



Opening of The Believe Projects® Literacy Lab April 27, 2023

University City, MO – The Barbara C. Jordan Elementary School, in The School District of University City will become the newest home to a Believe Projects literacy lab. The Believe Projects® is an initiative of the St. Louis Black Authors of Children's Literature (STLBACL) organization, and its literacy labs are designed to improve reading proficiency in elementary students, K – third grade, by providing access to 1,000 books reflecting the images and experiences of the young readers. **A ribbon cutting will take place Thursday, April 27, 2023, at Barbara C. Jordan Elementary School, 1500 82nd Street, 63132.** Advanced registration required for participation in this event. Please use the Eventbrite link to register to attend. There is limited space, so do not delay; register today!

Eventbrite Link:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/believe-9-opens-at-barbara-c-jordan-in-university-city-school-district-tickets-615120681517>

According to the US Department of Education, students who are not strong readers in third grade are four times more likely to drop out of school. The Believe Projects® literacy labs keep students engaged and connected to the worlds they read about. We are particularly excited to see their reaction to the beautiful wall mural and paintings produced by local artists, books by local and national authors, and exposure to live theater all located in a colorful, culturally responsive homestyle setting.

Funding from Build-A-Bear Foundation made the project possible. "Literacy is a critical part of a child's wellbeing, imagination, and success," said Chris Hurt, Chief Operations & Experience Officer, and Build-A-Bear Foundation President. "We're on a mission to inspire creativity by making written stories more accessible for kids and educators. It's a true honor to partner with experts at The Believe Projects® to bring this inclusive reading space to students in our hometown of St. Louis."

"We are excited and grateful to welcome a second literacy lab in The School District of University City thanks to the outstanding vision of The Believe Projects® and its supporters, including Build-A-Bear Foundation. The literacy labs are critical components of our district's commitment to racial equity and are also powerful learning tools for our students. It is liberating and healthy for our students to read about and enjoy illustrations of main characters and literary heroes that reflect themselves," said Dr. Sharonica Hardin-Bartley, superintendent of The School District of University City.

"Our goal is simple," says Julius B. Anthony, President, St. Louis Black Authors of Children's Literature and The Believe Projects®, "We want to encourage children to fall in love with literacy through experiences they feel a connection with, that builds confidence, and gives them joy! It is to ensure all children become successful readers by the end of third grade."

Community partners supporting The Believe 9 literacy lab include Nine PBS, The Noble Neighbor, Ready Readers, Metro Theater Company, and the Whitaker Foundation.