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Public Education in Buffalo and the Region

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Public Education in Buffalo and the Region

Abstract

The biggest problem facing Buffalo's public schools is the fact that many students live in poverty, while at the same time being segregated from students from wealthier communities who tend to enjoy better educational opportunities and rates of academic success. Buffalo shares many of the problems of large cities in the United States, largely caused by high concentrations of poverty in urban areas. In 2009, about 59% of students served by urban school districts located in the metropolitan areas of the 50 largest U.S. cities graduated, compared with 77% in nearby suburban communities. In Western New York, all of Buffalo Business First's highest ranked public high schools except City Honors are located in affluent suburbs: Williamsville, East Aurora, Clarence, Lewiston-Porter, etc. The thirteen lowest ranked high schools are in the City of Buffalo.

Keywords

Buffalo, Education, K-12 Education, Poverty and Education, Fact Sheet, PPG, PDF

Public Education in Buffalo and the Region

Marc J. Masson

Educational Attainment of Those Over Age 25 (2012 American Community Survey)¹

	City of Buffalo (164,739)	Buffalo-Niagara Falls Metropolitan Area (779,253)	National Average (208,731,498)
Less than High School Diploma	18.4%	9.6%	13.7%
High School Diploma or Equivalent	28.7%	29.6%	28.0%
Some College or Associate's Degree	29.6%	31.1%	29.3%
Bachelor Degree	12.9%	16.6%	18.2%
Graduate or Professional Degree	10.5%	13.1%	10.9%

Percent of Adults with Bachelor's Degree: Buffalo-Niagara Metropolitan Area, 2000²

	Male	Female
Black	10%	12%
American Indian	13%	14%
Asian/Pacific Islander	69%	56%
Hispanic	15%	16%
Non-Hispanic White	26%	23%

Four Year Public High School Graduation Rate³

	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
City of Buffalo	56.0%	47.8%	55.3%	49.6%	57.3%	52.4%
Large NY Cities ⁴	56.6%	53.5%	56.3%	52.7%	52.2%	53.1%
New York State	77.8%	76.7%	76.8%	76.1%	74.4%	73.6%
United States Average ⁵	--	81.0%	80.0%	78.2%	75.5%	74.7%

- In 2013, the Buffalo Public Schools Credit Recovery Program contributed to higher graduation rates. It helped about 200 high school students graduate on time, as well as created a system to chart students' progress and provide focused attention to struggling students.⁶

NY State High School Four-Year Cohort Members by Diploma Type and Race⁷

	2013			2012			2011		
	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic	White
Local Diploma	4.00%	3.00%	3.90%	4.40%	3.30%	3.80%	10.00%	8.80%	6.00%
Regents Diploma	46.00%	43.30%	39.40%	44.60%	42.30%	39.60%	38.90%	37.30%	35.80%
Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation	9.00%	12.40%	43.00%	9.00%	12.00%	42.20%	9.50%	11.90%	43.30%
Graduation Rate	59.7%	59.2%	86.5%	58.1%	57.8%	85.7%	58.4%	58%	85.1%

An In-Depth Look at Buffalo's 2012 High School Seniors⁸

High School	Class of 2012	Poverty Rate	Limited English Proficiency	Students with Disabilities	School Attendance	Graduation Rate
City Honors	104	33%	0%	4%	95%	96%
Da Vinci	98	64%	1%	8%	93%	90%
Olmsted 56	47	70%	0%	2%	94%	89%
Emerson	112	80%	1%	22%	87%	81%
Hutchinson Technical	285	73%	1%	5%	89%	78%
Visual and Performing Arts	121	76%	1%	21%	91%	68%
Occupational Training Center	72	81%	4%	17%	92%	64%
Math Science Technology Prep	75	81%	5%	15%	88%	60%
McKinley	300	86%	4%	14%	85%	57%
South Park	245	71%	4%	23%	79%	51%
Bennett	307	81%	3%	18%	79%	32%
International Prep	84	80%	36%	14%	86%	30%
East	212	86%	0%	20%	82%	27%
Riverside	244	79%	12%	26%	76%	24%
Burgard	209	84%	7%	33%	81%	24%
Lafayette	282	82%	46%	21%	85%	21%
Districtwide	2,948	75%	9%	21%	91%	47%

- The differences between the best and worst performing high schools in the district correlate strongly to the percentages of non-native speakers, students with disabilities, and rates of poverty.

Inequality of Education in Buffalo's Urban and Suburban Schools

- The biggest problem facing Buffalo's public schools is the fact that many students live in poverty, while at the same time being segregated from students from wealthier communities

who tend to enjoy better educational opportunities and rates of academic success.

