

Books for the Border and Beyond Planning Guide
Table of Contents

I. Introduction

1. About **Books for the Border and Beyond**
2. Join Us!
3. Essential Information

II. How to use this Planning Guide

III. On your mark . . .

1. Contact Literacy Connexus
2. Contact Host Border Church
3. Connect with Border Community
4. Communicate with Project Participants
5. Coordinate for Book Bags and Gospel of John Books

IV. Get set . . .

1. Promoting **Books for the Border and Beyond** in Your Church
2. Preparing Spiritually
3. Collecting Books
4. Building Bookcases
5. Planning Your Border Activities

V. Go!

1. Travel to Border
2. Risk Management
3. Family Reading Fair

VI. Return Trip and Follow-up

1. Drive home
2. Follow-up Reporting

I. Introduction

1. *About Books for the Border and Beyond*

Books for the Border and Beyond is a project that provides resources and hope to families living in poverty. It connects churches to the people of communities by means of planning and conducting family reading fairs, where parents are encouraged and equipped to habitually read to their children.

Research indicates that children who are read to in their first three years develop more quickly and completely than those who are not. Unfortunately, poverty and other factors deny too many children of this early literacy experience. These children, consequently, often enter kindergarten behind the level of their peers, and lag farther and farther as their school careers progress.

Some churches include ***Books for the Border and Beyond*** projects on short term border mission trips, while others reach out to underprivileged families in their own cities, collaborating with schools, community organizations, and other churches. In all cases, families are given the tools to read together, and the potential for lasting relationships between church members, school personnel, children, and parents is established.

In the first five years of the project, ***Books for the Border and Beyond*** placed approximately 3,000 beginning home libraries with families. Libraries include a Children's Bible Story Book, either a bilingual Gospel of John or an outreach Bible, a health literacy book: What to Do When Your Child Is Sick, a Rock-A-Bye Baby Reader, and age-appropriate books from Scholastic Book Fairs and other sources. Total cost of books is about \$30.00.

Literacy Connexus launched what was initially ***Books for the Border*** in 2008 with a demonstration project in the Maverick county city of Eagle Pass. Since then, a growing number of Texas churches have participated, and projects have served families in poverty not only along the border, but in communities throughout the state.

2. Join Us!

- Sponsor a family reading fair in a colonia
- Sponsor a family reading fair in your community
- Send books and/or bookcases to the border
- Host a bookcase-building party
- Co-sponsor an event with another church
- Collect books or funds for books
- Convert an unused room in your church to Literacy Connexus Book Bank
- Sponsor a family (\$50 each)
- Enlist support of a service club to secure resources for a family literacy event in your community
- Pray for this ministry

3. Essential Information

This planning guide is intended to provide direction for planning and executing a ***Books for the Border and Beyond*** literacy project. Many projects are conducted by churches throughout Texas in their local communities. Other are planned for short-term mission trips on the Texas-Mexico border. On a short-term mission trip a church will typically incorporate a ***Books for the Border and Beyond*** project as one among other events--such as construction, vacation Bible school, sports camp, evangelism outreach, etc. This guide does not address planning the mission trip as a whole, nor any other activity that may be included in the mission trip.

Literacy Connexus is concerned for the safety of all who take part in ***Books for the Border and Beyond*** projects. We require that all participants follow the guidelines of this planning guide and comply with the risk management and safety requirements. Literacy Connexus cannot be held liable for any claims, actions, or causes of action that may arise in connection with a group's conduct of any activity related to a ***Books for the Border and Beyond*** project.

II. How to Use this Planning Guide

This Planning Guide includes guidelines on planning a family reading fair either in your own community, on the Texas - Mexico border, or elsewhere.

Please begin by looking over the entire document for an overview of the ***Books for the Border and Beyond*** project planning process. The basic elements of a project include:

- planning a family reading fair at a chosen location
- coordinating with community establishments—perhaps other churches, schools, libraries, health providers, and other agencies
- identifying families to be invited to the family reading fair
- building and painting bookcases for each family
- collecting new and used books
- planning family reading fair activities
- completing our follow-up survey form
- building on the relationships formed with follow-on ministry

Whether your church participates in an entire project or a portion of one—building bookcases, conducting a book drive, etc.—you will find helpful information in the pages that follow.

Please note that sections referring to border mission trips will include some information beyond what may be needed for a project planned in your local community. In general, you will be able to apply most of the border mission trip guidance to your community project.

Every ***Books for the Border and Beyond*** project is unique. Churches have proven to be creative far beyond the guidance provided by this Planning Guide. Please feel free to shape your project in the way that you feel God calling you to minister to families.

Read accounts of what others have done in our Newsletter Archives at <http://www.literacyconnexus.org/newsletters/newsletter-archives/>

Be sure to share your extraordinary ideas with us!

III. On your mark . . .

1. Contact Literacy Connexus:

Lester Meriwether, Executive Director

4802 Hwy. 377, Suite 14

Fort Worth, TX 76102

817-696-9898

Toll free: 877-696-9898

lester@literacyconnexus.org

www.literacyconnexus.org

Literacy Connexus is excited to collaborate with your church in ministry. We will help you get started and provide answers and assistance along the way. We hope your interest and involvement in *Books for the Border and Beyond* will continue for years to come.

