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Getting There: Improving Attendance in the Buffalo Public Schools

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Getting There: Improving Attendance in the Buffalo Public Schools

Abstract

High rates of absenteeism in the Buffalo Public Schools (“BPS”) are strongly linked to low academic performance and graduation rates. Several difficult issues contribute to the low attendance in Buffalo, including poverty, segregation, mental and physical health challenges, access to transportation, and problems with school climate and student engagement. Many effective programs to improve attendance are already in place, but more work needs to be done. Recent data provides some insights into the attendance situation in BPS. For example, recent BPS data shows a direct correlation between high school students’ attendance rates and their success on Regents exams. In spring 2014, there was a difference of 35% between the passage rates of students with satisfactory attendance and those with severe absenteeism.

Keywords

Buffalo, Education, K-12 Education, Report, Other, PDF



Getting There

Improving Attendance in the Buffalo Public Schools

By Rachel Stern and Tina Meyers

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A Report by Partnership for the Public Good for the Open Buffalo Innovation Lab

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Executive Summary

High rates of absenteeism in the Buffalo Public Schools (“BPS”) are strongly linked to low academic performance and graduation rates. Several difficult issues contribute to the low attendance in Buffalo, including poverty, segregation, mental and physical health challenges, access to transportation, and problems with school climate and student engagement. Many effective programs to improve attendance are already in place, but more work needs to be done.

Recent data provides some insights into the attendance situation in BPS. For example, recent BPS data shows a direct correlation between high school students’ attendance rates and their success on Regents exams. In spring 2014, there was a difference of 35% between the passage rates of students with satisfactory attendance and those with severe absenteeism.

Also, in Buffalo, the combined Average Daily Attendance (ADA) for elementary and secondary schools fell from 91% in 2002-2003 to 88% in 2013-2014. The figures for chronic and severe absence are even more telling. In the 2013-2014 school year, 43% of BPS students were chronically or severely absent, meaning they missed more than 10% of the school year—18 or more days. Fourteen percent were severely absent—missing more than 7 weeks of school. This is actually an improvement from the 47% of BPS students that were chronically or severely absent during the 2010-2011 school year.

Data also shows that absenteeism in Buffalo is much higher among low-income students and students with special needs. Interestingly, though, English language learners have better attendance rates than their peers; at the eleven schools with the highest number of students with limited English proficiency (LEP), the 3,346 LEP students had a chronic or severe absence rate of 36%. African-Americans have the lowest rates of chronic or severe absence (as noted below, however, students who are suspended are not counted as absent, and African-Americans have disproportionately high suspension rates).

Potential strategies to improve attendance rates in Buffalo include the following:

- Increasing number of attendance teachers in BPS to at least one full time staff per school;
- Fully staffing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (“PBIS”) teams throughout the district to increase support to students and families and identify and address the root causes of absenteeism;
- Expanding Ready Freddy to all elementary schools and tracking the attendance before and after the program is implemented to evaluate how well it works;
- Offering rewards for students with improved attendance to give those students recognition and reinforce the notion that school attendance leads to success;
- Addressing the root issues of poverty and segregation in Buffalo by providing necessary social services and supports for students and their families and ensuring that all school

district employees earn a living wage;

- Improving accessibility of transportation to and from school by expanding the “walking school bus” program and reforming the current arrangements with Niagara Frontier Transit Authority (“NFTA”) for student access to public transit;
- Offering mandatory, free flu and other vaccinations at the schools to help improve attendance and prevent the spread of disease among students, teachers, and staff;
- Continuing to work with community partners and social service agencies to provide more mental health counseling to students;
- Improving school climate by increasing the emphasis on Social-Emotional Learning (“SEL”) and incorporating SEL into all academic programs;
- Ensuring full implementation of restorative justice practices at all schools and promptly providing training in restorative practices for all school staff;
- Increasing understanding of school climate issues by instituting a comprehensive annual survey and climate walk to collect data from teachers, parents, and students at each school;
- Improving school climate and student engagement by instituting mindfulness programs and practices for both teachers and students in all schools;
- Implementing teacher training and preparation programs to equip new and existing teachers with the core skills necessary to foster SEL and improve cultural sensitivity.

By adopting these strategies and working together with teachers, parents, students and community members, BPS can improve its attendance numbers and thereby improve student success in Buffalo.

Introduction: Attendance is Vital to School Success

According to the national advocacy group Attendance Works, consistent attendance from an early age is a key indicator of whether students finish high school – even more predictive than kindergarten school readiness or eighth grade test scores.¹ High rates of absenteeism from an early age widen the achievement gap, especially for low income and minority children. Promoting attendance from the start of kindergarten helps sustain regular attendance throughout a child’s education.²

Improving the low attendance rates of the Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) is a first step towards better educational outcomes. When students spend time in a literacy-rich, engaging learning environment – especially during the early years – they have a higher chance of finding themselves on a path towards success.³ In fact, recent BPS data shows a direct correlation between high school students’ attendance rates and their success on Regents exams.⁴ For each of the ten Regents exams administered in spring 2014, the passage rate dropped by an average of 35% between students with satisfactory attendance and students with severe absenteeism. *See Appendix 1.*

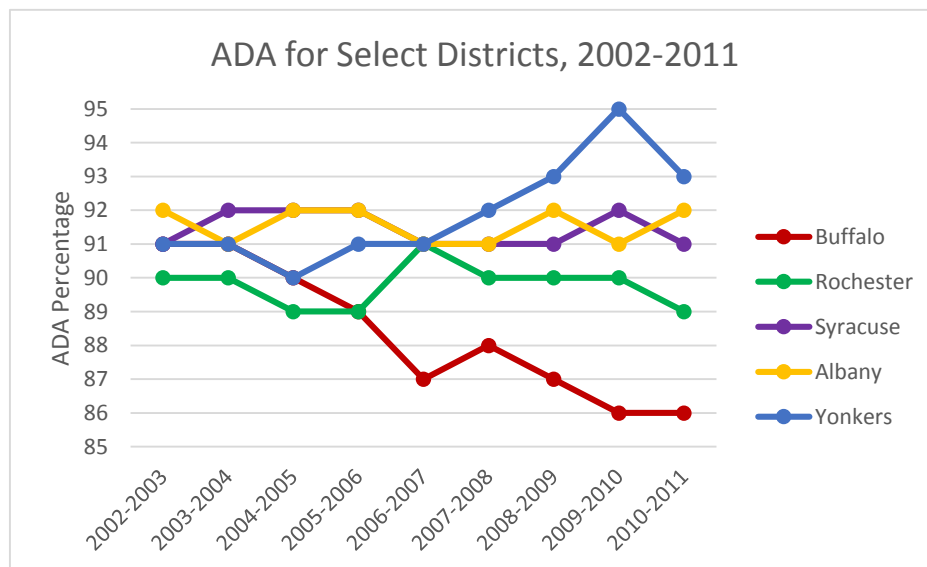
Definitions

- **Chronic absenteeism:** missing 10-19.99% of the school year (minimum 2-3 days every month).
- **Severe absenteeism:** missing 20% or more of the school year.
- **Average daily attendance (ADA):** the percentage of the student population who attend school on a particular day.
- **Truancy:** unexcused absences that are often associated with willfully skipping class. Not all chronic absences are considered truant behavior.

Attendance Rates in Buffalo

In the 2007-2008 school year, the national Average Daily Attendance (ADA) rate was 94% for elementary schools and 91.1% for secondary schools.⁵ In Buffalo, the combined ADA for elementary and secondary schools fell from 91% in 2002-2003 to 87% in 2011-2012.⁶ However, between the 2011-2012 and 2013-2014 school years, the combined ADA rose slightly from 87% to 88.26%, and as of February 2015 the combined ADA is at 88.03%.⁷

When it comes to graduation rates and standardized test scores, Buffalo often scores better than peer cities such as Rochester, Albany, and Syracuse. However, when it comes to attendance, Buffalo's rates are among the lowest, with the Rochester ADA also at 87%, Syracuse at 92%, and Albany at 92% in the 2011-2012 school year.⁸

