

AEFL WEEK 2024

Awareness Toolkit



– SEPTEMBER 15–21 –

AEFL Week

Every year, the National Coalition for Literacy, on behalf of the adult literacy and basic education field, requests that Congress recognize one week as National Adult Education and Family Literacy Week. This year, that week is September 15–21.

During AEFL Week, the goal is to work side-by-side with stakeholders across the field in every state, territory, and district to heighten public awareness, strengthen alliances, leverage resources, and increase the number of people who understand the vital role adult education and family literacy plays in our nation's well-being.

ProLiteracy is using this week to raise awareness about who adult learners are and to destigmatize the shame that is associated with low literacy.

The more people who understand how critical this issue is, the more likely it becomes that we can gain the support and funding to ensure every adult has access to quality educational resources—no matter where they live or who they are.

One of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to grab attention and raise awareness is by leveraging social media.

We created this toolkit to help you raise awareness and advocate for increased support in your communities. Our social media plan includes a Lifelong Learning Challenge to promote throughout the week as well as daily posts to help shed light on who adult learners are and how to support them.

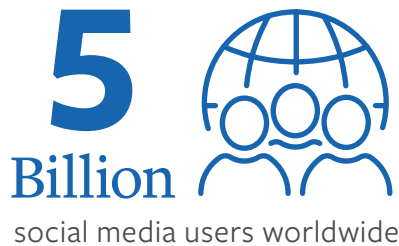
We're also including a letter writing activity that empowers students to stand up for themselves and their literacy needs and advocate for the cause by writing to their lawmakers.



Social Media

What to Make of 8 Seconds

We can make adult literacy awareness go viral during AEFL Week through a unified social media campaign by adult literacy programs across the country. With roughly 5 billion people worldwide using social media, this is an important platform to tap into to spread the message about the impact of low literacy. Use this guide to create engaging posts for each day of AEFL Week to share on your organization's platforms.



The goal with any social media post is to grab attention, which is easier said than done. Let's be honest: social media is saturated with content, most of which we just scroll right past. Thought leaders tell us that we have about 2 seconds to grab someone's attention and get them to stop scrolling. You then have another 6 seconds to engage them enough to take some sort of action. That's a total of just 8 seconds.

What actions do we want people to take?

- Visit and browse your website
- Make a donation
- Volunteer
- Share your posts

Engage the User

So, how do we win someone's 8 seconds? Here are some hallmarks of engaging social media posts:

- Great photos or visuals
- Short attention-grabbing videos
- Messaging that is short and to the point
- An emotion was created
- The information was local and impacts the user personally
- A call to action that is clear and easy to complete

Engaging posts do not need to have every one of these aspects, but you should build your posts using a combination of them.

The Plan

To create a unified approach to social media across the field during AEFL Week, we can focus each day on a different aspect of adult literacy. Here's how we'll approach this on our ProLiteracy channels:

Monday: Kick off AEFL Week

Tuesday: Why Adult Literacy?

Wednesday: Adult Literacy Facts/Statistics

Thursday: Advocate for Adult Literacy

Friday: Success Stories

On the following pages we will outline a framework for each day, including relevant hashtags to use. We will include templates for each day that you can personalize. You can also feel free to use the hallmarks of great social media posts from page 3 to build your own.

We will also post videos occasionally throughout the week that will illustrate what it's like to not be able to read. We encourage you to share these videos as another way of showing the impact of low literacy.

Plan Ahead

Our best advice is to plan ahead. Think about what you want to highlight from your community or program, write (and edit) your posts, and design your visuals ahead of time.

Be sure that if you are featuring any students, tutors, or volunteers from your program that you have their permission. By planning ahead, your AEFL Week social media campaign will be more cohesive and have a bigger impact.

Monday—Kick Off AEFL Week

Kick off AEFL Week and get your followers on board to use the week to advocate and raise awareness. Use a staggering statistic, an attention-grabbing photo, or a video. On this day, ProLiteracy will be kicking off our Lifelong Learning Social Media Challenge. We invite you to join us.

The challenge: To destigmatize low literacy by sharing that it's OK to not know how to do something. We are all still learning! Keep people engaged and keep the challenge going all week by asking participants to tag your literacy program and @ ProLiteracy and resharing all week long.