Your first consideration in planning a *Books for the Border and Beyond* project is to determine where your church will serve. The initial focus areas for the ministry were eighteen counties along the Mexico border, among the poorest in the United States. If you desire to serve on the border, Literacy Connexus will connect you to a host border church, and will help you begin jointly planning your project. If your church already has a relationship with a border church, we'll help you plan that, too.

Literacy Connexus will advise on any portion of a *Books for the Border and Beyond* project that your church participates in. If your part is collecting books or building bookcases for another church's project, we'll help coordinate your efforts with the others involved. Please check the *Books for the Border and Beyond Resources* section of our website, <http://www.literacyonnexus.org>, for information on other projects you may want to join.

2. Contact Host Border Church (for border projects)

Your host church is your most important *Books for the Border and Beyond* connection. The ties this church has with others in their community will prepare the way for an effective mission trip for your church, and a successful family reading fair. All of your mission trip planning will be worked out with this church.

Early contact with your host border church is the time to consider:

- When will your mission trip take place? You will probably need at least two months to collect books and build bookcases for your project.
- How long will your mission trip last? A family reading fair will require time for preparation and set-up, a morning, afternoon or evening for the event itself, plus clean-up afterward. Other projects will add to your time requirement.
- What other work projects will your church accomplish? Many border churches need repairs or painting, and have opportunities for home rehabbing, vacation Bible school and other activities.
- Where will the family reading fair take place? The host church may have adequate space indoors or out; if not, you will need to make arrangements at a library, community center, or elsewhere. This is an important detail to settle as early as possible. There are many appropriate venues; the host church can provide good direction here.
- How will families be identified for invitation to the family reading fair and how many will be invited? This is the time to discuss agencies with which to contact and work, for the purpose of identifying eligible families.

You will work out further details with your host church throughout the planning process. Keep in mind that as the sponsor church, your role is to come alongside your host, serving with them, not doing things for them. With your host church taking the lead, the resulting family reading fair will have a distinctively local flavor, as would any community event.

3. Connect with Border Community

Plan your *Books for the Border and Beyond* project around available local assets. When agencies and other resources reach out to those in need within their own community, the impact is greater and longer lasting than when help comes from the outside. Encourage your host church to take the lead in inviting agencies and businesses from their community to contribute to your project.

Community points of contact of benefit to your project are varied and not limited to the suggestions listed below. They include agencies which assist the low-income population and who can identify eligible families for your family reading fair. Medical and educational organizations may also help to identify families and may be willing to provide contributions, such as health literacy and parenting brochures. Local businesses and service clubs may be eager to extend community good will with donations and assistance.

Community Resources

- **Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy & Learning (TCALL)**

<http://www-tcall.tamu.edu>

State literacy resource center. Use the website's **Provider Directory** to find points of contact for adult and family literacy providers by city. These providers may assist in identifying families eligible for family reading fair.

- **AVANCE**

<http://www.avance.org>

Provides education and family support services to predominately Hispanic families in low-income, at risk communities. Use the website's **Locations** listing to find points of contact by region. Regional executive directors will connect you with local resources for helping identify eligible families.

- **Buckner Border Ministries**

<http://www.itsyourmission.com>

1-877-7ORPHAN

Buckner connects Christians with orphan and at-risk children, and provides domestic mission opportunities along the U.S.-Mexico border. Buckner may be able to provide local information and contacts.

- **Schools and Early Learning Programs**

Check local school district websites and early learning program directories. Educators know students in dire need of books, and may assist in connecting families to your project. Ask for book recommendations when you begin ordering.

- **Public Libraries**

Public libraries may provide connections to community agencies and programs to assist in identifying families in need. Libraries may be used for family reading fair sites.

- **Adult and Pediatric Health Clinics**

Health Clinics may work with you in identifying eligible families. Medical providers may also have brochures or books to donate, and may even follow-up on families who receive their information.

- **Local Businesses**

Home improvement centers and craft stores may be willing to donate paint and supplies for decorating bookcases. Restaurants may be willing to donate napkins, cups, or food for your family reading fair.

- **Service Organizations**

Organizations such as The National Exchange Club and Rotary International aim to support the needs of local communities, and may be a source of information and assistance.

4. Communicate with Project Participants

Books for the Border and Beyond projects involve a sponsor church (which builds the bookcases and collects books) and a host (border) church working together, with input and assistance from various community agencies. Regular contact among all participants is essential to the success of the project.

Literacy Connexus recommends using **Google Docs** as an easy tool for maintaining communication between your church and those with whom you plan your project. **Google Docs** is a free online program for creating, sharing, and collaborating, with information contained in a single, secure document which all parties can access.

See **Google Docs in Plain English** for a brief description:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRqUE6IHTEA>

Be sure to share the planning document with all who have a part in planning your project, adding new contacts as they join. Add notes and track progress throughout the planning phase, checking regularly for communication from other project participants.

5. Coordinate for Book Bags and Gospel of John Books

Literacy Connexus would like to support your ***Books for the Border and Beyond*** project by contributing bilingual *Gospel of John* books and sturdy book bags to be given to guests at your family reading fair. The book bags are graciously funded by the *Mary Hill Davis* offering.

