

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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## **OPENING LETTER**

#### DEAR FRIENDS,

We are so pleased to share this overview of all that we have accomplished, with your generous support, over the past year. It's an honor to have you as our partners as we work to help the 54% of Americans who lack the literacy skills they need to fully participate in our society as parents, workers, and citizens.

Like our founder, Barbara Bush, we know that these overlooked and often underserved Americans are not hopeless. They lead busy lives as mothers, fathers, caregivers, and employees, often holding down multiple jobs in order to provide for their families. But without the reading, writing, and comprehension skills that many of us take for granted, they simply don't have an equal chance to succeed.

Our research, conducted in partnership with Gallup, has shown that low adult literacy rates have a \$2.2 trillion impact on our economy each year. On an individual level, that translates to vast differences in income, with adults who are proficient in literacy earning nearly double the annual income of those at the lowest levels of literacy.

But it's not just salary that matters. When people can read better, they have more options in life. There is dignity in all work—which means reaching your full potential and gaining new responsibilities, which is only possible with literacy.

Literacy isn't just about dollars and cents. It's about opportunity, closing gaps, and equity. And while low literacy is a deep-rooted and pervasive problem, it's also one of the most promising gateways to lasting transformation.

Perhaps even more importantly, raising U.S. literacy rates will help us—authentically and lastingly to embody our common, core values of freedom, justice, and opportunity for all.

Thank you for your continued support, which powers our work to unlock the full potential of tens of millions of our fellow Americans - and our shared potential as a nation.

With gratitude,



Doro Bush Koch

**Doro Bush Koch** Honorary Chair



Butil Robins

British A. Robinson President and CEO

# LITERACY, EQUITY, AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

"The American Dream is about equal opportunity for everyone who works hard. If we don't give everyone the ability to simply read and write, then we aren't giving everyone an equal chance to succeed." - Barbara Bush

More than 30 years ago, Barbara Bush recognized that, at its heart, literacy is an issue of equity. She knew that literacy is about so much more than words on a page. It is the key that unlocks the potential in every one of us, empowering us to support our families, contribute to our communities, and navigate the world with dignity.

Today, 130 million Americans—roughly 54% of adults aged 16-74—lack proficiency in literacy, essentially reading below a sixth grade level. As a result, they struggle to fully participate in our society as parents, workers, and citizens, simply because they lack the skills that many of us take for granted.

Low literacy lies at the core of multigenerational cycles of poverty, poor health outcomes, low educational attainment, and food and housing insecurity—issues that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research continues to prove that Barbara Bush was right. Literacy is inextricably linked to equity, health, and social and economic mobility.



 The U.S. could be losing up to \$2.2 trillion—or 10% of GDP—in economic growth due to low adult literacy rates.



• The existing gap in digital literacy skills could cause 76% of Black individuals and 62% of Hispanic individuals to be shut out or under-prepared for 86% of jobs in the U.S. by 2045.



 Low-literate adults are four times more **likely** than others to report low levels of health, requiring hospitalization and using emergency services at significantly higher rates.





· Through all of its impacts-medical errors, increased illness and disability, loss of wages, and compromised public health—low health literacy is estimated to cost the U.S. economy up to \$236 billion every year.



 88% of children under age 6 whose parents lack a high school equivalency or diploma live in low-income families.



 A mother's education level is the single greatest determinant of her children's future academic success, outweighing other factors such as neighborhood and family income.

This equity gap impacts every one of us, and it will continue to grow as it is passed down from parent to child, until we solve the problem.

The good news is that we have the opportunity to break this cycle. Barbara Bush chose family literacy as her cause because she knew that equipping parents and caregivers with essential skills is the best way to give everyone an equal chance to succeed — not just today, but for generations to come. As we carry on the work that she began, we remain committed to that vision, focusing on:

- 1. Technology and Innovation
- 2. Reading Mentorship Programs and Curriculum Development
- 3. Awareness and Thought Leadership

Read on to learn more about how your support is powering our efforts to build a stronger, more equitable America through literacy.

