

# The School *of* Education

A Legacy of Excellence.

## Buffalo Book Buddies

LOCAL POET  
LAUREATE INSPIRES  
BOOK DONATIONS



Jillian Hanesworth

Buffalo State University’s 2022 Professional Development Schools (PDS) Conference featured Jillian Hanesworth, founder of Literary Freedom and Buffalo’s first-ever poet laureate. Hanesworth, who was born and raised on Buffalo’s east side, is known for her revolutionary performance poetry that serves as a call to action and means of empowerment for those seeking social and community change. Her prerecorded performance of her poem, “Choose Love,” a tribute to the victims of the May 2022 mass shooting at Tops supermarket, was aired during a September 2022 Buffalo Bills game on NFL Network.

As the PDS Conference morning keynote, Hanesworth spoke passionately about her initiative, Buffalo Books, which she established as a means for promoting literacy and increasing access to books, especially those written by local authors. Like the Little Free Library nationwide project, Buffalo Books places tiny libraries throughout the city’s east side, using donated texts, services, and funds.

Hanesworth’s presentation sparked an idea for Hillview Elementary School (Lancaster Central School District) teachers Jen Bandelian, Katie Perritano, and Joy Carroll, and principal Amy Moeller. The speech was a call to action for the team.

During a brainstorming session at the conference, the group decided to donate their 2022–2023 PDS mini-grant funds to Buffalo Books. They raised an additional \$716.00 for Buffalo Books through its annual talent show and purchased over 300 children’s books featuring characters from diverse backgrounds. Junior participants in EDU 311, taught by Patty George, lecturer of elementary education, literacy, and educational leadership, helped select the titles.

Hillview Elementary’s students played the most important role of all in this project, dubbed Buffalo Book Buddies.

After reading the books purchased for the Buffalo Books tiny libraries, the elementary students wrote and recorded book reviews. QR codes were generated for the book review videos and placed inside the books, which would enable children and families visiting the libraries to watch the videos and select books that interested them. When the Buffalo Book Buddies project was completed in May 2023, the books were delivered and distributed to tiny libraries on the east side.

In a recent update from Hanesworth, Buffalo State and Hillview learned that many of the books were placed in a library box at the Johnnie B. Wiley

Amateur Sports Pavilion and in various boxes on Northland Avenue in Buffalo. Additionally, the books were placed in library boxes at special events such as a recent expo showcasing Black writers from Buffalo.

Buffalo Book Buddies brought together a school, a university, and the community—all to promote literacy. While this project had many impactful components, one aspect really stood out to the coordinators: the children at Hillview Elementary will never forget the opportunity provided to share their love of reading.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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SCHOOL *of* EDUCATION

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LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Dr. Wendy A. Paterson, '75, '76 Dean, School of Education

This fall's School of Education newsletter is a vibrant testament to the high level of creativity undertaken by our faculty, staff, and students to achieve our

“forever” goal of educating curious, creative, competent students who choose teaching as a career path. Please note that in this and all of our newsletters, I do not talk about “training teachers” or even “teacher preparation” as good descriptors of the activities and people you will read about here. Teaching is certainly a career path and we have excellent curricula, field experiences, school partnerships, and experienced faculty to guide teacher candidates toward that path. However, the objective of higher education is not solely to prepare our students for professional careers; it is to provide a diverse, deep, and broad array of opportunities for post-high school students and continuing adults to explore all areas of study from traditional foundational subjects in the natural and social sciences to traditional arts and humanities to the applied and technical sciences. A comprehensive university such as Buffalo State also provides access to outstanding faculty who are accomplished practitioners in professional vocations, one of which is teaching and school leadership.

