Last Fall, when we first came before the SC to talk about this project, Mickie and I hoped it would be a positive event for Lowell. We have to admit to being overwhelmed by the support from so many in the community. We were truly stunned by the response and within an hour of opening the doors to educators, support staff, community groups and families on November 19th, we went from "never again" to "how can we do this again".

The FirstBook/AFT program, *Books on Wheels*, is targeted to communities serving students in need as defined by several means - Title I participation being one of these. In Lowell, we met FirstBook's free truck requirements through a hybrid program requiring 1,000 new email signups from UTL members for FirstBook's Marketplace (discounted materials) and a minimum contribution of $4,500.

With the Superintendent's cooperation, the UTL successfully solicited email addresses from interested staff throughout the Fall. We also met with and received support from community groups like CMAA's AfterSchool program, Community Teamwork, Coalition for a Better Acre , Pollard Library, and Boys and Girls Club of Greater Lowell - all of whom support our children here in Lowell in a variety of programming.

The impact of FirstBook and the UTL's collaboration is found in some of the preliminary data we've collected:

- **Over 1,000 LPS staff emails** collected to meet the requirements for a free book truck.

- **$6,000 raised** through GoFundMe - we exceeded our original goal of $5,000. With the funds raised, we were able to supplement the free truckload of books with culturally diverse titles suggested by teachers throughout the LPS

- **over 40,000** new books delivered, sorted and stacked within a 12-hour period

- On sorting day, **nearly 200 volunteers** working together from retired and active United Teachers of Lowell members, to community volunteers, student service groups, parents, administrators from Central Office…. on distribution day we lost count, but more than 50 had signed up on our volunteering website

- About **450 LPS staff** members picked up **40 books** for use in classrooms and with their students. We had participation from every Lowell Public School

- Nearly **2,000 students** - probably more since we did not ask High School students to bring a coupon - picked up 5 books of their choice.

- Our event donated more than **500 books to help Lawrence's Bruce school** recover from a recent fire

———————— video: FirstBook Invade Lowell

Of course, an event of this magnitude could never have happened without cooperation and collaboration among many, many groups:

- The Lowell Public Schools, Superintendent Khelfaoui, and Central Admin staff who helped us get the message of FirstBook out to staff starting with the opening day meeting of all staff, assisted us with ensuring that our equipment needs were met. Special thanks to Patty Guziejka Title I Director, Melissa Newell from the Curriculum office, Rick Underwood (facilities), and Deputy Superintendent Jeannine Durkin who helped us get the word out about the event.

- Brian LaPierre of AFT-MA and Leslie Getzsinger and Tom Moran from AFT in DC for guidance throughout the event.

- The United Teachers of Lowell active members who submitted email registrations and especially the Building Reps who tirelessly made sure that UTL members from all 4 units (teachers, paras, custodians and cafe workers) knew about FirstBook and how to register.

- Special thanks for the guidance, encouragement, and support from UTL President Paul Georges and the UTL Executive Board and especially to Nancy Giblin our UTL Office Manager for stepping in to solve every challenge (and there were tons of them) that came our way

- To the our custodians and especially Dennis Ferriera who got 26 pallets of books off a 53' trailer and into the ELKS hall in record time

- Our community supporters - Washington Savings (especially Vee Kong), JDCU, Central MV Labor Council, Winn Residential, AFT-MA, and the more than 65 donors small and large to our GoFundMe effort

- Our UTL retirees, along with retirees from other sectors within the community, who unpacked and sorted books on Friday morning and worked throughout the day on Saturday

- Active UTL members - many of whom came to volunteer on Friday afternoon and into the evening after a full day and week of school

- Service groups in the schools came to help us both days. Thanks to Mr. Chase's class from the Wang School who walked to the Elks to help sort on Friday, to Mr. Neagle and Ms. Herbert's service group from the Pyne Arts who came to assist on Saturday, and to members of LHS National Honor Society. Thank you to UTEC's Americorp team and to Andrea Wallace and her team from Winn Residential for helping us sort on Friday. Thanks also goes to Dr. Pat Fontaine from UML College of Ed. and her pre-service students who volunteered on Saturday.

- To the Lowell ELKS who couldn't have been a better host for this event - especially to the Elks Club manager, Paul Palladino. Whatever we needed, the Elks were there to help us.

- To Gunther Wellenstein (SWR) who helped us keep this a "mostly" green event. Everything but the plastic shrink wrap on the cartons was repurposed or recycled.

- To all of our elected officials who were able to come out to support us, especially Bob Hoey. Bob performed door duty throughout the event and greeted our families and staff from start to finish.

- To all the parents and caregivers who were able to attend the event and stood in long lines with their children with more excitement than we could ever have imagined; special thanks, as well, to all the parents who were able to help during either Friday's set-up or Saturday's distribution, or both.

- Our families, who lived and breathed every nuance of this event for the past 6 months. And now, for re-retirement.

It took participation from our entire village to make this event special - we've had so many positive reactions to it. We are making plans for a bigger and even better event in November 2018 and hope to have many partners helping us continue the mission to get books into the hands of our families and the educators working with them.