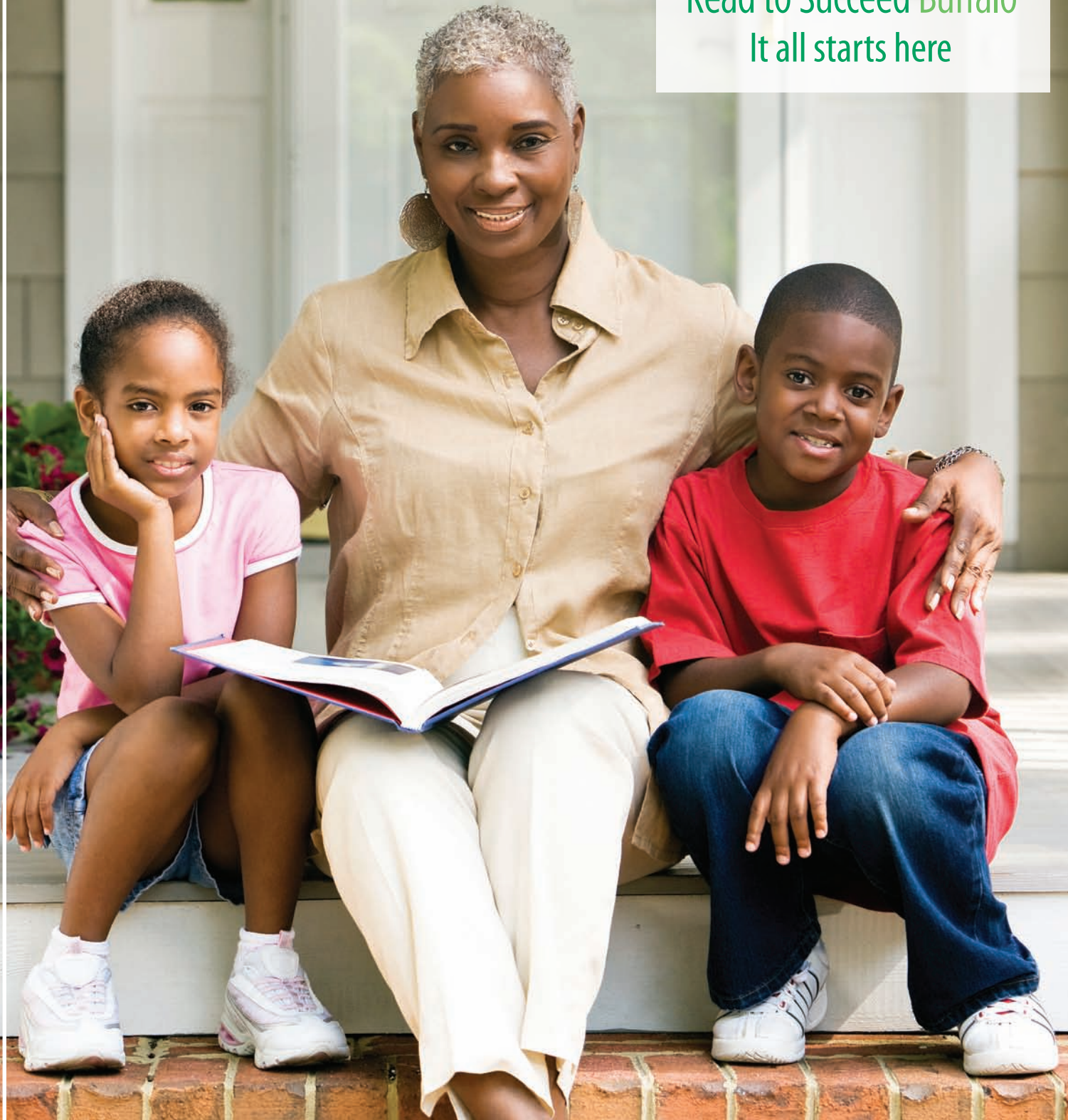



**FOCUSING AND
ALIGNING RESOURCES**
sustaining success



Read to Succeed Buffalo
It all starts here





**“We shouldn’t
teach great books –
we should teach a
love of reading.”**

B. F. Skinner

Message From Our Executive Director

In May 2011 I became Executive Director of Read to Succeed Buffalo. One of my first priorities was to get out into the community and listen. Listen to what funders, stakeholders, partners, service providers, friends and yes – even critics - had to say about the future role of RTSB.

I was motivated and inspired. I heard that this community recognizes and values the incredible infrastructure of program expertise and data management and tracking that was developed throughout the four years of Early Reading First and Project CARE. I heard that Buffalo’s community leaders believe in RTSB’s role as a convener and advocate for young children. And I learned that RTSB has a board and staff committed to filling the void of evidenced-based literacy practices and advocacy for children through the entire early childhood developmental continuum – birth through age 8.