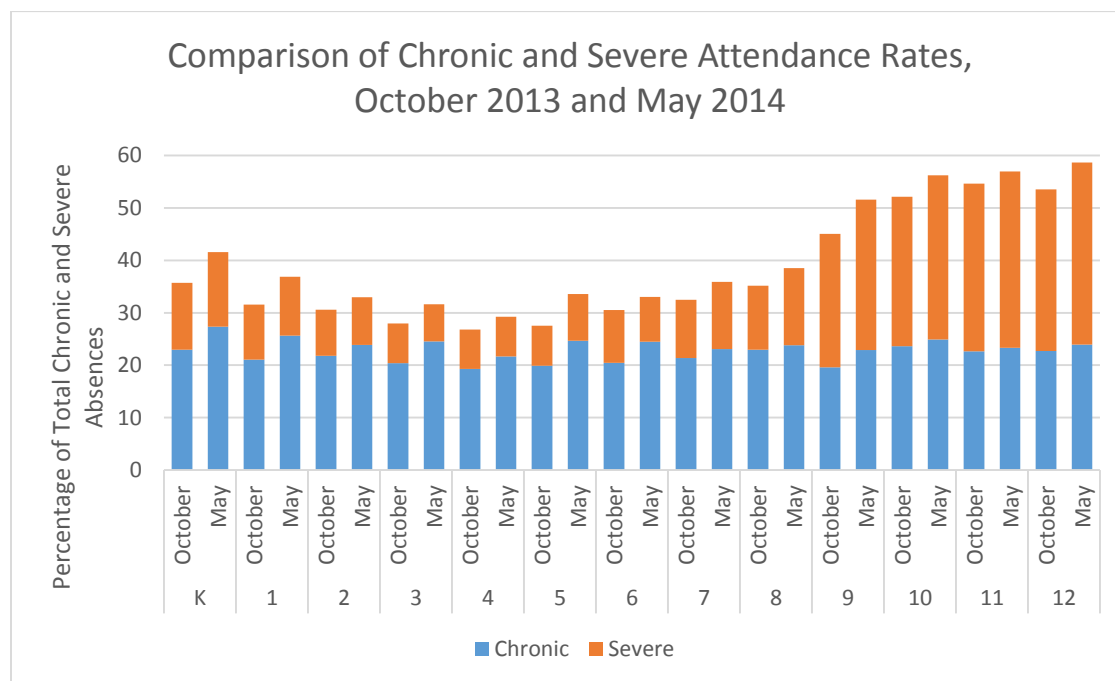


The figures for chronic and severe absence are even more telling. Of the 37,420 students in BPS in 2013-2014, 16,202, or 43%, suffered chronic or severe absences, which means they missed more than 10% of the school year – 18 or more days. Fourteen percent were severely absent – missing more than 7 weeks of school.⁹ This is actually an improvement from the chronic and severe absences recorded during the 2010-2011 school year. Of the 34,084 students in BPS in 2010-2011, 15,952, or 47%, were chronically or severely absent.¹⁰

Absenteeism is much higher among low-income students and students with special needs. Interestingly, though, English language learners have better attendance rates than their peers; at the eleven schools with the highest number of students with

Demographic Group	Chronic or Severe Absence Rate 2013-2014
LEP Students	36%
African-Americans	43%
Whites	45%
Hispanics	53%

limited English proficiency (LEP), the 3,346 LEP students had a chronic or severe absence rate of 36%. *See Appendix 2.* African-Americans have the lowest rates of chronic or severe absence (as noted below, however, students who are suspended are not counted as absent, and African-Americans have disproportionately high suspension rates). *See Appendix 2.*



Collecting Data

The BPS collects data based on homeroom attendance. If a student arrives late, a clerk in the school’s main office will change the student’s record from absent to tardy and mark the time of entry. When a homeroom teacher forgets to report attendance, the default display shows all

students present (although the teacher or a clerk can go in later to correct it). Thus, BPS attendance figures may be artificially inflated. There is a need for further research to determine how many perfect attendance reports from classrooms are the result of non-reporting, rather than truly perfect attendance.

Infinite Campus, the online database BPS uses for student enrollment, attendance, and grades, tracks 35 reasons for absences within its system. Students who are “exempt” from school that day, whether it be due to suspension, school field trip, or alternative instruction elsewhere, are not counted in the school’s ADA. If suspended students were counted as absent, the attendance rates would be much lower.¹¹

Unlike other school districts throughout the state, BPS provides current attendance and suspensions data on its website for public access. This includes the breakdown of students in each grade level by school, attendance category, and overall ADA. An overall attendance report is provided at the end of the school year and monthly data updates are provided throughout the current school year.¹²

The image shows two screenshots from the Infinite Campus system. The left screenshot is the 'Classroom Monitor' interface for Campus High School, Section ACT/CS100-1 Community Service, dated 04/21/2010. It displays a table of teacher attendance data across six periods (01-06). The right screenshot is the 'Standard Seating Chart' for course 4017 US History 10, showing student portraits and attendance status for five columns. A 'Daily Attendance' pop-up window is overlaid on the seating chart, showing a table of student attendance for the same date.

Teacher	Dept	Contact	HR	01	02	03	04	05	06
Abra, Dean	English				1001-7 (---32)		1001-8 (---32)		
Adams, Donald	English			1001-1 (31-32)	4016-15 (---0)	1001-2 (---31)	1001-3 (---32)	1001-4 (---32)	1001-5 (---32)
Addy, Dorothy				4016-14 (---0)				4017-12 (---0)	
Allen, Douglas									
Alley, David									
Andrewartha, John				1004-1 (18-21)	1004-2				
Andrewartha, John				1004-8 (20-21)	1004-9				
Axtman, Debbie				1100-1 (26-27)	1100-2				
Backham, John				1015-7 (---28)	1015-8				
Batrum, George				1201-8 (30-30)	1201-9				
Boul, Henry				3007-1 (28-28)	3007-2				
Boyes, Bruce				3011-1 (---8)	3011-2				
Brendan, Ted				3011-8 (---8)	3011-9				

Student	Number	Grade	HR	01	02	03	04
Adams, Elyse	103711	10		A			
Allard, Esther	103882	10		A			
Ambiel, Josie	103971	10		A			
Benesch, Neville	105469	10		T			

State Attendance and Truancy Laws

In New York, as in every state, parents and legal guardians are responsible for school attendance. Penalties for noncompliance in New York include fines and jail sentences, but these are not usually imposed until administrative measures prove unsuccessful.¹³

Under New York State law, attendance teachers and supervisors can arrest a minor who is unlawfully absent from school without a warrant. The attendance teacher or supervisor must bring the arrested student to school, notify the parent/guardian, and then may either commence proceedings to commit the student as a school delinquent or arraign the student before a court.¹⁴

In the past, kindergarten was not mandatory for students in the BPS. A New York state law passed in 2014 now requires all five-year-olds to be enrolled in formal, full-day kindergarten.¹⁵ This may help reduce the high rate of absenteeism in kindergarten and cut down on the heavy caseload of attendance teachers.

BPS Policy

The current BPS attendance policy has been in place since 2005. BPS recognizes excused absences as those due to “personal illness, illness or death in the family, impassable roads due to inclement weather, religious observance and education, quarantine, required court appearances, incarceration, approved field trip, "Student to Work" Day, suspension (formal and informal), attendance at health clinics, approved college visits, approved cooperative work programs, military obligations or other such reasons as may be approved by the Board of Education.”

Unexcused absences are those which do not fall into the above categories. Examples include lack of required immunization without a religious or medical exemption, family vacation, babysitting, unlawful employment, expressing solidarity with a cause, illegally detained by parent, no transportation, illegal pickup by a parent, missed bus, lack of proper clothing, truant (out of school without parental consent), obtaining learner's permit, road test, and oversleeping.¹⁶

Under the current policy, students absent for more than 50% of a given class period are considered absent for the entire class that day. Disciplinary consequences for students with unexcused absences, tardiness, and early departures include detention or denial of participation in interscholastic and extracurricular activities. Teachers have to send a letter home to parents/guardians after a student misses three classes in a marking period.¹⁷ The policy also requires a minimum attendance of 85% of the entire year in order to take the final exam; however, the District has an incentive to not enforce this requirement due to its need to increase graduation rates and award more Regents diplomas.¹⁸

Prior to 2005, the BPS attendance policy required that students receive a failing grade for a marking period if they were absent (excused or unexcused) for more than 15% of that marking period.¹⁹ Some argue that this minimum attendance requirement was too harsh and that instead of punishing students for poor attendance, schools should identify and address the root cause of the issue.²⁰ Others argue that the lack of this requirement in the current policy is exacerbating the attendance problem in BPS.²¹

Also under the current grading policy, teachers cannot give a report card grade lower than 50 in any marking period. This means that students can maintain an 80 grade point average through the first half of the school year, skip all classes during the second half of the year, and still pass a course. Some argue that changes in policy and practice, along with the elimination of district-generated final exams, may have caused already-low attendance rates at Buffalo public high

schools to get worse.²²

Direct Responses to Absenteeism

Ready Freddy

In 2013, BPS implemented the Ready Freddy program in 19 elementary schools to help boost attendance. Freddy, a frog mascot, helps out at attendance events and competitions hosted by participating schools. The mascot is visible at attendance kick-off events in August and also greets students on the first day of school. In addition to a Freddy costume, participating schools receive resources



such as a bus for families to tour, stipends for staff to attend the kick-off, t-shirts for staff, and stickers and books for students. By visiting classrooms, parent events, assemblies, and sitting with classes during parties for good attendance, Ready Freddy reinforces the idea that regular attendance leads to fun activities within the school.²³

Attendance Teachers

Attendance teachers are certified teachers whose role in the schools is to monitor student attendance. Many are former classroom teachers, social workers, and guidance counselors who now work to reduce truancy within the school. They contact parents, arrange conferences, and make home visits if necessary. Their funding comes primarily from sources such as the City of Buffalo and federal School Improvement Grants (SIG).²⁴ Over a decade ago, the BPS had more than 30 attendance teachers in the district. Now, only 15 teachers are spread across 22 schools. Some are at one school full-time, while others spend half their time at one school and a quarter each at two other schools.