Yet as wonderful as this description of the purposes and opportunities of “higher education” here at Buffalo State is, I fear that the *higher education* part of teacher education is in danger. Recently, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) has proposed to make the master’s degree only one of three options for initially certified teachers to achieve professional certification. The other two options would be through examination with the National Board or through “stackable professional training” credits provided primarily by Boards of Cooperative Education Services (BOCES) or other corporate trainers. In frustration over finding faster ways to staff New York’s many looming vacancies, NYSED has several times mentioned that higher education programs “take too long” to turn out the teachers New York so desperately needs right now, and claims that no “research evidence” demonstrates that master’s completers make better teachers. For that matter, I have yet to read any definitive research offering any other single factor that produces “better” teachers since much of teaching can’t be assessed by measurement of subject matter mastery or students’ achievement scores. It is almost impossible to quantify and make generalizations about the intensely personal relationships that highly successful teachers make with their students.

Given that there is a measurable shortage of teacher candidates for specific certification areas in specific regions of New York and throughout the country, how will we address that shortage by decommissioning advanced graduate study? As a teacher of graduate students for many years, I know that even though my new teachers come to class tired and spent from the school day, it is during our graduate class where new energy gained from each other rekindles the passion and creativity of my novice teachers, and they inspire *each other* to “try that tomorrow.” Graduate school doesn’t train teachers beyond what they have already been “trained to do” in pedagogical practice. What it does is provide a forum to engage novice and accomplished teachers from all over our regional districts as we dive deeper into teaching literacy and math and science and English as a New Language. Read this newsletter and pay close attention to the concrete examples of how the university environment is uniquely inspirational for all of our candidates from the earliest (Ed Pathways) to the advanced (Master Teachers). Read how gathering teachers from around the world and around our own region helps our classrooms to demonstrate the real-time values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Just as we are currently studying the relative effects of online learning versus traditional course delivery in person, we cannot let the cart drive the horse by letting the shortage of teachers deprofessionalize the way we develop advanced knowledge and hone professional acumen in teachers. I hope alumni readers as well as hard-working graduates of Buffalo State who are currently teaching—whether in their first year or their fiftieth—read this newsletter and assert the importance of this work for the development of professional educators. It stands in stark contrast to the proposals that accept minimum training options for anyone who can last a day in a classroom. While I do not want to overstress the urgency of this message, the wonderful work you see summarized in this newsletter is not accidental, nor can it be replicated by corporations who “sell” fast routes to certification. **Teaching is a profession.** Advanced coursework for teachers is no less important than the internship or residency years of a medical practitioner. Perhaps with the myriad concerns about mental health and social-emotional aspects of learning that are so well-documented with P-12 students, it couldn’t be a worse time for the State of New York—formerly recognized as setting the gold standard of teacher education in this country—to set aside this standard to put trained workers, not professional teachers, in our classrooms.

# Find Your Path Back to Teaching

## ADDRESSING TEACHER SHORTAGES

A new program in the Buffalo State Teacher Education Unit, called **Find Your Path Back to Teaching (FYPBT)**, is aimed at potential teachers who either let their New York State teacher certification lapse or did not receive it in the first place. The initiative, designed to alleviate teacher shortages and build enrollment in teacher education programs, offers personalized support and programming to individuals who started, but did not complete, a teacher preparation program or the certification process.

“The State of New York right now is trying every which way to get teachers into classrooms,” said Wendy Paterson, dean of the School of Education. “We believe this program will help with that.” The goal is to move qualified individuals into teaching roles as soon as possible, she said.

New York State will need more than 180,000 new teachers within the next decade, to replace those leaving the field for various reasons, including retirements and pandemic-related burnout. Because more than one-third of the current teaching force in New York State is over the age of 50, retirements will contribute significantly to these shortages. This looming

overall teacher shortage threatens to disproportionately affect school districts in low-income and diverse areas, where shortages are already prevalent in specialty areas such as special education, TESOL, mathematics, science, and career and technical education.

“Teachers are starting to retire,” Paterson said. “COVID-19 convinced a lot of people it was time to go. That’s the cyclical nature of teaching. You’ll have a glut, and then those teachers will age out. We’re responding to the job market as quickly as we can.”