Follow these steps to receive books and bags:

1. Read Planning Guide for understanding of project details and requirements.
2. Coordinate with host border church and community agencies to determine number of families you will be ministering to at your family reading fair.
3. Read, agree to, and sign the *Memorandum of Agreement and Request* located on the following page.
4. Fax or mail form to Literacy Connexus. Fax #: 817-696-9899.

Literacy Connexus will send books and bags to the church address provided.

Memorandum of Agreement and Request

Literacy Connexus and _____ *Your organization* _____ share the common goal of ministering to parents and their children by providing books and bookcases to families along the Texas-Mexico border and in other areas.

Literacy Connexus will provide cloth book bags and interlinear Gospel of John books, and, if requested, will share the **Books for the Border** logo to be used for publicity. Additionally, Literacy Connexus will provide the **Books for the Border** Planning Guide, and will assist your organization through the planning process--via telephone and email--as needed.

_____ *Your organization* _____ will encourage all of its volunteers, partnering churches, and other involved groups to read and follow all guidelines in the **Books for the Border** Planning Guide.

_____ *Your organization* _____ agrees to strictly comply with all risk management and safety requirements contained in Section IV of the Planning Guide, and to require its volunteers and partners to so comply.

_____ *Your organization* _____ agrees that Literacy Connexus, its staff, and its board, shall not be liable for any claims, actions, or causes of action that may arise in connection with _____ *Your organization's* _____ conduct of family reading fairs or any other related activities, and agrees to indemnify and hold harmless Literacy Connexus, its staff, and its board, against any such claim.

_____ *Name and phone number* _____ is the point of contact for _____ *Your organization* _____

Literacy Connexus will mail books and book bags to:

_____ *Your address* _____

_____ *Signature and date* _____

_____ *Literacy Connexus signature and date* _____

IV. Get set . . .

1. Promoting *Books for the Border and Beyond* in Your Church

This is an opportunity to enlist people of all ages, as they consider the potential impact of the project. In explaining *Books for the Border and Beyond*, help your church membership to realize the need for this ministry by sharing information on living conditions in the colonias, the reality of homes without books, and the consequences of parents not afforded the opportunity to read to their children.

Suggested information to share with your church:

- Colonias, which means *neighborhood* in Spanish, are home to approximately 500,000 Texans. They are unincorporated, isolated settlements that often lack water and sewage systems, electricity, health facilities, paved roads, and safe and sanitary housing. There are approximately 2,300 colonias along the Texas-Mexico border, housing the largest concentration of people living without basic services in the United States.
- Colonia homes are characterized by extreme poverty. Many of the homes are so substandard as to lack solid floors. Books, newspapers, and magazines are a luxury not seen lying around. In this setting, the bookcase provided by *Books for the Border and Beyond* is a much needed counterpart to the newly obtained books it will hold.
- The foundation of literacy and learning are laid during infancy and toddlerhood when the brain undergoes its most dramatic development and children acquire the ability to think, speak, learn, and reason. According to ZERO TO THREE National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families, failure to nurture this early development affects brain architecture, and young children begin to fall behind. Additionally, Dr. Tom Prevost, retired, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Global Missions Office, declares literacy to be the single most important factor in addressing poverty in the United States. How to improve literacy? "Getting babies ready to read by the time they're toddlers."

Promote your *Books for the Border and Beyond* project in the following ways:

- Pulpit announcements
- Bulletin inserts
- Video:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAknP8Lb0UQ>.
- Children's sermon with bookcase and books as visuals
- Bookcase displayed with information, to be used as gathering point for donated books
- Sunday school announcements

As your project progresses, keep your church updated regularly on the work accomplished. How many bookcases have been built? How many books gathered? How are children and senior adults participating? Let group representatives share their milestones. Also, keep your church updated with news from your host border church and its efforts toward your project.

2. Preparing Spiritually

Begin an organized prayer effort as a first step in your project. ***Books for the Border and Beyond*** seeks to make a lasting difference in the community in which your church will serve and throughout the eighteen counties identified as among the poorest in Texas. Ask God to show your church its role in this plan, and pray about how the relationships established as a result of this project can be used to affect change and to glorify Him.

Pray for:

- The families who will receive the books and bookcases your church provides—for this to be a change of direction in lives, as parents become empowered to read to their children, thus helping to set them up for success in school.
- School teachers and administrators that you work with, along with any other community agency representatives
- Your host border church—as it works with local agencies, prepares for your mission team's arrival, and makes arrangements for the family reading fair. Pray for this church to be a continuing beacon of hope to colonia residents.
- Your church—to gain a greater awareness of our biblical mandate concerning the poor, and to be able and willing to implement those lessons-learned in your own community.
- For opportunities throughout your ***Books for the Border and Beyond*** project to share the gospel at home, on the border, and in-between.

3. Collecting Books

Gather both new and gently-used books for beginning home libraries. Each library will include an adult Bible, a children's Bible, and a health literacy book, as specified below, plus an assortment of books which border children and parents will select together.

The intent of *Books for the Border and Beyond* is to encourage and equip parents to read to their children throughout infancy and toddlerhood—the time during which the foundations of literacy and learning are laid. Therefore, your emphasis should be on collecting books appropriate for early childhood. However, some families will have older children whose needs you will also want to provide for. Our website **Tool Box** includes book sorting guidelines.