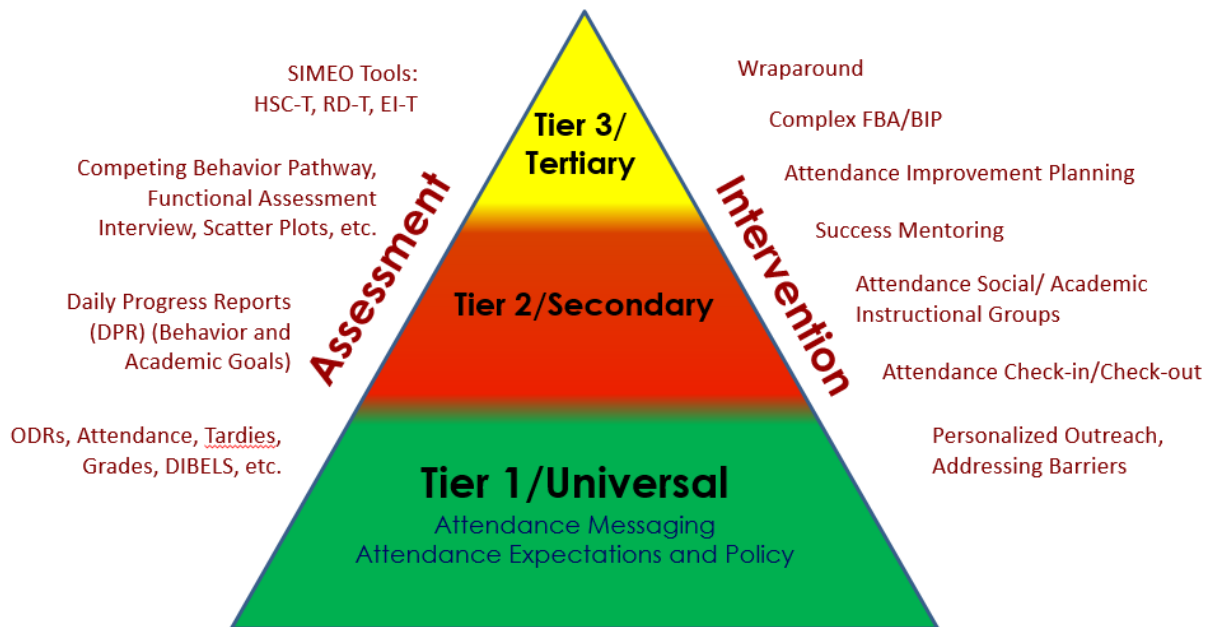


PBIS

BPS uses a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) model. PBIS is a proactive approach to establishing the behavioral supports needed for students to achieve social, emotional, and academic assistance. In addition to improving school climate and safety, one of the goals of PBIS is to improve attendance by “establishing a culture of attendance, acknowledging outstanding attendance, and supporting students at-risk for chronic absenteeism.”²⁵ As a

Response to Intervention (RtI) model, PBIS follows a three-tiered support structure and problem-solving process.²⁶ “Student support teams” under PBIS are composed of administrators, several teachers, the school nurse, social workers, the school’s attendance teacher, and service agencies present in the building. These teams meet on a regular basis to discuss specific student concerns and work towards making the school climate better for all.

Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports: Attendance



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Family Support Specialists

Through a public-private partnership funded by Erie County and Say Yes Buffalo, as of February 2015 all 55 Buffalo Public schools have a Family Support Specialist who works within the school to help students who are at-risk and in need. Family Support Specialists triage severely absent students, make home visits, and provide students with additional resources to ensure they can focus on their education.²⁸

Family Support Specialists work closely with existing Attendance Teachers in the schools, and often act as the third line of response once attendance calls are made by the school and Attendance Teachers have attempted to address the issue. Family Support Specialists also attempt to fill the existing gaps in Tier 3 interventions in the schools. (See PBIS triangle diagram above). By working to identify the root causes of attendance issues, Family Support Specialists are able to provide students and families with wraparound services to address basic needs such as childcare and housing.²⁹

Child Protective Services

Whether the school contacts Child Protective Services (CPS) regarding absenteeism depends on the circumstances for each student.³⁰ According to the former Supervisor of Attendance for BPS, John Crabbe, the criteria BPS uses depend less on the amount of absence and more on “what proof the school has that a child is negatively affected by not being in school, and whether it is a parent issue.”³¹ He also stated that BPS staff generally do not call CPS if the student is responsible for his or her own absence and there is no suspicion of abuse.

As of January 2015, Family Support Specialists at 28 of the 55 Buffalo Public Schools are partnering with Erie County Department of Social Services (which houses CPS) to prevent and address education neglect calls in the school system.³² Education neglect is defined as the failure of a parent or guardian to ensure that their child attends school, and it is one of the criteria for placing a call to the CPS hotline.³³ Unlike some of the other criteria for reporting to CPS, education neglect calls do not have any set triggering event (i.e. certain number of days absent from school that constitutes education neglect) but instead are based largely on the discretion of the caller.³⁴

It is unclear how often education neglect calls are placed in BPS. Anyone can make such a call, including teachers, staff, administration, and neighbors, and school staff do not need approval of their supervisors in order to do so.³⁵ The Say Yes Buffalo partnerships with CPS aim to proactively reduce the number of calls being made by attempting to address the root cause of the attendance issue and get families any services they might need.³⁶

Present Students, Future Leaders

In 2014, the Public Policy and Education Fund of New York (PPEF), in partnership with the Alliance for Quality Education, and Citizen Action of New York was awarded a three year grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to launch a project, Present Students, Future Leaders, which focuses on attendance issues in Buffalo. The Present Students, Future Leaders project will organize and engage the community to discover obstacles to attendance and find community-driven solutions to address these obstacles.

Building on the momentum of this project, a coalition of parents, community members, and organizations led by PPEF has joined with Mayor Byron Brown, BPS, and



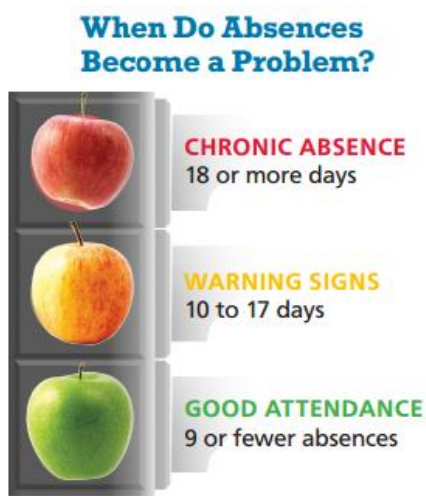
Photo courtesy of Citizen Action of New York

Attendance Works to call on the community, elected officials, and local businesses to become “Attendance Champions.” The initiative will require a commitment to raising awareness about the importance of attending school, motivating and encouraging children to attend school, working to making school a safe environment where students can learn and teachers can teach, finding solutions to the problem of absenteeism, and getting involved in the future of children.

Recommendations for Direct Responses to Absenteeism

Increase Number of Attendance Teachers

The district’s number of chronically and severely absent students is far too high for only 15 attendance teachers to address. Only six of the attendance teachers are assigned full-time to a single school. At those schools without a full-time attendance teacher, other teachers and



Note: These numbers assume a 180-day school year.

2011 Attendance Works & Reach Out & Read, Inc.

professionals end up fulfilling some of the duties, which is often inefficient and frustrating. A more logical alternative is to assign one full-time attendance teacher to each school to make home visits and refer special cases to support staff.

Fully Staff PBIS Teams & Offer Robust Attendance Incentives

BPS should fully staff its PBIS teams throughout the district, so that they can offer students and families the full array of supports needed to identify and address the root causes of absenteeism. See section below *Addressing Root Causes to Improve Attendance*. The teams should identify at-risk students before they become chronically absent and keep contact with other schools where at-risk students have siblings.