Potential teachers may have forgone the certification requirement for a variety of reasons, such as moving out of state or starting a family. And the certification exams themselves may have been cost prohibitive, particularly for young wage-earners just starting out. The new initiative will provide individualized programming for derailed teachers to get back on track. FYPBT will assist those who are interested in resuming course by figuring out exactly what they need and creating a path to become a certified teacher in New York State. Support will also be provided through the Buffalo State Teacher Certification Office and Career and Professional Education



Center. The testing requirements have also recently changed, Paterson said. There used to be four tests; certification now requires just two tests, so the process is simplified.

FYPBT encourages young people, career-changers, and paraprofessionals to consider teaching as a profession. FYPBT identifies the barriers to certification and licensure and leverages resources—including time, finances, expertise, creativity, space, and technology—through partnerships among the university, schools, and state education agencies. The collaborations provide mutually beneficial outcomes and a positive social impact to encourage people to choose teaching and remain in the profession.



CURRENT PROGRAMS  
AND INITIATIVES



Families enjoyed space-themed educational activities on campus

## UNIVERSITY HOSTS SPACE FAIR

NASA captured the excitement of space exploration and celebrated its successful Artemis I mission at a Space Fair and Trade Show on August 23 at Buffalo State's Science and Mathematics Complex.

The free, family-friendly event geared toward K–12 students featured a variety of fun educational activities—from constructing paper rockets to exploring internships and interacting with engineers and scientists. An evening session highlighted the work of Western New York companies, including Moog, Eaton, Taber Industries, and Taylor Devices, that contributed to the Artemis I mission. The event was co-hosted by the School of Education and the New York State Master Teacher Program along with fellow campus sponsors.

# New Visions Education Pathways Academy

The School of Education is engaging in a new partnership that allows high school students across Western New York to explore the field of education while earning high school and college credits. The program, New Visions Education Pathways Academy, a one-year, senior-level, highly academic program through Erie 1 BOCES gives students the resources to move confidently in the direction of a career in education.

The academy offers opportunities for participants to obtain up to 17 college credits through specialized instruction from high school and university faculty. The students are exposed to the Buffalo State campus and environment and enjoy significant financial savings over the traditional costs of tuition. Courses are structured as learning communities, which consist of a cohort of students and faculty exploring a common theme. Each education course is matched with a writing course and integrated hour co-hosted by faculty to provide enrichment and specialized experiences. This

format ensures that the students are connected to one another, the faculty, and the campus, and helps for a smoother transition to university-level work.

Participants begin with classroom instruction and eventually work with mentors in the field to gain a better understanding of the work that is involved in education.

“By showing interested high school students all that education has to offer, I’m looking to foster a pipeline of passionate homegrown talent to fill key positions locally, nationally, and abroad,” said New Visions instructor Anthony Lleras. “The best part is watching students transform into educators. They come in with cursory ideas and questions about education based on their experience as students, but very quickly start to evidence thinking like a teacher.”

The first class of seven Education Pathways candidates completed the program in May 2023, with four of

the seven enrolling in teacher education programs at Buffalo State. A new class of 11 enthusiastic new teacher “wannabes” began study in September. Buffalo State faculty members are working in tandem with BOCES I faculty member Anthony Lleras on a second year of outstanding teaching and learning experiences hosted in Bacon Hall.



## Urban Teacher Academy

The Buffalo State Urban Teacher Academy (UTA) is a teacher-training program aimed at combating the lack of diversity among teachers in the classroom, especially in the city of Buffalo and its first-ring suburbs.

Designed to develop a diverse generation of educators for the Buffalo Public Schools,

the UTA began in 2017 as a collaboration

between Buffalo State and McKinley High School and, since 2021, the International Preparatory High School.

Each year, the UTA invites high school students from McKinley and International Preparatory to campus to participate in the Anne Frank Project's Social Justice Festival and Professional Development Schools Conference, hear presentations from the Admissions and Financial Aid offices, and tour campus. UTA also provides an opportunity for participants to meet with Buffalo State teacher education candidates and to have field experiences in area Buffalo Public Schools, where they observe and interview classroom teachers and read to children. In the summer, UTA students come to campus for Summer Bridge, a four-day institute that includes instruction from faculty members who help the high schoolers further understand teacher education and what the teaching profession entails.