As you identify families for your reading fair, through coordination with your host church and service agencies, you will know more specifically what languages to prepare for-- Spanish, bilingual, or English.

Families living in colonias primarily speak Spanish. With few exceptions, books for babies and toddlers should be in Spanish, or Spanish and English, in order for parents to be able to read to their children. Bibles and health literacy books for parents will also typically need to be in Spanish. Books for older children may be in English, as they will have learned English in school.

Again, contact Literacy Connexus when you know how many beginning home libraries your church will provide, to be furnished with book bags and Gospel of John books. The Mary Hill Davis Offering for Texas Missions funds the bags, which are given to family reading fair participants.

Beginning home libraries include:

- A Spanish, English, or other language children's Bible
Order by case of 12 from *Bibles by the Case*
<http://biblesbythecase.com/>
Volume includes over ninety Bible stories with pictures and text.
- A Spanish, English, or other language adult Bible
Order by case of 24 from *Bibles by the Case*
<http://biblesbythecase.com/>
- A Spanish, English, or other language *What to Do When Your Child Is Sick*

Order from the Institute for Healthcare Advancement.

<http://www.iha4health.org/>

Easy-to-read health literacy book for parents, covering the management of more than 50 common illnesses, injuries, and health problems occurring from birth to eight years.

Non-profits are eligible for a reduced price on these books.

- Six to ten age-appropriate story books

Scholastic Book Fairs supports ***Books for the Border and Beyond*** and will discount books for your project. *SBF* provides a wide range of Spanish and bilingual books and materials for children, parents, and teachers.

<http://www.scholastic.com/bookfairs/>

Also recommended:

- Spanish, English, or other language *Third Week Books*

These are *Baby* and *Toddler Readers* written for new parents and their children. *Readers* combine education for parents on the importance of reading to young children, with illustrated rhymes for babies and toddlers.

<http://www.thirdweekbooks.com/babyreaders01yrs.html>

<http://www.thirdweekbooks.com/toddlerreaders13yrs.html>

4. Building Bookcases

Well-built, brightly painted bookcases are sure to contribute to a successful **Books for the Border and Beyond** project. Your church will have as much fun assembling the bookcases as children at the family reading fair will have decorating and taking them home.

Build and paint bookcases prior to the border mission trip. Your project will require a bookcase for every family for which your church provides beginning home libraries. If possible, ask for input from the potential home library recipients regarding paint colors. This is a fun way to get them involved in the project.

The following pages include the tools and materials you will need, instructions for cutting the lumber efficiently, and preparation and assembly instructions. Take the **Lumber Cut Sheet** to your local lumber supply or home improvement store, and most will gladly cut all of the pieces for your project.

Once the lumber is cut, it's a good idea to sand all of the pieces and to pre-drill pilot holes in the side panels, according to the measurements on the **Prepare to Assemble** page.

At this point, bookcase building stations can be set up for children, seniors, or any age in between. With the wood sanded and pre-drilled, the bookcases come together very quickly.



Bookcase Directions

Materials

One sheet of 3/4" high grade plywood (one side sanded), measuring 4' x 8' (**see p. 4 for alternative cutting instructions using pine planks instead of plywood**)

One sheet of 1/8" fiberboard or plywood backing, measuring 4' x 8'

Scrap plywood to make two 11 1/2" x 8" **spacers*** for easy positioning of shelves

1 1/4" screws, 1" nails, wood glue, and paint

Sandpaper

Tools

- Electric drill/screw
- Table saw (if not ordering pre-cut lumber)
- Hammer
- 24" bar clamp
- Router or power sander or jig saw
- Sandpaper

Cutting

Five bookcases can be cut from one 4' x 8' sheet of plywood.

Seven back pieces can be cut from one 4' x 8' sheet of backing material.

The seven steps below are illustrated on the Cut Sheet on the following page.

1. Make first cut length-wise through 3/4" plywood 20" from edge. This will result in one 20" x 96" strip and one 27 7/8" x 96" strip.
2. From the 20" strip, cut thirteen pieces, each measuring 7 1/4"-wide for shelves.
3. From the 27 7/8" strip, cut two more 20" x 7 1/4" pieces for shelves.
4. From the remaining 27 7/8" strip, cut ten pieces, each measuring 8"-wide for side panels.
5. Cut length-wise through backing material 21" from edge. This will result in one 21" x 96" strip and one 26 7/8" x 96" strip.
6. From the 21" strip, cut three pieces, each measuring 26 7/8".
7. From the 26 7/8" strip, cut four pieces, each measuring 21".

*Read more about **spacers** in the **Prepare to Assemble** section.