# **OUR SOLUTIONS:** TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

## Leveraging the power of technology to meet learners where they are

Over the past two years, technology has played an increasingly critical role in learning — reinforcing the need for tools that truly meet students where they are. While there are plenty of technology tools available for K-12 learning, very few existing tools meet the unique needs of their parents and caregivers. Through our work in education technology, we are working to bridge this gap.

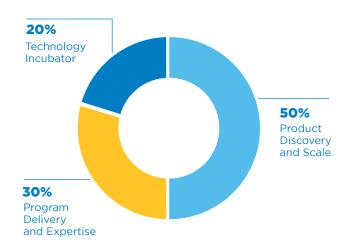
#### THE ROBERT AND DOROTHY KING **TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION FUND**

In March 2021, we launched the first-ever technology fund for literacy—the Robert and Dorothy King Technology Innovation Fund—through a generous gift from King Philanthropies. The fund powers our work to drive the development of groundbreaking tools for adult learners and their families by:

- Harnessing the power of technology to reach families where they live, work, play, and pray
- Combining our vast network and deep expertise in adult learning theory and family literacy programming with leading emerging educational technology to expand opportunities for learning beyond the traditional classroom
- Identifying and scaling innovative learning tools for adults, including mobile apps, mixed reality, and gaming—investing expertise to optimize and bring promising solutions to market

While in-person literacy programs remain an effective learning platform, a substantial portion of our nation's 130 million low-literate adults are unable to participate in these programs—a challenge that has been compounded by the **COVID-19 crisis**. We are working to increase access to innovative, high quality digital literacy tools to help learners overcome these barriers.

Through the Robert and Dorothy King Technology Innovation Fund, the Barbara Bush Foundation plays the role of strategic investor, early funder, endorser of vetted technology tools, and provides key technical assistance. The fund is used to build, develop, incubate, and scale technology-based literacy solutions, including distribution of small grants that show the promise of delivering impact for learners, as follows:



- Technology Incubator (20%) Create a social impact technology incubator to explore effective interventions and ideas based on strategic research and data
- Product Discovery and Scale (50%) Support larger investments in promising edtech products tailored for adult learners
- Program Delivery and Expertise (30%) -Invest in technology solutions directly related to the delivery of Foundation-owned content and curriculum programs

We're grateful for King Philanthropies' visionary support of this work, and we look forward to engaging more partners to help us catalyze innovation that will foster equity and improve outcomes for learners nationwide.

#### TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COUNCIL

As we move forward with our edtech investments, we continue to leverage the expertise of our Technology Advisory Council. This diverse group of innovators—which includes Silicon Valley leaders, venture capitalists, industry trailblazers, and some of the nation's top philanthropies and nonprofits—supports and advises our use of technology and digital tools to serve adult learners. Their critical input will help shape the trajectory of not just our work, but the entire literacy field, in the years to come.

#### CURRENT TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENTS

We continue to invest in technology solutions that can help us expand access for adult learners and their families. Our current solutions include:

- Enigma is an interactive, game-based app developed by Southern Methodist University in partnership with the Barbara Bush Foundation and the Dollar General Literacy Foundation. The game currently serves learners who read up to a third-grade level. Work is now underway to expand the range of literacy skills to grades 3-8, pilot test the game with adult learners, and evaluate its efficacy. After a small usability study conducted in fall 2021, the game is now being pilot tested with adult learners at three sites in Texas and Washington, D.C. An enhanced version of the game, which will serve learners up to a sixth-grade reading level, is scheduled to be available on both iOS and Android operating systems in late 2022.
- Microsoft's HoloLens 2 is a mixed reality headset that projects interactive holograms into the wearer's field of view. Working in partnership with Microsoft, SphereGen Technologies, and T-Mobile, we are exploring the potential for use of the HoloLens 2 in concert with cutting-edge eye tracking technology to help educators and providers in a variety of settings identify literacy issues and craft personalized, effective learning plans to improve learner outcomes. A research project, currently underway, will assess the solution's efficacy in a real-life setting in preparation for a probable pilot test in late 2022.