BPS should expand Ready Freddy to all elementary schools and track the attendance before and after the program is implemented to evaluate how well it works. Competitions among classrooms and other incentives for attendance will help all grade levels encourage students to attend every day.

Tapestry Charter High School has some best practices to share. The majority of Tapestry students come from low income families in the 14215 zip code and receive free and reduced-price lunch, but Tapestry’s ADA rate is 93.8%. Tapestry’s attendance policy includes interventions after six and ten unexcused absences and/or tardies. Responses may include a parent meeting, drafting a contract to commit to regular attendance, and/or detention, during which the student writes a reflection paper about his or her conduct. Additional absences deny student credit in missed courses, affecting the student’s chances of graduating on time.³⁷

Perhaps most importantly, the school also places responsibility on the students for their daily

attendance. The Tapestry “Crew” model, in which twelve students and a faculty advisor meet daily throughout all four years, helps keep at-risk students on track, as their peers hold them accountable for their attendance and behavior.

At Burton Elementary School in Grand Rapids, Michigan, students who achieve perfect attendance for a month become STAR (Studious, Thoughtful, Accountable, and Respectful) students. They earn a gold t-shirt saying “I am a STAR student,” their picture is displayed on a television in the school lobby, and they are invited to an ice-cream social with the principal. In Georgia, seven unexcused absences per semester at Creekview High School means course failure. But those with fewer than two excused absences can receive ten extra points on homework and tests.³⁸



Simple rewards, such as extra recess time, homework passes, or a “dress-down” day to students with good attendance, motivate students to come to school. Offering attendance rewards for students with improved attendance gives those students recognition and reinforces the notion that school attendance leads to success.

Addressing Root Causes to Improve Attendance

The direct responses to absenteeism discussed above are all important. A truly effective approach to attendance, however, must address root causes: the poverty, transportation, health, and school climate issues that keep students out of the classroom.³⁹

Poverty

The issue of poverty is complex, and not all students from impoverished families have low attendance rates.⁴⁰ However, of the 77% of students in the BPS who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, 42% are chronically or severely absent, compared to 32% of students who do not qualify for free or reduced-price lunch.⁴¹ See Appendix 6. Students whose family’s economic struggles get in the way of school need additional supports to manage issues that are often beyond their control.

Working parents are often faced with numerous challenges and may place many responsibilities on their older children. Students may arrive late to school because they were asked to put a younger sibling on the bus, or they may miss school while helping the parent deal with emergencies. Students may be tending to a sick parent, sibling, or even their own child. The

resulting lack of success in school, as well as the emotional burden placed on a student, may create a vicious cycle of disengagement and absenteeism.

Families in poverty often have to move involuntarily. According to the United States Government Accountability Office, one in six children has attended three or more schools by the time he/she completes third grade.⁴² Moving frequently affects students socially and can lead to alienation and disengagement as well as logistical and transportation problems. Students and families who are homeless have even greater barriers preventing them from attending school. The number of students in Buffalo experiencing homelessness and thus qualifying for federal “McKinney Vento” services has risen from 700 to over 1200 in the last seven years.

Speaking more broadly, schools generally start to struggle when they become more than 50% low income.⁴³ Schools with high rates of students in poverty have lower test scores, lower expectations, few advanced or honors classes, and tend to be racially segregated. Students do not have the personal freedom of students in high-performing schools; too often they feel that school represents a punitive institution. Rather than becoming a ladder to success, the school becomes a pipeline to prison.⁴⁴

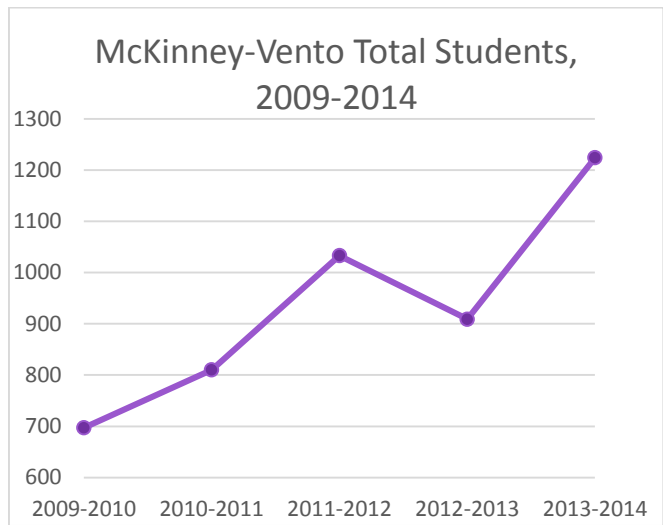
The suburbanization of the region and the concentration of poverty in the urban core contributed to the current status of many schools in Buffalo. According to a 2012 Partnership for the Public Good report entitled “Concentrated Poverty and Public Education,” the vast majority of Western New York’s highest ranked high schools are located in affluent suburbs, with the thirteen lowest ranked high schools located in the City of Buffalo.⁴⁵

For example, sixty years ago, Bennett High School was a model school for educators to observe. With over 2,000 students in the school and a wide variety of extracurricular programs, students excelled and the school had a positive reputation. Over time, however, Bennett became a school populated almost entirely by students living at or near poverty. Over the past two decades, Bennett has experienced significant declines that now leave the future of the school uncertain.⁴⁶

2013-2014 McKinney Vento Students (including charter and parochial schools)	
Grade	Number of Students
PK	109
K	131
1	128
2	84
3	96
4	102
5	97
6	89
7	90
8	65
9	72
10	52
11	56
12	53
Total	1224

Buffalo Public Schools data.

When an entire neighborhood is living in poverty, higher rates of crime occur. Stories from students who have seen family members and friends murdered due to gun violence are not uncommon. The mental impact of violence affects a student's motivation to attend school, and some may be too preoccupied following the deaths of family and friends to make time for school and homework. Students who get involved with gangs may have had high grades and expectations for themselves at one point, but attendance of students in gangs is significantly lower than that of their peers. Incarceration, increased drug use, and other circumstances cause many of them to eventually drop out. Students placed on probation for criminal activity are court-mandated to attend school, and probation officers check with the school regularly to ensure the student is attending; but absenteeism, suspensions, and disengagement tend to be high.



Buffalo Public Schools data; 2013 WNY Homeless Alliance annual report.

Recommendations for Buffalo

For schools to thrive, poverty and segregation in Buffalo must be addressed head-on. Decades of research have proven that family income is the single biggest factor in school success; thus, there is no education reform as powerful as reducing poverty. The tools to fight poverty include raising people's incomes through living wage jobs and reducing their expenses by making basic necessities such as health care, child care and transportation more affordable. While Buffalo is experiencing a welcome spate of economic development projects, it also needs reinvestment in neighborhoods, and, even more important, in residents.

It is unrealistic to expect schools to remedy poverty on their own; even well-educated workers will struggle if a large portion of the jobs available do not pay a living wage. But schools can play an important role in addressing poverty by becoming hubs for the kind of support services that help students and their families to thrive. The arrival of the Say Yes Foundation represents a great opportunity to make support services more complete and integrated. The district should also work with Erie County Department of Social Services to place caseworkers in schools. Families and students should be able to apply for public assistance, get questions answered, and resolve problems at schools, alleviating the need to skip class and wait in line at the downtown office. Caseworkers could also work directly with community partners and student support teams to ensure that all of the students' needs are being addressed, from academic support to family counseling.

Transportation

Transportation is another leading contributor to chronic absenteeism. In Buffalo, only 10% of students live within 1.5 miles of their school, which is considered walking distance.⁴⁷ Students who live further than 1.5 miles away are eligible to receive free bussing. Students in pre-K through eighth grade ride traditional yellow school buses (currently provided through a contract with First Student, although the bus aides are BPS employees).

In Buffalo, only 10% of students live within walking distance of their school.