- Buffalo shares many of the problems of large cities in the United States, largely caused by high concentrations of poverty in urban areas. In 2009, about 59% of students served by urban school districts located in the metropolitan areas of the 50 largest U.S. cities graduated, compared with 77% in nearby suburban communities.⁹
- In Western New York, all of Buffalo Business First's highest ranked public high schools except City Honors are located in affluent suburbs: Williamsville, East Aurora, Clarence, Lewiston-Porter, etc. The thirteen lowest ranked high schools are in the City of Buffalo.¹⁰
- Part of the reason for this divide is the severe differences in poverty concentration that exist between public high schools in the Buffalo region. Of Buffalo school children, 77.5% qualify for free or reduced price lunch. At Williamsville East, the top ranked suburban public school, 6% qualify.¹¹

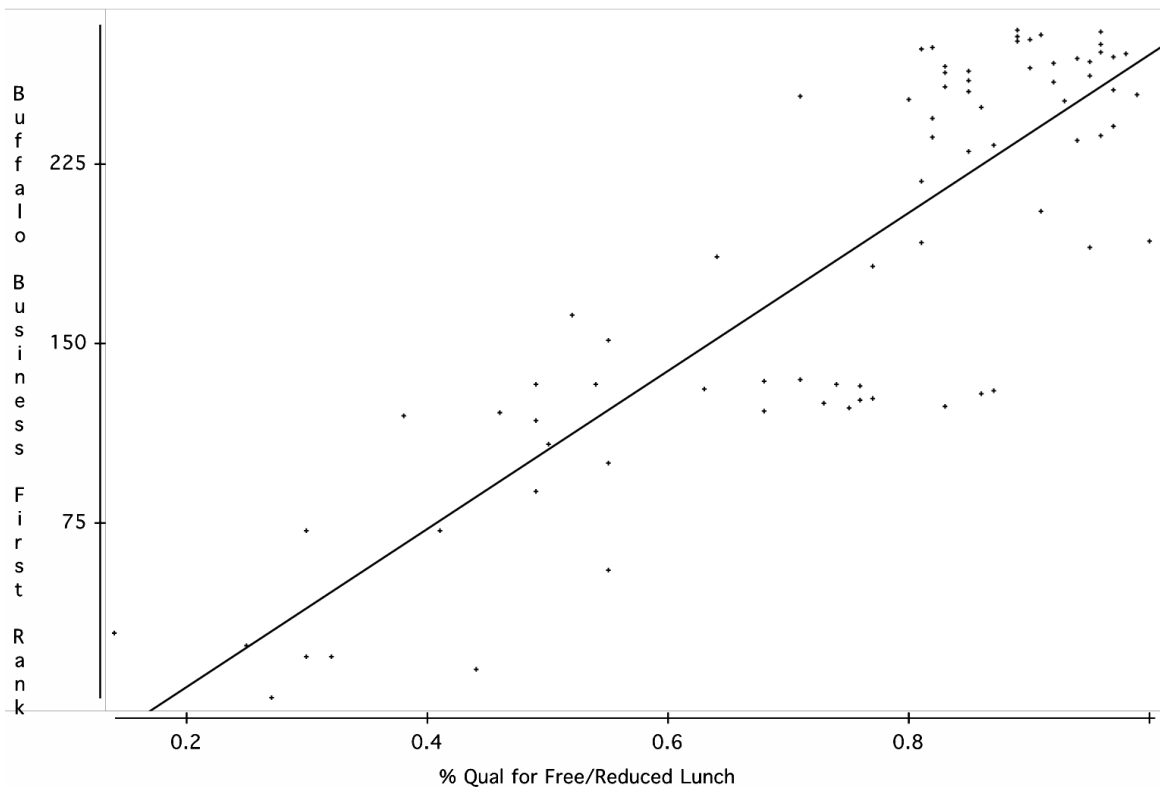
Segregation in the City and Region¹²

- The Buffalo public schools are just as segregated as they were in the 1970s, with segregation defined as at least 80% minority or 80% white. In 1972, 70% of the city's schools were considered segregated, and a federal judge ordered the district to desegregate. However, in 2014, a Buffalo News analysis found that 70% of schools in the city were segregated, reversing the gains made since the court order. This is a dramatic increase from just a decade earlier, when 29 of the 74 Buffalo schools were segregated.
- The re-segregation is closely linked to the decline in the number of white students in the district as a whole. In 1972, white students accounted for 54% of the district. By 2012, they made up only 22%.
- Today, white students remain heavily concentrated in a small number of schools where they make up the disproportionate majority. Despite being making up the minority district wide, at 11 schools in the district they are the majority (including two schools with special admissions policies – City Honors and Olmsted 64).
- The suburban districts are becoming somewhat more diverse. Over the past decade, the percentage of minority students grew in every school district save one in Erie and

Niagara counties. In half, minority enrollment grew by at least 5% and in seven districts it grew by at least 10%: Cheektowaga, Cleveland Hill, Sweet Home, Cheektowaga-Maryvale, Williamsville, Lockport, and Amherst.

