus? Confirm their suspicions! Host an Education Circus, complete with booths on school achievements, games with education themes, and an LEF Ringmaster.

Film Festival. From a couple of days to a couple of weeks, sponsor a showing of films to raise public awareness about education issues. Include public discussion, panels, and lectures by experts. From documentaries to major motion pictures such as *Stand and Deliver*, *Teacher*, *Kindergarten Cop*, *To Sir With Love*, *Dangerous Minds*, there is something on film to engage everyone in your community.



Event Checklist

Planning an event can be a lot of fun if you're prepared and organized. This checklist divides your preparation into four months, but you may not have that much time. This is just a guide to demonstrate the planning process and to make sure you don't forget anything.

* These steps should be continued throughout the planning process.

Four Months Ahead

- Set up a planning committee and meet with them regularly.*
- Develop goals—what do you want to accomplish?
- Identify your target audiences—who do you want to attend?
- Determine the size and atmosphere for the event.
- Develop a preliminary budget.
- Recruit and secure sponsors, if necessary.
- Set a date for the event.

Three Months Ahead

- Finalize the budget.
- Determine what materials and outside services you will need and begin to contract with outside vendors. Don't forget food and beverages; room setup, including tables and chairs; signs and banners; decorations, including flowers; entertainment; and attendee giveaways.
- Begin developing your materials.
- Develop a theme and begin setting the agenda.
- Select location and plan logistics (room setup, food, AV, etc.).*
- Write and mail pitch letters to recruit any outside speakers; include background information on your project.
- Call potential speakers to seek confirmations.

- Research the names and addresses of individuals and organizations you would like to invite.
- Finalize and print a "Save the Date" card, if you opt to produce one, and mail it to invitees.
- Touch base with sponsors to update them on your progress.*

Two Months Ahead

- Finalize and print materials (except for the agenda and participants list, which should be printed in the final week).
- Decide whether you will invite media.
- Mail out invitations.

One Month Ahead

- If you are seeking media coverage, draft news advisory (see sample on page 28).
- Contact speakers to discuss their presentations and see if they need additional information or support.
- Compile a list of media outlets that may be interested in covering your event.

Two Weeks Ahead

- Send out your news advisory.
- Start calling reporters to interest them in the event.
- Make a list of materials to be taken to the location and begin packaging them.

One Week Ahead

- Finalize the agenda and have it printed.
- Make staff assignments (including registration staff, note taker, audiovisual coordinator, and speaker greeter) and explain duties to all staff members.



Sample News Advisory

FOR RELEASE:
[date]

CONTACT: [local spokesperson]
[telephone number]

Revitalized Local School Libraries, Praised in Report, To Be Showcased at Open House

[LEF name] use of [\$] Library Power grant
from Dewitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund
Sparks Exciting Renewal of Elementary, Middle School Libraries

[Local dateline]—Praised in a new report for no longer being dingy places with dark stacks, obsolete books and inadequate research materials, [site's] renewed elementary and middle school libraries will showcase their new look, lively educational features, and revitalized role on [day and date] at an open house being sponsored by [LEF name] at the [school name] library.

The library at [school name] is one of [number] in [site] to undergo a major renovation in its appearance and mission as a result of the [LEF's] management of [\$ amount] in grants received from the Library Power Program of the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. Exciting changes in [school name] library include [brief, 10- to 20-word itemization of new features, such as computers with Internet links, audiovisual equipment, types of new books, types of new programs].

All of the Library Power money has been distributed through [LEF name], the nonprofit, community-based local education fund that has made improvement of [site] schools its mission. In addition, local benefactors have included [list names], providing [\$ amount/gifts in kind].

WHAT: [LEF name] open house to showcase impressive changes in [site's] elementary and middle school libraries.

WHO: [Main spokespeople in attendance, such as:
- a local education fund official's name and title;
- a local Library Power official's name and title;
- names and titles of one or two school representatives, possibly including a library media specialist, teacher, administrator, and student;
- one or two prominent local businesspeople or charity representatives who have given money or provided services to Library Power sites.]

