



CONTACTING YOUR RIF TEACHER

1. Start by emailing your teacher and **copy your RIF school liaison on the email**. The teacher's email address (and RIF school liaison's email) will be on the *Excel spreadsheet or email* that you were given as your school/teacher assignment. When you email your teacher (and copy liaison) for the first time, be sure to include / ask the following:
 - a. **Put 'Book'em Reading is Fundamental (RIF) Visit' or similar in subject line.** *Teachers do not open unfamiliar emails, but they should be on the lookout for one from a RIF contact.*
 - b. Introduce yourself as their Book'em Reading Is Fundamental classroom reader and include your contact information (name, email, phone if you want)
 - c. Explain that you will visit their classroom 5 times throughout the school year for about 30 minutes each time to read aloud with the class and allow the students to each select a new book to take home as their own
 - d. Confirm the teacher's grade level
 - e. Ask when a good time would be to schedule your first visit – if you have some restrictions on your schedule, you might want to suggest some options that work for you
 - f. Ask how many students are in their class at this time (sometimes the number of students changes throughout the school year)

NOTE: We have found that shorter emails are more likely to get a response from your teacher. Teachers are more overwhelmed than ever, so your main goal is to make a connection and set up a time to visit. Knowing the student count and class breakdown is important, but it is *most* important to get a date/time set. If you do not get a student count from your teacher, take 30 books for your first visit. **See the Teacher Email Templates page for ideas on how to keep your emails short – the highlighted areas are places that you need to fill in your teacher's or your own information.

2. If you don't hear back from your teacher within 3-4 school days, call the school and work through the phone system to speak with someone in the office. Confirm that the teacher is indeed teaching at the school (sometimes teachers move schools or resign) and confirm that you have the correct spelling for the teacher's email (sometimes we get incorrect spellings). Ask to leave a message for the teacher either on their voice mail or a written note put in the teacher's school mailbox. **In your message, request that the teacher check their junk/spam folder in their email – we found that many emails from volunteers have simply never gotten to teachers.**
3. If you don't hear from your teacher within 3-4 school days, **email or call your RIF school liaison** to ask for their assistance contacting your teacher. This information is included on the Excel spreadsheet that has your school/teacher assignment. **Copy Caroline Lewis, Caroline@bookem-kids.org, on this email.**
4. If you still haven't heard anything or don't get a satisfactory response, contact Caroline Lewis, Caroline@bookem-kids.org, 615-255-1820. The RIF School Liaison can typically fix communication issues. It is



rare, but we have had cases where a teacher is just too difficult to reach or does not want a RIF volunteer and we decide not to send a volunteer to that class. If this is the case, we will reassign that volunteer, if possible.

Tips for setting up visits

Experienced volunteers offer the following tips:

- Try not to leave a reading without knowing when you will be back the next time. Confirm with the teacher before you leave the classroom.
- Once you establish contact, set up the next visit (or more)
- Continuity and consistency are key to building relationships – space the visits out over the school year. Don't try to cram them in during April and May. If possible, make at least 2 visits before the December break.
- Find out how your teacher prefers to communicate. It usually starts with email, but some teachers may prefer using their private cell phones after initial contact.
- Consider scheduling visits for the semester or entire year and sending calendar invites. This helps as a reminder of the visit as well as catching conflicts if they pop up.

Questions? Contact Caroline Lewis at Caroline@bookem-kids.org or 615-255-1820.