IMPACT

The Literacy Alliance | Annual Report 2020-21

Striving to end illiteracy through programs that empower individuals to succeed at work, at home, and in the community.

1005 West Rudisill Blvd., Suite 307 | Fort Wayne, IN 46807 | p. (260) 426-7323 | www.literacyalliance.org

TLA Graduate Josiah

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Josiah

My name is Josiah, and I'm 23; I have six siblings and currently work as a server at a local restaurant.

I came to The Literacy Alliance because I wanted to prove to myself and any future employer that I have a high school equivalency (HSE) diploma. After I was home schooled for 15 years, I just had my mom saying I graduated, even though I had no diploma.

My experience has been great at The Literacy Alliance. It's a terrific confidence booster, and there has never been too much pressure to get things done. I've received some valuable tips for understanding the questions on the HSE exam.

I want to either be a math\economics teacher or a hospitality manager. I still don't know what I want exactly, and I enjoy my serving position. I don't want to go to college until I know exactly what I want to study and how much effort it will take to pursue.

"My experience has been great at The Literacy Alliance. It's a terrific confidence booster."

My advice to every home-schooled student out there is not to fret too much. My mom did a terrific job teaching me the love of learning, and that was her goal. It wasn't to memorize dates and dead people or pass tests without understanding why; she taught me to enjoy the process.

Josiah passed the HSE exam in early February 2021 and earned his high school equivalency diploma.

Visit **literacyalliance.org/blog** for more student stories!

Dear Friends and Supporters,

The Literacy Alliance's 2020-21 fiscal year has been one of growth and adaptation as a result of and despite the pandemic. While student participation rates have trended downward (which is also true of state and national outputs), TLA experienced improved student performance, outpacing the previous year as well as current regional and state metrics; details can be found on page 4.

We made every effort to teach in person over the past program year and were successful in this endeavor. By following health and safety protocols, we provided the individualized attention that puts our students first. We also created a library of Chromebooks for students who do not have access to a home computer. This allows them to move forward with distance learning, which is an integral part of our learning program.

Other student-focused initiatives are paying for the full cost of the high school equivalency test and celebrating our graduates individually through pop-up graduation ceremonies held in our classrooms among their peers and families.

197

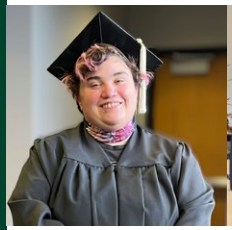
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED IN 2020-2021

72%
OF HSE STUDENTS MADE OVERALL ACADEMIC GAINS

46%
OF HSE STUDENTS EARNED THEIR HSE DIPLOMA

21%
OF HSE STUDENTS EARNED A PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICAITON

1,731
SERVICE HOURS BY VOLUNTEERS



The Literacy Alliance added a volunteer coordinator to its staff as well, which enables us to recruit and train more one-on-one tutors for our students who need a little extra help crossing the finish line. We are grateful for so many caring community members who want to help our students succeed.

Outside of our main service area of Allen County, we upped our game in Adams County by marketing our classes through billboards and opening a dedicated classroom at the MERIT Center in Decatur. This has resulted in a doubling of students served in Adams County.

The unique challenges of fundraising in a pandemic led to new ways of raising awareness and support. Funniest in the Fort, Giving Tuesday, and the production of the virtual play "Salt & Pepper" in conjunction with Arena Dinner Theatre enabled us to generate revenue and create new friendships. Read more about these events on page 10.

In addition, TLA's board of directors spent many months during this fiscal year deliberating the acquisition of an impactful literacy program, Project READS. Adding Project READS to the fold will extend our reach into the community, serving struggling young readers in grades K-3 in Allen County to improve their educational outcomes.

We invite you to explore our annual report and join us as we work together to increase functional literacy in our community to empower individuals to succeed at work, at home, and in the community.

Corey Porter
Board Chair

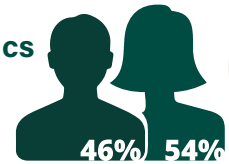
Melinda Haines
Chief Executive Officer

Adult Education Impact

Metrics comparisons to the prior year and the state show the strongest numbers to date. Though fewer students were served, a state-wide trend attributable to the pandemic's disruptions, a greater percentage demonstrated gains and HSE attainments. To address the lagging enrollment numbers, TLA staff will work to reach more students in 2022. Increased marketing efforts plus regular texts and emails to new, lapsed, and former students helped to get the word out and encouraged stopped-out students to return. In addition, TLA has secured funding and partnerships to expand its English Language Learners (ELL) offerings to serve more adults.