According to Kathy Wood, associate dean of recruitment and teacher diversity and director of the Urban Teacher Academy, the UTA is important because it addresses a critical need in public education. “Having a diverse teaching staff allows students from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds to see educators who look like them,” Wood said. “Further, a diverse teaching staff can be more adept at relating to students and families, and can help mitigate unconscious bias that impacts overall student success by addressing the opportunity gap that students in urban settings experience.”

Wood directs the program with help from a faculty liaison who works with BPS teachers to provide professional development and in-class instruction to students. Since its inauguration, over 60 students have participated in the UTA.

This year the UTA is undertaking a new initiative, Educators Rising (ER), a national organization established to provide a pathway for diversifying the teacher workforce. Through this new collaboration, the UTA will work with Buffalo Public Schools to assign a teacher-facilitator to recruit seventh- and eighth-grade students into an “ER club” with the intent that those students will choose to attend either McKinley or International Preparatory high school. The UTA will also establish ER clubs in two high schools with the hope that they will serve as a recruitment initiative to bring new participants to Buffalo State and into a teacher education program.



# Living Within Two Educational Worlds



Asma Syed

Asma Syed lives within two educational worlds. A lecturer in the Elementary Education, Literacy, and Educational Leadership Department at Buffalo State, she also teaches English as a New Language (ENL) to grades 9 to 12 at Lafayette International Community High School of Buffalo, which is populated solely by English language learners.

While working at two schools at once is a large workload, it's Syed's ultimate goals and the importance she places on teaching that drive her to do her best in both spaces. Her goals are rooted in a teaching philosophy centered on socio-emotional learning and culturally relevant teaching practices. She is afforded unique and relevant insights from her active teaching at Lafayette, which informs her work as a Buffalo State professor, where she is in a special position to foster these principles in teacher education students, granting them access to the day-to-day work of a practicing teacher.

"I use a lot of personal examples and I think that's why a lot of my EDU 201 students remember the facts. By hearing my strategies, whether classroom management or diversity lesson planning, I provide students with concrete, real examples from my high school classroom. This gives them a true picture of what happens in a classroom daily," she says. "Buffalo is very diverse and a hub for refugees and immigrants. It doesn't matter if you teach in a public school or the suburbs, teachers encounter diversity in their classrooms, whether it's ENL students or those with special needs. By helping new teachers learn about diversity and sharing my own experiences, I show them how to build relationships with their students and how to teach beyond the standard content."

Syed cares not only about the future of her students, but also about their role in the future of their individual communities and the world. She sees education as not only a career, but a force for meaningful change, and feels successful when able to impart good values and ethics through her teaching.

"There are a lot of refugees and immigrants who come from all walks of life. I don't just teach them English; I teach them about their new country—the

values, rules, and regulations of it—because they are the future. It is the ultimate accomplishment to make these students successful and, ultimately, to make our community and our country successful," said Syed. "Especially when I see my English language learners graduate and become the first in their community or homes to get an education, I feel like I've achieved something. The future of this country are these kids. They are the ones who will be running the show, so it's very important for us to teach good values and ethics in addition to content. If I can engrain that into my students, they will go forward to do the same."

Syed's philosophy is having a real-life impact on the students who she teaches at Buffalo State, where she has become a figure students look to for support and inspiration. In preparing the next generation of teachers and citizens alike, she wants to ensure that women are given the agency to live independent and empowered lives.

"I want to empower women of all ethnicities and religions. If the mother is educated to succeed in a career, in society, and able to move about independently, she will teach that to her children and they, in turn, will not be dependent on a spouse or others for financial support. But I don't feel like it's just religious barriers that restrain women in the world from achieving their potential. We face many struggles including family barriers, cultural expectations... I feel I've become a role model for what a Muslim woman can achieve, especially in Lafayette where 50 percent of the population is Muslim. Even at Buffalo State, where many of my students are not Muslim, they still come to me to talk and thank me for what they've learned."