WHEN: [Day of the week], [date], [time (from when to when)]

WHERE: [School, floor and classroom number, if necessary]

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- Verify details with venue; confirm audiovisual needs; send venue your room layout and any special instructions.
- Continue calling reporters to encourage attendance.
- Touch base with speakers to make sure that they have the correct date and location of the event, as well as the time they are expected to speak. Give speakers the name of a contact person who will greet them upon arrival.
- Assemble materials for distribution to participants; send them to the venue.
- Print name tags, if applicable.

The Day Before

- Double check to make sure that all materials arrived at the venue.
- Pack an “emergency kit” with any miscellaneous materials you may need (tape, scissors, stapler, pens, pencils, paper, phone numbers of speakers, etc.).

The Day of the Event

- Arrive early and check that the location is set up correctly and that audiovisual materials are available as requested. Check all microphones, projectors, audio equipment, and computer connections.
- Check the registration area. Make sure name tags and supplies are plentiful. Plan to have staff members at registration approximately one hour before the start of the event.
- Make sure staff are in correct locations and that all areas are covered for the entire event.
- Allow time for run-throughs if requested by your speakers or needed by entertainers.
- Make sure that the signs directing people to the event are posted.

Follow-Up After the Event

- Send thank-you letters to sponsors.
- Send thank-you letters to speakers.
- Contact organizations that attended the event to discuss potential collaboration.

Sample Event Flyer/Invitation

Come learn more about the Johnson City Schools—
“THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH!”

The Johnson City local education fund (LEF) and many community partners are working to improve our public schools. Join us under the Big Top to see what’s being done in our schools and what’s in store for our community in the coming year.

- * Visit school booths to learn what’s new at each school.
- * Meet teachers, library media specialists, and others.
- * Check out our new books, use the computers, and participate in live storytelling.
- * Meet representatives from your local education fund and play the Community Involvement Game.
- * Enjoy food, games, and entertainment for the whole family.
- * And more!

Come one, come all, and help us celebrate excellence in our public schools!



WHERE: Thomas Baily Middle School
1368 Miller Avenue

WHEN: Saturday,
July 25
10 a.m. to
4 p.m.



Keep Track of Your Efforts



Remember to document your communications initiative by taking photos and writing articles for your newsletter, local media, and other publications. Also, try to measure your success by counting participants in your events. Supply a sign-in sheet for smaller events or take a crowd count for larger events. In addition, encourage attendees to complete an evaluation of the activity. It will help you know if your initiative accomplished its objectives. If you decide to create an evaluation form, keep it short, offer multiple choices, and leave room for additional comments. The results will assist you in planning other community events and activities.

Finally, please share your success with us! We want to hear about your effective, innovative, and collaborative events, and what you've accomplished locally. Send us photos, newsletter articles, newspaper clippings, or any other materials which will tell us how you reached your community with positive messages. We will feature your feedback in future newsletter issues.

Good luck! If you have any questions about the Library Power report release, contact Bill Miles or Bob Saffold at the Public Education Network at (202) 628-7460.

If you have questions about your local initiative or need communications technical assistance, please call Brenda Foster or Patty Poston at Vanguard Communications at (202) 331-4323 or e-mail them at bfoster@vancomm.com or pposton@vancomm.com.

Communications Resources

Media Directories

You can purchase media directories that list media outlets by type of media, city, and area of specialization. Before ordering a directory, find out when the next issue will be published, as several major directories are issued late in the year.

The most popular directories are *Bacon's Media Directories*, *Gale's Directory of Publications*, and *Editor & Publisher's Yearbook*, all of which are national in scope.

Remember, whatever printed source you use, special sections and programs are likely to change, people in the media are likely to move around, and the information reported in the latest annual directory may, in fact, already be dated by the time it is published.

Verify the information with a phone call to confirm the reporter's name and his or her "beat"—the subject area assigned to a given reporter. Several reporters may cover the same issue. Know the media outlet's deadlines for filing stories and their preference for receiving leads (e.g., fax, news release, phone call, etc.).

Bacon's Media Directories. Bacon's TV/Radio Directory, Magazine Directory, and Newspaper Directory list stations or publications with addresses, phone numbers, and key contacts. Updated annually. For costs and subscription information, call (800) 621-0561, (312) 922-2400 in Illinois, or write Bacon's Media Directories, 332 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60604.