High school students are given a transportation pass to be used on public buses or trains operated by the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA).⁴⁸ The current contract with the NFTA provides transportation on school days during designated times for arrival and dismissal. Students are only allowed to board at the stations identified on their pass. Free bussing ends 90 minutes after dismissal; the student must then pay standard fare. Each student is assigned a designated route that he or she must take on the trip home; thus, for example the bus pass cannot take a student home three days a week and to a community center the other two days.⁴⁹ Surprisingly, the district does not receive a discounted rate from the NFTA for bus passes – that is, the district pays the equivalent of a full-time pass, even though it can only be used for limited hours.⁵⁰

Issues arise when students miss the bus, the bus is late, or students lose their bus pass. Getting a new pass, or changing the route, is often an inconvenience, and each school has a different protocol for handing out passes. Transportation changes only take effect on Wednesdays, leaving a student who moves to a new home on a Thursday without district transportation to school for four days.⁵¹ Central Registration, which is responsible for student enrollment, hopes to attach bus passes to its regular registration process in the future to make some aspects of the process flow more smoothly.⁵² Depending on timing, students who miss one bus may not be able to use their passes for another bus before the cut-off time.⁵³ For students who live within 1.5 miles of school, the prospect of walking to school in frigid weather or biking in the snow can encourage absenteeism, especially for asthma sufferers. *See* below table ADA During Winter Months, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. A large portion of BPS households lack cars, which presents difficulties for students who are late or need to be driven to school.⁵⁴

Another concern with transportation lies in the safety of riding the bus. The district has disciplinary consequences for inappropriate behavior on the bus, but that does not necessarily stop children from getting bullied or experiencing other bad conduct.⁵⁵ At the high school level, students in opposing gangs get into fights both on the bus and in the metro rail stations. It would not be surprising if many students who skip school do so out of fear for their personal safety.

Recommendations for Buffalo

GO Bike Buffalo, a local non-profit working to create healthy, environmentally sustainable, community-friendly transportation options in the City of Buffalo, has worked diligently to develop maps under the “Safe Routes to Schools” (SRTS) program. By examining conditions around schools and conducting projects and activities that work to improve safety and accessibility, SRTS aims to make bicycling and walking to school safer and more appealing. Most schools have a kid-friendly map that details the traffic lights, bike lanes, and other important factors students can consider in determining the best commute to school.⁵⁶ GO Bike’s programs can help students get low-cost bicycles and learn how to maintain and repair them.



A “Walking School Bus” consists of adult volunteers who have agreed to escort students safely to school. Similar to a bus schedule, a timed route allows parents and guardians to know when the volunteers are coming down their street.⁵⁷ Federal funding for the Walking School Bus can be used for grades pre-K through eight.⁵⁸ This solution has worked successfully in Springfield, Massachusetts and other cities throughout the United States. In its second year, Springfield had three separate walking routes with about 134 students consistently walking to school each day.⁵⁹ At Olive Chapel Elementary School in North Carolina, "neighborhood captains" (parents) and children walk from six separate departure points to the school, and children who participate receive prizes.⁶⁰

GO Bike Buffalo rolled out the first Walking School Bus program in Buffalo at School 74 (Hamlin Park) during the 2012-2013 school year. School 74 was picked because the neighborhood had received a major infrastructure grant, primarily used to repair intersections and make them safer. The school has a higher rate of walkers than other schools because of its location, and thus obtaining a grant for the Walking School Bus was not particularly difficult. While the program was on hiatus over the past year because of changes in school personnel, GO Bike Buffalo hopes to start it back up.⁶¹

The Walking School Bus model may be effective in Buffalo, particularly during the fall and spring months. Volunteers from block clubs and other neighborhood groups may help to gather students to walk to school. Since students within an area do not all attend the nearby school, a good supplement to the Walking School Bus would be to have volunteers gather the students

who are getting bussed and wait at the bus stops with them.

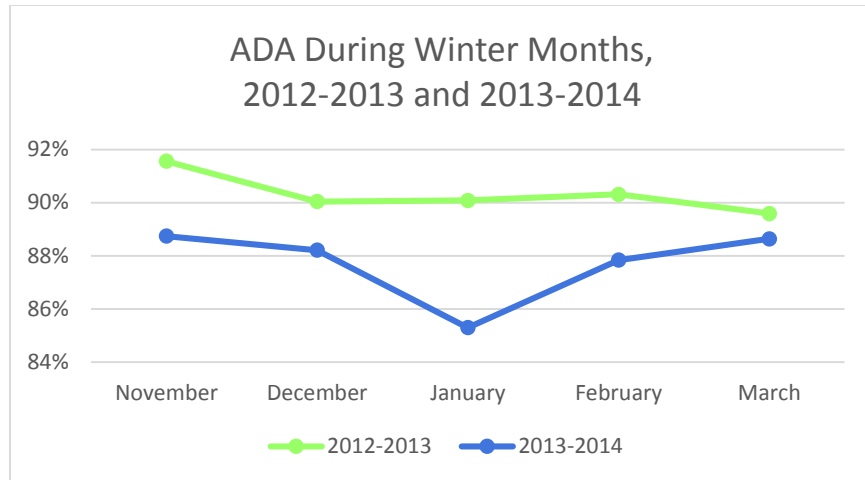
A more organized method of replacing lost bus passes and transferring routes will help high school students and bus drivers avoid confusion when the student needs a new pass or a bus route changed. Promptly addressing student safety concerns will restore students' sense of security in riding the bus. Negotiating a cheaper contract with the NFTA could free up funding for yellow busses to travel to designated zones throughout the city to pick up students who missed their school or NFTA bus. Students in other large cities receive discounts of up to 50%, and students at several colleges receive unlimited access. Even a 33% discount would save \$2.5 million for the BPS.⁶² In addition, the NFTA could provide students with a full-service bus pass, or at least offer more flexibility on times and destinations, to help students who miss busses, who have after school activities, or who need to start or return from different destinations.

Buffalo Public Schools could save millions of dollars by negotiating a discounted bus contract with the NFTA. Even a 33% discount would save BPS \$2.5 million.

Health

Health is closely linked to poverty as a root cause of absenteeism. Poverty is the biggest factor that affects a child's health, and health is one of the biggest factors in school attendance and success. A child's health starts with the mother's nutrition and prenatal care. Contributing to a child's development are the nature of parent-child interactions in the home and access to learning-oriented toys and age-appropriate activities that stimulate cognitive development. Environmentally unsafe housing and neighborhoods have led to higher rates of asthma among children living in poverty, and lead paint, asbestos, and other carcinogens are not uncommon in older, urban homes.⁶³ Fear of crime in unsafe neighborhoods often leads parents to keep their children inside and inactive, rather than playing actively outside.

The majority of children in the U.S. do not meet recommended levels of daily physical activity. The result of less opportunity for physical activity is poorer physical and mental health and much higher rates of obesity. Students who are overweight, have poor nutrition, and suffer from asthma or other respiratory illnesses are likely to get sick more frequently and miss school. Attendance drops significantly in the coldest months in Buffalo; this may stem in part from the exacerbation of asthma symptoms from cold air, as well as the fact that it is flu season.



Buffalo Public Schools data.

Mental Health

According to a study from the University of Pittsburgh, “the more stressors one is exposed to early in life, the greater the influence is on a poor quality of mental and physical health . . . Pregnant mothers in poverty typically don't get adequate nutrition while experiencing family and social pressures and stress.”⁶⁴

Societal factors can put a tremendous emotional strain on children’s health. Nationwide, 1 in 5 children have a diagnosable mental health disorder, but 75% to 80% of children in need of mental health services do not receive them.⁶⁵ Particularly in high school, students with mental health concerns often do not attend school regularly. While some students are referred to outside services, others opt to stay home or find a calm environment to help keep them relaxed.

Every school in the BPS has at least one social worker, but their caseload is often overwhelming, and one student can present a multitude of problems that take time to address. Teachers have expressed concern about inadequate support – at home, in the community, and in the schools themselves – for students struggling with multiple responsibilities and mental health issues.⁶⁶ According to a 2013 survey of roughly 5,500 high school students in the BPS, there has been a rise in suicide attempts that require medical treatment, and nearly 14% of all students surveyed reported suicidal thoughts.⁶⁷ Access to mental health services should improve somewhat with the addition of Say Yes Family Support Specialists and thirteen school-based mental health clinics, but further improvements remain imperative.⁶⁸



Recommendations for Buffalo

In many states, the flu vaccine is mandatory for preschoolers. In December 2013, the New York

City Board of Health approved a mandate requiring the flu vaccine for children under age 5 who attend daycare or pre-school.⁶⁹ The Rhode Island Department of Health has a program called “Vaccinate Before You Graduate,” which provides vaccines – including flu vaccine – to all high school students in the state at no cost.⁷⁰ Mandatory, free vaccinations offered at the schools themselves could help BPS improve attendance and prevent the spread of disease among students, teachers, and staff.

Continued work with community partners and social service agencies to provide more mental health counseling will help increase attendance rates. Students who know they can receive mental health services at school may be more likely to attend. Working within the school itself will allow providers to address issues related to home environment, school anxiety, reduce bullying, and make school a more positive place for students to attend and feel safe.

