



PRESS RELEASE

THE WNY LITERACY INITIATIVE ADDS 3 NEW PARTNERS IN THE ROCHESTER AREA

Buffalo, February 7, 2024 – The WNY Education Alliance is pleased to announce that The Hoekelman Center for Health Beyond Medicine, the Ibero-American Action League, and the Monroe County Library System have become partners in the WNY Literacy Initiative. The new partners reflect the growing regional reach of the initiative as well as the increased focus on improving literacy rates by working with pediatricians, public libraries, and non-profit organizations that assist English learners and their families. There are now 29 organizations in the WNY Literacy Initiative.

The WNY Literacy Initiative is a collaborative effort comprised of teachers, parent groups, community organizations, education non-profits, librarians, and literacy experts, including the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown and the City of Buffalo, the Buffalo NAACP, the Buffalo Police Athletic League, the Buffalo Sabres Foundation, the Buffalo Urban League, the Community Action Organization of WNY, Dyslexia Allies of WNY, Dyslexia Services of WNY, The Education Trust – New York, The Hoekelman Center For Health Beyond Medicine, the Ibero-American Action League, Literacy Buffalo Niagara, Monkey See, Monkey Do...Children's Bookstore, the Monroe County Library System, the National Parents Union, Neuhaus Education Center, the New York State Network For Youth Success & the Afterschool Network of Western New York, The Niagara Frontier Reading Council, the Parent Network of Western New York, Project FLIGHT, The Reading League, Read to Succeed Buffalo, Say Yes Buffalo, Teach My Kid to Read, Villa Maria College, We the Parents of WNY, WNY Education Alliance, and the WNY Literacy Collaborative.

The mission of the WNY Literacy Initiative is to increase awareness of the importance of literacy and improve literacy rates in Western New York through community outreach, innovative partnerships to address educational gaps, professional development opportunities for local educators, and research and advocacy.

Tarja Parssinen, founder of WNY Education Alliance, commented: "We are excited to welcome The Hoekelman Center, the Ibero-American Action League, and the Monroe



County Library System as partners in the WNY Literacy Initiative. The addition of the new partners further expands the initiative in the Rochester area and highlights the importance of partnering with health organizations, public libraries, and community-based non-profits to help improve literacy rates in the region.”

“In addition to our work to support teachers and schools, we plan on partnering with health organizations, like The Hoekelman Center for Health Beyond Medicine, to work with pediatricians throughout the region to provide families with resources to help young children learn to read. The link between literacy, poverty, and public health is underappreciated and we hope to raise more awareness of literacy as a critical public health issue, much like getting vaccinations.”

“Public libraries play an important role in promoting literacy by providing residents with access to books and other educational resources, particularly in underserved communities. Families with young children and struggling readers often seek support from public libraries in their efforts to teach their children to read, and librarians often serve as our “literacy first responders.” We look forward to working with the Monroe County Library System and other partners in the WNY Literacy Initiative, such as Teach My Kid to Read, to ensure that our libraries have the resources needed to support those who are learning to read, including equitable access to decodable books, and that our librarians are trained in reading science.”

“Lastly, literacy is a particularly important issue for those families whose second language is English. English learners are a growing demographic in many communities in Western New York, and community organizations like Ibero play an important role in supporting and advocating for Latinos and the underserved in the Rochester area. We look forward to working with Ibero and organizations like it to help address the literacy needs of all English learners in the region.”

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About (in alphabetic order):

Buffalo & Erie County Public Library

Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries provide residents of all ages with resources, materials, partnerships, services, information, and expertise to encourage and support lifelong learning. There are 37 library branches and two mobile units with more than 3.2 million materials - books, eBooks, DVDs, music, public computers, WiFi and more. Our mission is to Connect our diverse community with library resources that enrich, enlighten and entertain. Free library cards (traditional and eLibrary) are available to Erie County, New York residents and to those who work and/or attend school in Erie County, NY.

Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown and the City of Buffalo

The Honorable Byron W. Brown was sworn in to a fifth term as the 62nd Mayor of New York's second largest city in January of 2022. Mayor Brown is a long-time champion of Buffalo's students, especially as it relates to literacy. He established his Reading Rules! Kids Summer Reading Challenge over 20 years ago in an effort to "maximize the reading potential of our youth and encourage their developmental success." Over 25,000 students have completed the Summer Reading Challenge since the inception of this program.

Buffalo NAACP

For more than a century the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has worked to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination. The purpose of the Buffalo Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People shall be to improve the political, educational, social and economic status of minority groups; to eliminate racial prejudice; to keep the public aware of the adverse effects of racial discrimination; and to take lawful action to secure its elimination, consistent with the efforts of the national organization and in conformity with the articles of Incorporation of the Association, its Constitution and By-Laws, and as directed by the National Board of Directors.

