


# Buffalo City School District Budget Testimony Before The New York State Legislative Fiscal and Education Committees




Presented January 31, 2018 by:  
Dr. Kriner Cash, Superintendent of Schools  
Buffalo City School District



## 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’S NEW EDUCATION BARGAIN: A CITY OF CHOICE, A SCHOOL SYSTEM OF EXCELLENCE”**

The Buffalo City School District (BCSD) is the second largest, and most culturally and linguistically diverse school district in New York State. Once seen as a failing district, Buffalo Public Schools is in full turnaround mode. The District has made a deal that requires the collaboration of parents, children, and the City of Buffalo called, “The New Education Bargain with Students and Parents (NEB).” Through strategic innovation within the NEB, graduation rates are rising, student growth and achievement scores are rising, and the district is providing greater programmatic access, quality, and opportunity for all students than ever before.



# 2018 STATE OF THE DISTRICT

## **STRONG RELATIONSHIPS**

- Parent Groups
- Teachers/Principals
- Mayor's Office
- Common Council
- Strategic Partners
- Business Community
- Local and National Philanthropic Foundations
- Higher Education
- Faith-based Leaders
- Healthcare Organizations
- Our New Americans Community
- Law Enforcement and the Judiciary Community
- State Education Department/Commissioner
- WNY Legislative Delegation

## **MAJOR NEW EDUCATION BARGAIN ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE**

- Kindergarten through second grade class sizes reduced to 18-20 in our neediest schools;
- 15 Community Schools launched district-wide and strategically located in 4 Promise Zones throughout the City;
- 10 NEW Innovative High Schools/Programs launched;
- 42 Collegiate, corporate and healthcare partners engaged city-wide;
- 7 NEW Career and Technical Education Certifications established;
- High School curriculum designed to align on-time student graduation with emerging industries;
- Enriched after-school programs in every building 5 days a week;
- Saturday academies for all families at all Community Schools;
- Mental health clinics in 52 of 56 schools;
- Trauma-informed care training for all teachers, psychologists and social workers;
- Restorative Practices training for all principals, teachers, parents, and students;
- Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Training (CLRT) for administrators and teachers;
- 4 Comprehensive, full service Parent Centers in each quadrant of Buffalo to support families;
- Creation of a new Parent Congress, providing opportunities for all parent groups to have optimum representation in district level decision-making;
- A fair, competitive contract for teachers and administrators, focused on greater learning opportunities for students;
- Strengthened teacher recruitment practices in high-needs areas that included hiring of bilingual teachers from Puerto Rico, diverse teachers of color from Medgar Evers College in New York City, and Teach for America;
- Say Yes Family Support Specialists/Social Services in every school;
- Say Yes Legal clinics in Community Schools, Adult Education Center, and at Central Registration;
- Mentoring for BPS students and rising seniors transitioning to college;
- Laser focus on quality instruction
- 25 minutes of instructional time added to school day.

## TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION AND UPGRADES

- PreK through Grade 2 classrooms have center-based iPads for literacy and numeracy enrichment;
- Delivery of 12,000 tablets for 1:1 computing in grades 3-12 completed this year;
- Virtual reality labs through zSpace in 16 schools this year;
- Access to over 12,000 high quality digital books personalized for each student by interest and reading level (myON);
- Teacher access to a rich library of over 7,000 online, cognitively challenging, cross-curricular, standards-aligned, real-world content lesson plans and materials (NextLesson);
- Designed and implemented school-based score cards to track progress of each school in to good standing;
- Comprehensive teacher training in mobile technologies for the classroom;
- Launch of a “Best Practices” webpage to showcase and share school and district-level strategies that are yielding extraordinary results;
- BPS Virtual web-based learning program launched to help over-aged, under credited fourth-year high school students meet graduation requirements in non-traditional, flexible, earn-as-you-go settings;
- Launch of Coding Clubs and youth technology mentors;
- 82 Metric Data Dashboard to measure performance of the NEB.



In 2017, the Buffalo City School District put the *New Education Bargain* fully into action. Now, we are measuring the work across our schools and inside our classrooms. The results are promising.

The Bargain begins with this basic assurance:

*“An equal and high-quality education is every child’s civil right. As educators, we must deliver on this essential democratic principle.”*

Our strategy remains unchanged. We will, however, ramp up each of the six (6) components of the *New Education Bargain* with intensive focus, greater acceleration, and noticeable urgency. We will continue to strengthen elementary education, launch rigorous, innovative new high schools and community schools, support our neediest students and families, provide extended learning in every school, and support teachers with the tools and conditions they need to improve student learning. *Our New Education Bargain* is essential to producing citizens that are college and career-ready and able to contribute to Buffalo’s nationally-recognized renaissance.

