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## A Profile of Third-Grade Proficiency in Erie County

United Way of Buffalo & Erie County on behalf of the Erie/Niagara Birth to 8 Coalition

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## A Profile of Third-Grade Proficiency in Erie County

### Abstract

Produced by the United Way of Buffalo and Erie County, this report details information about why it is important for third graders in Erie County to be proficient in reading and math. Children below grade-level proficiency in third grade are much less likely to graduate from high school. Without mastering early reading and math skills, a child will fall further and further behind their peers. Without a high school degree, our children will face a future in which they are less likely to be able to support themselves through employment, and are more likely to live in poverty.

COMMUNITY REPORT CARD SERIES

Education • June 2016

A P R O F I L E O F

# THIRD-GRADE PROFICIENCY

I N E R I E C O U N T Y

A product of the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County on behalf of the Erie/Niagara Birth to 8 Coalition

LIVE UNITED



United Way of Buffalo  
& Erie County

# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR THIRD-GRADERS — TO BE PERFORMING WITH — GRADE-LEVEL PROFICIENCY?

*Children below grade-level proficiency in third grade are much less likely to graduate from high school.*

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- Reading and math are windows to the world and fundamental to a child's education. The importance of learning to read cannot be overstated.
- Without the ability to read, a child is hindered from learning, both inside and outside of the classroom.
- Poor reading skills affect not only grade performance, but also self-confidence and motivation.
- Children who do not understand the fundamental elements of math cannot go on to understand higher level mathematics, and lack basic skills for everyday tasks.

Without mastering early reading and math skills, a child will fall further and further behind their peers. Without a high school degree, our children will face a future in which they are less likely to be able to support themselves through employment, and are more likely to live in poverty.



RESEARCHERS ESTIMATE THAT CHILDREN WITHOUT BASIC READING SKILLS BY THE START OF FOURTH GRADE **ARE FOUR TIMES LESS LIKELY TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL**

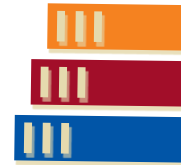
## A DEVELOPMENTAL THRESHOLD



In third grade, students make the important shift from learning to read to reading to learn.



By third grade, children should understand the basic building blocks of math—from addition to multiplication and from whole numbers to fractions.



Already by fourth grade, researchers estimate a child reading below grade-level will fail to comprehend half of the curriculum.

## EARLY LEARNING PAVES THE WAY



Early learning is the path that leads to graduation, employment and a higher quality of life.