Syed doesn't see her students as numbers who rotate in and out of her classroom every year, she sees them for the potential in each and wants to prepare all of her students—regardless of gender, ethnicity, or background—to become changemaking, independent teachers and citizens. Students who come from remote areas where they haven't been exposed to much diversity of race, culture, or thought are given an opportunity to explore how these concepts can unfold in classrooms.

"There was a student from a very small rural town who sent me an email a few months after our semester together. He had gotten a job in the Buffalo Public Schools and was thankful for everything I taught him about inclusiveness and culture, which helped him build a relationship with his students," she said.

At Lafayette, Syed works to ensure her immigrant and refugee students view the United States as their home and feel compelled to become an active part of it.

"I don't want kids who come from other countries to still talk about 'back home.' My parents came to the U.S. from Kashmir when I was young. I don't have a home there; I can't go 'back home,' and neither can these kids. I want them to learn that this is where they are now, that this is our country and our community, and we need to take care of both.

So that is success to me: when they realize these things and become a whole person inside and out—academically, socially, emotionally—and in every way."

Through her experiences with the students at Lafayette, she has seen a need to provide students with a deeper comprehension of the English language.

"The Regents exams are compulsory, but we have students who are at the beginning right now. How are we going to teach them the content that they need to pass the exams when they are just learning English? It's impossible. English language learners should first spend a year to completely learn English."

While Syed is aspiring to full-time work at the university, she also aspires to help fill this gap in the educational sphere. She draws inspiration from her experiences abroad where she has seen how countries such as Saudi Arabia require two semesters of English language instruction before students move on in their studies.

"I've been thinking about ways to create such a system here, even if it's a private English Language Center. That's my ultimate goal. Teaching local language and culture to newly arrived refugees, including our systems of living, how to navigate the schools... it's so crucial to the success of the students and parents as well as the teachers and schools where they are placed."

The classroom plays a pivotal role in molding our future leaders and citizens. With increasing teacher shortages, now more than ever we need passionate educators to take up the profession and lead our nation's youth. Good teachers do not simply hold a job, they excel in a vocation that shapes and inspires the next generation to lead our world.

Syed reflects on what educators can strive to achieve. She truly embodies excellence through her continual effort to ensure the best possible future of her students at Lafayette and her work perpetuating that care by educating teacher candidates at Buffalo State University.

An advocate for all, Syed is a driving force behind the future change makers in our communities and the world.

## SUPPORT SOE INITIATIVES

As a longtime leader in education, Buffalo State's School of Education (SOE) continually engages its teacher and leadership candidates in meaningful opportunities like those presented in this newsletter. If you would like to support SOE and any of these valuable initiatives, please let us know!

Visit [schoolofeducation.buffalostate.edu/giving](https://schoolofeducation.buffalostate.edu/giving) for more information.



FEATURED STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

# Teach and Study Abroad

After a two-year break, Buffalo State’s International Professional Development Schools (IPDS) program came back strong in 2023 with 45 students participating in short-term, faculty-led programs to the Dominican Republic, Italy, Germany, Rwanda,



and Zambia. Three Western New York teachers participated in the IPDS Colombia Experience Educators Exchange during the February school break and three candidates completed their practicums through the international student teaching program in Siena, Italy. In spring 2024, IPDS launches new programs in Costa Rica and Spain.

IPDS is grateful for the support provided by our donors which, for many students who do not envision study abroad as possibility, opens the door to these incredible opportunities. Travel with IPDS and find out what’s happening next through IPDS!

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# Bengals Passionate about Education (BPE)

CARE. BELIEVE. INSPIRE.

Bengals Passionate about Education (BPE) is an inclusive student organization sponsored by United Students Government that provides networking and professional development opportunities to improve the preparation of future professionals in the education field. Working with students of all ages and ability levels, BPE welcomes candidates from many

disciplines who have a common goal of working with P–12 students. In collaboration with Kappa Delta Pi, BPE sponsors educational, recreational, and social functions for candidates and members, fostering a high degree of professionalism through these events and other service-learning and professional development opportunities. In the last academic year, BPE

hosted a professional development event focusing on autism and then supported children on the spectrum and their families at Explore & More’s AuSome Evenings as well as an ice cream social to celebrate the end of the school year. Attendees learned about new courses on campus designed to develop leadership skills.