Invite staff, tutors, students, or anyone else associated with your program to record a video using any of the following prompts, or your own messaging promoting lifelong learning:

Video script:

"I'm a lifelong learner who is not embarrassed to say I'm still learning _____. This Adult Education and Family Literacy Week, I'm joining ProLiteracy's Lifelong Learning Challenge to support the millions of American adults working to improve their literacy skills."

"I'm proud to say that I am a lifelong learner! During AEFL Week, I'm joining ProLiteracy's Lifelong Learning Challenge to support the millions of American adults working to improve their literacy skills."

"We're all lifelong learners! During Adult Education and Family Literacy Week, I stand with the millions of adults learning to read and improving their literacy skills."

Social copy:

It's Adult Education and Family Literacy Week, and I'm joining ProLiteracy's Lifelong Learning campaign to support the millions of American adults learning every day and working to improve their literacy skills. I nominate <tag one to three social media friends> to join the campaign and share what you're still learning.

Hastags: #AEFLWeek #LifelongLearning #LiteracyMatters

Tuesday—Adult Literacy Facts/Statistics

People love numbers. Numbers don't lie. Numbers help people understand the scope of the issue. But, while saying that 48 million adults in the US can't read above a third-grade level is shocking, sometimes breaking down a number can mean more to your audience. For example, 48 million is actually about **one in six US adults**. This statistic allows someone to look around the room and see six people and understand that one of them may lack literacy skills. These people are everywhere in our community: our neighbors, individuals at church, regulars at the local diner, etc. There's a stigma that people don't believe they know anyone who can't read or read well. They're wrong.

Use our [Adult Literacy Fact Sheet](#) to find facts to share about the importance of adult literacy to our social well-being.

Sharing statistics that reflect your own community is also an effective way to make your audience care. Use the PIAAC Skills Map to find literacy statistics for your state or county and use those to illustrate how low literacy affects your own community.

Skills Map: <https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/skillsmap/>

Social copy:

In our community, X% of adults are classified as low literate. Look around. What do you think that looks like? Truth is, low literacy looks like your neighbor, your waiter, your friend at church, and the list goes on.

Hashtags: #AEFLWeek #LiteracyMatters #AdultEdu #LocalLiteracy



Wednesday—Why Adult Literacy?

Make the case for adult education and literacy. Make it clear that low adult literacy affects everyone, and the health of a community is dependent on the reading levels of its citizens. You can build on your post from Tuesday that included a statistic and include a student quote about why they want to learn.

Social copy:

No adult should feel shame for having insufficient literacy skills. There are any number of factors that have led someone to where they are now. But less than 10% of adults who need literacy services are enrolled in classes. Let's uplift those who have taken the steps to get help and improve their lives through literacy, and let's encourage those who have not taken the first step to do so. Together we can build better communities.

Hashtags: #AEFLWeek #AdultEdu #NoShame #LiteracyMatters



Thursday—Advocate for Adult Literacy

Use social media to encourage your followers to contact their representatives in D.C., and let's flood Congress with calls for support of adult literacy.

Use the Find Your Members function at [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) to find the contact information for your representatives to reach their offices. Make it easy for your followers by including the contact information in your post. Find your lawmakers' social handles and tag them in your posts.

Social post:

@<name your Rep>, members of our community struggle to read. They're people, just like you and I, and giving them the support they deserve would improve their ability to participate in everything from their children's education to elections to the workforce. We are asking you to support increased adult literacy and education funding for better communities.

Help us advocate, contact your reps in Congress: (202) 224-3121

Hashtags: #AEFLWeek #LiteracyMatters #AdultEdu #AdultEdAdvocate

Psst... For more ways to advocate, see p. 9.



Adult literacy changes lives.

Call your rep and advocate for
increased support.

Friday—Success Stories

Wrap up AEFL Week by showing how adult literacy can change someone's life. Share your students' successes. It doesn't have to be long; it can just be a few words about what they've achieved.