Gale's Directory of Publications. Published by Gale Research Company, Gale's provides subject information and circulation figures for print media publications across the country. Updated annually. For costs and subscription information, write Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit, MI 48226.

Editor & Publisher's Yearbook. Provides information on editors and publishers of newspapers. Published by *Editor & Publisher* magazine and updated annually. For costs and subscription information, call (212) 675-4380 or write *Editor & Publisher Yearbook*, c/o *Editor*

& *Publisher*, 11 West 19th Street, New York, NY 10011.

Community Activism and Communications Tactics

- ***Best Kept Secrets: Ideas for Promoting Your School Library*** edited by Ann Wasman, American Association of School Libraries, Chicago, 1996
- ***Enough is Enough: The Hellraiser's Guide to Community Activism*** by Diane MacEachern, Avon Books, 1994

For information, contact Vanguard Communications, 1019 19th Street, NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20036.

Publicity Campaigns

- ***Guerilla PR*** by Michael Levine, Harper Collins, 1993
- ***Strategic Communications for Nonprofits***, the Benton Foundation and the Center for Strategic Communications, Washington, DC, 1992
- ***O'Dwyer's PR Services Report*** (February 1993 issue)

Writing and Style

- ***The Elements of Style (3rd Edition)*** by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, The Macmillan Company, 1979
- ***The Associated Press Stylebook and Libel Manual***, Associated Press, Addison Wesley, 1992
- ***The Chicago Manual of Style***, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, 1982

Coalition Building

- National Trade and Professional Associations of the United States, published annually. To order, write: Columbia Books, Inc., Publishers, 1212 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 330, Washington, DC 20005

Creative Thinking

- ***The Artist's Way*** by Julia Cameron, Tarcher/Perigee/Putnam Publishing Group, 1992
- ***Brainstyles. Change Your Life Without Changing Who You Are*** by Marlane Miller, Simon & Schuster, 1997
- ***Break-Out Creativity: Bringing Creativity to the Workplace*** by Rick Crandall, Select Publications, 1977
- ***Corporate Creativity: How Innovation and Improvement Actually Happen*** by Alan G. Robinson, Sam Stern, Berrett-Koehler, 1997
- ***The Creative Brain*** by Ned Hermann, Brain Books, 1988
- ***Creativity in Business*** by Michael Ray and Rochelle Myers, Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1986
- ***Lateral Thinking: Creativity Step-by-Step*** by Edward DeBono, 1990
- ***Mindmapping. Your Personal Guide to Exploring Creativity and Problem-Solving***, Berkeley Publishing Group, 1991
- ***The Path of the Everyday Hero. Drawing on the Power of Myth to Meet Life's Most Important Challenges*** by Lorna Catford, Ph.D. and Michael Ray, Ph.D., Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1991
- ***Use Both Sides of the Brain*** by Tony Buzan, E.P. Dutton, Inc., 1974
- ***The Vein of Gold—A Journey to Your Creative Heart*** by Julia Cameron, Tarcher/Putnam Books, 1996
- ***A Whack on the Side of the Head. How to Unlock Your Mind for Innovation*** by Roger von Oech, Ph.D., Warner Books, 1983
- ***Whole Brain Thinking. Working From Both Sides of the Brain to Achieve Peak Job Performance*** by Jacquelyn Wonder & Priscilla Donovan, Ballantine Books, 1984

Writing

- ***Anybody Can Write*** by Jean Bryant, Whatever Publishing, Inc., 1985
- ***The Copywriter's Handbook*** by Robert Bly, Henry Holt, 1985
- ***Words That Sell. The Thesaurus to Help You Promote Your Products, Services, and Ideas*** by Richard Bayan, Contemporary Books, 1984
- ***Writing on Both Sides of the Brain. Breakthrough Techniques for People Who Write*** by Henriette Anne Klausner, Harper, & Row, 1986
- ***Writing Down the Bones. Freeing the Writer Within*** by Natalie Goldberg, Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1986
- ***Writing the Natural Way*** by Gabriele Lusser Rico, J.P. Tarcher, Inc., 1983