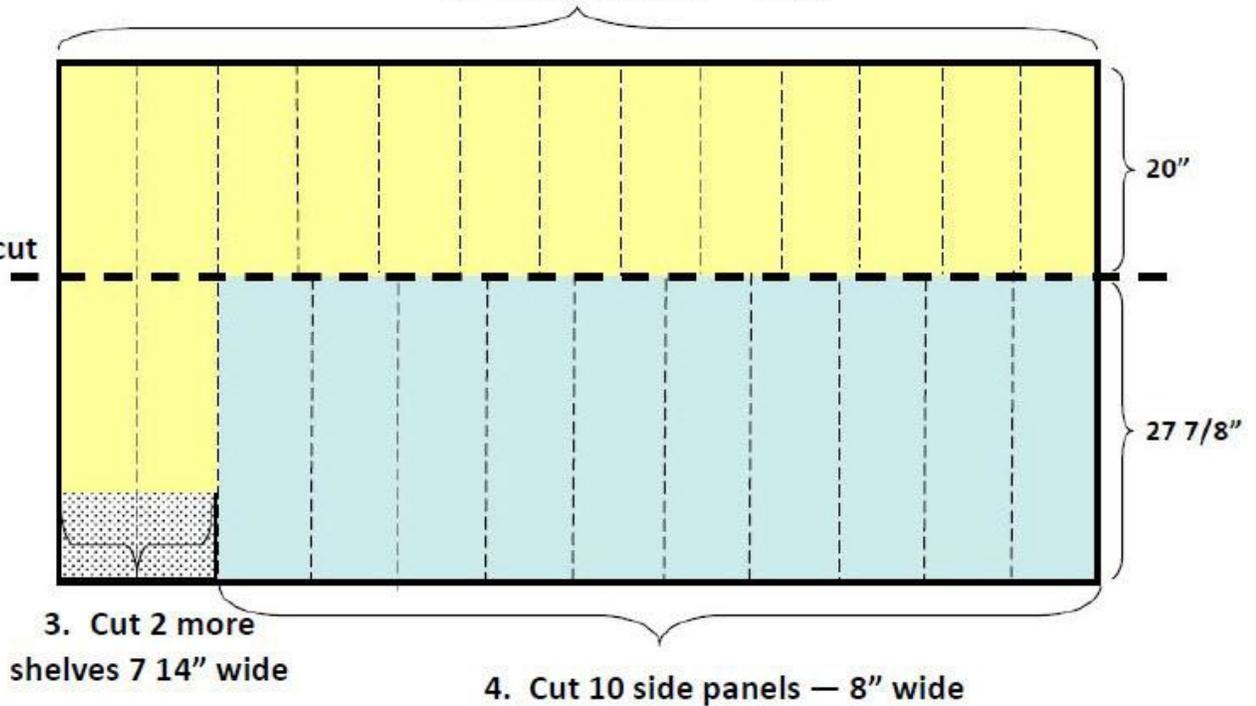
Lumber Cut Sheet

Shelves & Side Panels:

4' x 8' sheet of 3/4" high grade plywood, one side sanded (1/8" allowed for saw blade)

2. Cut 13 shelves — 7 1/4"

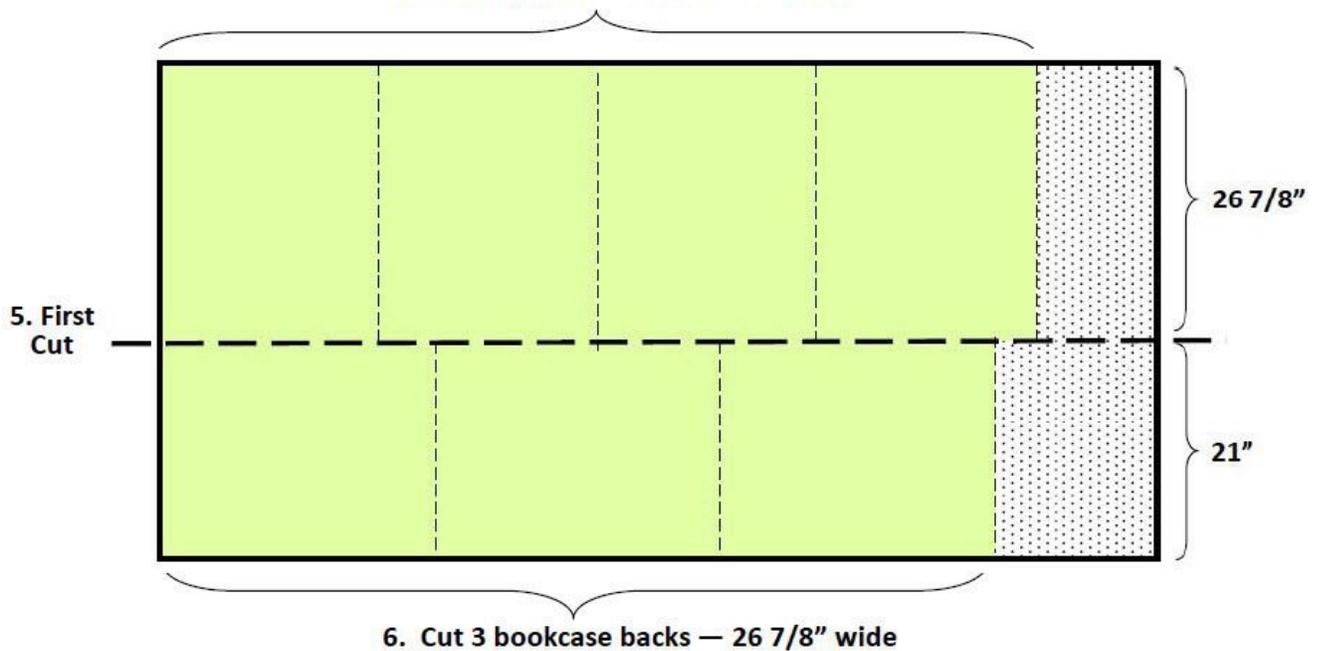
1. Lengthwise cut
(1st cut)



Backs:

4' x 8' sheet of 1/8" fiberboard or plywood

7. Cut 4 bookcase backs — 21" wide



**Alternative Cutting Guide Using
10-FT. Pine Planks
Instead of Plywood for Shelves and Sides**

For one bookcase:

60" of 1" x 8" pine for 3 **20" shelves** (1 board)

56" of 1" x 10" pine for 2 **28" sides** (1 board)

For five bookcases:

300" of 1" x 8" pine for 15 **20" shelves** (3 boards)

280" of 1" x 10" pine for 10 **28" sides** (3 boards)

Use pieces to assemble bookcases according to the following directions.

