

## *A Special Day for Literacy Celebration*

The International Reading Association recognizes outstanding literacy programs that help many in economically and educationally disadvantaged regions. The Association sponsors an annual celebration of International Literacy Day in Washington, DC that includes representatives from many organizations that share a commitment to worldwide literacy, including partners involved in international literacy projects.

Coinciding with the beginning of a new school year in many countries, International Literacy Day is an ideal time to recognize the role literacy plays in everyone's life. A growing number of International Reading Association Honor Councils involve their members and communities in activities at the state and provincial levels. Many national affiliates celebrate the day by presenting awards or organizing events. Classroom teachers, librarians, clubs, and communities use this unique day to create and further literacy action and partnerships.



To find out more about  
International Literacy Day,  
visit UNESCO at  
[www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)  
and the  
International Reading Association at  
[www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org).

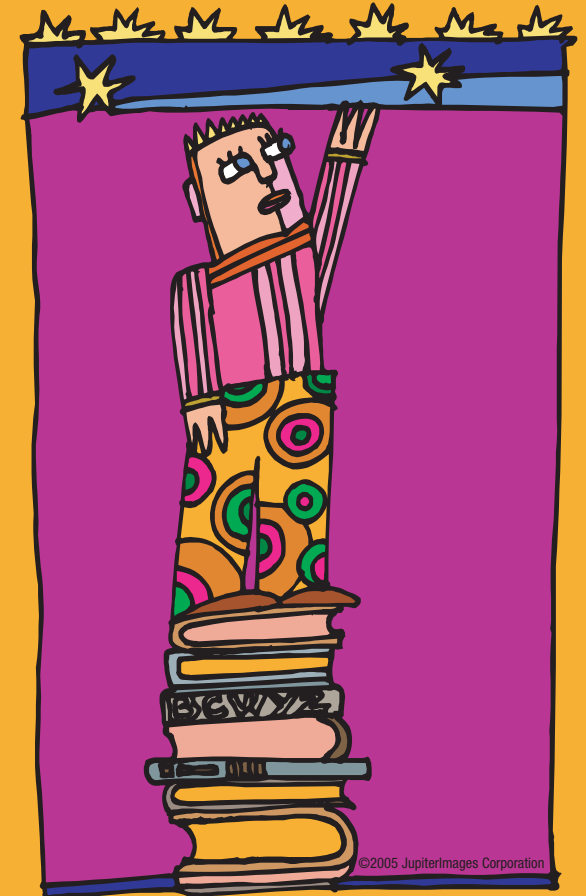
For materials to help you celebrate  
International Literacy Day,  
visit the  
International Literacy Day page  
at [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org).



INTERNATIONAL  
READING ASSOCIATION

800 Barksdale Road  
PO Box 8139  
Newark, DE 19714-8139, USA  
Phone: 302-731-1600  
Fax: 302-731-1057  
[www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)

# *International Literacy Day*



INTERNATIONAL  
READING ASSOCIATION  
[www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)



# September 8 is International Literacy Day

## Literacy Needs

International Literacy Day is an opportunity for literacy leaders to recommit to policies and practices that give hope to those marginalized by their lack of education, skills, and knowledge, including an estimated 860 million adults (two thirds of whom are women) who cannot read or write and more than 100 million children, again the majority female, who lack access to school.

## Promoting Literacy: A Reason to Celebrate

On International Literacy Day, a community of nations hosts local and national events that recognize the value of literacy to individuals, families, and communities. Thousands of reading professionals and volunteers are recognized for their daily work and dedication. The newly literate are applauded for their persistence and encouraged to go on learning. Communities initiate new ways to improve literacy.

## Why September 8?

In September 1966 the World Conference of Ministers of Education on the Eradication of Illiteracy was held in Tehran, Iran. September 8, the opening date of the conference, was proclaimed International Literacy Day. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) inaugurated its official observance of International Literacy Day in 1967.

## International Literacy Initiatives

The international community is involved in several initiatives that focus on education and development. Education for All (EFA), a commitment launched in 1990 and reaffirmed in 2000, set the goal of increasing literacy rates by 50% by 2015. Two of the EFA's specific goals are included in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) adopted by 189 countries, civil society groups, and development agencies. The United Nations adopted a resolution in 2001 to make 2003-2012 the Literacy Decade. This initiative demonstrates the collective will of countries facing literacy challenges and those in a position to provide assistance to promote literacy.

## International Literacy Awards

UNESCO recognizes meritorious literacy programs by awarding prizes on International Literacy Day. National governments or international non-governmental agencies nominate programs for the awards. An international jury appointed by the Director-General of UNESCO reviews the applications and makes recommendations. The prizes are as follows:

- Two UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prizes created in 1989 and sponsored by the government of the Republic of Korea.
- Two UNESCO Confucius Prizes for literacy launched in 2005 and sponsored by the government of the People's Republic of China, which include a study visit to literacy project sites in China.