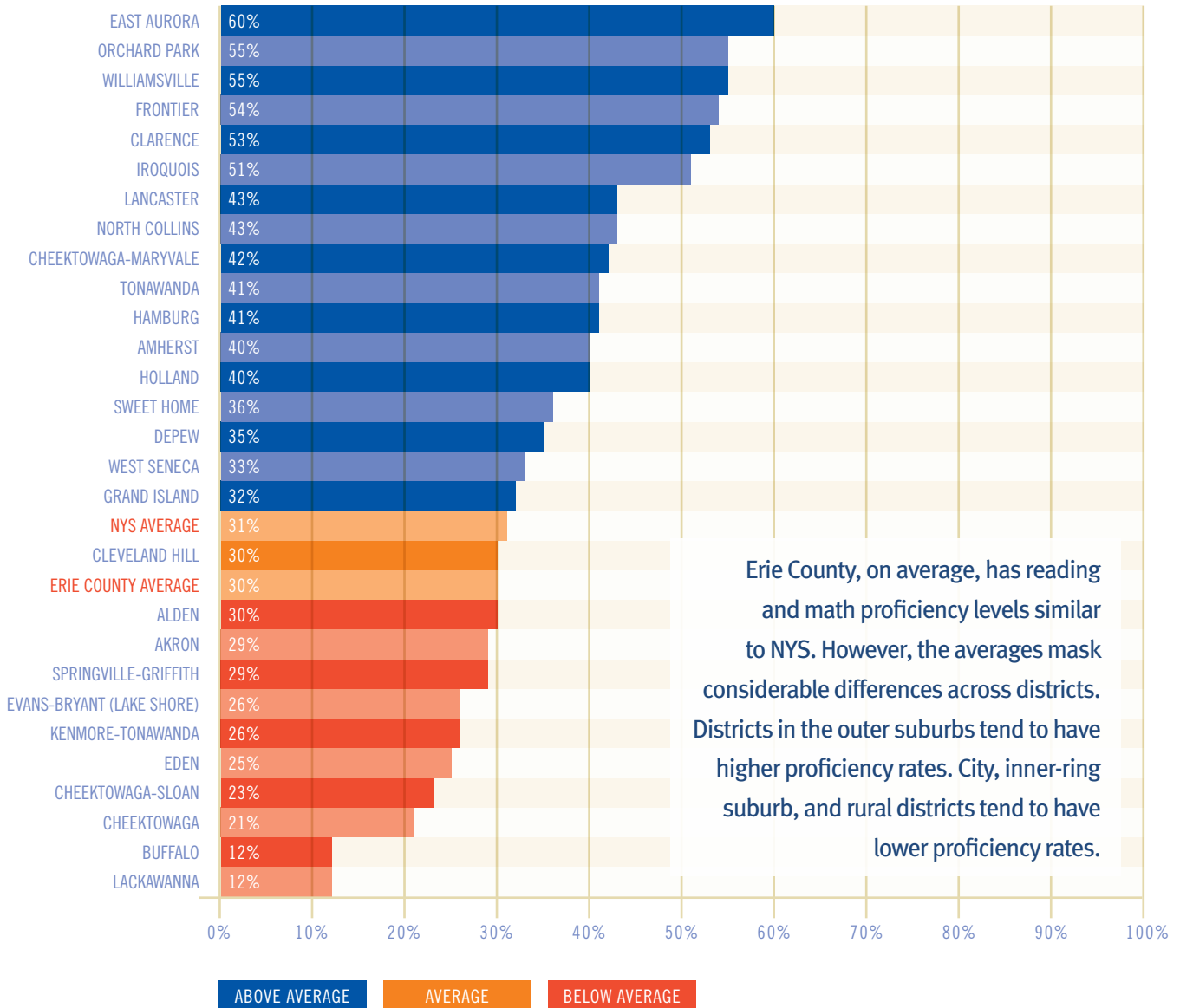


Children that grow into adults without a high-school degree face higher barriers to employment and earn lower wages.



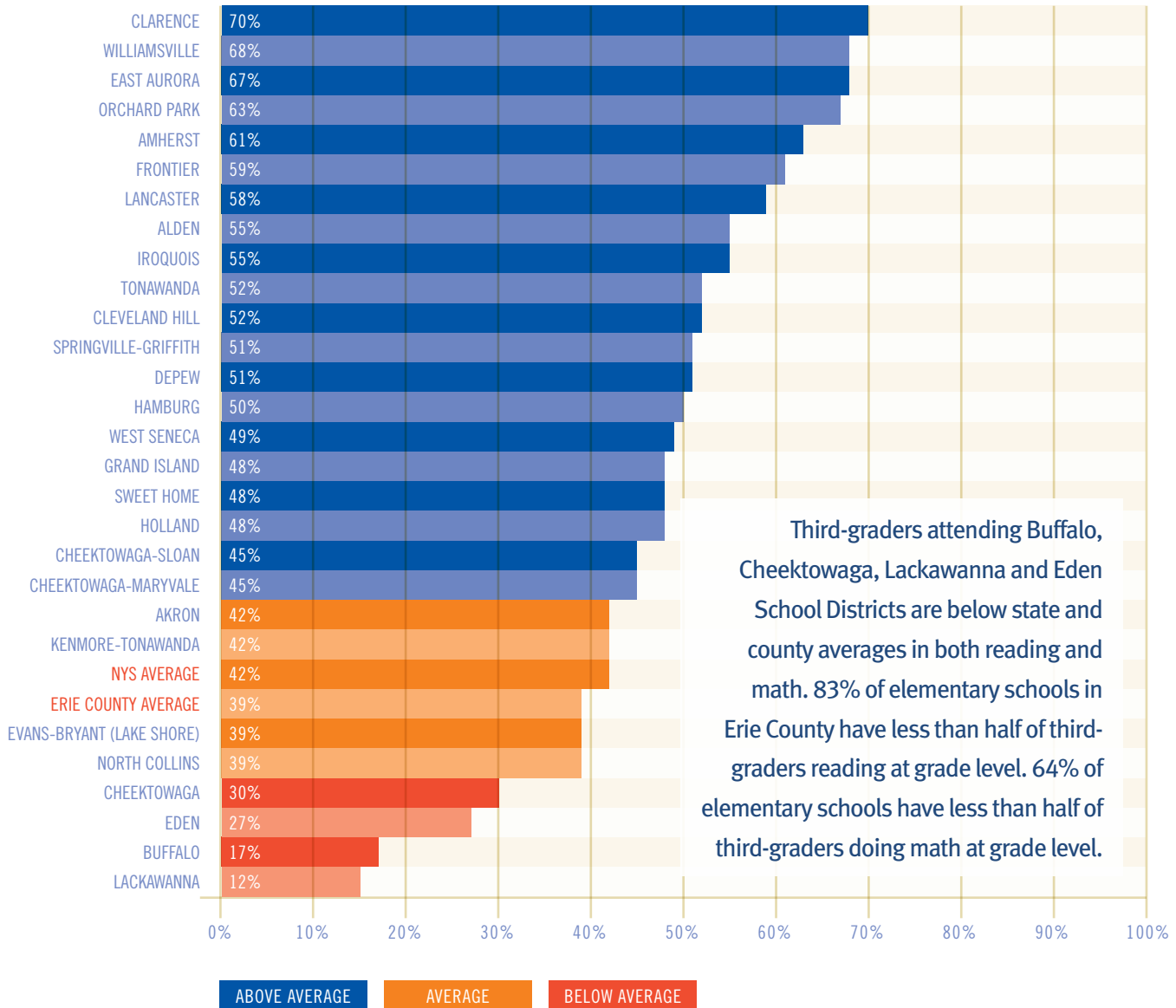
Without a high-school degree, they are more likely to experience poverty, incarceration, teenage pregnancy, unemployment and violence.

