



BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of Shared Accountability

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To: Dr. Kriner Cash, Superintendent
From: Ebony E. Bullock, Chief Accountability Officer
Date: January 14, 2021
Re: Graduation Rate Data Highlights – January 2021 Release

This document is intended to complement the New York State Education Department (NYSED)'s release of the Cohort 2016 Graduation Rate data. The graduation rate for the Buffalo Public Schools increased for a fourth straight year, with 76.3% of the students in cohort 2016 graduating in four years, by August 2020. This represents an 11.6% increase from the previous graduating cohort (64.7%). Further, the District out-performed the state graduating average for English Language Learners and Students with Disabilities.

These increases are due to strategic innovation within the Education Bargain with Students and Parents and the Buffalo Public Schools transformational turnaround plan. Graduation rates have risen, technological innovation is a hallmark attribute, and the District is providing greater programmatic access, equity, quality, and opportunity for all students than ever before – all under extreme changes that came with the Covid-19 pandemic and remote instruction.

Table 1: Graduation Rates – Cohort 2014- 2016

	Cohort 2016	Cohort 2015	Cohort 2014
4 Year (August)	76.3%	64.7%	64.5%
5 Year (August)		70.7%	68.4%
6 Year (August)			69.6%

In recent years the District showed gains in graduation rates, however the gain for Cohort 2016 by 11.6% was achieved during a global pandemic. The graduation rate for English Language Learners (ELLs) rose from 33.2% to 57.5% (+24.3%) for the first time in recent years and exceeded the state average of 45.7%. The graduation rate for Students with Disabilities (SWDs) rose from 51.9% to 64.2% (+12.3%), outperforming the state average of 62.2%.

The achievement gap between white students and black students continues to persist, however the gap between white and black students narrowed from 12.3% to 5.5% (-6.8%). The gap between white students and Hispanic students narrowed slightly from 16.5% to 15.7% (-0.8%). Of special note, the graduation rate for black students increased by 14.2% and the graduation rate for Hispanic students increased by 8.2%.

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Twelve out of the twenty high schools had a graduation rate that exceeded 80%. Although the overall dropout rate decreased from 15.2% to 12.5% (-2.7), it still exceeded the state average of 5.1%.

Table 2: Big 5 City School District Cohort June Graduation Rates

Big 5 City School District Cohort June Graduation Rates			
	2015	2016	% Point Change
Statewide	83.4	84.8	+1.4
NYC	77.3	78.8	+1.5
Buffalo	64.7	76.3	+11.6
Rochester	63.0	68.2	+5.2
Syracuse	64.5	70.7	+6.2
Yonkers	88.0	90.6	+2.6

Graduation Projections vs. Actual Graduation Rate and the Impact of Regents Exemptions

Prior to the March 2020 closing of schools due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Buffalo Public Schools was projecting a graduation rate of 71.7%. The expectation was that 1870 of 2477 students would receive a Regents or Local Diploma by August. This was based on a revamped tracking model in the district that students in need of 2 or fewer Regents Examinations who also have at least 16 credits are on track to graduate by August.

Of the 1889 Graduates from the 2016 Cohort, 1466 (78%) graduated without needing any exemptions to meet the NYS graduation requirements, although they *may* have used exemptions to receive a credential beyond a Regents or Local Diploma. The remainder of the cohort breaks down as follows: 210 students (11%) used 1 exemption, 95 (5%) used 2 exemptions, 55 (3%) used 3 exemptions, 46 (2%) used 4 exemptions, and 17 students (1%) used exemptions for all 5 Regents Exam requirements.

Table 3: Graduation Rate by Exemptions

Number of Exemptions	Percent of Graduates	Projected Graduation Rate
0	78%	59.5
1	11%	67.9 (+8.4)
2	5%	71.7 (+3.8)
Total	71.7%	

The district’s expectation is that students in need of 2 or fewer Regents Examinations in their final year will graduate by August. The numbers above show that **without the option for an exemption** on one or more exams, the graduation rate would have been around **71.7%**. Our ELLs and SWDs benefitted from the exemptions. 45.5% of graduating ELLs took advantage of one or more exemptions and 34.8% of graduating SWDs used one or more exemptions. 21 students are included in both of these subgroups.

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1466 (0 exemptions) + 210 (1 exemption) + 95 (2 exemptions) = 1771 potential graduates
 $1771/2477 = 71.7\%$ (this would have been an increase of 6.6%)

Initiatives in Place to Support Students and Increase Graduation Rates

The data in the preceding section illustrates that the development of the Graduation Tracker in the Buffalo Data Dashboard, as well as the work of multiple levels of support in keeping the data clean, has allowed the Buffalo Schools to address student challenges towards meeting graduation requirements and implement immediate interventions. In addition, the district has taken the following steps:

- New innovative high schools were introduced, and 4 of those schools graduated their first class in 2020.
- One of the new innovative high schools (Lafayette) was developed to support ELL students. The graduation rate for their first cohort was 82.8%.
- The Innovative Transformational Equity Zone (ITEZ) was implemented to support 6 of the districts struggling high schools:
 - Tiered support for the principal and leadership team with most receiving 1 weekly 90-minute session with the ASL
 - Classroom visit protocols to support high quality instruction for all students
 - Systematic cohort tracking of individual students starting with the graduating cohort and expanding to 9th grade
 - Team development including instructional leaders along with the administrative team
 - Implementation of a Data Champion liaison to support the systematic cohort tracking plan

Superintendent Cash created the Innovation Technology Equity Zone in the BPS at the beginning of 2019 and hired talented administrator Toyia Wilson to lead it. Six high schools were identified for the ITEZ due to their 4-year graduation rates being persistently below 70%. First year results: Five of the six schools had double-digit increases. They included McKinley High School at 87.1% (+14.9), International Prep High School at 73.0% (+16.5), Math Science Technology High School at 67.4% (+17.4), Burgard High School at 64.2% (+13.9), and Academy (alternative-transfer high school) at 20.3% (+5.9). East Community High school graduated its first class (47.7%); therefore, there is no year-to-year comparison.