School Climate, Engagement, and Discipline

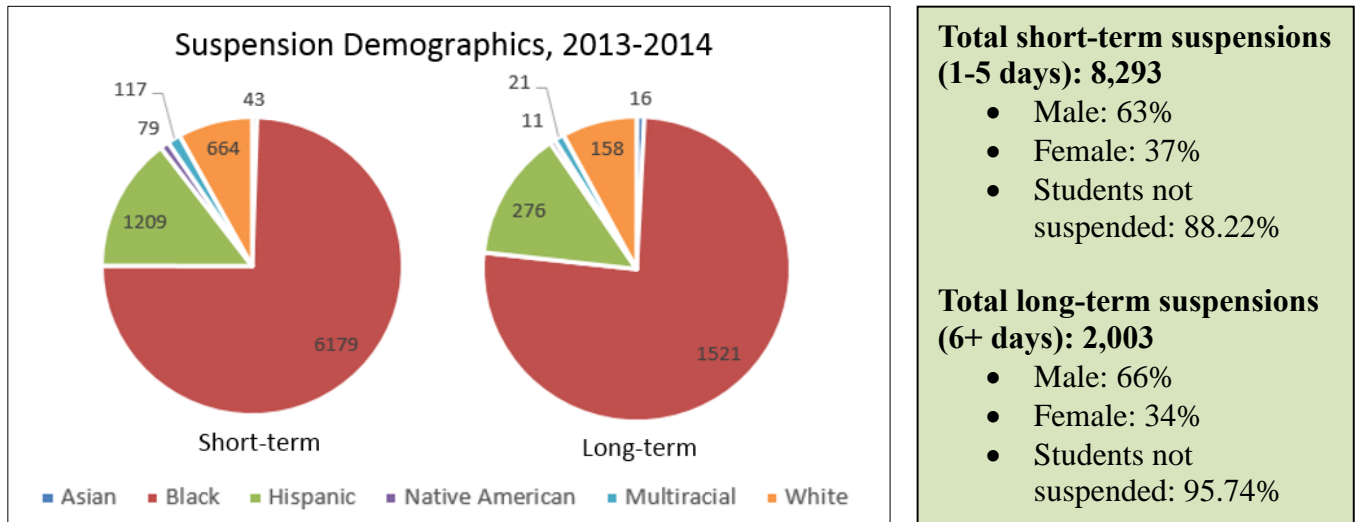
Schools need to be inviting places for students to learn and families to feel comfortable. The climate of a school is reflected in the way staff and students influence each other. Positive energy, a fun and culturally-sensitive curriculum, and mutual respect make both staff and students excited to be there. Without enthusiasm for educating and a willingness to help students grow, students do not feel attending school is worth their time.

Students in low-performing schools often do not feel engaged in the classroom. Lesson plans have become overly geared toward standardized test preparation, especially with the Common Core curriculum. Teachers may not be sensitive to the racial and cultural makeup of the student body. Low grades contribute to the expectation that they will fail. Sometimes they might only be missing a handful of credits required for graduation, but they drop out.

Many of these sentiments develop in the ninth grade. Taking public (NFTA) bus transportation instead of a yellow school bus, students are more responsible for getting themselves to school and feel a new sense of freedom. It is not unusual to see a group of students hanging out at a store near the school before, during, and after school hours. The bus drops them off at school, but the driver is not responsible for seeing them step inside.⁷¹ Students tend to converge at convenience stores or parks; they feel rebellious by skipping school and feel pressured to do so.

According to the BPS Code of Conduct, schools must offer alternative instruction (either on-site at the school or off-site at an alternative location) to suspended students of compulsory attendance age. Schools must provide the alternative instruction as soon as possible once a student is suspended, and in no case later than the third day of suspension.⁷² However, it is the student’s own responsibility to attend; the district does not provide additional bussing or a separate bus pass for off-site alternative instruction. Thus, if a student from South Buffalo attends South Park High School, he or she cannot use a bus pass to take the NFTA bus to the Alternative School, which is located on the East Side. If suspended students do not find another

mode of transportation, they simply do not attend.⁷³



Students who serve out-of-school suspensions are marked as “exempt” from their regular school attendance and they do not affect the school’s average daily attendance rate.⁷⁴ Obviously, however, students serving out of school suspensions are not attending their regular schools, and so the questions of school discipline and attendance are inseparable. In addition, students serving out-of-school suspensions are likely to get into further trouble and form the habit of doing things other than going to school during the day.

Recommendations for Buffalo

Improving school climate is an integral component to improving attendance in BPS. In order to improve school climate, BPS should increase its emphasis on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and incorporate SEL into all of its existing academic programs. Although Common Core State Standards are increasing pressure on schools for improved test scores, the standards also require that students collaborate, see others’ perspectives, and persevere in solving problems.⁷⁵ BPS should not look at SEL as separate from academic and cognitive success. Instead, Buffalo must recognize the convergence of academic, social, and emotional learning, and the importance of SEL for improving school climate, engagement, and attendance, and reducing disciplinary issues and suspensions.⁷⁶

Reducing out-of-school suspensions through the use of restorative justice practices and other, more therapeutic approaches is a critical component of SEL, and is vital to improving attendance and reducing disciplinary recidivism rates in Buffalo. Restorative Justice is a way of creating justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal or rule-breaking behavior, rather than simply punishing it.⁷⁷ Restorative practices such as peace circles and community conferencing are effective in response to disciplinary issues in schools and also as a proactive tool to build relationships and trust in the classroom.⁷⁸ Schools using restorative practices in

cities such as Chicago, Baltimore, Denver, and Oakland have seen improvements in attendance, graduation rates and school climate.⁷⁹ BPS embraced the restorative philosophy by revising its Code of Conduct in 2013.⁸⁰ Now it is imperative that district leadership send a clear message that implementation of restorative practices is mandatory at all schools and promptly provide training for all school staff.

Restorative Justice is a way of creating justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal or rule-breaking behavior, rather than simply punishing it.

In order to prioritize improving school climate, BPS should also institute a comprehensive annual survey to collect data on school climate from teachers, parents, and students at each school. Recently, an education professor at Buffalo State College and the head of the Niagara Health Quality Coalition, in cooperation with the Buffalo Teachers Federation, implemented a school climate survey for all BPS teachers. The 25-question survey got responses from 1,763 teachers in 47 city schools on how much the existing school climate helps or hinders teachers, and only four schools scored above the half-way mark.⁸¹

BPS should follow the lead of Baltimore City Public Schools and utilize an annual school climate survey to more accurately assess the current situation at each school, while communicating to parents and students that their opinion counts.⁸² The Baltimore data is publicly available each year and provides useful information related to safety (physical safety, bullying, substance use, social-emotional wellbeing), engagement (connectedness, academic emphasis, parent involvement, culture of inclusion) and environment (order and discipline, physical environment, support services).⁸³

Baltimore City Public Schools also utilizes a “school climate walk” that helps members of the school community make specific observations and create a feedback loop with school leadership regarding strengths and concerns about the school environment, staff, and students.⁸⁴ In 2015, in partnership with BPS and Attendance Works, Citizen Action of New York and Public Policy and Education Fund of New York are planning to pilot a Climate Walk in BPS that will build upon the work in Baltimore and involve both the parents and the community in the process.

Mindfulness programs also have been shown across the country to improve school climate.⁸⁵ According to a San Francisco Bay Area-based program called Mindful Schools, “Mindfulness is a particular way of paying attention. It is the mental faculty of purposefully bringing awareness to one’s experience. Mindfulness can be applied to sensory experience, thoughts, and emotions by using sustained attention and noticing our experience without reacting.”⁸⁶ Mindful Schools offers online mindfulness training to teachers, instructing them in how to

equip children to concentrate in classrooms and deal with stress.⁸⁷ University of California, Davis conducted a study at three public elementary schools in underserved neighborhoods in the City of Oakland. After only four hours of mindfulness training over a course of six weeks, students receiving the training had markedly higher success in factors such as paying attention in class, social compliance, and showing care for others than did untrained students.⁸⁸

Lastly, teacher training and preparation programs in Buffalo, and New York State generally, should equip new and existing teachers with the core skills necessary to foster SEL and therefore improve school climate.⁸⁹

Teachers are under an immense amount of pressure, and they need guidance in creating the safe and engaging classrooms that students need to learn. BPS should institute mandatory staff training in SEL topics, such as restorative practices, cultural sensitivity, anti-oppression, trauma informed care, and self-care for teachers.

After only four hours of mindfulness training over a course of six weeks, elementary school students in Oakland had markedly higher success in factors such as paying attention in class, social compliance, and showing care for others.

New York State should require teacher colleges to provide more robust courses on each of these topics and mandate them for new teachers to graduate and become certified. In the meantime, BPS should coordinate with the primary teacher colleges in Buffalo and should only hire new teachers that have been well educated on these topics. BPS should also revise its curriculum to include more culturally-sensitive courses such as African American history to more accurately reflect the racial and cultural makeup of its student body.