# WHAT IS THE STATE OF THIRD-GRADE READING IN ERIE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS?



Data is from 2014–2015. NYS Education Department (NYSED) identifies children who are performing at grade-level proficiency as those with a score of Level 3 or 4 on the third-grade ELA assessment.

# WHAT IS THE STATE OF THIRD-GRADE MATH IN ERIE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS?

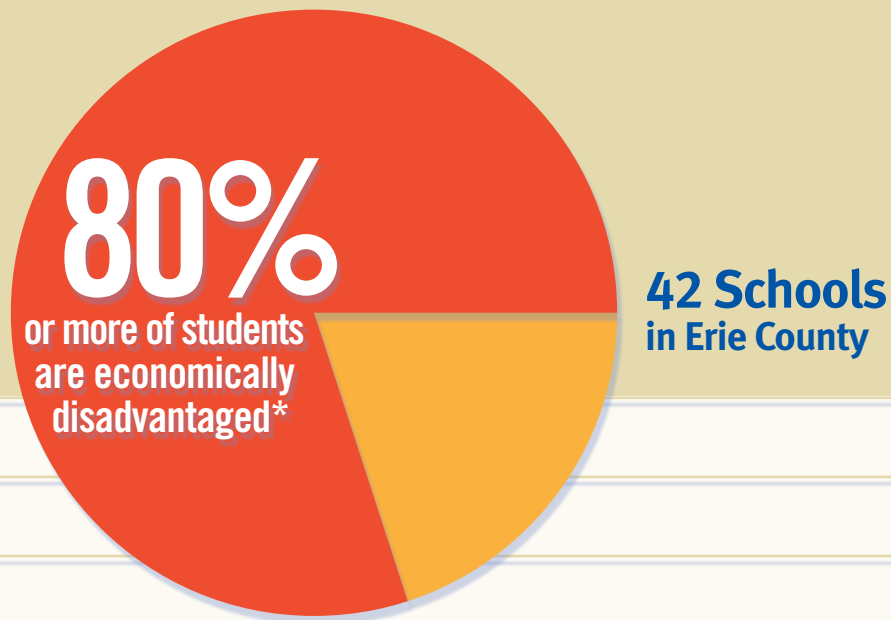


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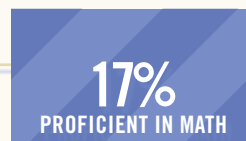
# POVERTY & PROFICIENCY

THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON PROFICIENCY CAN BE OBSERVED IN COMPARISON

MEDIAN PROFICIENCY RATE OF THIRD-GRADERS



ELA



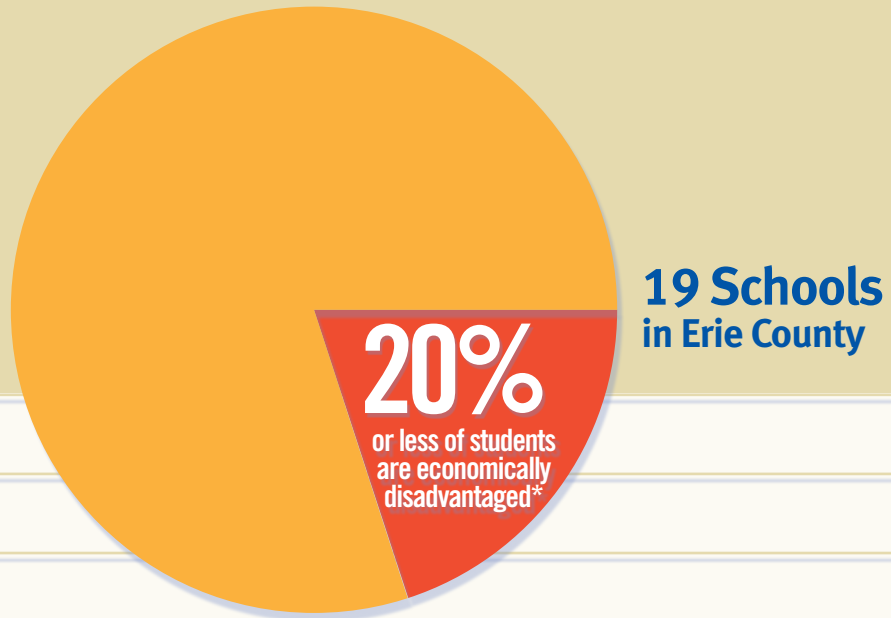
MATH

\*Economically disadvantaged students are defined by the NYSED as those who participate in, or whose family participates in, economic assistance programs, such as the free or reduced-price lunch programs.



# IN ERIE COUNTY SCHOOLS

RING ERIE COUNTY SCHOOLS WITH HIGH AND LOW LEVELS OF POVERTY.



**ELA**



**MATH**

— WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE —

# THIRD-GRADE PROFICIENCY?

*Researchers estimate that the school-readiness gap accounts for at least half of the achievement gap.*

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- Children start developing the skills that they need for school success long before the first day of kindergarten.
- Research shows that the gap in development starts at infancy, but widens considerably among toddlers.
- A child's early environment and interactions with parent(s) and caregivers are critical to child development.
- Frequent, positive interactions are important for establishing an emotional bond, which forms the basis of a child's social-emotional development.
- Child engagement in interactive dialogue provides exposure to vocabulary, supports cognitive development, and increases a child's readiness to learn.



# 30-MILLION WORD GAP

**BETWEEN CHILDREN GROWING UP IN LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS, IN COMPARISON WITH MIDDLE- AND UPPER-CLASS PEERS.**

More than 4 in 10 preschoolers, 5 in 10 toddlers, and 6 in 10 babies are not read to regularly.

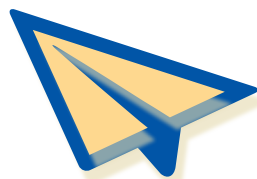
On average, children coming from low-income households are 12–14 months behind their middle- and upper-class peers in developing pre-reading skills when they start school.

Once in school, without effective intervention, the gap widens further as students fall further behind.

**RESIDENTIAL INSECURITY, FINANCIAL INSECURITY, FOOD INSECURITY, AND MORE EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE AND CRIME CONTRIBUTE TO:**



Poor health



Shorter attention span



Higher rates of absenteeism



More frequent changes in school enrollment

# WHAT CAN WE DO TO IMPROVE THIRD-GRADE PROFICIENCY?

1

## Parents or primary caregivers

A parent or primary caregiver is a child's first and most important teacher.

Children need frequent, positive interactions with a parent or caregiver. Reading, speaking, holding, playing and laughing together help children develop.

Seek out parenting support services to learn positive ways to interact with an upset child.

Help Me Grow WNY is a free online resource with child development and parenting information: [helpmegrowny.org](http://helpmegrowny.org)

2

## Teachers & childcare providers

Teachers of young children and professional childcare providers should engage children in activities that promote early learning.

Childcare providers should work with parents to align and support school and program learning with activities that can be done at home or in a grocery store, such as naming the letters on a cereal box.

Social promotion of students that are not performing at grade level causes students to fall further behind. Schools should take an individualized approach to grade promotion.

3

## Policymakers & funders

Take a preventative approach by investing in early learning initiatives and home visiting programs for at-risk children and their parent/caregiver(s).

Increase funding for community schools in distressed neighborhoods.

