



Lehigh Valley Reads

Powered by United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley and PBS39

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Lehigh Valley Reads is a regional literacy campaign to ensure all Lehigh Valley students read on grade level at the end of third grade by 2025. This collective impact initiative is powered by United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley (UWGLV) and PBS39.

The research is clear - students must have strong literacy skills in order to be successful in the modern workplace and fulfill their potential as future leaders of our community. Children who don't read proficiently by fourth grade are four times more likely to drop out of school.

From birth to third grade, children learn to read. From third grade on, children read to learn. Third grade reading proficiency is the most important indicator of high school graduation and career success. In 2018, about 1 in 3 or 35% of Lehigh Valley fourth grade students entered the classroom not reading on grade level. In some Lehigh Valley schools that percentage is much higher.

Lehigh Valley Reads wants to change that.

To work toward their literacy goal, Lehigh Valley Reads will focus on three primary audiences: school districts and educators, children and families, and community members from diverse sectors. To implement this program, school districts and educators as well as families will be offered support and evidence-based strategies. Lehigh Valley community members will be engaged as informers, advocates, stewards, mentors, and champions.

Lehigh Valley Reads builds education systems in which students are **READY, PRESENT, RESILIENT, SUPPORTED AND ENGAGED.**

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INITIATIVES

Lehigh Valley Reads will address pivotal target areas that include:

- Early Childhood Education and School Readiness
- Chronic Absenteeism and Every Day Attendance
- Summer Learning and Fighting the Summer Slide
- Trauma Informed Schools
- Community Schools
- Evidence-based Literacy Instruction in the Classroom

Early Childhood Education and School Readiness

Nearly 7,000 babies are born in the Lehigh Valley every year and almost half live in low-income families. Our most vulnerable children have the most limited exposure to high-quality childcare and will likely begin kindergarten 12-14 months behind their peers. Seven out of ten children in the Lehigh Valley are not ready for kindergarten socially, emotionally or cognitively. Children who enter kindergarten 'not ready' need additional supports to improve their language and literacy development to get them on track for reading well by the end of third grade. Children from lower income homes hear less words than their middle to upper income peers. This limits vocabulary and language and literacy acquisition. Some research suggests children from lower income homes may hear up to 30 million fewer words before kindergarten entry.

How is Lehigh Valley Reads addressing school readiness?

- Supporting the Talking Is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing campaign. This campaign encourages families, community members and others to talk, read and sing to young babies to build their brain and develop language and literacy skills. Making every day small moments big by talking, reading and singing is easy and effective.
- Networking partners across the Lehigh Valley to a common message around the importance of Talk, Read, Sing to make every day small moments BIG.
- Building awareness around on-time kindergarten registration across the Lehigh Valley
- Working toward common understanding of what kindergarten readiness means, prioritizing the skills and categories in which kids need to be "ready"
- Common "readiness" assessment across multiple Lehigh Valley districts

Chronic Absenteeism and Every Day Attendance

About 1 in 5 children across the Lehigh Valley miss more than 18 days of school each year. That's roughly 2 days per month, 10 percent of the school year, and about a month of lost learning opportunity. Students who miss 18 days are considered chronically absent, fall behind in their course work, and have a difficult time keeping connected with their classmates.

The Challenge 5 campaign encourages students to attend school every day, and to strive for less than five days absent each year.

Attendance habits in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten have been shown to set the pattern for how children will continue to value attending school each year. Important reading skills taught in kindergarten and first grade are critical to helping children read well by the end of third grade. How is Lehigh Valley Reads addressing chronic absenteeism and everyday attendance?

- Helping schools become really great at tracking school attendance and chronic absenteeism as well as offering strategies for implementation that address the barriers behind poor attendance
- Supporting programs that make it fun for children to come to school every day
- Thanking parents and family members who make every day attendance a priority
- Building more positive school cultures and offering supports to families who have barriers to sending their children to school every day

Summer Learning and Fighting the Summer Slide

When school lets out for the summer, new challenges emerge for many children living in poverty. In addition to limitations on free or reduced breakfast and lunch, many children do not have access to learning opportunities that help them continue to build their reading skills. Children who do not participate in learning programs or enrichment opportunities such as field trips, camps, etc. over the summer can lose between two to three months of reading skills. This is called the "summer slide". Children from low-income households often experience this summer slide because of these limited opportunities to continue growing their skills.