Appendix 1: Breakdown of Buffalo Public Schools Regents Exam Passage Rate by Attendance Category, June 2014 (BPS data)

Examination:	Regents Algebra2/Trigonometry				Grand Total	Not Passing	Passing
	Standard Achieved						
Attendance Category	0 - 55	55 - 64	65 - 84	85 - 100			
1 - Satisfactory	119	48	78	43	288	58.0%	42.0%
2 - Risk	133	28	51	15	227	70.9%	29.1%
3 - Chronic	91	20	25	5	141	78.7%	21.3%
4 - Severe	34	6	3		43	93.0%	7.0%
Grand Total	377	102	157	63	699	68.5%	31.5%

Examination:	Regents English				Grand Total	Not Passing	Passing
	Standard Achieved						
Attendance Category	0 - 55	55 - 64	65 - 84	85 - 100			
1 - Satisfactory	62	33	209	157	461	20.6%	79.4%
2 - Risk	66	53	208	131	458	26.0%	74.0%
3 - Chronic	108	84	299	93	584	32.9%	67.1%
4 - Severe	179	106	264	26	575	49.6%	50.4%
Grand Total	415	276	980	407	2078	33.3%	66.7%

Examination:	Regents Geometry				Grand Total	Not Passing	Passing
	Standard Achieved						
Attendance Category	0 - 55	55 - 64	65 - 84	85 - 100			
1 - Satisfactory	109	81	183	74	447	42.5%	57.5%
2 - Risk	141	63	124	25	353	57.8%	42.2%
3 - Chronic	170	67	68	8	313	75.7%	24.3%
4 - Severe	122	34	12	2	170	91.8%	8.2%
Grand Total	542	245	387	109	1283	61.3%	38.7%

Examination:	Regents Global History				Grand Total	Not Passing	Passing
	Standard Achieved						
Attendance Category	0 - 55	55 - 64	65 - 84	85 - 100			
1 - Satisfactory	150	69	266	160	645	34.0%	66.0%
2 - Risk	193	79	235	65	572	47.6%	52.4%
3 - Chronic	348	96	287	38	769	57.7%	42.3%
4 - Severe	447	114	194	20	775	72.4%	27.6%
Grand Total	1138	358	982	283	2761	54.2%	45.8%

Examination:	Regents Integrated Algebra				Grand Total	Not Passing	Passing
	Standard Achieved						
Attendance Category	0 - 55	55 - 64	65 - 84	85 - 100			
1 - Satisfactory	101	116	486	71	774	28.0%	72.0%
2 - Risk	151	127	405	35	718	38.7%	61.3%
3 - Chronic	243	189	366	9	807	53.5%	46.5%
4 - Severe	297	199	242	1	739	67.1%	32.9%
Grand Total	792	631	1499	116	3038	46.8%	53.2%

Examination:	Regents Living Environment				Grand Total	Not Passing	Passing
	Standard Achieved						
Attendance Category	0 - 55	55 - 64	65 - 84	85 - 100			
1 - Satisfactory	91	79	318	134	622	27.3%	72.7%
2 - Risk	109	97	294	75	575	35.8%	64.2%
3 - Chronic	184	129	305	27	645	48.5%	51.5%
4 - Severe	279	141	206	9	635	66.1%	33.9%
Grand Total	663	446	1123	245	2477	44.8%	55.2%

Examination:	Regents Phy Set/Chemistry				Grand Total	Not Passing	Passing
	Standard Achieved						
Attendance Category	0 - 55	55 - 64	65 - 84	85 - 100			
1 - Satisfactory	58	65	137	34	294	41.8%	58.2%
2 - Risk	84	79	93	7	263	62.0%	38.0%
3 - Chronic	63	49	48	3	163	68.7%	31.3%
4 - Severe	21	19	10		50	80.0%	20.0%
Grand Total	226	212	288	44	770	56.9%	43.1%

Examination:	Regents Phy Set/Earth Science				Grand Total	Not Passing	Passing
	Standard Achieved						
Attendance Category	0 - 55	55 - 64	65 - 84	85 - 100			
1 - Satisfactory	91	63	115	55	324	47.5%	52.5%
2 - Risk	125	69	95	25	314	61.8%	38.2%
3 - Chronic	154	53	79	6	292	70.9%	29.1%
4 - Severe	126	22	32	2	182	81.3%	18.7%
Grand Total	496	207	321	88	1112	63.2%	36.8%

Examination:	Regents Phy Set/Physics				Grand Total	Not Passing	Passing
	Standard Achieved						
Attendance Category	0 - 55	55 - 64	65 - 84	85 - 100			
1 - Satisfactory	22	19	47	29	117	35.0%	65.0%
2 - Risk	18	11	31	12	72	40.3%	59.7%
3 - Chronic	20	9	18	5	52	55.8%	44.2%
4 - Severe	6		5	1	12	50.0%	50.0%
Grand Total	66	39	101	47	253	41.5%	58.5%

Examination:	Regents US History&Gov't				Grand Total	Not Passing	Passing
	Standard Achieved						
Attendance Category	0 - 55	55 - 64	65 - 84	85 - 100			
1 - Satisfactory	59	38	180	161	438	22.1%	77.9%
2 - Risk	83	39	196	119	437	27.9%	72.1%
3 - Chronic	148	58	313	89	608	33.9%	66.1%
4 - Severe	234	85	262	32	613	52.0%	48.0%
Grand Total	524	220	951	401	2096	35.5%	64.5%

OSA: 12/10/14, gtg

Sources: Data Warehouse-L2RPT; Infinite Campus

**Appendix 2: Breakdown of Chronic and Severe Absenteeism by Race, 2013-2014
(BPS data)**

School Name	Chronic and Severe Absences		Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (%)	Black		Hispanic		White	
	Total Students	Severe Absences		Total Black Students	Chronic and Severe Absences	Total Hispanic Students	Chronic and Severe Absences	Total White Students	Chronic and Severe Absences
0003 D'Youville Porter Campus	770	376	83	146	33.56	509	54.22	54	59.26
0006 Buffalo ES of Technology	707	270	89	376	40.16	47	53.19	78	53.85
0017 Early Childhood Center	470	217	89	287	45.30	99	50.51	50	52.00
0018 Dr. Antonia Pantoja	610	192	80	227	30.84	160	53.13	54	31.48
0019 Native American Magnet	614	174	96	226	21.68	80	43.75	52	46.15
0027 Hillery Park Elementary	724	270	82	222	41.89	82	50.00	355	32.96
0030 Frank A Sedita Academy	851	423	85	144	27.78	614	57.49	41	46.34
0031 Harriet Ross Tubman	470	269	91	378	57.94	29	62.07	43	48.84
0032 Bennett Park Montessori	913	245	71	587	29.64	60	25.00	198	18.18
0033 Bilingual Center	539	314	85	35	62.86	383	60.31	94	50.00
0037 Futures Academy	579	319	96	443	54.63	57	64.91	40	57.50
0039 MLK-Multicultural Inst.	688	312	90	617	45.22	39	53.85	12	16.67
0043 Lovejoy Discovery School	701	285	82	158	32.28	97	53.61	382	40.58
0045 International School	851	49	92	264	8.71	60	3.33	114	11.40
0053 Community School	454	216	89	385	45.45	32	65.63	20	45.00
0054 Dr G. Blackman Sch Of Exc.	576	231	85	426	38.03	36	52.78	73	41.10
0059 Dr.C.R.Drew Sci Magnet	859	404	94	593	49.95	66	48.52	106	41.02
0061 Early Childhood Center	337	175	98	285	50.53	20	75.00	14	64.29
0064 Frederick Law Olmsted North	627	76	32	173	10.40	111	28.83	295	6.78
0065 Roosevelt ECC	418	194	83	129	48.06	110	46.36	130	46.92
0066 North Park Middle Academy	377	161	81	259	39.00	32	71.88	73	39.73
0067 Discovery School	656	133	38	92	29.35	58	22.41	474	18.35
0069 Houghton Academy	598	323	85	181	46.96	67	74.63	306	54.25
0072 Lorraine Elementary	767	319	81	214	49.53	103	48.54	393	35.37
0074 Hamlin Park School	577	237	82	501	39.72	40	45.00	24	62.50
0076 Herman Badillo Bilingual Acad.	803	450	81	76	35.53	679	59.50	32	37.50
0079 Pfc. W.J. Grabiarz Sch Of Exc.	590	254	95	233	45.06	152	50.66	144	39.58
0080 Highgate Heights Elementary	526	184	90	464	33.84	21	52.38	16	37.50