Buffalo Police Athletic League

The Police Athletic League of Buffalo, Inc. (PAL) is a not-for-profit organization that provides youth of the City of Buffalo with recreational, educational, cultural, environmental and preventive program activities in structured, supervised and organized settings, using professional recreation and law enforcement personnel, in an effort to provide leadership, direction and an opportunity for those youth to become responsible, successful adults.

Buffalo Sabres Foundation

The mission statement of the Buffalo Sabres Foundation is to identify and support organizations in Western New York which share our core objectives: serving children and military personnel, caring for the sick, assisting physically and mentally challenged athletes, and supporting youth hockey initiatives. By utilizing financial resources and community influence, the Buffalo Sabres Foundation assists these organizations and their beneficiaries in realizing their highest potential and succeeding in their endeavors.

Buffalo Urban League



Since 1927, the Buffalo Urban League has brought positive change and opportunities for a better future to hundreds of thousands of lives in the Buffalo-Niagara region. Our services build strong and stable families through empowering disadvantaged individuals to secure economic self-reliance, parity, power, and civil rights. Our programs serve individuals from birth through senior years by providing family support and stabilization services, foster care, adoption, education, job training, employment, scholarships, health awareness, financial management, business development, technical assistance, and loan, and housing counseling to renters, first-time homeowners, and to prevent foreclosures to families and individuals in our community. For more information on our services and programs, please visit us at www.buffalourbanleague.org.

Community Action Organization of WNY

The Community Action Organization of Western New York is a non-profit that serves over 50,000 individuals and families annually. We use our combined expertise to lead the charge on mitigating poverty throughout low-income communities within our area by empowering our clients with the resources they need to become self-responsible.

Dyslexia Allies of WNY

Dyslexia Allies of WNY is a local chapter of Decoding Dyslexia – NY, and we are allies of all dyslexia groups. Our focus is connecting families to resources, support, educational interventions for dyslexia and improving instruction for students in New York State.

Dyslexia Services of WNY

Dyslexia Services of WNY offers intervention, advocacy, consultation, professional learning, assessment, and dyslexia education and simulation, as well as comprehensive literacy services for any struggling reader.

The Education Trust – New York

The mission of EdTrust–NY is to eliminate the gaps in equity and opportunity that hold back too many students from reaching their full potential, especially those who are low-income or students of color, in order to enable all students in New York State to achieve at high levels — from early childhood through college.

The Hoekelman Center for Health Beyond Medicine

The Hoekelman Center is part of the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Rochester School of Medicine. Our mission is to create healthier futures for children by addressing critical social, economic, and environmental factors that affect their lives. One focus area is evidence-based solutions for early literacy. For more information, contact our director, Dr. Andy Aligne: www.hoekelmancenter.org.

Ibero-American Action League

Ibero is a dual-language multi service agency that uplifts, empowers, and advocates for Latinos and the underserved. Ibero offers several programs categorized in our various divisions and owns and operates Poder 97.1 FM. The Youth Services Division’s mission is to advocate for and enhance the quality of life for



youth and their families in Monroe County. We achieve this by providing services in the areas of education, health, leadership development, cultural enrichment, and employment.

Literacy Buffalo Niagara

We are the only provider of free, one-on-one tutoring for adults in Erie and Niagara counties. Adults looking to read better or learn English are welcome to reach out to us. Our vision is that all people in Erie and Niagara counties are literate. Our mission is to develop literacy skills by providing free tutoring in Erie and Niagara counties through engagement and training of diverse community volunteers.

Monkey See, Monkey Do...Children's Bookstore

Monkey See, Monkey Do...Children's Bookstore is a locally owned, independent bookstore in WNY that opened in 2009. Our mission is to foster a love of reading, spark curiosity and imagination, encourage independent thinking, and promote healthy, active lifestyles for all ages. Our curated book services and literacy experiences entertain, educate and inspire readers through our love of books. We are committed to working with local schools, teachers, librarians, businesses and the WNY community to support literacy efforts and provide meaningful experiences.

Monroe County Library System

The Monroe County Library System (MCLS) is an association of independent public libraries working together to improve library services for residents of Monroe County. The MCLS was chartered by the New York State Board of Regents in 1954 and is directed by a board of trustees appointed by the Monroe County Legislature. MCLS members include the libraries of sixteen towns, a school and the City of Rochester. Each member library is governed by an independent board of trustees and funded by local taxes.