- · Amira is an accurate, online, artificial intelligence-driven, personalized intelligent reading tutor grounded in reading science. The Amira avatar listens to students while they read, and as a student stalls or makes a mistake, she draws from over 30 different "micro-interventions" backed by reading science. We have partnered with Amira to support Reading Together — a project funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. Reading Together will create an artificial intelligence enabled family support program that offers parents of all literacy levels personalized tools to support their children's reading skills, fosters stronger collaboration between home and school, and provides emergent readers with targeted instruction based on the science of reading. Educator and caregiver focus groups have been conducted to support the development of a prototype for the upcoming feasibility studies, which will begin in fall 2022. The final design will be piloted in fall 2023.
- Cell-Ed, a Silicon Valley-based developer, creates mobile-first tools that make learning easy, fun, and fast for adults, providing live education coaches with no internet, data plan, or classroom required. The app's literacy program is delivered in short, three-minute increments, works on any device, and does not even require a smartphone-expanding reach to an entire subset of adult learners who are often left behind.

We're also proud to serve alongside organizations including Stanford University, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, and the State of New York as a founding partner in the Cell-Ed One Million Learner Challenge-an initiative that put the app in the hands of 114,000 learners in low-skilled, marginalized communities over the past year.

We have embedded the adult literacy app in our family literacy programs, and in 2021, we partnered with Cell-Ed to launch our first app-based early literacy course—Building Future Readers for parents and caregivers of children ages three through eight.

# **OUR SOLUTIONS: READING** MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

## Providing evidence-based programs and tools to serve learners and families

We channel our 30+ years of literacy expertise into developing evidence-based programs and resources for students, families, and educators. Our reading mentorship programs boost literacy skills while fostering relationships that encourage overall confidence and academic growth, and our educational resources equip teachers with engaging, high-quality tools for use both inside and outside of the classroom.

#### BOOK EXPLORERS

This year, we launched a brand new reading mentorship program, Book Explorers, which aims to help target "summer slide" or COVID-19-related learning gaps by allowing students to keep progressing year-round. Book Explorers builds on the success of our long-running reading mentorship program, Teen Trendsetters®, and can be used alone or in conjunction with the existing program to extend learning.

The program pairs students in grades 1-3 with a reading mentor and uses targeted strategies

and activities to build literacy skills and confidence. All program resources—including 56 engaging, culturally responsive fiction and narrative books, mentor guides, and parent guides—are digital and available online. Learning teams have the option to connect virtually or meet in-person, and the program offers flexible implementation models (one to one mentoring or small group). The program is designed to promote learner ability by encouraging learners to combine knowledge of familiar literacy skills with new skills to explore, practice, and master.

Book Explorers is designed to support educators and caregivers in a variety of settings, whether it's used to keep students learning at home during the summer months or in a classroom during the school year for enrichment or intervention. It also offers mentorship opportunities for volunteers from corporations, schools, and community-based organizations.

After successful pilots in Florida, Maine, and Texas during summer 2021, the program is now available nationwide.













#### **RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS AND PARENTS**

Our online literacy resource center equips educators with a variety of engaging tools to share with learners of all ages, from early literacy through adult education. Available resources include:

- Sharing Stories Book Guides: To make story time more fun and engaging, our team curated a wonderful list of books for parents and caregivers to explore with their children. Each title has a Parent Guide that provides ideas about how to use the book—all of which are in print and available at local libraries or bookstores.
- Reading Resource Library: Our Reading Resource Library provides curated text sets of topically relevant, educational, and captivating books at a variety of reading levels—geared for adult learners and their families.

• Diversity-Focused Teaching Resources: This suite of resources includes a unit of study on the "Three Black Women of Literacy," an expertly curated diversity toolkit to support educators in anti-racist/anti-bias teaching, and a collection of diversity-focused lessons from teachers across the United States that span elementary through high school.

These resources are available, free of charge, for use by educators, parents, and caregivers in any classroom, digital learning, or home school setting.