In addition to increased gains and HSE attainments, the Pre-HSE program saw an increase in the number of graduates advancing into the HSE program. Pre-HSE students enter the program with a reading level below 6th grade. If the HSE diploma is their goal, they work to improve their reading so they can graduate into the HSE class where they prepare for the HSE test. Last year, 5% advanced from Pre-HSE classes to the HSE classes to prepare for the HSE exam. This year it was 14%. Three former Pre-HSE students obtained their HSE diplomas. In addition, calls about our ELL class increased in 2021. The agency learned that its current offering of a single afternoon class was not sufficient. TLA has secured funding and partnerships to expand its ELL offerings to serve more adults. Two classes have been added as we continue to explore ways to improve service delivery.

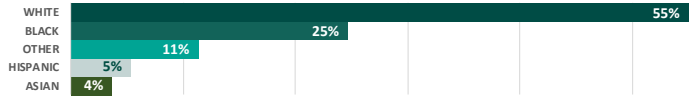
Student Demographics



Initial Assessed Education Grade Level

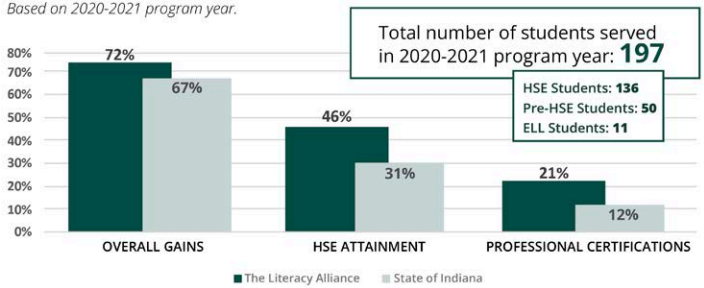
65% ABOVE 6TH GRADE

35% BELOW 6TH GRADE



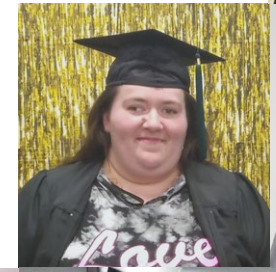
HSE Student Outcomes

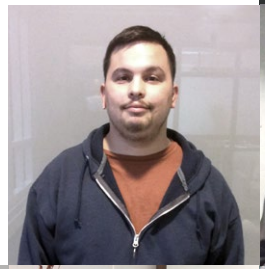
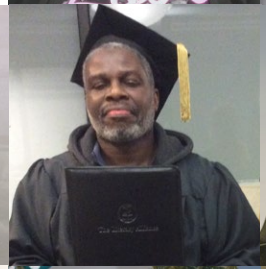
Based on 2020-2021 program year.

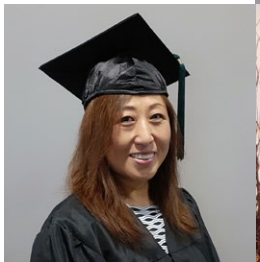


2020-2021 Program Year Graduates

Jhenna Adams
Darrell Bair
Roy Barrera
Bryson Bermes
Thomas Bratton
Max Broughton
Kynadee Burnham
Gaige Carpenter
Rui Darling
Josiah Davoli
Adriana Diaz
Jessica Fosnaugh
Mathew Gase
Nathaniel Gaskill
Irene Gathoni
Cayla Gerbers
Jose German
Lucia Giron
Jaquilla Graham
Alexis Graves
Titus Graves
Raigen Harkinson
Hla (Paung) Hclin
Jamie Holmes
Naomi Ijah
Brenda Izquierdo
Haley Jacobson
Thomas Johnson
Dominique King
Christina Martinez
Aslih Matlek
Jessica McIntosh
Ambre Miehlke
Crystal Miller
Victor Montenegro
Brent Morris
Lizbeth Nichols
Vernita Poorman
Joshua Purdy
Leeyaaza Ross-Sorrells
Amy Sanderlin
Miguel Santoyo
Suzanne Saylor
Elizabeth Schell
Anitra Scott
Maranda Smith
Devon Spaulding
Fate Stewart
Marvin Suttle
Kiev Ward
Robert Way
Brianna Whiteman
Jessika Wiles
Justin Wiley
Shalee Willett
Kimonie Williams
Nicholas Wroblewski
Julia Zook