- A relatively large part of the increase in diversity can be attributed to increased Asian enrollment, which in some cases accounts for more than other minority groups combined. Half of the schools in Williamsville had an Asian enrollment that accounted for at least 10% of the student body. The most dramatic growth in minority population, however, was in Cheektowaga, where black students now account for 32% of the enrollment.
- Yet even as some suburbs are becoming more diverse, about three out of four of those schools would still, by the definition of Buffalo's desegregation order, be considered segregated.
- Hispanic and Black populations are more affected by poverty, and this is reflected in the 2010 metro poverty rates: white 8.8%; black 28.8%; Asian/Pacific Islander 12.8%; Hispanic 25.8%.¹³
- The Buffalo-Niagara metro area was ranked 7th most segregated by income in 2014¹⁴, as well as the fifth most racially segregated large metro in the nation. Part of the reason for this gap is the high concentration of poverty as well as of minorities in the cities of Buffalo and Niagara Falls.¹⁵
- As a result, there are radically different high school success rates in the cities and the surrounding suburbs, with predominantly white high schools with high academic success rates in the suburbs, and the reverse in the cities.

Correlation of Poverty to Test Outcomes in Buffalo, Amherst, and Cheektowaga*



*This graph compares the 2013 Buffalo Business First rankings¹⁶ of each public school in Buffalo, Amherst, and Cheektowaga with the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced price lunch.

- The R^2 value for the regression is 73.9%, suggesting that almost three fourths of the variation in rank is accounted for by the regression and can be attributed to the percentage of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch – in short, poverty.

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- ¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>. All estimated population numbers refer only to those over the age of 25.
- ² Harvard University, www.diversitydata.org. Note that this data is from 2000, and may not reflect the current situation.
- ³ This represents the percentage of students who graduated within four years of entering high school, by August of their fourth year. Data was collected from the New York State Education Department, June 23, 2014. <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20140623/home.html>
- ⁴ High school graduation rates in Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers combined.
- ⁵ National Center for Educational Statistics, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_coi.asp
- ⁶ Lankes, Tiffany. The Buffalo News, June 30, 2014. <http://www.buffalonews.com/city-region/buffalo-public-schools/buffalo-graduation-rate-rises-with-credit-recovery-20140630>
- ⁷ New York State Education Department, <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/irs/pressRelease/20140623/home.html>
- ⁸ Tan, Sandra. The Buffalo News, Thursday, July 25, 2013. *Stacking the deck against Buffalo's six 'failing schools'*, <http://www.buffalonews.com/city-region/buffalo-public-schools/stacking-the-deck-against-buffalo-2013-07-25>
- ⁹ Education Research Center, "Closing the Graduation Gap" http://www.edweek.org/media/cities_in_crisis_2009.pdf p.16
- ¹⁰ Buffalo Business First, <http://www.bizjournals.com/buffalo/news/2014/06/12/western-new-york-high-school-rankings-in-2014.html?page=all>
- ¹¹ Partnership for the Public Good, <http://www.ppgbuffalo.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/education-and-poverty-april-2012.pdf>
- ¹² Pasciak, Mary. The Buffalo News, April 5, 2014. *Segregation in Buffalo schools has returned to early 1970s levels*, <http://www.buffalonews.com/city-region/buffalo-public-schools/segregation-in-buffalo-schools-has-returned-to-early-1970s-levels-20140405>
- ¹³ "Buffalo-Cheektowaga-Tonawanda, NY Profile: Economic Opportunities." *Diversitydata.org*. Harvard School of Public Health, n.d. Web. 03 Dec. 2012
- ¹⁴ The Atlantic Cities, <http://www.citylab.com/housing/2014/03/us-cities-where-poor-are-most-segregated/8655/>
- ¹⁵ Partnership for the Public Good, <http://www.ppgbuffalo.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/poverty-2012.pdf>
- ¹⁶ Business First's rankings are based on 2009-2012 data on test scores and graduation rates from the New York State Education Dept. High schools are ranked based on graduation rates and Regents exam scores in ten subjects. Middle and elementary schools are ranked based on state English and math test results for seventh and eighth graders. For a full explanation, see www.bizjournals.com/buffalo/feature/schools/2013-wynschools/2013/06/how-business-first-does-the-school.html. All data other than Business First rankings is drawn from New York State Department of Education 2011-2012 Report Cards for schools and districts, available at <https://reportcards.nysed.gov/>.