#### TEEN TRENDSETTERS®

Our longest running reading mentorship program, Teen Trendsetters®, serves struggling elementary school readers and their families, leveraging an innovative combination of high-quality curriculum, evidence-based mentoring techniques, and parental engagement to improve literacy skills across multiple generations. In 2021, we were honored to have the program recognized with a Successful Practices Award by the Library of Congress' Literacy Awards.

The program pairs teen mentors (grades 7-12) with elementary schoolers (grades 1-3) who are reading four months or more below grade level, using targeted strategies and activities to build literacy skills and confidence.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we rapidly launched a new online version of the program to serve remote learners and their families. During the 2020-2021 academic year, the program served struggling elementary school readers, teen mentors, and caregivers in Florida, Maine, Maryland, Texas, and the District of Columbia.

Participating children—whether they meet with their mentors online or in-person—receive 16-20 age-appropriate books to help build their home libraries, and parent guides (available in

English and Spanish) provide at-home enrichment activities for children and their caregivers to enjoy together. Parent guides also provide free access to the Cell-Ed adult literacy app for parents who wish to improve their own literacy skills.

#### Our results:



 Teen Trendsetters consistently achieves remarkable literacy gains for the mentees - an average of 1 year and 2 months over the 7-month program.



• The increase of more than one grade level in reading is especially substantial given that mentees begin reading well below grade level.



 Mentees show 50% more growth than would be expected for an on-grade or above-grade reader during the same amount of time.



Teen mentors benefit as well, reporting improved self-esteem and confidence, as well as improved reading skills and grades.

As we prepare to mark the program's 20th anniversary in 2022, we look forward to expanding its reach to even more learners and families.

# **OUR SOLUTIONS:** AWARENESS AND THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

## Fostering multisector engagement in solving the literacy challenge

We believe that low literacy is one of the great solvable problems of our time. Yet, the fields of adult and family literacy are historically underfunded and under-researched. As a national thought leader, we invest in critical research and education initiatives to fill research gaps, raise awareness, break down silos, and galvanize collective action that will help move the needle on this issue.

## NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR **ADULT LITERACY**

After nearly two years of work, we have begun implementation of the first-ever National Action Plan for Adult Literacy. We were thrilled to launch this initiative alongside Dr. Jill Biden, First Lady of the United States, who provided inspiring keynote remarks at our 2021 National Summit on Adult Literacy.

Conceived and convened by the Barbara Bush Foundation, the National Action Plan was developed in collaboration with more than 100 expert stakeholders including representatives from corporations and foundations; community organizations and associations; federal, state, and local governments; academic experts; and edtech leaders.

This multisector, multiyear initiative aims to transform adult and family literacy for millions of Americans by driving inclusive, collective action to address systemic challenges over the next five years. The plan aims to:

- Attract new resources into adult education
- Lift up and leverage ongoing efforts
- Inspire new ideas and initiatives
- Facilitate cooperation among stakeholders
- Generate transformative and lasting impact



Photo Credit: Katie Dance

Our 2021 National Summit on Adult Literacy focused on putting the plan into action with the establishment of a multisectoral group that includes representation from the literacy and education fields, as well as corporate partners. Work is already underway to establish and chart the course for this group's work.











Photo Credit: Katie Dance

The Summit, held at the REACH at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., convened more than 150 adult literacy experts, education researchers, edtech innovators, philanthropic leaders, and industry partners. Emceed by Ali Velshi of MSNBC, the daylong event also included collaborative, cross-sector working sessions and a panel discussion—The Role of Employers, Funders, and Foundations in Solving the Literacy Challenge—featuring panelists from Business Roundtable, Dollar General, Humana, Intel, Microsoft, and Shell.

Both the National Action Plan for Adult Literacy and the National Summit on Adult Literacy were made possible through the generous support of our longtime partner, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation.

#### BARBARA BUSH FELLOWS PROGRAM

Our Barbara Bush Fellows program continues to fuel critical research, providing two-year grants for assistant professors, associate professors, and graduate students conducting academic work in the field of adult literacy in the United States. The fellows' efforts focus on identifying issues and opportunities to help the field increase learning, accelerate innovation, and incubate the most effective initiatives, as well as exploring the most pressing questions faced by literacy practitioners today.

