



CAMPAIGN GUIDANCE FOR THE *READ TO ME CHALLENGE*

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INTRODUCTION

In order to achieve the goal of having a highly literate population in Maine, our collective efforts must begin early in children's lives when their brains are rapidly developing. During early childhood and grade school years, Maine's children must learn language, acquire vocabulary, develop knowledge of the world and engage in productive interactions with trusted adults to grow their literate abilities.

The simple act of reading aloud to a child is one of the most highly successful and cost-effective methods of building his or her literate abilities. Just 15 minutes a day of reading aloud to a child for five years results in 27,375 minutes of language exposure, putting these children on the path to high literacy achievement ([Read Aloud 15 Minutes campaign](#)). Reading aloud exposes children to the world around them, helps them see reading as an enjoyable and valuable activity and often strengthens bonds with trusted adults. This is why the Maine Department of Education is launching its own campaign, the *Read to ME Challenge*.

The *Read to ME Challenge* is an opportunity to contribute to a child's literacy growth by reading aloud to one or more children for 15 minutes (or listening to a child read to you). Challenge participants will capture the reading experiences visually with photos or short (15-30 second) videos and use social media to post the reading episode and to challenge friends, families and colleagues to read aloud to a child for 15 minutes, too!

WHY A PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN?

Building public awareness of the vital importance that reading aloud plays in supporting children's literacy development is a critical step in bolstering literacy education efforts in Maine. In today's fast-paced, technologically driven world, it is not uncommon to overlook the impact that reading to children has in building their language and supporting reading and writing achievement. The more reading encounters children have with caring adults, the greater the probability that they will build the literacy skills needed for later success.

The *Read to ME Challenge* seeks to harness the energy of social media as a tool for raising awareness about the benefits of reading aloud to children and to increase the number of minutes children are read to during their childhood years.

CHALLENGE GOALS

The *Read to ME Challenge* has three primary goals:

1. Promote awareness of the importance of reading to children 15 minutes a day.
2. Build enthusiasm for reading to children by making it more visible.
3. Increase the number of minutes children are read to during their childhoods.

TARGET AUDIENCES

The *Read to ME Challenge* is designed to involve a wide range of people from across Maine. Certainly, parents and caregivers and their children are the primary audience, but all Mainers can play a role. Involvement of children's family and friends can increase the number of reading episodes. Organizations that have a mission to improve literacy education efforts are strongly encouraged to get involved by enlisting their members to take the challenge and by engaging in creative methods of shining a light on the benefits of reading aloud. The support of government, education and business leaders in spreading the challenge is also desired in raising public awareness.

WEBSITE

The *Read to ME Challenge* website is:

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/content/ela/literacyforme/readtome>. This is the public site for the campaign where a variety of resources related to the campaign are located.

→**Action:** We invite you to develop a link from your website directed to the [Read to ME Challenge](#).

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CHALLENGE

- Read to/with a child or children for at least 15 minutes.
- Read an engaging book, chapter of a novel, newspaper or magazine article, comics, nursery rhymes or poetry.
- Capture a photograph or short video (15-30 seconds) of yourself reading to/with the child.
- Use **#ReadtoME** or **#ReadaloudME** to post the photo or video on social media with your challenge to others to read aloud 15 minutes to a child or children they know.
- Recommended social media platforms include: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or Youtube.
- If you live a distance from a child you'd like to read to, use Skype or Facetime to read aloud via digital means.
- If you are unable to complete the challenge within 48 hours, consider:
 - Donating a book to a school or public library, a food cupboard, a homeless shelter or a little free library near where you live.
 - Volunteering your time at a library.
 - Singing to or having a conversation with a child (these methods build language, too).

PLAN A CONNECTED EVENT

During the *Read to ME Challenge* month (February), consider how you might engage your organization by hosting a special event to highlight the campaign. Consider these questions as you plan:

- How can your organization be involved in the *Read to ME Challenge*?
- What goals of your organization directly connect to the *Read to ME Challenge*? How can you utilize the *Read to ME Challenge* to work on your goals while also building awareness of reading aloud to children?
- What methods of communication could you use to share details about the *Read to ME Challenge* with your membership?
- What activities does your organization already have planned in February that might connect or benefit from connecting to the *Read to ME Challenge*?

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media will be one of the most powerful aspects of the *Read to ME Challenge* because it fosters ability for many people across Maine to participate, maintains momentum and ensures interaction. It is our hope that the *Read to ME Challenge* will become a viral social media campaign that is fun and raises awareness of the importance of reading aloud.

The Read to ME Challenge will kick off will be broadcast via Twitter @mdoeNews and on the Maine DOE's Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Maine-Department-of-Education-1121155571257922>.

You do not need to be nominated to participate in the challenge, but you must nominate others in your social media post to keep the momentum going.

There are no restrictions on what social media platform to use however the Department recommends Twitter and Facebook. Please adhere to permission requirements for your organization if you are encouraging posting to a website.

To Participate on Twitter:

Take a "selfie" or short video of a reading episode and tweet it on your organization's or your personal Twitter feed with the hashtags **#ReadaloudME** or **#ReadtoME** and use the "@" symbol to nominate others. A suggested tweet is: "I completed the challenge for child literacy. You're next! @yournominee."

To Participate on Facebook:

Take a "selfie" or short video of a reading episode and post it on your organization's Facebook page or your personal Facebook page with the hashtags **#ReadaloudME** or **#ReadtoME**. Use the Tag option to nominate others to complete the challenge.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HASHTAGS

Hashtags turn the words that immediately follow the # symbol into a searchable link, therefore grouping all of the conversations connected to that hashtag in a single place.

The *Read to ME Challenge's* social media accounts and hashtags should be shared widely via websites, publications and events to build a strong follower base.

Actions:

- Follow us and link to us on Twitter @mdoeNews and Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Maine-Department-of-Education-1121155571257922>.
- "Retweet", "share", "like", or comment on #ReadtoME posts.
- Use the campaign hashtags on your own social media messages.
- Organize your own social media event in support of the *Read to ME Challenge*.

LOGO AND PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Maine DOE has developed a campaign logo for the *Read to ME Challenge* as well as a series of public service announcement scripts. These are available on the [Read to ME Challenge](#) website.

STORIES, PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEOS

Sharing stories, photos and short (15-30 second) videos that capture participation in the *Read to ME Challenge* are critical elements of the campaign. We encourage you to contact your local media outlets to make them aware of activities you are planning as part of the *Read to ME Challenge*. Please share your stories with the Maine DOE by sending a brief description and timeline to danielle.m.saucier@maine.gov. If you send photos and/or videos, we will need permission to post photos of minors.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Visit the [Read to ME Challenge](#) webpage to access resources related to the campaign, including tips about reading aloud and book ideas. A list of partner organizations can also be found on this site.

CONTACT

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