In the end, School districts are judged by their results. Recent outcomes are encouraging but we must continue this work to fully transform our District. Parents and taxpayers expect more. We expect more. And we must work hard together to deliver results that far exceed the expectations of our constituents—students, parents, and taxpayers alike. Graduation rates climbed to 64% in 2017 after years of averaging around 50%; an initial group of 25 Receivership Schools decreased to 15 as a result of increased school-wide performance; 14 of 15 remaining Receivership Schools met Demonstrable Improvement Index Targets in 2017; and, since the 2015-2016 school year, 21 Priority and Focus schools have sufficiently increased student achievement levels to move into a higher performing state accountability level. Most significantly in 2017, our District increased the number of schools recognized by the New York State Education Department as being in Good Standing from 14 two years ago to a high of 26 today—the highest number in at least a decade.

In the last 10 months, through initiatives that are the hallmarks of the *New Education Bargain*, we have launched ten (10) new innovative high schools and programs. We also established four (4) credit recovery centers in each quadrant of the City because many students need new pathways to graduation in non-traditional settings. Two (2) more Community Schools were added last fall bringing our total to 15 of these enriched neighborhood-building schools established throughout Buffalo. Our Community Schools initiative is the most successful in New York State and recognized throughout the United States as a model for District and neighborhood transformation. Class-size reduction that began with Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten in 2016 was expanded through Grade 2 and will impact Grade 3 next fall. And, the professional agreement with our teachers and principals was settled after 16 years, establishing greater instructional time for students, a laser focus on high instructional quality, and the competitive compensation our teachers and principals deserve.

While encouraged by this impressive start in measurable results, we recognize there is much more to be accomplished in Buffalo's academic outcomes. By 2019, we must reach a 70% four-year graduation rate. And we will not rest until every student has the opportunity to graduate on time with a college or career-ready diploma. We will increase the number of Schools in Good-Standing toward our ambitious objective of a *District in Good Standing*. All Receivership Schools will meet their improvement targets. Our focus is on the whole child and our services and support for our neediest children and families will continue to be exemplary. Our business operations will be second to none in public education statewide. These are ambitious benchmarks—but Buffalo's children deserve no less.

To implement our bold agenda and attain even greater results, we will continue our unprecedented high level of recognized collaboration and engagement with regional businesses, higher education institutions, civic and philanthropic organizations, churches, health care partners, and all levels of government. As an example, we have recently partnered with ADPRO Sports and Pegula Sports and Entertainment to upgrade our vast athletic facilities throughout the District while also setting new and higher academic benchmarks for our student athletes. Together, we are joining with the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation to support this new standard in sports and academics for our students in Buffalo. We have sought out the best partnerships available to produce the best outcomes—and we are just beginning.

We are grateful to George Weiss of Say Yes National for his continued commitment to Buffalo. Say Yes Buffalo is our primary strategic partner aligned to the New Education Bargain. With top-flight staff, under the effective leadership of David Rust, Mary Anne Schmitt-Carey and Gene Chasin, the team is delivering a model of support for students and families unmatched in the United States. While the college tuition scholarship provided by Say Yes Buffalo continues to represent the faith Buffalo residents and national donors have in our students, this dynamic organization's broad and direct strategic contribution to the New Education Bargain is unparalleled.

Buffalo's parents have demonstrated impressive levels of engagement and leadership in our District. In 2017, under the leadership and guidance of our parent organizations, we launched four (4) new Parent Centers located in each quadrant of our City. The Centers are led and managed by parents with the engagement of Say Yes Buffalo as places for parents to learn, grow, and support each other. Our parent groups and leaders also responded to the spirit of collaboration in the New Education Bargain by combining their organizations to form the new Parent Congress of the Buffalo Public Schools. This new infrastructure is a unified governing body dedicated to the Bargain and advancing important legislative and funding equity for our District.

Governor Andrew Cuomo, in his recent State of the State address, committed to greater equity in funding for districts with high levels of families in poverty. We applaud the Governor for his continued support for education in Buffalo and are grateful for his strong leadership. Our Western New York Legislative Delegation, led by our distinguished leaders in the Assembly and Senate, has a record second to none in advocacy for our District. We are working closely with the Governor's Office and our esteemed legislators to secure the funding Buffalo's children need for the best-in-class education they deserve.