Fellows currently working in the field are:

- Dr. Junghwan Kim, the Annenberg Barbara Bush Fellow at Texas A&M University -Dr. Kim's research focuses on development of a conceptual framework for adults with lower literacy levels using an integrative literature review method. While examining contemporary digital literacy and health studies for adults, the research aims to identify essential components of digital and health literacy for the population.
- Dr. Stephanie Moore, the Dollar General Barbara Bush Fellow at the University of New **Mexico** — Dr. Moore's research focuses on edtech for adult learners to identify variations in strategies, competencies, and other variables that account for efficacy and inform recommendations for practice.

#### EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Raising awareness of America's literacy challenge is a key focus of our thought leadership work. Throughout 2021, we shared our message through a variety of appearances including podcasts, keynote addresses, panel discussions, and interviews. Notable appearances included:

- Sundays with Vernā Interview with Vernā Myers, author, entrepreneur, and Vice President of Inclusion Strategy for Netflix
- Wall Street Journal "Personal Board of Directors" — Interview highlighting President and CEO British A. Robinson's work with the Foundation
- The Kara Goldin Show Podcast appearance with Kara Goldin, author and founder of Hint
- Chief Council of State School Officers' **A Nation of Readers** — Keynote address for national gathering of state K-12 leaders
- Forging Forward Philanthropy conference series hosted by Changing Our World
- FORTUNE Most Powerful Women Summit Panel discussion on equity with leaders from Airbnb, Boeing, Deloitte, and Wellesley College
- National Association of Counties Panel discussion on the economic impact of literacy with county leaders

We also continued to engage participants and viewers from sectors including libraries and education, healthcare, and entrepreneurship through our ongoing webinar series. The 2021 series included:

- · Libraries, Literacy, and Equity featuring Dr. Carla Hayden (Librarian of Congress) and Tracie Hall (American Library Association)
- Driving Impact Through Disruption featuring Kara Goldin (Hint) and Tim McBride (Raytheon Technologies)
- The Vital Importance of Health Literacy (sponsored by the Florida Association of Health Plans) featuring Ambassador Nancy Brinker (Susan G. Komen), Dr. Georges C. Benjamin (American Public Health Association), Doro Bush Koch (BB&R Wellness Consulting), and Tricia Reilly Koch (BB&R Wellness Consulting)

# CELEBRATING THE IMPACT OF LITERACY

Our 2021 National Celebration of Reading brought together bestselling authors and entertainers, literacy trailblazers, and friends and supporters to celebrate our impact and advance our vital work.

This incredible, joy-filled evening at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in

Washington, D.C., was emceed by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jonathan Capehart, and featured live and virtual appearances from President George W. Bush, Mateo Askaripour, LeVar Burton, Eva Chen, Meena Harris, Leslie Jordan, Lupita Nyong'o, Tim Shriver, and Darren Walker.











Photo Credit: Katie Dance









Photo Credit: Katie Dance

# LOOKING AHEAD

The Barbara Bush Foundation—along with the entire field—has reached an inflection point. It is truly an exciting time to be engaged with the cause of literacy.

In the year ahead, we look forward to building on our successes and capitalizing on the momentum that we have created. Our plans include:

- · Launching new programs and resources to build vital literacy and digital literacy skills for parents and caregivers
- Expanding our reading mentoring programs to serve even more learners and families

- Implementing the National Action Plan for Adult Literacy, alongside our partners in and beyond the literacy field
- Continuing to invest in innovative technology tools including mobile apps, mixed reality, and artificial intelligence to expand opportunities for learning beyond the classroom
- Educating the public about the scope and impact of our nation's literacy challenge to build awareness and engagement

We are grateful for your ongoing support, which makes all of this life changing work possible. Together, we have the opportunity to fulfill Barbara Bush's vision of an America in which everyone has an equal chance to succeed.

# FINANCIAL IMPACT

Dear Friends,

The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy maintains a strong and healthy financial position.

