



For Immediate Release: February 26, 2021

**On Friday, February 26, 2021, Project Flight and
New York State Martin Luther King, Jr. "Leaders are Readers" Program Presents the
Buffalo Academy of Science Charter Elementary School
the Award for Literacy**

*The New York State Governor: Project Flight, State Agencies and the Buffalo & Erie County Public
Library Will Celebrate the MLK Literacy program entitled "Leaders are Readers"*

History of Project Flight's "Leaders are Readers" Martin Luther King, Jr. Initiative

In promoting literacy for New York children, Project Flight founded, in partnership with the Governor's Office, the Office of Children and Family Services, the Office of MWBE and Community Relations of the New York State Office of General Services, the *Martin Luther King Literacy Initiative* entitled "*Leaders are Readers.*"

The program that began in the Buffalo area in 2004 was held in New York City, Albany, and Buffalo, representing the three areas of the state. In 2014, Project Flight added a new partner, the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, to help celebrate the Martin Luther King, Jr. New York State Literacy Initiative for Buffalo. For 25 years Project Flight, a not-for-profit literacy organization has worked to promote literacy in Western New York and in the world through school and family literacy initiatives.

The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library has historically been the purveyors of literacy for all who walk through their doors. This year Project Flight provided books and learning materials to one school in need in the Western New York area. Buffalo is ranked third for children in poverty in the country.

The 2021 Martin Luther King, Jr. Literacy Initiative winner this year is the **Buffalo Academy of Science Charter School**. They will be receiving over 5,000 books and materials. Along with the promise to promote literacy in school and at home, the Buffalo Academy of Science Charter School must provide a specific program that promotes Dr. King's vision of equality and justice through literacy as well as develop a relationship between the school and their local public library.

Project Flight's mission is to have every child have a book of their own and to read at grade level; that children will live in a literate environment whether at home or at school and that literacy is an entree out of poverty. To date, for this program, over **154,000** books, worth approximately **\$1,271,484.82** have been donated to **33** schools.

"There is no doubt how education uplifts the power to fulfill dreams. We believe that the legacy of literacy is democracy and freedom," said Project Flight Co-Director Dr. Betty Cappella.

"Our vision at Project Flight is to make sure all children will increase their aptitude in literacy to gain a wealth of knowledge which will spread throughout their lives and families," added Project Flight Co-Director Dr. Geraldine Bard.

"Children should be given the opportunities and encouragement to read. Having access to books can open a child's imagination, expand a child's creativity, and promote exploration of interests. Books support the notion that learning can be fun. The more you learn, the more you grow. The more you grow, the more you know. The prospects are endless," stated Mary Jean Jakubowski, director of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System.

The selected Leaders are Readers recipient: **Buffalo Academy of Science Charter School**

Director: Dr. Joseph Polat
Elementary Principal (K-4th Grade): Ms. Piazza
89 Clare Street
Buffalo, NY 14206
Phone: 854-2490

Buffalo Academy of Science Charter School (BuffSci) is a Kindergarten through 12th- grade school. There are 970 students currently attending the two Elementary schools and the High School. This school has about 90% of the student population (630) identified as living in economically disadvantaged households. Buffalo Academy of Science Charter School is a top rated, tuition-free, college preparatory charter. Currently, the school is divided into three sites. The elementary grades (K - 4th) are located at 89 Clare Street, the middle grades (5th - 8th) are located at 100 Poplar Avenue, and the high school grades (9th - 12th) are located at 190 Franklin Street. As part of their mission statement, "BuffSci's integrated curriculum includes broad training in the humanities, complemented by particular emphasis on STEM subjects and college preparation. BuffSci provides an environment designed to empower each student to become a lifelong learner, and develop skills in goal-setting, critical thinking, problem solving, effective communication, collaboration, cooperation, self-discipline and creative expression."

BuffSci uses a variety of innovative approaches in helping their students reach their full potential. One of these is by practicing "DEAR time." DEAR stands for drop the electronics and read. (DEAR time is a nationwide initiative that encourages families to create a special time for reading.) Despite the circumstances we are all facing during this pandemic, forcing most of student learning to be accomplished online, BuffSci instills the need for their students and staff to take time out of the virtual world and physically read. According to their website: "BuffSci students are expected to read every day from a non-digital material. All students and staff read 20 minutes between 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm every day." This is one of many examples of why Buffalo Academy of Science Charter School is deserving of the Martin Luther King Jr. "Leaders are Readers" Program School Award for Literacy.

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