

# GETTING FREE (OR NEARLY FREE) SCHOOL VISITS

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You already know the benefits of having an author or illustrator visit your school. But author visits cost money and your school may not have the budget for it.

Below are multiple avenues to get kidlit creators to your school with a little sweat equity.

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

- Who do you want? Who are your students' faves? Who's good at visits?
- Check author and illustrator websites to see which of them are doing visits, and what other schools have said about them
- Kidlit creator sites often have information on presentations, availability, and costs
- Remember, fees vary widely
- Your least expensive option might be with a local debut author who wants to practice their visits
- When you make contact, specify your budget constraints so creators can work with you to figure it out
- Use the suggestions below to secure your visit funds

## VIRTUAL VISITS

Not every creator wants to do virtual visits, but it doesn't hurt to ask! They are a lower-cost way to get the same benefits as an in-person experience. Many creators have developed ways to make their virtual visits just as impactful as their in-person ones.

Some creators offer a limited number of free virtual Q&As. They usually run about 10 minutes. (Please be respectful of time if they agree to such a visit.)

## PARTNERED VISIT

### COMMUNITY BANKS

- have funds for local events
- donations are tax deductible

### LOCAL BUSINESSES

- often willing to donate for community initiatives
- donations are tax deductible

### EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

Friend and family members with corporate jobs may have access to community resources.

### LOCAL RESTAURANTS/HOTELS

- request gift cards for meals
- request gifted rooms for multi-day stays

## MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL VISIT

If your school/district has funds for books but not for creators, this can be a win-win. Pre-orders and first week sales are very important to kidlit creators. Some will be willing to forgo their fee for early sales. For a visit like this, timing is everything.

### **Bookseller route:**

Talk to your indie bookseller about local authors with upcoming releases.

Identify local authors so transportation and hotel are not additional costs.

Offer a release week school visit in exchange for buying books in bulk. Volume is key.

### **Publisher route:**

Reach out to the publisher directly and let them know you would like to buy books in exchange for a visit from the author or illustrator.

## NONPROFIT PARTNERSHIPS

Some organizations are already doing the work of bringing authors and illustrators to underfunded classrooms. There are national and local organizations. Ask your school district or town librarian about organizations in your area.

National: [First Book](#)

National: [Our Kids Read](#)

Washington D.C.: [An Open Book Foundation](#)

New York City: [Meet the Writers](#)

North Texas: [Readers 2 Leaders](#)

### VISIT-SPECIFIC GRANTS

- [Junior Library Guild Book Grants](#)
- [Maureen Hayes Author/Illustrator Visit Award](#)
- [SCBWI Amber Brown Grant](#)

### STATE FUNDS

- state arts council grants
- state library commission grants
- use Title I funds

## Things to Keep in Mind

Most creators book visits 3 months to 2 years in advance

Leave a lot of time to secure a local business sponsor or apply for a grant

Confirm with your chosen kidlit creator after you have secured funds for the visit

### OTHER RESOURCES

Author [Donna Janell Bowman](#) has a comprehensive list of educational grants on [her site](#).

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