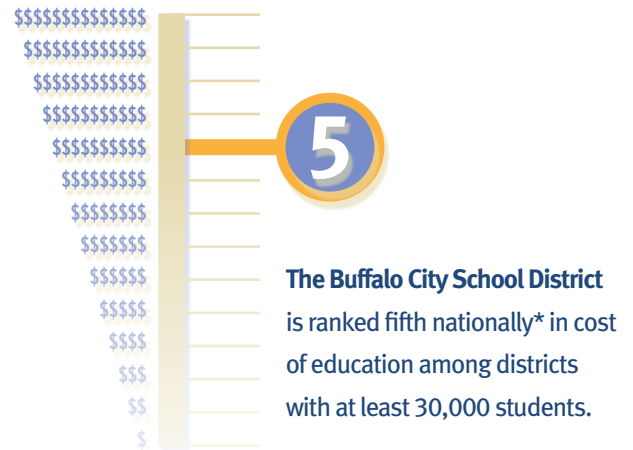
Increase funding for pre-kindergarten to a level sufficient for mandatory Pre-K to become a reality.

Continue supporting interventions that reduce child poverty, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

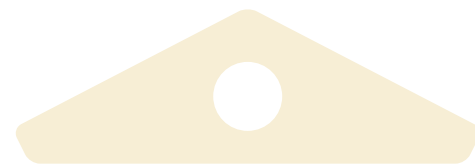
# INVESTING EARLIER IS SMART SPENDING



SMARTER SPENDING THAT TARGETS  
**AT-RISK CHILDREN**  
WITH EARLY INTERVENTIONS  
BRING A HIGH RETURN ON INVESTMENT



NYS currently spends more per pupil than any state in the country. Clearly, we need to spend more wisely.



IN 2014, THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT RELEASED A REPORT ESTIMATING A  
**RETURN OF \$8.60**  
BENEFITING OUR SOCIETY  
**FOR EVERY \$1 INVESTED**  
IN EARLY LEARNING INITIATIVES

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OUR RESPONSE

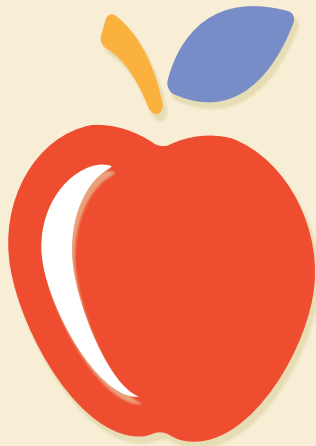
AT UNITED WAY OF BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY,  
**WE INVEST IN  
RESULTS**

*United Way brings people, organizations and resources together to improve community well-being. To achieve our mission, we have made it a priority to invest where we can have the most impact.*

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# UNITED WAY OF BUFFALO & ERIE COUNTY

INVESTS IN PROGRAMS THAT  
INCREASE SCHOOL READINESS AND EARLY LITERACY OF AT-RISK CHILDREN



Research shows that investing in a child's life from birth through the age of 8 has extraordinary returns to society. Therefore, we invest in research-supported, early intervention program models targeting young children and their families.

Through our community investments process, we direct our funds to sustain and expand the reach of programs that are delivering results in Erie County.

# HOW OUR INVESTMENTS INCREASE SCHOOL READINESS

## The Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP)

The Parent-Child Home Program (PCHP) is a two-year home visiting program for at-risk children, age 16 months to four years old. This national model is supported by 50 years of research showing that PCHP graduates:

- Enter school ready to learn
- Outperform their peers on third-grade assessments
- Are more likely to graduate from high school

PCHP is implemented locally by King Urban Life Center and Jericho Road Community Health Center.

PCHP has been shown locally to have a positive impact on third-grade proficiency of students living in a community of concentrated poverty. In a five-year study, PCHP graduates enrolled in third and fourth grade at King Center Charter School (KCCS) were compared with the proficiency of their KCCS peers who had not participated in PCHP.