While low-income students lose 2-3 months of learning over the summer, higher income students gain knowledge and increase their language and reading skills. This yearly process is cumulative and can account for two-thirds of the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle-income peers in by ninth grade.

How is Lehigh Valley Reads addressing the summer slide?

- Increasing the number of summer opportunities available for children across the Lehigh Valley, especially for low-income children
- Increasing the quality of all summer opportunities to ensure they are rigorous and address language and literacy skills
- Organizing information about summer learning opportunities so families are more aware of the resources available
- Funding summer learning programming in partnership with school districts

Trauma Informed Schools

One in 4 children will witness or experience a traumatic event before the age of 4. Children who experience trauma can have significant delays in their language and emotional brain development, which can make it more challenging to pay attention in class and process new information.

Preparing schools to be “trauma informed” means making sure teachers and staff are aware of and sensitive to trauma. It also means ensuring a school is a safe, stable, and supportive environment for students and staff. The goal is to meet children where they are, prevent re-injury or re-traumatization by acknowledging trauma and its triggers, avoid stigmatizing and punishing students and increase quality learning opportunities.

How is Lehigh Valley Reads addressing trauma informed schools?

- Offering training sessions for community agencies that serve youth to help them understand what trauma is and its effects
- Training school districts and individual schools in trauma 101 and also sharing effective practices to support children who have experienced trauma
- Networking Lehigh Valley organizations with each other and also linking our Lehigh Valley work with the state and national resources to advance the effort.

Community Schools

Due to many variables, there are not equitable resources across the 125+ schools in the Lehigh Valley. Some are situated in neighborhoods with many challenges and serve students and families that have barriers to living well.

Community schools are safe and stable schools that respond to the unique needs of its students, families, and residents. Often this means a community school will partner with organizations in the community and ask them to bring their services to the school. Services can be health-related, such as dental, vision or mental health services or can be geared towards helping families meet basic needs, such as a food pantry, community garden, cooking class or clothing closet. Community schools also work hard to partner with parents so that decisions made at the school create a unified voice of students, families, staff, and community.

How is Lehigh Valley Reads addressing Community Schools?

Community schools transform high-need schools into the centers of their communities, by organizing and offering before-school and after-school programs; health and social supports and services, including on-site medical clinics; family and community engagement opportunities and early childhood development and transition practices. They use data to inform decisions and work through a continuous improvement lens where effective partnerships with many systems and sectors are key.

- Sharing best practice approaches for how to effectively implement the Community School model
- Hosting an AmeriCorps VISTA program that supports Community School development
- Connections to local, state and national peers and resources advancing community schools as well as resources to support community schools through policy and legislation

Evidence-based Literacy Instruction in the Classroom

Incorporating modern reading science and evidence-based instructional practices into K-3 classrooms has never been more important. The evidence is clear that all students can and should become proficient readers if they receive sustained, explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Teaching reading requires an understanding of brain science, multisensory instructional techniques, and responsive uses of data. Without explicit, evidence-based instruction students cannot be expected to learn to read by simply being exposed to books. Rather, successful readers are built by expert teachers using science to guide their instruction.

How is Lehigh Valley Reads addressing quality in-school literacy instruction?

