

Budget Testimony Before The New York State Legislative Fiscal and Education Committees



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The New Education Bargain with Students and Parents

An equal and high-quality education is every child's civil right; and, as educators we must deliver on this essential democratic principle. The New Education Bargain is simple: The District will guarantee pathways to opportunity that will lead to achievement and success in exchange for hard work, commitment, and collaboration of our students and parents.



IT IS THE PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO:

- Place a high premium on education
- Make sure your child goes to school and to all classes every day
- Make sure your child does his in-school work to the best of his ability and puts in additional study time (up to two hours each day) outside of school hours
- Make sure you and your child show respect for teachers and for staff

**Rigorous
Early Elementary
Education**

**Strong
Community
Schools**

**New
Innovative
High Schools**

**Extended
Learning Excellence
for All Our
Students**

**Services for
Our Neediest
Children and
Families**

**New
Relationship with
Our Teachers**

BUFFALO CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

2017 STATE OF THE DISTRICT

IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS OVER THE PAST YEAR

- Parent Groups
- Teachers/Principals
- Mayor's Office
- Common Council
- Strategic Partners
- Business Community
- Foundations
- Higher Education
- Faith-based Leaders
- HealthCare Organizations
- Our New Americans Community
- Law Enforcement and the Judiciary Community
- State of Education Department/Commissioner
- WNY Legislators

SUMMARY OF MAJOR NEW EDUCATION BARGAIN (NEB) ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

- Kindergarten and first grade class sizes reduced to 18-20 in our neediest schools
- Literacy Coaches in every elementary school
- 13 Community Schools launched district-wide in every Promise Zone
- Collegiate, corporate and healthcare partners city-wide
- 6 NEW Career and Technical Education Certifications
- High School curriculum designed to align on-time student graduation with emerging industries
- Enriched after-school programs in every building
- Saturday academies for students and parents at Community Schools
- Mental health clinics in 52 of 56 schools
- Trauma-informed care training for teachers, psychologists and social workers
- CLRT training for principals, assistant principals, and teachers
- 4 Parent centers launched to support families (located at Bennett, East, Lafayette and South Park High Schools)
- National grant awards to improve student wellness
- A fair, competitive contract for teachers, focused on greater learning opportunities for students
- Family Support Specialists/Social Services in every school
- Legal clinics in Community Schools, through Adult Education and at Central Registration
- Mentoring for seniors as they transition to college

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION AND UPGRADES

- All PreK and Kindergarten classrooms will have center-based iPads for literacy and numeracy enrichment.
- All elementary schools have access to a library of over twelve thousand high quality digital books personalized for each student by interest and reading level. (myON)
- Teachers in K-12 have access to a rich library of over seven thousand online cognitively challenging, cross-curricular, standards-aligned, real-world content lesson plans and materials. (NextLesson)
- All teachers are receiving comprehensive training supporting the integration of mobile technologies in the classroom.
- District is launching a "Best Practices" webpage to showcase and share school and district level strategies and processes that are yielding extraordinary results.
- BPS Virtual web-based learning program launched designed to help overaged, under credited fourth year high school students meet graduation requirements in non-traditional, flexible, earn as you go setting.

BUFFALO CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT – 2017 STATE OF THE DISTRICT

The Buffalo City School District is demonstrating a level of public confidence, access, quality, and opportunity for students unseen in a generation. Our Board of Education, together with parents, students, teachers, strategic partners, and our entire District community are working to accelerate gains in graduation rates and to markedly improve the skills students need for future success.

This school year, I made a bargain with Buffalo. *The New Education Bargain with Students and Parents* begins with this promise:

“The District will guarantee pathways to opportunity that will lead to achievement and success in exchange for hard work, commitment, and collaboration of students and parents.”

Specifically, the *New Education Bargain* strengthens elementary education, launches rigorous, innovative new high schools and community schools, supports our neediest students and families, provides extended learning in every school, and supports teachers with the tools and conditions they need to be effective. The community is united with us in our belief that the *New Education Bargain* is essential to producing citizens that are college and career-ready and able to contribute to Buffalo’s renaissance.

School districts are measured by results. Recent trends in our outcomes are encouraging but are just the beginning. Our parents and community members expect much more and we are committed to delivering results that exceed the expectations of our constituents—students, parents, and taxpayers. Graduation rates have climbed from 57% to 63% in just the last two years; an initial group of 25 Receivership Schools decreased to 15 as a result of increased school-wide performance; 10 of 15 remaining Receivership Schools met Demonstrable Improvement Index Targets in 2016, their first year in Receivership, while four more Receivership Schools were within the appeal range; and, since the 2015-2016 school year, 14 Priority and Focus schools have sufficiently increased student achievement levels to move into a higher performing state accountability level.

While encouraged by this impressive start in measurable results, we recognize there is much more to be accomplished. Over the next two years, we expect (4 year) graduation rates to climb to 70%; student attendance, course rigor, teacher effectiveness, and test results to increase significantly; all business operations to substantially increase their efficiency; all Receivership Schools to meet their improvement targets; and, all District Schools to move their accountability levels to either Focus (yellow) or Good Standing (green).

To help us advance these results, we are also collaborating with regional businesses, higher education institutions, civic organizations, health care partners, and all levels of government to spur continued gains in student achievement. Our partnership with Say Yes Buffalo is a model for the country. It represents the faith Buffalo residents have in our students by sending them to college, tuition free, with their generous investment. Very few school communities in America are the benefactors of such extraordinary partnerships. Say Yes is also providing essential support to several of the major elements of the *New Education Bargain*.