# PDS Student Representatives



Buffalo State encourages its teacher candidates to serve as Professional Development Schools (PDS) student representatives, a volunteer position for undergraduate teacher candidates from across the Teacher Education Unit. PDS reps are selected through an application and interview process. Serving as a PDS student representative is a rewarding, collaborative, and educational experience through which students build their résumés, develop their teacher candidate voices, and take advantage of opportunities for professional development and networking. PDS reps assist in the preparation of special events such as the annual PDS conference and orientation. PDS reps also conduct and present educational research of their choice at the National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) Conference in the spring—research that can then be presented at future conferences as students continue to build their résumés and professional portfolios.



◀ Christmann family and friends  
♥ Chicola family and friends



# SOE Names Programs After Chicola, Christmann Families

The Buffalo State School of Education’s International Professional Development Schools (IPDS) program was officially named the Michael and Nancy Chicola IPDS Program at a ceremony in October 2022. The new name honors Nancy Chicola, ’66, associate professor emerita of elementary education and reading, and her late husband, Michael, who made a generous commitment to support the IPDS mission.

The Buffalo State School of Education educational leadership program officially became the Christmann Family Educational Leadership Program at a naming ceremony in October 2022. The new name recognizes Robert Christmann, ’75, and Karen (Sudyn) Christmann, ’77, ’81, whose generous gift established an endowed fund in honor of Charles Christmann, ’46. Kathryn Christmann directed a significant estate gift toward the eponymously named fund as well.





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## FEATURED EVENTS

# YA Author Jason Reynolds Speaks at PDS Event for Area Students



**Young adult author Jason Reynolds addressed 400 middle schoolers at a full-house event on May 1** as part of a valuable collaboration between Buffalo State and the Buffalo Public Schools that focuses on diverse representations in children’s literature.

Reynolds, who is Black and grew up not seeing himself or his experiences represented in school-assigned books, is the *New York Times* bestselling author of more than a dozen books for young people, the National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature, and winner of a Newbery, an NAACP Image Award, and several Coretta Scott King honors.

Invited to speak by the Professional Development Schools Consortium, Reynolds regaled his audience with stories about growing up in the 1980s, surviving off government cheese, ramen noodles, and Kool-Aid in a neighborhood riddled by gun violence, drugs, and a newly emerging pandemic: HIV/AIDS.

“I was lucky enough to discover rap music,” he said. While politicians and pundits warned that rap would be the “death of a generation,” Reynolds said, he found that the songs mirrored the hard truths he was experiencing, including seeing neighbors and friends die far too young.

Despite a rocky start in college, Reynolds eventually found his way, thanks to one literature professor who helped him see how reading sharpens your imagination,

instills persistence, and teaches you how to listen to yourself. After graduation, the aspiring writer headed to New York City and landed his first publishing contract at age 21. While he worked odd jobs and did a short stint teaching middle school, Reynolds wrote and published prolifically. He teaches in the M.F.A. in creative writing program at Lesley University and resides in Washington, D.C.

Leading up to his visit, the students read parts of Reynolds’ *Long Way Down* and discussed it in their classrooms. They were enthusiastic about meeting the man who made their lives richer through writing.

“It’s clear how important Jason Reynolds’s storytelling is for middle schoolers,” said Pixita del Prado Hill, chair and professor of elementary education, literacy, and educational leadership. “The event was an amazing opportunity to hear from someone who has written books kids love and created characters they care about and have come to know as friends.”

After his talk, one student asked how he makes his work stand out; Reynolds shared a piece of advice applicable to life as well as to writing: “I never followed trends; I just wrote what was honest for me. I always do me, no matter what. What never changes is authenticity.”

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