High Schools that had a 2020 Graduation Rate of 80% or higher

In Buffalo, twelve of the city's high schools had graduation rates of 80% or higher: Buffalo School of Culinary Arts and Hospitality, Buffalo Academy - Visual & Performing Arts, City Honors, DaVinci High School, Emerson School of Hospitality, Hutchinson Central Tech HS, Frederick Olmsted #156, Leonardo Da Vinci High School, Lewis J. Bennett HS of Innovative Tech, McKinley High School, Middle Early College High School, and Research Laboratory HS – Bioinformatics.. Fifteen of BPS high schools have graduation rates that exceed the 67% ESSSA graduation requirements within 4, 5, or 6 years: Buffalo School of Culinary Arts and Hospitality, Buffalo Academy - Visual & Performing Arts, City Honors, DaVinci High School, Hutchinson Central Tech HS, International Prep School, Frederick Olmsted #156, International Prep High School, Lafayette International High School, Lewis J. Bennett HS of Innovative Tech, Math, Science Technology Prep-197, McKinley High School, Middle Early College High School, Research Laboratory, and South Park High School.

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Table 4: BPS Schools Total Cohort 4 Year Graduation Rates (August)

Schools	Percent Change from Cohort 2015 to Cohort 2016	Total 2016 Cohort 4 Year Graduation Rate (Aug)	Total 2015 Cohort 4 Year Graduation Rate (Aug)	Total 2014 Cohort 4 Year Graduation Rate (Aug)
City Honors School*	+3.5%	98.7%	95.2%	98.6%
Research Laboratory HS-Bioinformatics*	N/A	96.3%		
Middle Early College High School*	+15.7%	96.1%	80.4%	90.8%
Leonardo Da Vinci High School*	-4.3%	94.6%	98.9%	92.7%
Frederick Olmstead #156*	-1.9%	94.3%	96.2%	90.6%
Buffalo Academy-Vis & Perf Arts*	+1.9%	92.1%	90.2%	91.2%
Hutchinson Central Tech High School*	-0.1%	88.8%	88.9%	87.9%
Lewis J Bennett HS of Innovative Tech*	N/A	88.1%		
McKinley Voc High School*	+14.9%	87.1%	72.2%	77.1%
Buffalo-Culinary Art, Hospitality*	-0.3%	84.9%	85.2%	
Emerson School of Hospitality*	+5.1%	83.5%	78.4%	79.8%
Lafayette International School*	N/A	82.8%		
International Prep School*	+16.5%	73.0%	56.5%	69.7%
South Park High School*	+6.5%	71.6%	65.1%	74.9%
Newcomer Academy at Lafayette**	+13.9%	70.2%	56.3%	60.8%
Math Science Tech Prep School - 197	+17.4%	67.4%	50.0%	48.7%
Burgard High School	+13.9%	64.2%	50.3%	46.6%
East Community High School	N/A	47.7%		
Pathways Academy	+11.6%	21.6%	10.0%	
Academy School	+5.9%	20.3%	14.4%	6.9%
Riverside Academy High School***				

*ESSA graduation rates that exceed the 67% ESSA graduation requirements within 4, 5 or 6 years.

**Closed.

***Graduation cohort data not yet available.

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Graduation Rate Table Color Code	
Greater than 67%	Green
50%-66.9%	Yellow
Less than 50%	Red
No Data	Grey

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Table 5: BPS Schools Total Cohort 4, 5, and 6 Year Graduation Rates (August)

Schools	Total 2016 Cohort 4 Year Graduation Rate (Aug)	Total 2015 Cohort 5 Year Graduation Rate (Aug)	Total 2014 Cohort 6 Year Graduation Rate (Aug)
City Honors School*	98.7%	100.00%	100.00%
Research Laboratory HS-Bioinformatics*	96.3%		
Middle Early College High School*	96.1%	82.4%	92.3%
Leonardo Da Vinci High School*	94.6%	98.9%	96.9%
Frederick Olmstead #156*	94.3%	98.1%	97.1%
Buffalo Academy-Vis & Perf Arts*	92.1%	90.2%	93.1%
Hutchinson Central Tech High School*	88.8%	90.4%	89.2%
Lewis J Bennett HS of Innovative Tech*	88.1%		
McKinley Voc High School*	87.1%	80.1%	80.8%
Buffalo-Culinary Art, Hospitality*	84.9%	90.1%	
Emerson School of Hospitality*	83.5%	85.6%	87.8%
Lafayette International School*	82.8%		
International Prep School*	73.0%	70.1%	73.0%
South Park High School*	71.6%	72.6%	76.9%
Newcomer Academy at Lafayette**	70.2%	71.8%	37.7%
Math Science Tech Prep School - 197	67.4%	67.1%	58.4%
Burgard High School	64.2%	58.4%	52.2%
East Community High School	47.7%	10.5%	0.0%
Pathways Academy	21.6%	28.1%	36.1%
Academy School	20.3%	22.6%	14.3%
Riverside Academy High School***			

*ESSA graduation rates that exceed the 67% ESSA graduation requirements within 4, 5 or 6 years.

**Closed.

***Graduation cohort data not yet available.

Graduation Rate Table Color Code	
Greater than 67%	
50%-66.9%	
Less than 50%	
No Data	

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