School Name	Chronic and Severe Absences		Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (%)		Total Black Students		Black Chronic and Severe Absences		Total Hispanic Students		Hispanic Chronic and Severe Absences		Total White Students		White Chronic and Severe Absences	
	Total Students	Chronic and Severe Absences	Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (%)	Total Black Students	Black Chronic and Severe Absences	Total Hispanic Students	Hispanic Chronic and Severe Absences	Total White Students	White Chronic and Severe Absences							
0081 Buffalo Public School 81	881	244	77	365	24.38	135	34.81	282	27.30							
0082 Early Childhood Center	576	297	95	472	49.15	43	58.14	34	61.76							
0089 Dr. Lydia T. Wright School	811	323	83	730	38.63	41	58.54	15	46.67							
0091 B.U.I.L.D. Academy	534	289	97	481	53.64	21	66.67	12	58.33							
0093 Southside Elementary	1263	278	86	257	22.57	174	21.26	685	23.21							
0094 West Hertel Academy	951	412	95	336	46.13	194	58.76	146	48.63							
0095 Waterfront Elementary	975	348	96	399	31.08	208	50.96	141	43.26							
0097 Harvey Austin School	508	259	92	442	50.45	29	51.72	21	61.90							
0099 Stanley M. Makowski E.C.C.	819	323	96	600	41.50	59	52.54	44	29.55							
0115 Buffalo Public School 115	465	135	N/A	402	28.61	34	26.47	16	12.50							
0131 The Academy Schools	411	310	N/A	274	79.56	43	74.42	46	71.74							
0156 Frederick Law Olmsted School	696	202	55	324	30.25	91	39.56	214	25.70							
0187 Buffalo Academy for Arts	808	306	68	500	32.20	128	50.78	154	45.45							
0195 City Honors School at FMP	979	108	27	191	9.95	69	14.49	632	11.08							
0197 Math Science Technology Prep	537	347	76	464	64.22	26	69.23	23	73.91							
0198 International Prep at Grover	609	277	87	307	48.53	116	60.34	47	48.94							
0200 Bennett High School	645	503	86	525	80.57	43	72.09	32	78.13							
0204 Lafayette High School	805	423	68	191	43.98	219	84.02	92	44.57							
0205 Riverside Inst. of Technology	890	613	74	343	69.39	237	80.59	108	78.70							
0206 South Park High School	974	634	63	259	64.48	179	75.98	482	62.86							
0212 Leonardo da Vinci High School	410	134	55	162	30.86	60	43.33	156	32.05							
0301 Burgard High School	626	362	71	481	58.21	43	46.51	42	69.05							
0302 Emerson School of Hospitality	457	265	73	273	57.14	81	69.14	87	57.47							
0304 Hutchinson Central Technical	1107	415	60	464	30.60	173	43.93	378	44.71							
0305 McKinley High School	991	593	77	584	57.88	184	73.37	148	58.78							
0307 East High School	454	360	76	390	80.00	22	86.36	13	61.54							
0415 Middle Early College H.S.	311	88	N/A	225	23.56	33	39.39	51	39.22							
Total	37145	15920	79.96	18562	42.57	6528	53.29	7768	44.58							

Appendix 3: Absenteeism Among Elementary Schools and High Schools With Over 30% English Language Learners, 2013-2014 (BPS data)

School Name	Total Students	LEP Students		LEP Students		LEP Students		LEP Students		Severe (%)	ADA (%)
		Total LEP Students	w/ Satisfactory Absences	Satisfactory (%)	w/At-Risk Absences	At-Risk (%)	w/Chronic Absences	Chronic (%)	w/Severe Absences		
0006 Buffalo Ele Sch of Technology	707	272	102	37.50	89	32.72	55	20.22	26	9.56	91.93
0018 Dr. Antonia Pantoja Sch Ac Exc	610	239	129	53.97	67	28.03	30	12.55	13	5.44	94.46
0019 Native American Magnet	614	210	118	56.19	61	29.05	24	11.43	7	3.33	94.34
0030 Frank A Sedita Academy	851	340	66	19.41	85	25.00	116	34.12	73	21.47	86.12
0033 Bilingual Center	539	253	42	16.60	55	21.74	86	33.99	70	27.67	84.77
0045 International School	851	473	447	94.50	15	3.17	8	1.69	3	0.63	99.59
0076 Herman Badillo Bilingual Acad	803	407	56	13.76	110	27.03	156	38.33	85	20.88	86.40
0093 Southside Elementary	1263	103	68	66.02	19	18.45	12	11.65	4	3.88	95.19
0198 International Prep at Grover	609	188	97	51.60	33	17.55	29	15.43	29	15.43	91.76
0204 Lafayette High School	805	569	184	32.34	87	15.29	137	24.08	161	28.30	85.09
0205 Riverside Inst. of Technology	890	292	78	26.71	59	20.21	64	21.92	91	31.16	83.43
Total	8542	3346	1387	42.60	680	21.66	717	20.49	562	15.25	90.28

Appendix 4: Comparison of Chronic and Severe Attendance Rates for High-Performing and Low-Performing Schools, 2013-2014 (BPS data)

2014 Business First Ranking	School Name	Total Students	Total Chronic and Severely Absent Students	Chronic and Severely Absent Students (%)	ADA (%)	Free and Reduced-Price Lunch (%)
20	0064 Frederick Law Olmsted North	627	76	12.12	94.97	32
129	0067 Discovery School	656	133	20.27	93.66	38
171	0081 Buffalo Public School 81	881	244	27.70	91.82	77
200	0079 Pfc. W. J. Grabiarz Sch Of Exc	590	254	43.05	89.64	95
213	0072 Lorraine Elementary	767	319	41.59	89.41	81
272	0091 B.U.I.L.D. Academy	534	289	54.12	86.60	97
273	0053 Community School	454	216	47.58	88.36	89
274	0006 Buffalo Ele Sch of Technology	707	270	38.19	90.27	89
275	0031 Harriet Ross Tubman School	470	269	57.23	86.79	31
276	0037 Futures Academy	579	319	55.09	87.95	96
1	0195 City Honors School at FMP	979	108	11.03	95.11	27
72	0156 Frederick Law Olmsted School	696	202	29.02	91.42	55
83	0304 Hutchinson Central Technical	1107	415	37.49	89.36	60
133	0205 Riverside Inst. of Technology	890	613	68.88	76.27	74
134	0204 Lafayette High School	805	423	52.55	84.52	68
135	0301 Burgard High School	626	362	57.83	82.94	71

Appendix 5: Schools with over 50% of Special Education Students Chronically or Severely Absent, 2013-2014 (BPS data)

School Name	SpEd Students	SpEd Students w/Chronic or Severe Absences	SpEd Students with Chronic or Severe Absences (%)
0131 The Academy Schools	74	63	85.14
0200 Bennett High School	154	124	80.52
0205 Riverside Inst. of Technology	156	125	80.13
0307 East High School	101	80	79.21
0204 Lafayette High School	152	109	71.71
0030 Frank A Sedita Academy	166	119	71.69
0197 Math Science Technology Prep	113	81	71.68
0003 D'Youville Porter Campus	109	72	66.06
0305 McKinley High School	187	117	62.57
0031 Harriet Ross Tubman School	135	83	61.48
0198 International Prep at Grover	106	65	61.32
0076 Herman Badillo Bilingual Acad	175	106	60.57
0206 South Park High School	236	141	59.75
0091 B.U.I.L.D. Academy	121	70	57.85
0033 Bilingual Center	124	71	57.26
0018 Dr. Antonia Pantoja Sch Ac Exc	128	72	56.25
0006 Buffalo Ele Sch of Technology	105	59	56.19
0094 West Hertel Academy	143	80	55.94
0097 Harvey Austin School	124	69	55.65
0301 Burgard High School	166	91	54.82
0082 Early Childhood Center	160	87	54.38
0037 Futures Academy	159	86	54.09
0072 Lorraine Elementary	179	95	53.07
0302 Emerson School of Hospitality	119	63	52.94
0059 Dr.C.R.Drew Sci Magnet Museum	80	42	52.50
0069 Houghton Academy	133	68	51.13
0053 Community School	109	55	50.46
0212 Leonardo da Vinci High School	50	25	50.00
0061 Early Childhood Center	74	37	50.00

Appendix 6: Students Receiving Free or Reduced-Price Lunch by Attendance Category, 2013-2014 (BPS data)

Students Receiving Free or Reduced-Price Lunch By Attendance Category, 2013-2014					
Attendance Category	All Students	Free Meal	Reduced-Price Meal	Total Free and Reduced-Price	Percentage of Students
Satisfactory	11841	7889	549	8438	25.00%
At-Risk	8655	6434	309	6743	19.98%
Chronic	8484	6820	160	6980	20.68%
Severe	4769	3777	51	3828	11.34%
Total	33749	24920	1069	25989	77.01%

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