Prepare to Assemble

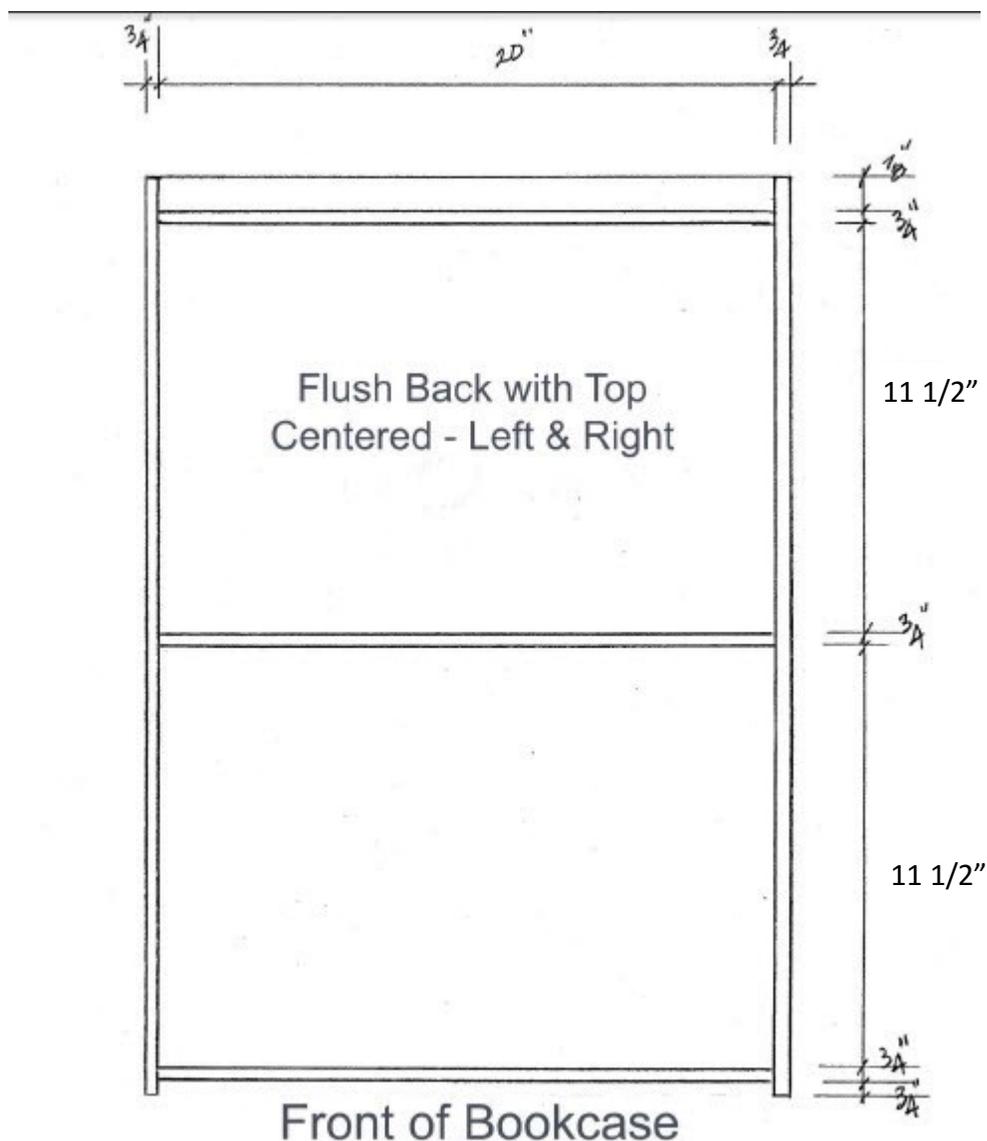
The schematic below shows the dimensions of the assembled bookcase.

Each shelf will fasten to the side panels with four screws, two on each side. To prepare, mark the top of each side panel and drill pairs of pilot holes:

- Top: 25 5/8" from bottom**
- Middle: 13 3/8" from bottom**
- Bottom: 1 1/8" from bottom**

Cut two pieces of 8" scrap lumber 11 1/2" long to be used as shelf **spacers**. These will allow for quick and easy assembly without having to take further measurements.

Sand lumber for shelves, side panels, and spacers. It's time to build.



Bookcase Assembly

1. On a flat surface, square up the bookcase, in its general configuration on its back, with two side panels and three shelves in between. Temporarily place the top shelf flush with the bottom of the side panels to space the bottom shelf 3/4" off the ground. Position middle shelf by lining up 11 1/2" **spacers** along inside surfaces of side panels, with ends against bottom shelf. Secure with bar clamp across middle shelf, fastened to side panels.



