Celebrating El día de los niños/El día de los libros

To quote Alice describing her adventures through the looking glass, it’s best to “begin at the beginning” when planning Día celebrations. In addition, for El día de los niños/El día de los libros celebrations that beginning should be early. Committee veterans who have planned citywide events suggest a year as the appropriate lead time for such a large-scale event. Those who have participated in smaller events indicate planning should begin three to six months before April 30. With the recent goal to have Día activities incorporated into year-round activities, programs, and events, some planning may be included in the planning of other ongoing programs, such as storytime, summer reading, and after-school programs.

The following steps outline ways in which someone organizing these events can plan and prepare effectively. The more that can be done beforehand, the less that needs to be done as the event approaches. Plans and checklists also help you stay on task and avoid overlooking any details.

Steps for a Successful Celebration

Congratulations! You have decided to celebrate El día de los niños/El día de los libros or want to expand your Día activities and are anxious to get your plans in motion. Before you start, remember that there are two rules of thumb for planning an event, whether big or small: (1) don’t do it all at once, and (2) don’t do it all alone.

The following steps outline ways in which you can effectively plan, prepare, and celebrate El día de los niños/El día de los libros.

1. What is your goal?
   Before meeting with your administrators, know why you want to celebrate El día de los niños/El día de los libros. Preface your proposal with a goal. For example: To offer families a day of activities that highlight bilingual literacy and library materials. Or you might have a goal: To incorporate bilingual and multicultural activities into other programs.

2. Outline what you propose to do in your program and what resources are required. The size of the event will guide your proposal and budget.
   1. Make a detailed outline of the activities and plans for the day. Books like El día de los niños/El día de los libros: Building a Culture of Literacy in Your Community through Día by Jeanette Larson and toolkits from the Association for Library Services to Children (ALSC) provide lots of guidance and ideas. There is no need to reinvent the wheel.
   2. Write a budget to support your activities and plans. Even if much of the materials and resources will be donated or are already on hand, you need to know the cost for the program. The appendix of this tool kit includes items to consider when writing a budget.
   3. Write your proposal, probably in the form of a memo. Keep it short, simple, and organized. Bullet your points so that you succinctly address all the components for your celebration.
3. After your proposal is accepted, set up your calendar. Allow enough time to plan, promote, and coordinate activities for the event. To stay efficient and organized, keep a status report for items related to the event alongside the calendar. Items to schedule might include:
  - Purchasing or obtaining supplies for arts and crafts activities
  - Purchasing books (be sure to allow plenty of time)
  - Contacting and hiring storytellers, authors, musicians, etc. (information on how to do this is provided elsewhere in this tool kit)
  - Meeting with community partners
  - Scheduling personnel and volunteers
  - Preparing and distributing publicity items
  - Mailing confirmation letters to performers, presenters, sponsors, and volunteers.

4. Seek out community partnerships and/or sponsorships. Solicit volunteers from local schools, colleges and universities, churches, service clubs, boys and girls clubs, etc. to help with activities associated with the celebration. Also, seek sponsorship from local area businesses. Their support can help defray the cost of the event by providing food and beverages or cash donations to help purchase supplies. A sample Solicitation Letter is included in the appendix of this tool kit.

5. Get the word out. Now that the program is established, contact newspapers, local radio and television stations, and local businesses. Find out deadlines for press releases for media outlets in your city or town. Write copy for newspapers and radio and television stations. Use social media like the library’s Facebook page. Do not forget to recognize your sponsors in your advertisements and ask them to help promote the event. A sample press release is included in the appendix of this tool kit.

6. Enjoy the celebration! Double check your plans a few days ahead to be sure you didn’t overlook anything. Be prepared for last minute emergencies and keep an eye on what worked well and what needs change or improvement.

7. After the celebration is over, send thank-you notes to participants, check to see that honoraria and bills have been paid, and evaluate the program. A sample thank-you letter is included in the appendix of this tool kit.

8. Start planning for next year’s *El día de los niños/El día de los libros* celebration.

**Additional Resources**

Official Planning for Dia Booklet (Downloadable/printout)
Press Kit and Free Program Downloads (link)