Meanwhile, as Buffalo’s parents express greater confidence in their school district, they have also marshaled their voices to articulate specific expectations for high quality education. These include smaller class sizes, up-to-date textbooks and materials, access to enriched curriculum via technology, strong after-school programs, expanded arts and vocational opportunities, and improved services for new Americans learning English for the first time.

BUFFALO CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT – 2017 STATE OF THE DISTRICT

The success of the Buffalo City School District is an essential condition for the region's long-term economic growth. We know that a top-flight education system will produce a safer, more prosperous, and desirable community for all to live in – young and old alike. My team and I are deeply committed to this critical responsibility. We respectfully ask for Buffalo's continued participation and support to move our exciting progress to even greater levels. We must not compromise student access to high quality academic institutions, strategic interventions for struggling students, advanced coursework, expanded arts and music instruction, comprehensive health and wellness programs, upgraded athletics programs, and the most qualified teachers and principals in our schoolhouses.

Governor Cuomo, in his recent State of the State address, set the bar high for Buffalo. He articulated support for a Buffalo Billions phase II (BB2²). His economic development initiatives for Western New York are rooted in a deep belief in what we can accomplish together. Those expectations are shared by the members of our Western New York Legislative Delegation, by our Mayor, by our business and higher education community, and by our students and parents who rely on public education to provide a strong foundation for accessing our competitive new economy.

The *New Education Bargain* complements those aspirations. First, by aligning our new high schools and programs—7 this year—with emerging industries that reflect Buffalo's new job market. Then, and perhaps most significant, by creating Community Schools—13 of them with longer hours, exciting extended learning programs, and Parent Centers in every quadrant of our city - as the epicenter for neighborhood renewal. And this is just the beginning.

Buffalo is united in recognizing that our children have extraordinary needs, and providing all of them with an equal and high quality education is every child's civil right. As educators, we must deliver on this essential democratic principle. We must meet parental and community expectations. We must dedicate ourselves to investing in all of the educational assets our students and families richly deserve. And, the Governor, the Mayor, and all of us must recognize that ameliorating the long-term effects of generational poverty and segregation by providing a high access, high quality education is an investment well worth making. There are no easy fixes. There are no shortcuts. This is extraordinarily difficult work. We can and must stay the course!

To conclude, we must keep the Bargain we have made with Buffalo. When we do, we will turn the high quality public education every taxpayer expects into reality. Thank you for supporting the work underway. Thank you for believing in our contribution to Buffalo's revival. And thank you for aspiring to achieve a world-class Buffalo City School District on behalf of all children in our remarkable City.



BUFFALO CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT – 2017/18 LEGISLATIVE REQUEST

- 1. Foundation Aid Increase** – The District’s New Education Bargain has shown positive results through a clear investment of resources directly to students, including reduced class size teachers in Kindergarten through first grade, literacy coaches in every elementary school and 13 community schools launched during 2016/17. The District requests a \$45 million increase in Foundation Aid above the Governor’s proposed budget. This total Foundation Aid investment amounting to approximately \$65 million will help put the District towards a sustainable trajectory of balanced budgets, while providing increased investment in the classroom to continue to improve student achievement outcomes.
- 2. Charter Tuition** - The Governor’s proposed unfreezing of charter school tuition is projected to increase the District’s charter tuition expense by approximately \$4.5 million in 2017/18 (and more than \$20.0 million over the course of our four year financial plan) when compared to the tuition rates in effect for 2016/17. **With tuition frozen since 2010, the charter schools in Buffalo have been able to collectively increase net assets (fund balance) by \$27.7 million, to nearly \$70.0 million as of June 2016. This is the equivalent of 56% of their total expenditures for the 2015/16 year. (See chart on page 6).** The District asks that the charter tuition be frozen, with any supplemental tuition increases funded by the State.
- 3. Charter Transitional Aid** – The District has a nearly \$100 million gap between transitional aid and charter school payments. The District first sponsored or converted two charter schools years before transitional aid was created to help offset the costs of tuition; yet over time, the tuition costs have continued to grow. These schools receive the same tuition per pupil as all other charter schools, yet their enrollments do not count toward charter transitional aid. Allowing these students to count in the transitional aid formula would provide additional funding of \$9.3 million in 2017-18 and \$20.2 million over a three year period.
- 4. Health Services Grant** - With the exception of the \$1.2 million in Bullet aid in 2015/16 and 2016/17, there have been no increases in the health services grant since 2006/07. However, the health related needs of our student population continues to grow. The District requests a permanent increase in the \$5.3 million health services grant (or a bullet aid allocation) of \$2.0 million to help offset the rising costs of providing nursing and health services to our students, as shown in the following table:

Year	Costs of Services
2014/15	\$6.1 million
2015/16	\$6.9 million
2016/17	\$7.3 million (projected)
2017/18	\$8.3 million (projected)

- 5. Universal Pre-K Grant** – The District requests an increase in the per pupil funding of the newly consolidated Universal Pre-K and Priority Pre-K programs. The categorical UPK grant and per pupil funding has been flat for numerous years, despite increases in salaries and benefits and the programmatic needs of the students to increase their reading levels. The District has absorbed \$5 million of the costs of the program in the Title I grant that could be redirected to other educational priorities if the combined UPK and PPK grant was self-supporting.

Charter School Payments, Accumulated Net Assets of Charter Schools, Charter Transitional Aid and Charter Enrollment