2. Attach bottom shelf to side panels by inserting two screws on each side through pilot holes.

3. Attach middle shelf to side panels using two screws on each side. (After one screw has been inserted on each side, remove bar clamp to access second pre-drilled hole.)

4. Relocate 11 1/2" **spacers** above middle shelf to determine top shelf position. Fasten top shelf to side panels using two screws on each side.

5. Flip bookcase over to attach back. Apply wood glue along back edges of side panels and shelves. Line up top edge of back with tops of side panels, and fasten in place using nails.



6. Stand the bookcase upright. Round off the top front corners, using a router or power sander or jigsaw.

7. Examine the bookcase for protruding nails or screws. Make corrections as needed. Fill in any plywood imperfections with wood putty and sand smooth.

8. Apply primer and paint.

9. Conduct a final quality assurance inspection, checking every inch of surface. **Make sure bookcase is smooth and safe for a child.**



5. Planning Your Border Activities

A. Assembling the mission team

As books and bookcases accumulate, assemble your mission team. This is a project suited to all ages, and the mission trip provides an opportunity for families to serve together. Give team members a clear understanding of what will take place, and of what their individual responsibilities will be.

The family reading fair is the climax of your *Books for the Border and Beyond* project. You will require enough team members to perform the following tasks (see **Family Reading Fair**):

- Greet families as they arrive
- Read stories to children
- Help children and parents pick out books
- Help paint names on bookcases, if needed
- Serve refreshments
- Lead crafts and games
- Help carry bookcases to cars
- Socialize with families

Your mission team members are ambassadors of your church and ambassadors of Christ. Prepare them to look for opportunities to connect with people and for opportunities to share their faith. One of the most significant things your team has to offer the border community is relationships to build upon.

B. Transportation Considerations

In addition to transporting your mission team members and other project requirements, plan for these *Books for the Border and Beyond* loading specifications:

- bookcase dimensions: 28" x 21 ½" x 8"
- bookcase weight: approximately 15 pounds
- books: these should be organized and boxed according to reading level prior to border trip
- family reading fair supplies and decorations

V. Go!

1. Travel to Border

Books for the Border and Beyond is a project intended for locations along the Mexico border, throughout Texas and in other states. We do not recommend or support travel across the border. Persons who travel to border counties may expect to go through a check point upon leaving the border area. All persons will be asked if they are U.S. citizens.

For information and updates on border safety, consult the U.S. Dept. of State Travel Warnings, http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_5665.html, and contact the Texas Baptists River Ministry, <http://texasbaptists.org/evangelismmissions/river-ministry/>. Consult the [River Ministry Trip Planning Guide](#) for further guidance in planning and executing your border mission trip.

2. Risk Management

Border mission trips require responsible adults who are able to work with children and youth on the ministering team as well as children and families in the host community. Churches must require national background checks on all adults working with children. See <http://records.txdps.state.tx.us/>. Train adults to be safety officers at all times, keeping watch for anything that would put a child in harm's way.

Safety Guidelines for Children on Ministry Team

- Familiarize children with plans, goals, and objectives of mission trip. Children who know what to expect and who share the team's goals and vision are more likely to be an asset to your team.
- For every responsible adult, assign no more than five children or more than ten youth.
- Do not allow adults to be alone with children or youth.
- Adults must be able to observe youth/children at all times.
- Keep hazardous items away from youth/children, such as sharp scissors, plastic bags, knives, matches, flammable liquids, medications, sharp instruments, power tools, cleaning supplies, chemicals, and items labeled KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN.
- Inspect accommodations, work, and play areas to make sure they are free of sharp protrusions, hazardous surfaces, trash, entanglements, electrical hazards, broken glass, toxic plants or materials, bodies of water, or any other dangers.

- Enforce all established rules.
- Supply water and sunscreen; make sure they are used.
- Require medication to be kept with an authorized adult, with written instructions for administering.
- Know that injuries and mishaps are most likely to occur not at the service site but at the lodging facility after the day's work is finished. Adults must not let their guard down at the end of the day.
- Have a safety plan in place before you leave home. Assign a first aid kit to a qualified adult. Have health and consent forms for every participant and know the location of the nearest medical clinic and hospital.

Safety Guidelines for Children at Family Reading Fair

- Inspect facility to make sure conditions are completely safe for children and toddlers and free of hazards such as exposed electrical outlets, unsafe wires and cords, objects that could be tipped over or pulled down, sharp protrusions, toxic plants or materials, and any other dangers.
- For fairs located outside, make sure event area is clearly defined and that children remain within its borders.
- Closely supervise craft activities. Keep small parts and choking hazards away from small children.
- Bookcases will be hoisted and carried as guests depart. Keep children safe.

3. Family Reading Fair

Plan this event before you leave home. Be creative. Walk through every activity with your mission team, and pack supplies accordingly.

Things to consider beforehand

- Site
Work this out with your host church. If the church does not have a fellowship hall or other adequate space, investigate using the public library, community center, or elsewhere.

Fair may be held outside, such as in the church parking lot—make sure shaded areas are provided.

- **Stories to read**

Identify reader(s). Pick out Bible stories and other story books. Coordinate with host church, if necessary, to have a Spanish-speaking reader available.