MERIT Center (Decatur)

TLA has been providing high school equivalency preparation classes in Adams and Wells Counties since 2018 and has partnered with local libraries in those communities to serve students at convenient locations and times. Over the last year, however, it became apparent that we could reach more students in Adams County if we developed a dedicated classroom where we could provide evening classes that would accommodate working students. By working with the MERIT Center board of directors in Decatur and the Adams County Community Foundation and United Way of Adams County, TLA has created its own classroom in the MERIT Center, the former Northwest Elementary School in Decatur. The new location allows us to offer evening class times for students who work during the day. A generous donation from Lincoln Financial Group brought high-quality, professional furnishings to the classroom. As a result, enrollment in Adams County doubled.

Nan Wilson, Teacher; Tracy Davis, Board Member;
TC Salmons, Site Coordinator, Brian Schlichtenmyer, COO

Habitat Libraries

Since 2007, The Literacy Alliance has provided a start-up family library to every new home built through Habitat for Humanity at the time of the dedication of the home - on average, ten a year. Access to quality books in the home encourages families, both parents and children, to be readers. Parents serve as role models in developing the habit of reading at home with their children and also help foster a love of reading and learning in their children that reinforces learning at school.

Each library consists of a new bookcase, new reference books, and a selection of gently-used pleasure reading selected to match the ages and interests of family members. Each start-up library costs roughly $150, and is funded by supporters just like you! To contribute to this fund visit **literacyalliance.org/habitat** to donate online.

Staff Accomplishments

- Brian Schlichtenmyer was nominated as 2021 Indiana Association for Adult and Continuing Education Outstanding Administrator
- Francine Liebhauser earned her Master of Business Administration
- Kami Gavilanez earned her Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Langauges certification

Brian Schlichtenmyer

Francine Liebhauser

Kami Gavilanez

LAUGHS FOR LITERACY!

$31,000
RAISED

September 2020 - In The Literacy Alliance's first virtual fundraiser, local business and organization leaders stepped up to the mic to support adult literacy in Allen, Adams, and Wells Counties. These brave "comedians" battled to earn the title *Funniest in the Fort!* in this year's Laughs for Literacy! fundraiser, which had transformed from an in-person to a virtual event in light of COVID-19.

Our jovial jousters included:

- Tom Henry, Mayor of Fort Wayne
- Gary Shearer, PHP*
- Mike Nutter, Fort Wayne TinCaps
- John Urbahns, Greater Fort Wayne Inc.
- John Sampson, Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership
- Demetrius Warren, STAR Financial Bank
- Thad Tegtmeyer, Sweetwater
- Ben Reynolds, Broken Pencil Improv

2020 *Laughs for Literacy!* sponsors were Baden Gage & Schroeder LLC, BF Goodrich, Comcast, Custom Engineering & Fabrication, Fort Wayne Metals, Horizon Bank, Ivy Tech Community College Fort Wayne, Leonard J. Andorfer & Co. LLP, Lincoln Financial Group, Old National Bank, Physicians Health Plan, Rifkin Family Foundation, Rothberg Logan Warsco LLP, STAR Financial Bank, and Sweetwater.

** Voted Funniest in the Fort!*

#GIVINGTUESDAY

$6,750

RAISED

December 2020 - Giving Tuesday 2020 helped TLA jumpstart its fund to pay the full cost of the HSE exam for our students, which can be a huge barrier for our students. During Giving Tuesday 2020, 18 individuals contributed to this fund to pay for 12 exams; a few months later, a generous donor made it possible to reach our goal of paying for 50 exams.

$4,200

RAISED*

April 2021 - Our spring fundraising event, "Salt & Pepper," in collaboration with Arena Dinner Theatre was a great success. With production expenses covered by STAR Financial and Parrish Leasing, each organization received almost $2,100 and TLA welcomed 70 new donors. We hope to work with Arena again next year, so stay tuned for our next great theatrical adventure.

*$2,100 per orgnization

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT
Olivia

Olivia came to The Literacy Alliance in May of 2020. She was looking for an opportunity to gain experience tutoring while attending Indiana University. She was nervous to start but soon found everyone friendly and welcoming. “I was a little nervous about making sure I had all the answers, but it’s okay not to know something.” Olivia quickly found that “Knowing something and being able to explain it to another person is very different.” She quickly adapted and now finds it fun to learn something new, alongside the students in the class.