I heard that there is a legitimate role for RTSB to focus attention and expertise on the alignment of teaching strategies from early childhood to school age and the alignment of assessment and program to support an individual child’s reading proficiency. National and state policy is moving in this direction; RTSB can help position Buffalo as a leader in this work. Finally, I learned that RTSB’s commitment to mission is valued.

I am thrilled to present this strategic plan to the community and look forward to joining our small force for alignment and change with you. Our youngest readers deserve it.



Anne S. Ryan
Executive Director

Read to Succeed Buffalo’s Priorities to improve literacy outcomes for children birth – age 8.

1. Improving student achievement by establishing an effective continuum of developmentally-appropriate literacy practices for Buffalo’s children from birth-8.
2. Make more children kindergarten ready by equipping more early childhood settings with research-based practices.
3. Elevate literacy as a community priority, which should become evident in measurable behaviors.
4. Ensure sustainable organization from which to carry out mission.

Our Mission

Read to Succeed Buffalo (RTSB) mobilizes the community to improve student achievement by creating a community-wide priority on literacy for children from birth to age 8. We focus on creating a comprehensive, high-quality early learning network that equips and challenges partners to support children in learning to read, enabling them to read to learn.

Our Strategic Plan

Fall of 2011 offered RTSB the opportunity to assess our progress and chart our course for the next five years. Our goal was to build upon the community-wide planning process that launched this organization and capitalize on the demonstrated outcomes of our coaching work with teachers in family child care sites and Bethel Head Start. Given the challenging fiscal environment, RTSB also seeks to become even more strategic about focusing our resources for impact and sustainability. Executive leadership and the Board of Trustees identified key priorities. From there, the entire staff was engaged to draw up action steps, timelines, and performance targets. Our strategic plan is a useful tool—aligning our day-to-day work to our priorities, allowing every staff member to see how their work fits into the organization’s goals, and holding ourselves accountable. This public document highlights for our partners and stakeholders where we are going and how we will get there. Most importantly this document highlights the critical service and advocacy niche that RTSB will fill over the next five years, ultimately resulting in a system that supports increased literacy outcomes for our youngest students.



Terminology and Symbols Used in this Plan

Goals: What we want to achieve in broad terms

Context and Theory of Action: This explains the key strategies or pathways we’ve chosen to achieve our goal, as well as lays out some of our discrete objectives along the way. This section provides a quick rationale for why we’re doing what we’re doing.

A note about OUTCOMES vs. DRIVERS: Goals 1 & 2 are focused on raising student outcomes by working with the systems and caregivers/educators who support children ages birth-8. These goals have a measurable OUTCOME. Goals 3 & 4 are considered DRIVERS. They will shape the community and organizational environments that facilitate and help realize the first two goals. They measure outputs, or processes, rather than student outcomes, though we commit to assess changes in key behaviors where feasible.

▶ **Targets:** Specific goals we must accomplish.

◆ **Key Actions:** Prioritized work that must be done to achieve the target.

Goal 1:

Improving student achievement by establishing an effective continuum of developmentally-appropriate literacy practices for Buffalo's children from birth-8.

Context and Theory of Action: Currently, our systems isolate early childhood education from formal schooling beginning in Kindergarten. However, the research on literacy development argues for a more coherent approach. There are developmentally appropriate practices that foster a child's ability to develop language starting at birth and culminating in reading to learn by 3rd grade (age 8). RTSB will lead a coalition comprised of leaders in the relevant systems in articulating and building a unified continuum of research-based practices that help children develop into proficient readers. This work might entail working toward common assessments and data systems, advancing policies at the state and local level, and convening stakeholders to draw down state and federal dollars funding systems change from birth - 8.

KEY OUTCOME: Increase the number of children achieving benchmarks on DIBELS and NYS ELA from K-grade 3. (Align with targets set by the BPA 2012, see improvement by 2015.)

- ▶ Increase coalition membership by 10%, with all major systems represented by 2013.
 - ◆ Define purpose, structure and model of coalition; recruit members.
- ▶ Define and articulate effective continuum of developmentally appropriate literacy practices by 2013.
 - ◆ Create document, in collaboration with coalition members.
- ▶ Align assessments and data points (for literacy) across systems that impact children birth – 8 by 2016.
 - ◆ Building on previous work, seek common indicators of success.
 - ◆ Work with funders to establish common indicators or assessments.
- ▶ 75% of coalition members support unified policy agenda to align continuum by 2013.
 - ◆ Identify policy priorities; engage coalition in advocacy and education activities.

Goal 2:

Make more children kindergarten ready by equipping more early childhood settings with research-based practices.

Context and Theory of Action: Research identifies the “big 5” of literacy development—alphabetic recognition, concepts of print, phonemic awareness, oral language and vocabulary. RTSB has the outcomes to prove that coaching child care providers/teachers—in home settings and in Head Start classrooms—increases children's ability to succeed in these areas. Our plan is to expand access to this coaching expertise. If we can reach more family child cares, more Head Start classrooms and more parents to equip them with easy, proven ways of supporting children, more of Buffalo's children will enter Kindergarten ready to learn to read. Simultaneously, we will research and develop new ways of sharing research-based practices with those who support children in getting ready to read and succeed.