- **Personalizing bookcases**

Children, with help from parents or volunteers, will paint their names on top of their bookcases. Provide aluminum pie pans for paint along with appropriately-sized brushes. Provide other craft supplies—stickers, rubber stamps, fun foam, glitter glue, etc. Bring more stickers than you think you will need; children love them.

- **Crafts and games**

Decide what other activities to include in your fair—making bookmarks, face painting, sidewalk chalk, blowing bubbles, etc.

- **Snacks**

Plan to serve refreshments. These can be as simple as cookies and juice, or as elaborate as sandwiches and fruit.

- **Supplies**

- Tarps to cover floors in painting and craft areas

- Duct tape to secure tarps

- Garbage bags

- Wipes or washcloths and water for cleaning hands

- Decorations—streamers, balloons, helium balloons, etc

- Ribbon or string for balloons

- Masking tape for securing streamers and balloons

- Self-standing dowel rod signs for organizing book tables by age levels

- Plastic table cloths for craft areas

- Craft supplies

Family Reading Fair Set-up

- Arrange donated books on tables

Use signs for easy identification of different age level books. Or, mark age levels on helium balloons and secure to tables.

- Prepare reading area

Provide a chair for the reader. Children can sit on the floor.

- Prepare snack area

- Display bookcases

Bookcases should be visible but out of the way.

- Prepare area for decorating bookcases

If your event is indoors, cover an area of the floor with plastic tarps. Plan on enough room for several families to work at once.

- Prepare areas for crafts and games

- Decorate fair area with streamers and balloons

Conducting the event

- The family reading fair is all about reading; reading to children is the only way to kick it off. Reading gets children excited about picking out their own books and it models the activity to parents. Read to children as they arrive and at any other opportunity.

- Greet families as they arrive; steer children to the reading area.

- After story time, give each child a ***Books for the Border and Beyond*** carrying bag. Direct families to the book tables.

- Be available to answer questions and assist as families pick out books. Depending on quantity of books, allow families to pick out 6-10 per child.

- Give each family a new adult Bible, a children's Bible, the health literacy book and, if ordered, a *Third Year Book* . Also distribute any health-related or other brochures.

- Have each child pick out a bookcase. Provide paint and supplies for personalizing. Assist as needed.
- While paint dries, direct children to game and craft areas.
- Offer refreshments throughout the event.
- Assist in carrying bookcases to cars.

End of the day

- Discuss the day's events with your mission team. Record feedback that may improve your church's missions operations and that will benefit Literacy Connexus and future ***Books for the Border and Beyond*** projects.
- Make sure your team understands the significance of its contribution as part of *Together for Hope's* long-term commitment to the poor—that its efforts, added to those of hundreds of churches and thousands of individuals, will be rewarded with spiritual and physical transformation of communities.
- Discuss ways to build on the relationships established on the border.

VI. Return Trip and Follow-up

1. Drive Home

On the return trip, encourage participants to reflect on their experiences and to consider providing beginning home libraries in other areas. For example, Park Cities Baptist Church completed two family reading fairs in the fall in Willacy County, and planned to return in the spring to do additional book fairs. In the meantime, they planned to provide beginning home libraries for residents in apartments near their church in Dallas where they host an apartment ministry. The border is the focus, but need is everywhere. Follow God's leadership to points of need wherever children lack books.

Discuss literacy issues regarding your own community. Team members may be surprised to learn that Texas ranks 47th in English literacy levels and is home to 3.8 million people in need of adult education services. Texas ranks last in percentage of adults with a high school diploma or GED. Your church may see need for a *Books for the Border and Beyond* project in your own neighborhood.

Check out the illiteracy rate of your county at:

<http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/docs/09illitmap.html>.

2. Follow-up Reporting

After your mission trip, Literacy Connexus will email a *Books for the Border and Beyond Report* requesting feedback on your project. Please take the time to fill out the form, and respond as soon as possible. In recording this information for us, you will have a guide to use in your mission report to your own church.

Sample report:

Please provide feedback to Literacy Connexus within three weeks of your mission trip/*Books for the Border and Beyond* involvement. Every project is a learning experience and with your input, our capacity to equip parents to read to their children and to distribute Bibles will continue to grow.

- Church name:

- Was this your church's *first Books for the Border and Beyond* project?

- What was your church's role in the project?
 - ___ Building bookcases
 - ___ Collecting books
 - ___ Mission trip
 - ___ Other

- What other churches or agencies did you collaborate with?

- How many people were on your mission team? Were there members on the team from other churches?

- How many families were served by your mission team?

- How many bookcases and beginning home libraries were provided?

- What other projects did you accomplish on your mission trip?

- How long was your mission trip?

- What was the estimated cost of your *Books for the Border and Beyond* project?

- How many professions of faith were made as a result of your ministry?

Please comment on the following:

- Guidance and support from Literacy Connexus

- · Highlights of preparation phase
- · Difficulties encountered during preparation phase—building bookcases, collecting books, etc.
- · Highlights of mission trip
- · Difficulties encountered during mission trip—family reading fair, other projects, etc.
- · Did your *Books for the Border and Beyond* project have a meaningful impact on your church? Please share.
- · What are your recommendations for improving Books for the Border ministry?
- · Your name and phone number