

San Lin, Former ENERGY and FLY Student

Born in Thailand, San Lin came to the United States with his family in 2008 when he was six years old. His parents were fluent in Burmese and Karen and were learning English, but they were not able to assist him with his education. When San Lin was starting fifth grade, his parents signed him up for WEDI's ENERGY program in hopes that it would help with his English fluency.

It wasn't easy at first. His older sister LayMya Aye remembers that prior to entering ENERGY, he would hide his homework because he didn't want to do it. He eventually moved up to FLY, WEDI's middle school program, and things started getting better: "Because he had attended ENERGY, he could stay on task," shares LayMya Aye. "He also had more people to help him to go over what he didn't understand, rather than just myself, so he had more support." He was also exposed to new literary genres and discovered his love of mystery books.

When San Lin entered FLY, he was reading at a second-grade level. With the help of FLY's staff and volunteers, he was reading at a fourth-grade level when he graduated from the program. His family was amazed by his progress. "Because the students were learning specific things, grammar one day and fluency another, his grammar is probably better than mine," exclaims LayMya Aye. "It gave him somewhere to go where everyone else was learning at the same pace and the students were going through the journey together." This confidence also helped San Lin come out of his shell and begin to make friends like Abubakar, with whom he bonded over a shared love of anime.

San Lin is now a freshman at Hutchinson Technical High School where he is focusing on coding, drafting, and drawing. He plans to study game design in college. "Because of the help San Lin received in the ENERGY and FLY programs," says LayMya Aye, "his future looks very bright."

VISION

All residents of Western New York can succeed and thrive in a culturally inclusive community.

MISSION

WEDI strengthens communities through a continuum of educational and financial resources, removing systemic barriers to economic equity for all Western New Yorkers.