



## PRESS RELEASE

### WNY LITERACY INITIATIVE ADDS NEW PARTNERS & PROVIDES UPDATE

***The WNY Literacy Initiative Welcomes the Buffalo NAACP, the Buffalo Urban League, the Community Action Organization of WNY, The Niagara Frontier Reading Council, and Villa Maria College as its Newest Partners***

**Buffalo, October 3, 2022** – The WNY Education Alliance is pleased to announce that the Buffalo NAACP, the Buffalo Urban League, the Community Action Organization of WNY, the Niagara Frontier Reading Council, and Villa Maria College have agreed to become partners in the WNY Literacy Initiative.

The WNY Literacy Initiative is a collaborative effort comprised of teachers, parent groups, community organizations, local universities, education non-profits, and literacy experts. There are now 21 organizations that have partnered together to support this important initiative, including Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown and the City of Buffalo, the Buffalo NAACP, the Buffalo Police Athletic League, the Buffalo Urban League, the Community Action Organization of WNY, Dyslexia Allies of WNY, Dyslexia Services of WNY, The Education Trust – New York, Literacy Buffalo Niagara, Monkey See, Monkey Do...Children's Bookstore, the New York State Network For Youth Success & the Afterschool Network of Western New York, Neuhaus Education Center, The Niagara Frontier Reading Council, 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 WNY Literacy Collaborative.

The mission of the WNY Literacy Initiative is to improve literacy rates in Western New York, especially in underserved communities, through a multi-year, three-pronged effort involving:

- 1) **Community Outreach** – We are working with partner organizations and sponsors to build science-aligned literacy hubs in local schools, public libraries, and community centers, conduct book readings in schools with celebrities under our



- “Reading with the Stars” Program, and hold community workshops to provide support for parents of struggling readers and children with dyslexia.
- 2) **Professional Development** – With the support of our partners, we are funding professional development opportunities for local educators and facilitating partnerships between local schools and educational organizations to provide evidence-based reading instruction through teacher training and the implementation of high-quality, content-rich curriculum.
  - 3) **Advocacy** – Through partner organizations, we are working to raise awareness of the science of reading with decision-makers in Western New York and New York State more broadly in an effort to provide more resources to support science-aligned reading instruction for students and training for teachers.

The partners in this initiative believe that literacy is one of the most pressing educational issues today. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), less than 35% of fourth grade students in New York State are proficient readers. Literacy rates are even lower in our most underserved communities. The data shows that students who are not proficient in reading by third grade end up, on average, experiencing much lower educational outcomes.

To support this initiative, the partners will host the WNY Science of Reading Conference in Buffalo on Saturday, November 5, 2022. Teachers and school administrators interested in learning more are encouraged to visit [www.wnyeducationalliance.org](http://www.wnyeducationalliance.org).

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About (in alphabetical order):

#### **Buffalo Mayor Byron W. Brown and the City of Buffalo**

The Honorable Byron W. Brown was sworn in to a fifth term as the 62<sup>nd</sup> 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.

#### **The 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.

#### **The 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.

#### **The 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](http://www.buffalourbanleague.org).

#### **Community Action Organization**

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.

#### **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.

#### **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](http://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 (ASNWNY) 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 ASNWNY 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.

#### **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 childcare, 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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