One idea is to ask students to write on a whiteboard or on a blank piece of paper what improving their skills has allowed them to do. Maybe they got a job, are able to read to their children, can grocery shop alone, passed their high school equivalency exams, got a driver's license, used a recipe, or wrote a letter to a loved one. It can be anything, because it's all important. Take photos of them holding up their achievements!

Other options are to take a video of a student talking about what they have been able to achieve since improving their skills. Or write a longer story for your blog about a student's success and share it.

Encourage your followers to help more adults in their community transform their lives with a call to volunteer or donate to your program.

Social copy:

Adult literacy transforms lives. Every adult has the right to fully participate in the world around them. Support the adults in your community who just need a little help Who knows? You might make a friend. Volunteer today: <https://www.proliteracy.org/get-involved/volunteer/>>

Hashtags: #AEFLWeek #LiteracyMatters #NoShame #AdultEdu

Pro Tips

Use current resources and statistics, including those produced by ProLiteracy.

Be consistent in the use and meaning of terms and language.

Remember your audience. Avoid jargon and provide examples that help explain to the general public what you mean by “low literacy.”

Be informed about federal policy and state trends. What is happening in Washington, D.C., and in your state capitol? Commit to taking timely and persistent action over the long term.

Use hashtags to help further your reach and to connect with others.

Don't share only text-based updates. Sharing photos and videos is an excellent way to increase engagement.

Ask questions on social media and invite people to respond. Make sure to acknowledge users when they respond to you.

Make sure your social media profiles are on-brand and the look and messages are consistent with your website and other materials.



Advocacy

Letter Writing Activity

Facilitate a letter-writing campaign for students to write to their elected officials. AEFL Week is the perfect time for students to introduce themselves and let officials know who they are and why adult literacy and education programs matter to them and their families.

By sharing their own stories, local elected officials can gain a better sense of just how impactful programs are and, ideally, help destigmatize perceptions about who adult learners are.

This type of activity can be used in any adult education setting, although a letter-writing campaign among those with lower literacy will require more support and guidance.

The Basic Activity

1. **Decide in advance what type of local elected official you'd like to target with your letter-writing campaign.** For instance, would it be city or county officials? A state congressperson? Someone else? You can also decide in advance if you'd like students to handwrite letters or type them. Although typing is more common, there is still a personal touch with handwritten letters.
2. **Ask students if they know who any of their local elected officials are.** Talk about the various levels of local elected officials, starting at a city level and continuing up to the national level with members of Congress. Even though you may have a specific person in mind already, it's good to get students thinking about the different layers of government. Ask why it might be important for elected officials to know about your adult education program. Facilitate a discussion, but make sure to point out that government often funds these programs.
3. **Let students know that they will write letters to briefly share a story about their adult education experience and why it's important to support adult literacy programs.** Let them know that they will write a draft of their letter before finalizing it.
4. **Provide a template for students to follow for their letter (see page 12).** Point out different elements it should or could contain.
5. **Provide time for students to write their letter draft.** Remind them that they don't have to share anything that they think is too personal.
6. **Have students share their draft letter with you and/or a fellow classmate for feedback.** This feedback can help improve any content, grammar, or spelling issues. However, the letters don't have to be perfect. The goal is authenticity.
7. **Give students time to revise their letters.** Make sure that they sign them as well.
8. **When finished, have letter copies ready to send.** If it's by email, then it's as quick as emailing the official. If it's by mail, students can help address envelopes.
9. **Let students know about any replies or feedback received from the legislator's office.** If desired, you can send letters to more than one candidate.

Programs can also follow this same format to have staff members write letters as well. They can share their passion and experience to advocate for their program/students and perhaps even invite the local elected official to the class or program.

Letter Template

Sample Letter for Students to Use for Letter Writing to Local Elected Officials:

[Your name]

[Your address]

[Your city], [state] [zip code]

[Today's date]

[Representative's name]

[Representative's address]

[Representative's city], [state] [zip code]

Dear [Title] [Representative's last name]:

In the body of your letter, you should:

- Introduce yourself,
- Explain why you are taking adult education classes,
- Show how the class or school helps you,
- Describe your plans for the future,
- Thank the representative for his or her service.

Please support funding for adult education.

Sincerely,

[Your signature]

[Type or print your name]