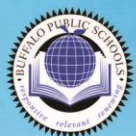


# Buffalo City School District Budget Testimony Before The New York State Legislative Fiscal and Education Committees



Presented February 6, 2019  
Dr. Kriner Cash, Superintendent of Schools  
Buffalo City School District



## The 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 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

Innovative  
High Schools

Extended  
Learning Excellence  
for All Our  
Students

Services for  
Our Neediest  
Children and  
Families

New  
Relationship  
with Our  
Teachers

## **2019 STATE OF THE DISTRICT**

***“Going Deeper, Getting Better, Breaking Through!”***

### **THE 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 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.*

### **DEEPER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

- Parent Groups and Leaders
- Teachers/Principals
- Mayor’s Office
- Common Council
- Business Community
- Local and National Foundations
- Community Based Organizations
- Higher Education
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Healthcare Organizations
- Our New Americans Community
- Law Enforcement and the Judiciary Community
- State Education Department/Commissioner
- WNY Legislators
- Electronic and Print Media

### **MAJOR EDUCATION BARGAIN ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

- Schools in Good Standing have more than doubled since 2016 from 15 to 37 schools;
- Grades 3-8 proficiency rates in ELA and Math rose to 23% and 21% representing some of the strongest year over year gains among city school districts statewide;
- Receivership schools have been cut from 25 to 3 since 2016;
- Graduation rates climbed to 65% (4 year), 68% (5/6 year) in 2018 with strongest gains made among students with special needs and English Language Learners.
- Kindergarten through third grade class sizes reduced to 18-22 in our neediest schools;
- Powerful, new enrichment experiences for every child with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo History Museum, and other local cultural institutions;
- Gifted & Talented teaching strategies now accessible, implemented, and supported by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation for all PK-4 students over the next 3 years;
- 21 Community Schools launched district-wide in every Promise Zone and supported by over 50 collegiate, corporate and healthcare partners;

- 10 NEW High Schools/Programs now open to students including a newly constructed Culinary & Hospitality Management High School in the heart of downtown Buffalo.
- 7 NEW Career and Technical Education Certifications now open to students;
- Secondary curriculum designed to align on-time student graduation with emerging WNY industries;
- Virtual Advanced Placement (AP) courses phasing-in to all high schools;
- Credit-recovery centers (5) launched to help over-aged, under-credited students in non-traditional, flexible settings with 24/7 access to online credit recovery coursework;
- Enriched after-school programs in every building;
- Saturday academies for students and parents at 21 Community Schools;
- Mental health clinics in ALL 56 schools and Adult Education Center;
- Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) training for teachers, psychologists, social workers and community partners working with BPS students;
- Restorative Practice (RP) training for principals, teachers, parents, students and community partners working with BPS students;
- Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching (CLRT) training for principals, assistant principals, and teachers;
- Comprehensive disproportionality training (TAC-D) across the City;
- Over 100 free parent workshops offered within 4 strategically placed Parent Centers;
- Over 160 Community Based Organizations integrated in our schools to support children and families;
- Creation of a Parent Congress that provides opportunities for all parent groups to have representation in district level decision-making;
- A fair, competitive contract for teachers, focused on greater learning opportunities for students;
- Strengthened teacher recruitment practices in high-needs areas that included hiring of bilingual teachers from Puerto Rico;
- Family Support Specialists/Social Services in every school deployed and managed by Say Yes Buffalo;
- Legal clinics in Community Schools and Adult Education Center managed by Say Yes Buffalo;
- Revamped Central Registration Welcome Center;
- Mentoring for BPS students including rising seniors transitioning to college;

## **TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION AND UPGRADES**

- Distribution of 1:1 computing devices to over 29,000 students in grades 3-12;
- All Pre-K through Grade 2 classrooms have center-based iPads for literacy and numeracy enrichment;
- Virtual reality labs through zSpace 3D technology established in over 50 schools, including the introduction of new zSpace laptops;
- Increased investment in digital resources, providing both students and staff with access to a rich library of digital books (myOn), lesson material (NextLesson), instructional software (Lexia, Prodigy) collaborative tools (Office365, Google Docs) and a Learning Management System which serves as our digital classroom environment (Schoology);
- Approximately 1000 middle school students are engaged in the Global Scholars Program, working directly with students from around the world to understand and propose solutions to important global issues;
- Students and families are engaged in STEAM engineering and design activities along with App development as part of our After School Programs, Community School Saturday Academies, and Our Story and My Brother's Keeper programs;

- District use of Workplace by Facebook is engaging staff in sharing “Best Practices” on a daily basis at both the school and district level;
- BPS AP Course offerings expanded dramatically with the addition of “Learning Live” courses that use videoconference technology to allow students to participate in real-time classes from remote locations;
- Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS) partnership to boost Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate course enrollment across district high schools.