KEY OUTCOME: 75% of BPS students Kindergarten ready by 2015

- ▶ By 2014, increase the number of caregivers using effective literacy practices by doubling the number of family child care sites from 12 to 24 and adding 10 Head Start classrooms to the total served by Read to Succeed Buffalo.
 - ◆ Expand Project Care through funding and recruitment.
 - ◆ Encourage providers to participate in QualitySTARS.
 - ◆ Support Buffalo Promise Neighborhood; deliver coaching services.
 - ◆ Build relationships across all three area Head Starts, looking for opportunities to align professional development and assessments.
- ▶ Engage more parents in learning opportunities (establish baseline, begin to track).
 - ◆ Explore opportunities to be seen as parental resource (Parent Council, PTAs, child progress form).
- ▶ Invest in “research and development” for at least one new way of disseminating research-based practices to new settings by 2013.
 - ◆ Explore links to charters for work on preK-K transition.
 - ◆ Design professional development modules.



Goal 3:

Elevate literacy as a community priority, which should become evident in measurable behaviors.

Context and Theory of Action: RTSB’s work directly supports the adults who foster literacy in children—the child care providers, Head Start teachers, and a growing number of parents. We also work at the systems level, advocating for a united approach to literacy instruction. However, we know that there is an entire community that influences children, and we want to spark and equip that community to elevate literacy as a priority. We envision enlisting community members in supporting key literacy behaviors. So, we will identify and promote a few high-impact, visible behaviors that people can do to celebrate and foster literacy. We will also develop ways to assess whether these efforts are changing behaviors.

- ▶ Support family literacy by enrolling 500 children in Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library (DPIL) in 2012 and increasing annual local participation in Read for the Record and Read Across America national initiatives.
 - ◆ Work with coalition members to conduct outreach and recruit families for DPIL.
- ▶ Develop community-wide baseline of 5 key literacy behaviors by 2013.
 - ◆ Create list of “Big 5” literacy behaviors.
 - ◆ Develop brief survey and baseline strategy.
 - ◆ Promote.
- ▶ Engage more individual donors in 2012.
 - ◆ Develop appeal and campaign.
- ▶ Build network of “friends of literacy” to champion birth to age-8 platform, once developed.
 - ◆ Develop platform and approach to engagement.

Goal 4:

Ensure sustainable organization from which to carry out mission.

Context and Theory of Action: Having our organizational house in order enables us to support the community and achieve our goals. As RTSB enters this next phase in our young life, we are focused on sustainability, which means being good stewards of our key resources—our people and our funding. We will maximize our staff talents by investing in a team, mission-focused approach. We will align both staff and board efforts toward our strategic goals, and we will increase the number of members on our board. Financially, we will aggressively pursue both grant and donation revenue, and will make organizational decisions with an eye on sustainability and outcomes.

- ▶ 100% of staff job efforts are aligned to strategic plan, by 2012.
 - ◆ Use strategic plan to rewrite job descriptions and performance expectations.
- ▶ 100% of staff and 100% of board make an annual contribution to RTSB beginning in 2012.
 - ◆ Explain purpose and expectation.
- ▶ In 2012, Board expanded to 15 members, each of whom undertakes one RTSB-related outreach, development or advocacy action.
 - ◆ Recruit members.
 - ◆ Develop expectations and resources to support board members.
- ▶ Business operations are effectively maintained (clean audit, staff and board satisfaction with functions) annually.
- ▶ \$150,000 in grant revenue and donations raised in 2012 to support literacy coaching work.
 - ◆ Hire Director Resource and Grant Development.

Acknowledgments:

An organization is only as good as its leadership and RTSB has benefited over the years from a strong board consisting of committed community leaders. The 2011 Board members are:

Hon. Betty Calvo-Torres, Chair
Vincent D. Clark, Vice-Chair
Joseph J. Castiglia, Treasurer
Rev. Richard Stenhouse, Secretary
Vito Borrello
Joseph Cozzo
Gordon Gross
Thomas Lunt
Hal Payne
Hon. Jack Quinn, Sr.
Marcia O'Neil-White

Along with the Board of Directors, our entire staff contributed valuable time and insight to this process; their candid participation was critical. Also key in the strategic planning process was the guidance and support provided by the Center for Governmental Research (CGR) and our lead staff on the project Kirstin Pryor. Without Kirstin's guidance, rigor and insight, RTSB could not have achieved our strategic planning objectives.

***“Early childhood is the one place where there is absolute purity.
I support this work because I know we need to empower children to
read for themselves so they can think for themselves.”***

Chuck Woelfel, Project CARE evaluator



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