- Creating and launching a micro-credentialing system aimed at supporting educators through a blended learning approach to learn the science-based strategies for effective literacy instruction
- Saturating the Lehigh Valley with highlights and examples of increases in literacy proficiency through the use of explicit instructional practices



LEHIGH VALLEY READS THREE PRIMARY AUDIENCES

School Districts and Educators - The Allentown School District, the Bethlehem Area School District, Easton Area School District and Parkland School District were partners in the Lehigh Valley Reads Steering Committee for the last 24 months. Currently, there is engagement from the following Lehigh Valley school districts in varying forms:

Allentown School District
Bangor Area School District
Bethlehem Area School District
Catasauqua Area School District
East Penn School District
Easton Area School District
Nazareth Area School District
Northampton Area School District

Northern Lehigh School District
Northwestern Lehigh School District
Parkland School District
Pen Argyl Area School District
Salisbury Township School District
Saucon Valley School District
Southern Lehigh School District
Whitehall-Coplay School District
Wilson Area School District

Parents and families are able to engage in several meaningful ways:

- Talking, reading, and singing to their children as part of our Talk, Read, Sing campaign (mainly for children birth – age 5)
- Visiting the Lehigh Valley Reads website and taking advantage of the resources available
- Volunteering their time on a coalition or committee

Community members and Coalition partners are actively engaged in driving and supporting work to advance the goals of each coalition that will result in success with the Lehigh Valley Reads goal. The Lehigh Valley Reads Steering Committee is currently comprised of the following partners:

Dr. Jack Silva - Bethlehem Area School District, Committee Co-Chair

Tracy Smith - Parkland School District

Dr. Lucretia Brown - Allentown School District

Alyssa Emili & Tracey Piazza - Easton Area School District

Nicole Moschberger - Penn State University Lehigh Valley

Tim Mulligan - Communities In Schools of the Lehigh Valley

Dr. Bonnie Coyle Ronco - St. Luke's University Health Network

Carol Ritter - Motivational speaker and Public Relations expert

Paula Margraf - Community Services for Children

Daphne Uliana - Dyslexia & Literacy Network

Brook Sawyer - Lehigh University

Angela Zanelli - PBS39

Jill Pereira - United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, Committee Co-Chair

In addition to the steering committee, more than 200 community volunteers, representing over 100 organizations - from county systems and universities to barber shops and bodegas - are lending their time and expertise to support Lehigh Valley Reads and the following coalitions:

Lehigh Valley Community School Network
Lehigh Valley Early Childhood Coalition
Lehigh Valley Summer Learning Coalition

Challenge 5 Attendance Awareness Coalition
Lehigh Valley Trauma Awareness Collaborative

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FUNDING

In May of 2018, UWGLV-Lehigh Valley Reads secured a \$150,000 national planning grant from the Aligned Partners Network consisting of Coalition for Community Schools, Communities In Schools and Strive Together. This award was one of 10 nationally and was funded by the Chan-Zuckerberg Initiative.

In August of 2018, Lehigh Valley Reads received its first joint grant filed by UWGLV and PBS39 towards this effort. The grant was from the Provident Bank Foundation for \$50,000 to support the Talking Is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing campaign.

In September of 2018, UWGLV was awarded a 5 year \$2.5m Federal Full Service Community School grant to support three schools in the Allentown School District. Union Terrace and Washington Elementary School became Community Schools with this support and Raub Middle School received enhanced services as it was already a Community School.

Crayola is the exclusive sponsor for the Lehigh Valley Reads launch event on February 28, 2019.

Lehigh Valley Reads has just received another national grant; however, an official announcement will be made the week of March 18th.

PRIMARY COLLABORATORS

Education is the cornerstone of a successful and thriving community. UWGLV and PBS39 both have robust and intentional work in education to support the community. Both have strong brands with national networks. PBS39's expansive media platform and reach coupled with UWGLV's reputation for effectively leading systemic change led to the formation of a dynamic partnership that will allow Lehigh Valley Reads to expand its reach and scope.

UWGLV leads the strategy of the Lehigh Valley Reads effort including leadership and staffing of the five coalitions underpinning the current campaign in addition to significant financial investment and evaluation oversight. PBS39 is contributing human and financial resources to further operationalize and market the campaign to new partners and potential donors.

Lehigh Valley Reads goal of "ensuring all Lehigh Valley students read on grade level by the end of third grade by 2025" builds upon and expands the United Way goal of "increasing by 50% the number of third graders reading on grade level by 2022." Because of the intentional focus on this goal, and thanks to achieved synergy with the Pennsylvania state ESSA plan, school districts are also more focused on grade level reading and more open to partnering to address these pillars that have connection to the ultimate goal.