Olivia hopes to have the opportunity to teach English abroad after she graduates. While she is currently tutoring TLA students in math, she hopes to transition to helping tutor in TLA's English Language Learners (ELL) program soon.

“Everyone I’ve met has very inspiring reasons for being in this class, and I admire them for their dedication.”

41

TOTAL VOLUNTEERS
2020-2021 PROGRAM YEAR

1,731

TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS
2020-2021 PROGRAM YEAR

Volunteer Impact

During the 20-21 program year, TLA engaged 41 volunteers across our adult programs who were deployed for 1,731 total hours. Our volunteers enjoy working with students and seeing them succeed. Often people come to us because they want to be a part of our mission. Their love of learning, reading, and teaching is put to use with our students whether they are a teacher, were a teacher, or never taught before. Coming from all walks of life, our volunteers make a huge impact on our program leaving everyone grateful for their service. Frequently people simply search online for a way to give back to the community and come to us to share their love of education. Visit **literacyalliance.org/volunteer** to learn more.

As our volunteer team continues to grow, we want to build a community where we learn from each other and develop new ways to engage and support students as they move toward their goals. Volunteers are excited to participate in celebratory classroom events when students get their diplomas. Some are discovering new career avenues for themselves as they grow and develop skills alongside our students in and out of classrooms.

TLA celebrates its partnership with the Volunteer Center, which has helped meet our need for volunteers since 2019.

Looking ahead to 2021-2022

The Literacy Alliance is excited about its new addition: Project READS (Reading, Early Assistance in Developing Skills). COO Brian Schlichtenmyer has been working with Project READS staff members Deb Dutton and JC York through the transition and is pleased with both the logistical and programmatic progress that has been made.

Brian believes that "adding early reading to TLA's menu of instructional services allows a more comprehensive approach to illiteracy in the community. We help children at the beginning of their educational journey to complete that journey successfully. We help adults reach success through high school equivalency attainment and workforce preparation. TLA is now able to affect change at both ends of the educational continuum."

Though TLA has served children indirectly in the past through Read to Me (RTM) and Families Learning Together (FLT), we are now able to serve and directly impact reading skills as early as possible. In FLT, TLA directly provided adult instruction to parents while the children received early education from a partner agency. We targeted parents of preschool-age children through the RTM programs, encouraging those parents to read to their children every day for 20 minutes.

Project READS program director Deb Dutton has been working with schools to get back to in-person programming and says, "I believe the schools have looked at us in a whole new way since the beginning years of PR as being a real resource for help in the language arts area for students. We have had teachers and school staff tell us that their students have learned to love reading and that they don't look at PR as something they have to do after school to get better at reading, but want to do. We have strived to make Project READS academically focused but also fun and engaging so that students are still learning but don't necessarily realize they are when having fun at the same time, plus they get a tutor/mentor who is truly invested in them."

She continues, “We had a student whose parents both worked full time and a half jobs. He was the oldest child in the family with way more responsibilities than a 2nd grader should have. When he started PR he said he didn’t like school and hated reading because he wasn’t good at it and he didn’t have time to learn stuff because he needed to take care of his little brothers. Taking care of his little brothers included feeding them dinner, entertaining them til bedtime and getting them off to bed. After a few months in PR, he started to move up a few reading levels and became more interested in stories we provided and really liked working with his tutor, whom he started to trust and open up to. His teacher told us he was doing better, not only in behavior and attitude, but also in his academics all around and he actually started looking forward to coming to school, especially on PR days. We feel that PR helped him find some happiness and perhaps gave him time to just be a kid himself and have someone take time to really listen to him and focus on his needs for a change. It became a pleasure for him to learn more, rather than another responsibility or another chore he had to get through.”

Deb’s favorite thing about Project READS, “is watching when our students get the ah-ha moments and the light bulb turns on, they find reading not only fun and enjoyable but also find success in other areas of their academics. We have seen students do a total turn-around. It’s an amazing process to watch unfold!”

ELL STUDENT SPOTLIGHT
Rui

My name is Rui and I am 51 years old. I come from northeast China. I have two brothers and one sister. I live with my son, Jack, and my husband, Robert.

I have been in Indiana for 12 years. I graduated from college in China 18 years ago. My English was not good, so I came to The Literacy Alliance in January 2020 to improve my English. I like to study here. We have the best teachers. There is no free adult school in China, so I am enjoying the resources.