We are sincerely grateful for the generosity of our many supporters and partners who enable our work to build a stronger, more equitable America through literacy. In 2021, supporters and partners contributed nearly \$5 million to advance our mission.

While we certainly felt the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that those we serve felt it more deeply. Thankfully, we were able to draw from our reserves to meet the surging needs of Americans struggling with literacy. We developed new programs and resources and invested in solutions that can impact millions of Americans. Our 2021 expenditures totaled \$6,824,865.

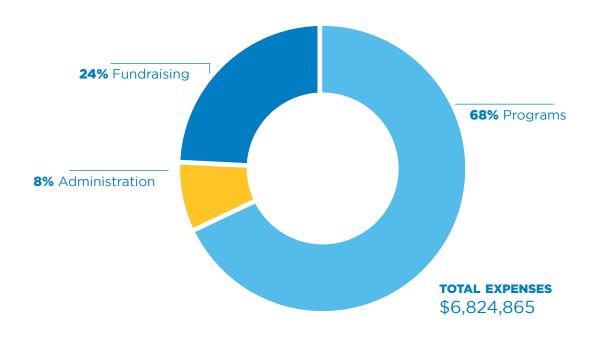
Together with my colleagues on the Board of Directors, I am proud of the Barbara Bush Foundation's continued commitment to deliver impact and drive equity through literacy. We are very grateful for our partners and donors for making this possible. Thank you for your continued support.

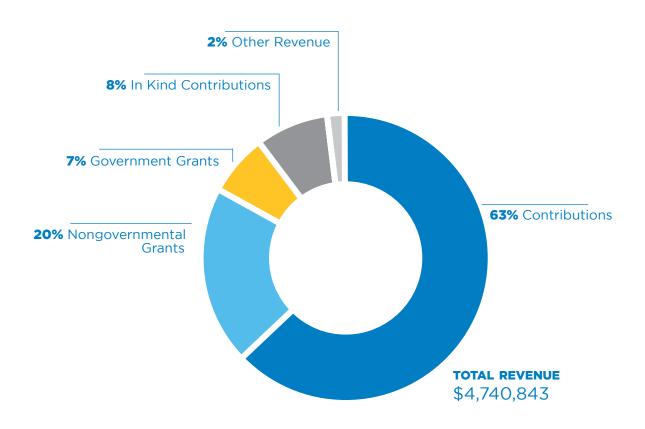
Sincerely,

LaMar Bunts

Chief Revenue Officer, Bitwise Industries Treasurer, Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy

# 2021 FINANCIALS





## OUR SUPPORTERS

# We are grateful to the corporations, foundations, and individuals whose financial support helped us improve lives through literacy in 2021.

- Paul Abrams
- M. L. Agnew, Jr.
- Joseph Agris, M.D.
- Jason Alba
- Nicholas Albano
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- Margaret A. Keck
- Ginna and Richard Kelly, Jr.
- The Larry and Mary Kent Charitable Fund
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- King Philanthropies
- Adam King
- Harriet Kliegman
- Doro Bush Koch and Robert P. Koch
- Liz Kohler
- Natalie and Herb Kohler
- Sue and Peter G. Kopperman
- Christine Kostek
- Bette and Timothy Krenzke
- Roberta Kristinik
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- Jean Legan
- Joanne R. Leoni
- Patrick A. Leoni
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- Sylvia and Brian Luther
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- Thomas J. McVey
- David Merwin
- Janet Messer
- Carol J. Metcalf
- · Jelena Mijanovic
- · Charlotte E. Miller
- Ellen and DeWolfe Miller
- Judi Miller
- · Colleen Miller-Owen
- Motoyuki Minakami
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# ABOUT THE BARBARA BUSH FOUNDATION

The Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy has been the nation's leading advocate for family literacy for more than three decades. Since our establishment in 1989 by first lady Barbara Bush, we have supported evidence-based family literacy programs in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Today, we are a national public charity based in Washington, D.C., dedicated to building a stronger, more equitable America in which everyone can read, write, and comprehend in order to navigate the world with dignity.

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