



## Media Invited

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## **Leaders are Readers School Honored**

*Project Flight, New York State Office of the Governor, and the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Present Books to Winning School – Frank A. Sedita Academy in Buffalo*

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**WHAT:** The New York State Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs, Robinson Hernandez, representing Governor Kathy C. Hochul, will participate in Project Flight's Martin Luther King, Jr. Literacy Initiative, *Leaders Are Readers*, to present the **2026 Award for Literacy to Frank A. Sedita Academy, Buffalo Public School #30**

**WHERE:** Frank A. Sedita Academy, 21 Lowell Place, Buffalo, NY 14213

**WHEN:** Thursday, February 5, 2026, 10:00 am.

**ABOUT:** The "*Leaders Are Readers*" *Martin Luther King, Jr. Literacy Initiative*

In an effort to promote literacy for New York children, Project Flight, 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, established the Martin Luther King, Jr. Literacy Initiative entitled "Leaders Are Readers." The program, which began in the Buffalo area in 2004, was held in New York City, Albany, and Buffalo. The Library became a partner in 2014.

For 22 years, Project Flight, a not-for-profit literacy organization, has worked to promote literacy in Western New York and across the world through school and family literacy initiatives. Project Flight's mission is to have every child have a book of their own and to read it at grade level, so that children will live in a literate environment whether at home or at school, that literacy is an entree out of poverty, and that literacy is a social justice issue. To date, **185,335 books and materials**, worth approximately **\$1.6 million**, have been donated to **40 schools**.

Buffalo has one of the highest child poverty rates in the country, often limiting access to the ownership of books and experience of reading. To combat this, **5,962 books and learning materials worth approximately \$82,676.97 will be awarded to one school in need in Western New York - Frank A. Sedita Academy!** Along with the promise to promote literacy in school and at home, Frank A. Sedita Academy will provide a specific program that promotes Dr. King's vision of equality and justice through literacy, and strengthen a relationship between the school and its local public library.

"There is no doubt how education can uplift 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.

“At the heart of Buffalo & Erie County Public Library’s mission is to sustain and strengthen literacy in our communities. One of the most critical steps is ensuring our community is reading, but it is also ensuring reading materials can be put in the hands of parents, guardians and children – no matter their situation or means. It is innovative partnerships, like our partnership with Project Flight, which help strengthen this purpose and bring it to life,” said Dorinda Darden, Interim Director, Buffalo & Erie County Public Library.

“We are proud to continue our support of the *Leaders are Readers* program, and are committed to providing the dignity of reading to as many of our neighbors as possible – now and long into the future,” Darden continued.

### **The 2026 Selected Recipient:**

Frank A. Sedita Academy, 21 Lowell Place, Buffalo.  
Principal: Pedro Estrada

Although named Frank A. Sedita School in the mid-80s, the Academy was established in 2006 and became a community school in 2017. A community school is a public school that serves as a neighborhood hub, integrating academics with wraparound support services for students, their families, and the wider community. As a community school, School #30 provides services that include all the health needs, the wellness needs, and legal assistance. School #30 provides enriching after school programming, including Saturday programming.

Put simply, Frank A. Sedita Academy is a vibrant community of learners and leaders. The school is also recognized for its community partnerships, which support after-school activities like STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) initiatives and other creative pursuits.

Based on the National Center for Education Statistics for the 2023-2024 school year, **Frank A. Sedita Academy** serves a total of **604** students from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. The school is known for its commitment to access and equity, providing enrichment programs, and being a diverse and inclusive learning environment.

NYSED Data:

- **Student Population:** **55% female** students and **45% male** students.
- **Diversity:** Approximately **96%** of the students are from minority backgrounds.
- **Economic Disadvantage:** **96%** of the students are economically disadvantaged.
- **Student-Teacher Ratio:** The school maintains a student-teacher ratio of 11:1 which aligns with the district average.

This donation of books will help the students’ progression of learning in their literary endeavors and help instill a lifelong love of reading.

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