I hope everyone can get an education as we are, get a good job, and gain the best skills to give back to the public. I would like to open my own business someday.

Rui has made significant advances in her English language skills since coming to TLA. In fact, in late June 2021, Rui passed the HSE exam. Rui is now enrolled at Ivy Tech pursuing a degree in business.

" My English was not good, so I came to The Literacy Alliance in January 2020 to improve my English. I like to study here. We have the best teachers."

ELL students at The Summit classroom

English Language Learners Program

For several years, The Literacy Alliance provided an English Language Learners (ELL) class that met in the afternoon. Prior to conducting a survey in 2020-2021 to further gauge the need and determine when and where ELL students could participate, TLA provided an ELL class that met in the afternoon. We quickly learned that our single ELL class was not enough because many ELL students work. With new funding secured from The James Foundation, The Literacy Alliance was able to hire an additional ELL teacher and add two evening classes. We see a need for an additional morning class and classes to serve incoming Afghan refugees. As we continue to serve ELL students, The Literacy Alliance explores ways to expand its ELL offerings and improve service delivery.

ELL Program Expansion Grant

Thanks to a generous donation from The James Foundation, The Literacy Alliance expanded its English Language Learners (ELL) program by adding an additional class at a new time and location. We continue to collect input from the community to assess current and future needs.

Brandon Park from The James Foundation presents a check to Melinda Haines at The Literacy Alliance offices.

TLA board member Kara Densmore, Melinda Haines, and ONB market president Sara Strimmenos.

Terri Reed and Bill Tomlinson from International Paper present a donation to TLA staff and students.

Donors

The Literacy Alliance is grateful for community support. The donors listed in this report reflect gifts received during the fiscal year running September 1, 2020 to August 31, 2021.

Foundations

The Literacy Alliance received 62% of its support from local foundations.

Adams County Community Foundation
Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne
DH Jones Family Foundation
Dollar General Literacy Foundation
Don and Virginia Wolf Charitable Foundation Inc.
Don Wood and Dar Richardson Foundation
Edward M and Mary McCrea Wilson Foundation
English Bonter Mitchell Foundation
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Foellinger Foundation
Howard P. Arnold Foundation
Ivy Tech Foundation
Lincoln Financial Foundation
Old National Bank Foundation
Prophet Sisters Foundation
Rifkin Family Foundation
The GoodCoin Foundation
The James Foundation
The Journal Gazette Foundation
The Waterfield Foundation
United Way of Adams County

THANK YOU!

Businesses & Organizations

Companies and groups join together in support of TLA through event sponsorships, internal fundraising measures and corporate giving programs.

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Allen County Sheriff Department
Baden Gage & Schroeder LLC
BF Goodrich
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Comcast
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Fort Wayne Metals Research Product Corp.
General Motors Fort Wayne Assembly
Half Price Books Community Services
Horizon Bank
Indiana Department of Workforce Development
Indiana Michigan Power (subsidiary of AEP)
Kiwanis - John Chapman
Kroger Rewards
Laborers' International Union of North America Local Union No 213
Leonard J Andorfer & Co., LLP
Network for Good
New Car Dealers Association
NIPSCO
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Pizza Hut of Fort Wayne
ProLiteracy Worldwide
Psi Iota Xi Pi Chapter
Psi Iota Xi Theta Theta Chapter
Rothberg Law Firm
STAR Financial Bank
Sweetwater
The Blackbaud Giving Fund/Your Cause
Wolf Corporation

Honor Roll Donors

The following individuals supported TLA with total giving of $250 or more during the fiscal year. Those marked with a (+) achieved Perfect Attendance by making a regular monthly gift throughout the fiscal year.

Joseph and Carol Anzalone
Eric and Susan Baier
Marsha Baltes
Marjorie Baumgartel
David and Jacqueline Beard
Glen and Chris Bickel
Ann Bobilya
Ian and Kim Boyce
Gary Chaney
Adam Clevenger
Sheri Davis+
Tracy Davis+
Ronald and Cathy Duchovic
Anita Dunlavy
Drew and Sheri Dunlavy+
Phil and Chrissy Dwire
Paul and Mary Everett
Brian and Karen Francisco
Tegan Fredrickson+
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Harriett Inskeep
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Individual Donors

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Denise Andorfer
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Rae Huffman+
Linda Huge
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David and Mary Lynn Kolhoff
Andrew Kopec
Michael and Helene Krafft
Nicole Krouse
Jeff and Alice Krull
Carolyn Lawrence
William Lee
Chung-Seng and Shuishih Sage Lee
Scott and Francine Liebhauser

*(+) Perfect Attendance | * Deceased*

Individual Donors (Cont.)

