READING ATHLETE TOOLKIT
FIVE STORIES. ONE TEAM.

Reading Athlete · National Literacy Month 2026

FUN WARNING

These are picture books, here to play with your inner child. Yes, on purpose. Ten minutes, no homework, and your whole team can finish one in less time than a well led warm up.

WHAT'S IN THE BAG

Each story was carefully curated as a tool to build thoughtful connection

THE BOOK	WHO PICKED IT	WHY THEY PICKED IT
No Matter What Debi Gliori	**Morgan's Message**	Morgan's favorite as a kid, chosen by her mom. The whole point: your value does not move when your stat line does.
The Rabbit Listened Cori Doerrfeld	**Kevin Love Fund**	Everybody in the story tries to fix Taylor's bad day. Only the rabbit sits down and is an active and patient listener. Be the rabbit.
I Am Every Good Thing Derrick Barnes & Gordon C. James	**The Mind-Field Athlete Institute**	Confidence is not never failing. It is getting back up and letting your character talk louder than anyone's doubts. A great reminder about how to speak to each other and to ourselves.
Moo Baa La La La Sandra Boynton	**Endurant Movement**	The animals make the wrong sounds and nobody corrects them. You do not have to sound like everyone else to belong. Be your best you, and honor that in others, to build a healthy community.
What Do You Do with an Idea? Kobi Yamada	**Athletes for Hope**	A child experiences the spark of a new idea and bravely explores its potential. It ends up changing his world. A reminder to explore how the character built through sport applies in every other area of life.

FOUR WAYS TO TAKE PART

Pick one. Seriously, one is plenty.

1. **Read one out loud.**
At practice, in the locker room, on the bus, at a home game. Ten minutes. Pick the team's fun captain to read, or make the coach do it with voices. **Pro tip:** an unexpected narrator, a parent or an alum, changes the whole mindset of the room.

2. **Take it to the littles.**
Grab a teammate, wear your jersey, and volunteer to read aloud at your library, an elementary school, or a community site. You will be the tallest hero those kids meet all year.

3. **Make something.**
Turn the book into team art, a chalk mural, a locker sign. Art starts conversations that questions cannot.

4. **The grateful thank you call.**
Ring or text someone to share a note of thanks. **Pro tip:** ask a teacher, a grandparent, or whoever raised you which book they read you. Their answer may surprise and motivate you.

IDEAS TO STEP UP YOUR GAME

Nobody remembers the practice where nothing happened. Plan it like a set play and practice with intention.

The Rabbit Listened
NINETY SECONDS AS THE RABBIT
Pairs. One talks about a hard week. The other may not speak, advise, or fix for ninety seconds.

What Do You Do with an Idea?
PASS THE GOLD CARD
Each week it goes to the teammate whose idea deserves protecting. It lives with them until they pass it on.

I Am Every Good Thing
NUMBER AND AN I AM
Every athlete writes one I am statement, adds their jersey number, and posts it in a shared area.

Moo Baa La La La
MAKE A TEAM SOUND
The silliness is the point. Build a sound that is yours, and use it when the group needs a reset.

No Matter What
WORST GAME CARDS
Write to a teammate what you would still value about them after their worst game ever. Give it to them when they need it most.

DOES THIS ACTUALLY WORK?

Morgan's Message Spring 2026 partnership pilot · 89 teams in 26 states and growing

73
athletes completed both check-ins. Average well-being scores rose, and athletes reported feeling calmer, more motivated, and more connected.

81%
of athletes who answered said the session was a helpful mental break from sport and school.

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dollars, ever. Free for every school, every team, every athlete. That part is not changing.

ONE REAL THING BEFORE YOU GO

A book is a good place to start the conversation. It is not the whole conversation. This is a free peer-led activity, not treatment. If you or a teammate are struggling, talk to a mental health professional, or call or text **988**, free and confidential, any hour of any day. Asking for help is the same skill as calling for the ball.

SAY HI

Share your story. Photo, caption, one sentence. Tag **@readingathlete** on Instagram, or email **readingathletes@gmail.com** with constructive feedback. We read every one.

BE THE LIGHT!

National Literacy Month, September 2026, running through Student-Athlete Mental Health Week, October 3–10. In partnership with Morgan's Message, the Kevin Love Fund, Athletes for Hope, The Mind-Field Athlete Institute, and Endurant Movement.