In 2017, Mayor Byron Brown again demonstrated his commitment to public education by increasing the City's aid allocation to schools. We took the further step this past year of forming a Common Agenda Team made of cabinet members from each City and district executive office, yielding an unprecedented focus on collaboration and projects that benefit all of Buffalo's families. Together with Common Council President

Darius Pridgen and his distinguished colleagues on the Council, we will continue to reflect the unity, collaborative hard work, and results all of our constituents expect.

Certainly, 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 shortcuts. We can and must stay the course! We will keep our end of the Bargain we have made through a handshake with the students and parents of Buffalo. When we do, we will turn the high quality public education every Buffalo resident expects into long lasting reality.

In short, in 2018-19, the Buffalo City School District requests a 3.8%, or \$19.4 million, increase in Foundation Aid over 2017-18 (or about \$11.5 million more than the Governor's proposed 2018-19 budget) in order to meet revised revenue targets of its long-term fiscal plan and to continue effectively implementing the New Education Bargain.

Thank you for embracing the mindset of excellence for all of Buffalo's children. Thank you for believing in us as we believe in you to support this work. And thank you for joining us in creating the best-in-class Buffalo City School District every child in our remarkable City so richly deserves.

Dr. Kriner Cash,



Superintendent of Schools  
Buffalo City School District

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**BUFFALO CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**2018-19 LEGISLATIVE REQUEST**

1. **Support for the Commissioner and Board of Regents proposals** - We support the Commissioner and Board of Regents proposed \$1.6 billion total increase in State Aid to Schools, including a \$1.25 billion increase in Foundation Aid for 2018-19 to continue its full phase-in and to support English Language Learners. In our large urban districts, particularly in regard to Foundation Aid, we need to continue the phase-in and ensure it is a predictable and equitable funding source going forward.

The Commissioner and Board of Regents also proposed \$314 million in statutory reimbursement-based aid increases; \$25 million for CTE program expansion; and \$20 million for UPK program expansion. The District utilizes approximately \$4 million in other funding sources outside of Pre-K grants to provide Pre-K programming, while our New Innovative High Schools are expanding CTE programming.

In addition, we support full funding for the following legislative proposals of the Commissioner and the Board of Regents:

- Access to High-Quality Early Education and Early Care Programs
- Promotion of Positive School Climate and Bullying Prevention
- Expanding Access to Quality High-Level Coursework
- Providing High-Quality Professional Learning
- Enhancing Supports & Services for Postsecondary Success of Students with Disabilities
- Highly Qualified Diverse Teaching Workforce
- Addressing the Shortage of Bilingual Education Teachers & English to Speakers of other Languages Teachers
- Enhancing Teacher Effectiveness

2. **Foundation Aid Request** – In 2018-19, the Buffalo City School District requests a 3.8%, or \$19.4 million, increase in Foundation Aid over 2017-18 (or about \$11.5 million more than the Governor’s proposed 2018-19 budget) in order to meet revised revenue targets of its long-term fiscal plan and to continue effectively implementing the New Education Bargain.

The District’s implementation of the New Education Bargain, its transformational plan, continues to be challenged by the growth in charter school tuition payments. For example, in the 2017-18 Budget, more than half of the District’s overall State Aid increases are projected to go towards increased charter school tuition for the 22% of Buffalo pupils attending charter schools, while the remaining 78% of Buffalo pupils in District schools receive less than half of the District’s overall State Aid increases.



3. **Health Services Grant** - With the exception of the \$1.2 million in Bullet aid received annually from 2015-16 to 2017-18, there have been no increases in the health services grant since 2006-07. However, the health related needs of students in Buffalo continues to grow. The District requests a permanent increase in the \$5.3 million health services grant (or a bullet aid allocation) of \$3.3 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
2017-18	\$8.1 million (projected)
2018-19	\$8.6 million (projected)

4. **Charter School Supplemental and Transitional Aid** – The expansion of charter schools continue to negatively impact the District’s budget, where funding and services provided by the District to charter schools annually exceed the funding provided by the State to the District for those same students.

With respect to Charter School Supplemental Aid, the District requests that this aid is remitted to districts in the same fiscal year the supplemental tuition is paid to charter schools. Given the expansion in charter pupils and charter tuition rates, the District is otherwise using a majority of its 2017-18 Foundation Aid growth to subsidize supplemental tuition paid to charter schools until the Charter School Supplemental Aid is received in the following year.

With respect to Charter School Transitional Aid, the District requests that all charter schools in Buffalo be included in this formula. The District first sponsored or converted two charter schools several years before Charter School Transitional Aid was created to help offset the cost of charter school tuition. 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 to the District of approximately \$22 million over a three-year period.