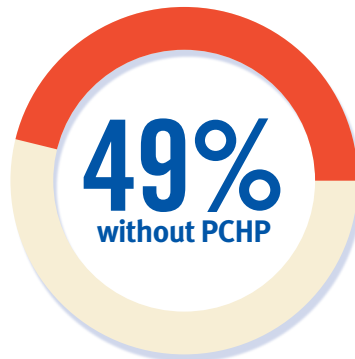
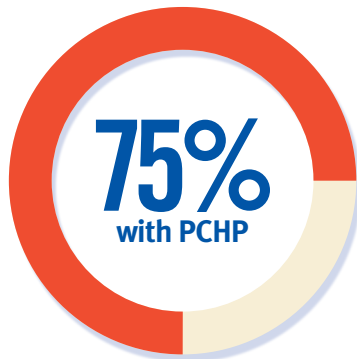


KING URBAN  
LIFE CENTER

*Out of the past... the future*



**JERICO ROAD**  
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER



NYS ASSESSMENTS:  
PROFICIENCY AMONG  
PCHP GRADUATES  
**READING**



NYS ASSESSMENTS:  
PROFICIENCY AMONG  
PCHP GRADUATES  
**MATH**

\*PCHP data is from the 2008–2009 academic year.



# HOW OUR INVESTMENTS INCREASE EARLY LITERACY

## Magic Penny

Magic Penny equips students for reading by teaching phonics, which allow for students to better sound out and spell words. Phonemic awareness, defined as the ability to hear the individual phonemes that comprise words, has been demonstrated by the National Reading Panel.

Suburban children receiving Magic Penny Early Literacy instruction in kindergarten took the third-grade NYS ELA in January 2006.\* 100% of the children taught with the Magic Penny Program scored at or above grade level while only 44% of the children who did not receive instruction with the Magic Penny Program achieved at or above grade-level reading proficiency.

Based on such promising results, and initial pilot studies conducted at four urban elementary schools, Magic Penny is now being widely incorporated in Buffalo. Approximately 2,000 children are currently receiving the Magic Penny Program in 110 kindergarten classrooms in 24 Buffalo Public Schools.

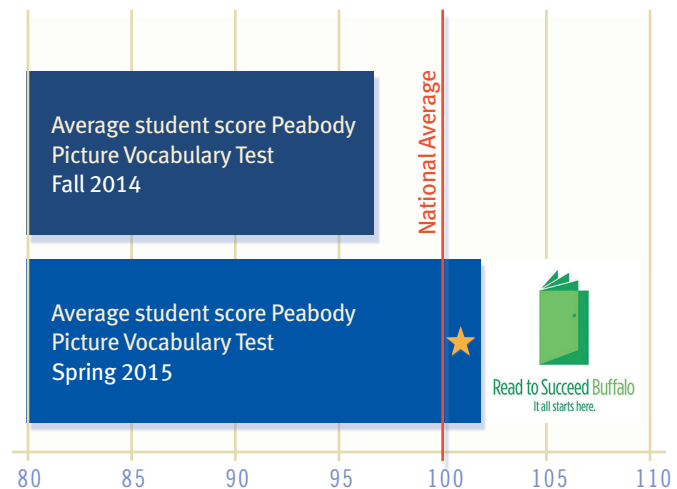
## Read to Succeed Buffalo

The Community Alignment for Reading Excellence (CARE) literacy coaching model equips childcare providers and teachers with tools to better foster literacy-rich learning environments. CARE has been recognized by the Annie E. Casey Foundation as a best-practice model for encouraging early literacy. Students from high-poverty neighborhoods participating in CARE classrooms\*\* demonstrated growth in their vocabulary, with all grade levels out-performing the national average on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test by year end.

## NYS READING ASSESSMENTS THIRD-GRADE PROFICIENCY



## READ TO SUCCEED BUFFALO STUDENT VOCABULARY GAINS



\*2005-2006

\*\*2014-2015

## USEFUL RESOURCES

For more information on third-grade proficiency in reading and math, please explore the following resources:

### **NYSED Report Cards**

Find publically reported education data from the NYS Education Department.  
[data.nysed.gov/](http://data.nysed.gov/)

### **United Way School Readiness Report**

Learn more about school readiness in Erie County and Western New York.  
[uwbec.org/school-readiness-report](http://uwbec.org/school-readiness-report)

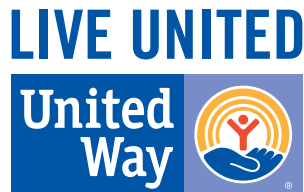
### **United Way Education**

Learn more about United Way's programs that are actively working to improve third-grade proficiency.  
[uwbec.org/education](http://uwbec.org/education)

### **Annie E. Casey Foundation**

Special reports and data through the KIDS COUNT initiative.  
[kidscount.org](http://kidscount.org)

Funded by Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo



**United Way of Buffalo  
& Erie County**  
[uwbec.org/education](http://uwbec.org/education)