### ***“Going Deeper—Getting Better—Breaking Through”***

As our theme for 2018-2019, these powerful phrases embody Buffalo’s rise and our District’s notable improvement in student achievement. Our most recent results for children have bolstered a new confidence in public education among parents and community members unseen in generations. Our strategic transformation plan, *The Education Bargain with Students and Parents* exemplifies for the nation the fundamental and required benchmarks for providing the equal and high quality education every child deserves and every parent expects.

Our Board of Education, along with parents, students, teachers, staff and our District-wide strategic partners are working together to deliver gains in graduation rates, academic proficiency, and in moving schools to an improved status on state accountability lists. Although there is much more to accomplish, we have built the required foundation for permanent reform. Once seen as a broken and ineffective school system, the Buffalo City School District has turned around. We are fast becoming a national proof-point and reference for improved public education:

- 1) Schools in Good Standing have nearly tripled since 2016 from 14 to 37 schools;
- 2) Receivership schools have been cut from 25 to 3 since 2016;
- 3) Grades 3-8 proficiency rates in ELA and Math rose to 23% and 21% representing some of the strongest year over year gains among city school districts statewide;
- 4) Graduation rates climbed to 65% (4 year), 68% (5/6 year) in 2018 with some of the strongest gains statewide made among students with special needs and English Language Learners.

With a persistent, district-wide focus on instruction, we have:

- 1) Implemented new, rigorous, research-based curriculum and materials for all content areas, aligned to state standards and assessments;
- 2) Established a mindset for instruction based on rigor, research-based best practices, and high expectations for all students;
- 3) Selected the most efficient, research-based, and culturally unbiased assessment tools to monitor instruction;
- 4) Launched a more consistent, equitable, and effective grading system for all learners district-wide;
- 5) Provided access to world-class technology tools in all our schools and classrooms;

- 6) Introduced extended learning time in all schools that is engaging, enriching, and motivating our students to achieve;
- 7) Established expectations for all teachers to become culturally and linguistically responsive instructors who set high expectations for all children;
- 8) Aligned all professional development opportunities for staff with four (4) instructional priorities, including grade-appropriate assignments, strong daily instruction, deep engagement with rigorous content, and high expectations for every student.

As a nationwide model for large district operations, we have:

- 1) Reformed our teacher recruitment effort to attract and retain the most competitive candidates through a selective hiring process;
- 2) Restructured school leadership teams to emphasize personalized learning, student support, and instructional collaboration;
- 3) Launched transformational leadership training for aspiring and current administrators with clear goals, accountability, flexibility, and guidance to achieve results;
- 4) Established a central office team that serves as a strategic partner to schools; leveraging data for school use, sharing best practices across the District, and shifting the emphasis to supporting local school team effectiveness;
- 5) Reformed our school based budgeting practices to ensure greater equity in providing resources for children who need the most support;
- 6) Received an exceptional, unqualified audit opinion on our financial statements for a \$1 billion budget from our independent auditor for 10+ years in a row;
- 7) Other Post Employment Benefit (OPEB) liability reduced by approximately \$600 million over the last two years, to \$2.3 billion at June 30, 2018.

This is meaningful evidence of a strong beginning—but just the beginning. We are relentlessly working toward a minimum 70% four-year graduation rate. Then, an 80% four-year graduation rate. We will not rest until all students, 100%, have the opportunity to graduate on time with a college and career-ready diploma. We will continue to increase the number of Schools in Good-Standing toward our now-reachable objective of an urban *District in Good Standing*. All remaining Receivership Schools will meet their improvement targets. Our services and support for our neediest children and families will continue to be exemplary. District business and financial operations will be second to none in public education nationwide. Buffalo’s children deserve nothing less than an equal and high quality public education capable of achieving these important deliverables.

Daily, our students face many injustices—economic, racial, housing, nutrition, and social injustices as examples. As Buffalo continues to rise, our partners have come together to fight to eradicate the many injustices our students have faced for generations. 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. We will also keep our end of the *Bargain* by ensuring educational equity and justice in every corner of our District. This means delivering a fully funded, best-in-class public education for all children in Buffalo.

As our primary example of our deep engagement with the Buffalo community, Say Yes Buffalo remains our unparalleled primary strategic partner. The broad and direct contribution by Say Yes Buffalo to the *Education Bargain* is exceptional. The college tuition scholarship opportunity embodies the increasing faith local and national donors have in our students and their futures. Under the capable leadership of Executive Director David Rust, the Say Yes Buffalo team is working with us to deliver a model of support for students and families unmatched in the United States.