The success of Lehigh Valley Reads will be achieved by integrating all sectors of our community through a common message, mutually beneficial activities and a genuine interest in better supporting our youth and families inside and outside of the school classroom. This unified effort will move the Lehigh Valley from 65% of third graders reading well to 100% by 2025.

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ABOUT UNITED WAY OF THE GREATER LEHIGH VALLEY

The mission of United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley is to provide the leadership, convene the partnerships, and develop the resources and solutions that improve our community. We remain committed to these goals and sincerely appreciate the continued support of partners, program providers and donors throughout the Lehigh Valley. www.UnitedWayGLV.org

ABOUT PBS39

PBS39 is a community-owned public media station licensed in Allentown to the Lehigh Valley Public Telecommunications Corporation, serving eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey. PBS39 acts as the catalyst to promote civic engagement, and to fulfill the regional needs of the Greater Lehigh Valley through its dynamic communication platforms and resources. PBS39 Reporter Corps journalists are embedded in the ten counties that make up the Greater Lehigh Valley. The Reporter Corps creates community-focused content for [PBS39 News Tonight](#) and for the PBS39 digital platform. For more information, visit PBS39.org.

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Angela Zanelli
Lehigh Valley Reads Campaign Director, PBS39

Angela Zanelli has spent her career working for mission-driven organizations that are making a difference. With nearly 20 years of experience in fundraising, marketing, and communications, she is thrilled to be part of the dynamic team charged with developing and executing the strategic vision for Lehigh Valley Reads. When she's not at her desk, you can find her teaching a yoga class or volunteering for various causes across the Valley. Angela lives in Bethlehem with her wife and three daughters. Their home is affectionately called 'The Crazy House of Zen'.



Jaime Karpovich
Lehigh Valley Reads Marketing Manager, PBS39

Jaime Karpovich brings her experience as a writer, speaker, and producer to craft and share meaningful stories.

She earned a B.A. from Cedar Crest College. At 28, she became the host and co-producer of *Save the Kales!*, a lifestyle television show that aired on RCN Cable to over 100,000 households monthly. Jaime has been a columnist and contributor to local print publications, national magazines, websites and podcasts.

Her professional experience includes editorials, recipe development, award-winning blogs, copywriting, live workshops, video pre-production, and creative marketing content creation across a span of industries. She has served on boards, co-founded regional projects, and volunteered with organizations that propel social change.

A first-generation college student, Jaime knows first-hand how community advocacy programming, literacy, and education provide robust opportunity to vulnerable populations. She lives in Easton, PA, with her book collection.



Jill Pereira
Vice President of Education & Impact, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley

Jill Pereira has held various leadership roles within United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley since 2009, most recently Vice President of Education. In her new role, Vice President of Education and Impact, Pereira will oversee the organization's \$13.5 million annual investments in education, health and human services as well as create and execute the strategies needed to advance successful outcomes for children, families and seniors across the region.

Pereira's professional background includes working in high-need communities in the Lehigh Valley serving diverse populations spanning the fields of mental health, juvenile justice, children and youth, public housing, and public education. As co-founder of the Pennsylvania Community Schools State Coalition, Jill worked to ensure that Pennsylvania's *Every Student Succeeds Act* recognized the Community Schools model as a strategy. Jill has presented at numerous local, state, and national conferences on the Community School archetype and the role United Way can play in large-scale social change efforts. She was nationally recognized with the 2018 Coalition for Community Schools Initiative Leader Award and was named one of the Lehigh Valley Business' *Forty Under 40* in 2015. Jill lives in Palmerton, PA, with her husband and three beautiful children.



Beth Tomlinson
Senior Director of Education, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley

Beth Tomlinson, Senior Director of Education at the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, oversees UWGLV's education platform. Beth has over 25 years of experience in social science research and evaluation, juvenile delinquency prevention, family services, education and social work. Additionally, she leads the Lehigh Valley Trauma Awareness Collaborative, a regional cross sector collective impact effort focused on building a trauma informed and resilient Lehigh Valley.