



Urban League of
Essex County

**The Literacy Center:
An Investment in our Shared Prosperity**

Prepared for:

the problem

THE URGENCY OF LITERACY

In Newark, more than 80% of third graders are not reading on grade level.

That statistic is not just academic. It is predictive.

Children who are not proficient readers by third grade are significantly more likely to struggle academically, disengage from school, and face limited economic mobility as adults. Literacy is the foundation upon which educational success, workforce participation, and civic engagement are built.

When literacy is not abundant, opportunity narrows.

At the Urban League of Essex County, we believe that reading is not a privilege — it is a civil right.

And at this moment, Newark needs a bold, permanent, community-centered response.

the solution

A COMMUNITY HUB FOR LITERACY

The Urban League Literacy Center will be more than a tutoring site.

It will be a permanent, place-based community hub designed to make literacy a visible, shared priority in Newark.

Located within the Fairmount Commons development, adjacent to new affordable housing, the Center will integrate literacy advancement directly into neighborhood revitalization. Families will not have to search for support. It will be embedded in the community itself.

The Literacy Center will:

- Provide free reading tutoring and interactive literacy programming for children
- Develop individualized Family Literacy Plans
- Offer structured coaching and support for parents and caregivers
- Host professional development for teachers and community partners
- Deliver advocacy training to strengthen literacy policy and accountability
- Serve as a convening space to align schools, families, and community stakeholders

This dual focus (direct service and advocacy) distinguishes the Center.

It is not simply helping children read.

It is building a literacy culture.

WHAT MAKES THIS SOLUTION

different

1. A Community Hub Model

The Literacy Center is designed as a gathering place: a visible anchor where families return consistently. The goal is not sporadic intervention, but sustained education and engagement. By embedding literacy within a physical space and a trusted organization, ULEC creates stability, continuity, and community ownership.

2. Direct Service + Advocacy

Many programs address symptoms. Few influence systems.

The Literacy Center combines hands-on tutoring and family support with advocacy training and cross-sector alignment. This ensures that literacy improvement is not isolated to individual children but supported at the policy and community level.

the investment

The total capital cost to build and fully equip the Literacy Center is \$2.5 million.

To date, \$500,000 has been secured through a combination of state Special Purpose Funding and internal allocation.

\$2 million remains to complete the buildout.

The Center's desired opening date is September 2026. However, construction and launch are funding-contingent. ULEC will not begin full buildout until it has sufficient funds in hand.

Private philanthropic leadership at this moment determines the pace at which we can complete buildout, open the Center, and serve Essex County's literacy needs at scale.

Annual Sustainability

Once operational, the Literacy Center's annual operating budget is approximately \$550,000, supporting:

- Center Director and Community Organizer
- Tutor stipends and instructional consultants
- Books, learning materials, and technology
- Structured literacy programming and community engagement

This operating model is designed to be stable, scalable, and measurable. Early philanthropic investment will also position the Center to attract additional foundation and institutional support.

the outcomes

WILL CHANGE OUR COMMUNITY

Completion of the Literacy Center will:

- Establish a permanent literacy anchor in Newark
- Provide structured literacy plans for at least 25 families annually in initial phases
- Move participating children measurably toward grade-level proficiency
- Equip parents to become literacy advocates
- Strengthen alignment between housing, education, and community development

The impact extends beyond one building.

Improved literacy drives:

- Higher graduation rates
- Greater workforce readiness
- Reduced long-term public expenditure
- Increased economic mobility
- Stronger neighborhoods

Literacy is human and community infrastructure.

your invitation

TO LEAD

For more than a century, the Urban League of Essex County has advanced economic and social mobility for African American and disadvantaged residents.

The Literacy Center represents the next chapter in that work.

This is a defining opportunity:

- To anchor literacy in Newark permanently
- To accelerate educational equity
- To invest in the long-term strength of Essex County
- To demonstrate private philanthropic leadership at a critical moment

Naming opportunities are available commensurate with investment level. We welcome conversations with individuals interested in shaping this transformative initiative.

When a child learns to read confidently, the future opens. When a community centers literacy, opportunity expands.

The question before us is simple: Can we meet this moment?

Please reference the naming opportunity options on the following pages and on behalf of the youth and families we serve, thank you for thoughtfully reflecting on where you might see yourself in this story.

Thank you for your interest and consideration.

Vivian Cox Fraser, President and CEO



Urban League of
Essex County

Naming Opportunities Menu

This naming opportunities menu for the proposed Literacy Center provides meaningful and visible recognition for donors, families, foundations, and corporate partners.

Naming Opportunity	Suggested Gift	Notes
Literacy Center Naming Rights	\$1,000,000	Naming rights for the full Literacy Center facility
Reading Room / Main Learning Commons	\$350,000	Central signature space featuring the stage, reading area, and primary gathering area
Outdoor Learning Terrace / Playground	\$150,000	Includes pergola, outdoor learning area, rubber playground surface, planters, and walkway
Multipurpose Room	\$150,000	Flexible room for tutoring, meetings, workshops, and community events
Coffee Shop / Family Gathering Space	\$200,000	Includes coffee area, family waiting area, and seating
Retail Shop / Literacy Marketplace	\$150,000	Visible, public-facing retail and merchandise area
Main Entrance / Welcome Lobby	\$150,000	Includes center check-in area, secured entry, and lobby space
Stage / Storytelling Circle	\$100,000	Central focal point inside the Reading Room

Early Readers Corner	\$100,000	Dedicated children's reading and early literacy area
Coaching Room 1	\$75,000	Individual tutoring, mentoring, or family coaching space
Coaching Room 2	\$75,000	Individual tutoring, mentoring, or family coaching space
Kitchen / Hospitality Area	\$75,000	Supports events, hospitality, family gatherings, and programming
Resource Library	\$75,000	Resource storage, literacy materials, and educational support area
Banquette Seating / Reading Nook	\$50,000	Built-in seating area adjacent to the Reading Room
Outdoor Pergola	\$50,000	Distinctive architectural feature in the outdoor area
Bench Seating Area	\$50,000	Main seating area outside Reading Room
ADA Entrance Ramp	\$35,000	Opportunity to recognize accessibility and inclusion
Mural / Community Art Feature	\$25,000	Could include donor-sponsored public art installation
Check-In Desk / Welcome Counter	\$25,000	Front-facing visitor reception area
Printer / Technology Closet	\$25,000	Technology support area for staff and participants
Staff / Volunteer Lockers	\$15,000	Recognition opportunity for volunteer engagement

Planters / Garden
Features (2 available)

\$10,000 each

Outdoor landscaping
and beautification
opportunities

Writing Wall

\$10,000

Interactive literacy-
focused feature

Bookshelves / Reading
Collections (multiple
available)

\$5,000-\$10,000

Naming opportunities
for shelving units,
themed collections, or
reading corners