Buffalo's parents have demonstrated impressive levels of engagement and leadership in our District. Our four (4) Parent Centers, launched in 2016, provide rich opportunities to collaborate, access resources, and attend free educational workshops. Parent groups and leaders also responded to the spirit of collaboration in the *Education Bargain* by combining their organizations to form the Buffalo Public Schools' Parent Congress. The purpose of the District Parent Congress is to support the Education Bargain, promote legislative and funding equity for Buffalo, serve as a shared decision-making stakeholder, and expand opportunities for more parents to become meaningfully engaged in our District.

We are collaborating with the University at Buffalo—SUNY to usher in whole-school transformation at B.U.I.L.D. Academy School #92; we launched a national model for Teacher Residency to boost the performance quality of candidates entering our profession; and we are supporting teachers and children with strategically-deployed literacy tutors from SUNY who are bolstering instruction based on rigor, research-based best practices, and high expectations one child at a time.

Together with the City of Buffalo and the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, we are joining with the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation to explore new state-of-the-art standards in sports, wellness, and academics for students of all ages. And in 2018, our District was directly awarded funding by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to support early childhood Gifted and Talented curriculum and instructional techniques for all students in all elementary schools. National foundations are taking notice of the transformation in Buffalo and we are deeply appreciative of their interest and support.

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 the Honorable State Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes and the Honorable State Senator Timothy Kennedy, 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 increased funding over the proposed Executive Budget that Buffalo's children need for the funding equity and best-in-class education they deserve.

In 2018, Mayor Byron Brown again demonstrated his commitment to public education by adding supplemental funding to the City's school aid allocation. Our Common Agenda Team comprised of cabinet members from each City and District executive office continues to collaborate on specific projects that yield

benefits to all of Buffalo's families. Joining with Common Council President Darius Pridgen and his distinguished colleagues, we will continue to advance an aggressive legislative agenda that ensures the justice, equity, and improved results all of our constituents expect.

Our Board of Education and entire District remain aligned with New York State Commissioner of Education MaryEllen Elia and the strategic focus established by the Board of Regents for 2019-2020. These priorities include full funding for the Foundation Aid formula, continued expansion of prekindergarten programs, enhanced support for English Language Learners, and expanded opportunities through Career and Technical Education programs. Our request for additional funding is consistent with the Regents' strategic priorities and keeps key deliverables for the *Education Bargain* described herein on track in 2019-2020.

In sum, the Buffalo City School District requests a **3.8%, or \$20.0 million increase in Foundation Aid** over 2018-19 (**\$10.6 million more** than the proposed 2019-20 Executive Budget). Additionally, the District requests a permanent increase of at least **\$3.0 million in the Health Services Grant**, and the adoption of bills S.6551C/A.7966C to reimburse the District for approximately **\$9.5 million in Supplemental Charter Tuition** payments in the same year the tuition is paid. **These requests are essential in order to meet revised revenue targets of our long-term fiscal plan and to continue effective implementation of our strategic transformation plan, *The Education Bargain with Students and Parents*.**

Thank you for embracing and sharing our mindset of excellence for all of Buffalo's children. Thank you for believing in us as we believe in you to support this work. You have my assurance that the Buffalo City School District will continue to go deeper, get better, and deliver breakthrough results each year for all of the precious children in Buffalo.

Dr. Kriner Cash



Superintendent of Schools  
Buffalo City School District





## BUFFALO CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

### 2019-20 LEGISLATIVE REQUEST SUMMARY

1. **Support for the Commissioner and Board of Regents proposals** - The Buffalo City School District reiterates our support for the Commissioner and Board of Regents 2019-20 legislative proposals.
2. **Foundation Aid Request** – In 2019-20, the Buffalo City School District requests a **3.8% or \$20.0 million increase** in Foundation Aid over 2018-19 (**\$10.6 million more** than the Governor’s proposed 2019-20 budget) in order to meet revised revenue targets of its long-term fiscal plan and to continue effectively implementing the Education Bargain with Students and Parents.
3. **Health Services Grant** - In the Governor’s proposed 2019-20 budget, there is a cut of \$1.2 million in District’s funding for health services. 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 **\$3.0 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
2017-18	\$7.6 million
2018-19	\$7.8 million (projected)
2019-20	\$8.3 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. If enacted for the 2019-20 year, this would result in additional revenues for the District of approximately **\$9.5 million**, offsetting the supplemental tuition expense. Given the expansion in charter pupils, the District is otherwise allocating 60% of its 2018-19 Foundation Aid growth to subsidize supplemental tuition paid to charter schools until the Charter School Supplemental Aid is received in the following year. This legislation is in the following bills: S.6551C/A.7966C.

With respect to Charter School Transitional Aid, the District requests that all charter schools 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.