Dave and Shari Lloyd
Harry and Barbara Manges
Tom and Joan Marcuccilli
Cheryl Mathews
David and Zora Matson
Patsy Matthews
Jeffrey McCollum
Janae McCullough-Boyd
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Cynthia McKinney
Doyal McLemore
Sandra McMurtrie
Wanda Metzger
Sharon Miller
Scott Miller
Ashley Miller
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Stefan and Maria Pittenger
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Babette Record
Melissa Reinking
Marna Renteria
Barbara Resch
Paul Reszel
Mary L. Rigdon
Emily Romine
Molly Rommel
Enid Rosenblatt
Kathryn Roudebush
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*(+) Perfect Attendance | * Deceased*

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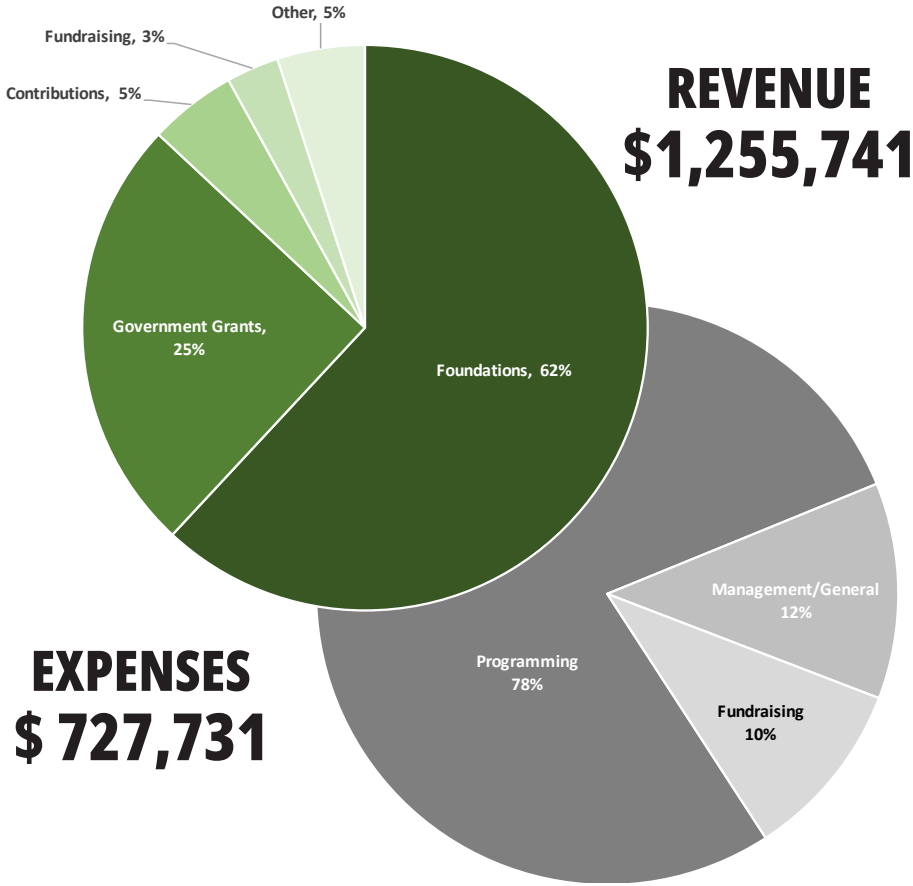
*(+) Perfect Attendance | * Deceased*

FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021

The Literacy Alliance is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Support for our services comes from annual campaign gifts, special events, foundations, and endowment income.

REVENUE
$1,255,741



EXPENSES
$ 727,731

31%

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF GREATER FORT WAYNE ENDOWMENT GROWTH

The Literacy Alliance has held an endowment fund at the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne since 2007. The fund balance at the beginning of FY2020-2021 was $73,286 and grew to $96,027 at the end of the fiscal year.

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Brian Schlichtenmyer
Chief Operating Officer

Matt Wire
Chief Marketing and Communications Officer

Nicole Phillippe
Volunteer Coordinator

Laura Weldon
Development Coordinator

Kami Gavilanez
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Teacher

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Nan Wilson
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The Literacy Alliance

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