National Parents Union

With more than 1,000 affiliated parent organizations in all 50 states, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico, the National Parents Union is the united, independent voice of modern American families. We channel the power of parents into powerful policies that improve the lives of children, families and communities across the United States. We are an authentically parent-led organization that works to advocate for policies and initiatives that support families and promote educational equity run by seasoned organizers with direct lived experience. Our work is guided by a set of values that prioritize parent empowerment, collaboration, and community building.

Neuhaus Education Center

Neuhaus Education Center is a non-profit educational organization located in Bellaire, Texas. Our mission is to promote reading success for all by providing evidence-based professional development to educators, information and resources to families, and direct services to adult learners. Learn more at www.neuhaus.org.

New York State Network for Youth Success / Afterschool Network of Western New York



The New York State Network for Youth Success (NYS NYS) is dedicated to building a youth-serving system that increases the quality and availability of afterschool and expanded learning programs. The After-School Network of WNY (ASNWNYS) is a subset of the New York State Network for Youth Success and serves as an intersection point for afterschool and out-of-school time stakeholders in Western New York. The ASNWNYS works collaboratively with NYS Regional Office-WNY to engage in systems-level work around policy, partnerships, and quality assurance to create conditions for programs to operate effectively and meet the diverse needs of young people in the region in out-of-school time settings.

The Niagara Frontier Reading Council

The Niagara Frontier Reading Council is a non-profit educational organization chartered by the International Literacy Association. Our mission is to promote literacy education, encourage professional development and provide community service that fosters literacy within Western New York. We hope to instill a passion for lifelong learning and to encourage readers to build a vision of the future.

Parent Network of Western New York

Parent Network of WNY is a not-for-profit agency that provides education and resources for families of individuals with special needs (birth through adulthood) and for professionals. Parent Network of WNY provides 1-on-1 Support and education through resources, workshops, and support groups to assist families of individuals with disabilities to understand their disability and navigate the support service system. Their mission is supporting families and professionals to empower individuals with disabilities to reach their full potential. You can learn more about this organization here:

<https://parentnetworkwny.org>.

Project FLIGHT

Project FLIGHT is a not-for-profit organization devoted to promoting literacy in children and caregivers, through school and family literacy initiatives. It works collaboratively with practitioners, schools, community organizations and businesses locally, statewide, nationally, and internationally to achieve its objectives.

The Reading League

The Reading League is a national education nonprofit led by educators and reading experts dedicated to promoting knowledge that will accelerate the global movement toward evidence-aligned reading instruction. We train and support educators and school leaders, and by extension, we also serve parents, specialists, and researchers.

Read to Succeed Buffalo

Read to Succeed Buffalo believes that through exposure to high quality, intentional, literacy instruction and literacy-rich environments from birth through 3rd Grade, all children, regardless of economic or social challenges, can achieve success. Read to Succeed Buffalo administers evidence-based literacy coaching programs in licensed child care, Head Start and Kindergarten - 3rd Grade classrooms throughout Buffalo.



Say Yes Buffalo

The mission of the Say Yes Buffalo partnership is to remove barriers to educational attainment, workforce participation and economic mobility for students in public and charter schools in Buffalo, NY. Our collective impact partnership, centered on racial equity and inclusion, provides a postsecondary tuition promise and cradle-to-career comprehensive supports to increase the rates of high school and postsecondary completion and the achievement of fulfilling professional employment.

Teach My Kid to Read

We are committed to creating awareness and providing education about how we learn to read and where the different resources fit, so librarians, parents and guardians are empowered to help more kids learn to read and discover the joy of reading.

Villa Maria College

Villa Maria College's mission is to provide students with a rigorous and enriching educational experience. By offering academic programs with a broad core curriculum, the College transforms and empowers students to realize their intellectual, creative, professional, and spiritual potential. To accomplish this, we use our five core values – transformation, justice and peace, solidarity with the poor, respect for human dignity, and compassion - as a guide to ensure that every decision made is done in our students' best interests.

We the Parents of WNY

We the Parents of WNY is an intergenerational collaboration of parents, community organizations, faith-based leaders, and concerned educators.

WNY Education Alliance

The WNY Education Alliance is a non-profit organization committed to improving education in the Western New York area through advocacy, community engagement, and strategic partnerships.

WNY Literacy Collaborative

At WNY Literacy Collaborative, our mission is simple: to help ALL children learn to read. Our goals are to help ensure educators are equipped with the knowledge of evidence-based reading instruction, to provide collaborative implementation and support aligned with the science, and to compile resources into one easy to access, shareable location.

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