

2020 COMMUNITY IMPACT SESSIONS



FOCUSED FORWARD

Community Foundation
for Greater Buffalo

Reinventing Education Delivery System

Every child deserves the opportunity to learn and flourish in high quality schools that help to discover and nurture their potential.

Our education system was tested in unimaginable ways when the COVID-19 pandemic shut down physical school locations in March and everyone moved to remote learning.

The Buffalo Public School District, which serves approximately 31,000 students, is considered high-poverty with approximately 80 percent of students qualifying for free or reduced lunches. For

children living in low-income households, this community crisis only heightened barriers to educational success. Parents and guardians added technology access, internet connectivity and child care concerns to the mounting challenges.

When the pandemic hit, the District was unable to reach one-third of its students by mid-April and computers for online learning were only available for students in grade 3 and above. As the Buffalo Public Schools, along with many others, begin the new 2020/2021 school year remotely, technology and connectivity continue to be a major challenge, as well as child care for parents who depend on the schools and after-school care while they work.

The Community Foundation has spent years building cross-sector community partnerships to address educational challenges facing children from birth through post-secondary education. Those partnerships and the trust built over time through collaboration have moved us forward during this crisis.

On Tuesday, September 22, you will be hearing from a few of our key partners in this work who will discuss the education challenges our community is facing through the birth to post-secondary continuum.



Child Care Resource Network

Speaker: Kim Suminksi, CEO

Before the pandemic, more than 60 percent of Erie County was a child care desert, or a place without sufficient child care to support the families living there. COVID-19 has only exacerbated this problem. When the crisis first hit, it was critical to ensure there was affordable and safe child care options available for the essential workers. The Child Care Resource Network, a resource and referral agency devoted to the child care and education needs of Western New Yorkers, moved quickly to create a program to support front line workers with child care needs. As the crisis evolved, so did the need. The Child Care Resource Network is now working with families to support them as parents go back to work but their students are in remote or hybrid education models and still need supervision.



Say Yes Buffalo

Speaker: David Rust, Executive Director

The Say Yes Buffalo partnership is strengthening the City's public school system and increasing high school and post-secondary graduation rates. The key to the success of Say Yes Buffalo is providing the supports needed to ensure Buffalo public and charter school students can pursue a post-secondary education with the Say Yes scholarship. Say Yes Buffalo adapted instantaneously to the change in those needs in March. Technology was at the top of the list when it came to ensuring continuity in learning. Fifty percent of Say Yes scholars have a family income below \$25,000, and 70 percent are below \$50,000. Say Yes acted quickly to move weekend and summer programming to a virtual platform to ensure they did not lose the momentum in the work to support students.



SUNY Buffalo State College

Speaker: Dr. Katherine Conway-Turner, President

SUNY Buffalo State College welcomes a significant number of Say Yes Scholars every year. In fact, of the nearly 7,000 undergraduates enrolled, half are from Erie County. Additionally, 55 percent of the undergraduate population is African American, Hispanic, Asian and multiracial, and nearly 40 percent work full-time. Buffalo State College is part of a network created with support from a \$2.9 million dollar grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that is working with Say Yes Buffalo to identify ways to increase college completion rates for Buffalo Public Schools graduates. The work made possible by this grant has never been more important as students face the additional barriers created by COVID-19.



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