

## **DISTRICT UPDATE 11-19-21**

### **DR. KRINER CASH, SUPERINTENDENT**

Dear Buffalo Public Schools Community,

As we approach the holiday season, we continue to be fully re-opened six days per week including Saturday Academies. As we face renewed challenges regarding local Covid-19 numbers, we remain diligent regarding the safety of our students and staff, always exercising the utmost in caution based on science concerning this devastating virus.

We thank you for all you have done to help us be successful this first quarter of the 2021-2022 school year. Now more than at any time during this insidious pandemic, we must continue to support each other and remain a strong Buffalo Public Schools family.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

The Transportation Advisory Committee held its third meeting on 11/9/21. The goal of this committee is to recommend strategies to address the bus driver shortage and reduce the amount of time students are on buses to and from school. The Transportation Department continues to consolidate bus routes. The Transportation Advisory Committee subsequently made the following 3 recommendations to Dr. Cash:

1. The District should make every effort to contract with appropriately license and qualified private transportation providers to address uncovered routes and athletics.
2. The District and First Student should maintain their urgency to strategize around recruitment and onboarding of job candidates. Further strategizing should continue around deployment of drivers and effective route creation.
3. The District should create a spring semester calendar where elementary schools are scheduled for at least one early release day. This would create a continual daily supply of extra buses in the afternoon available to address uncovered routes and maintain earlier clearing times.

### **Progress:**

- The number of uncovered or doubled routes has been dramatically reduced, and we have had several days that all buses were fully covered.
- The Transportation Department eliminated another 3 bus routes for 11/22. We will have 464 AM buses and 457 PM buses.
- PM clearing time continues to improve. There have been several days that buses cleared before 6:30 PM.
  - Buses that clear after 6:30 are primarily not related to driver shortage, rather they are due to out of District routes and buses waiting for parents to meet students.
- 4 new drivers started work in the last week.
  - 20 candidates are currently in behind-the-wheel training.
  - 9 road tests took place this week.

## **Hiring & Training of Drivers:**

The District does not manage or control the credentialing and employment process for bus drivers. The hiring and training process for bus drivers can take up to 7 - 10 weeks before a candidate is fully credentialed. Some changes that will help speed up the process have already been authorized by Governor Hochul. The District continues to advocate for more change at other levels of government.

The Commercial Learners Permit consists of 4 written and challenging sections. This exam is heavily geared toward tractor trailer drivers and may not apply to school bus drivers. We continue to advocate for changes to streamline the testing structure while keeping it effective and relevant.

The CDL road test requires each candidate to pass a mechanical based pre-trip inspection. Again, the District and First Student are advocating for streamlining changes here that are aligned with the modern requirements of school bus drivers.

All New York State bus drivers must pass a physical exam, DOT drug test, criminal background check and physical performance test before being eligible to drive. This process can be time-consuming since it requires candidates to be responsible for completing these requirements in a timely fashion.

## **FOOD SERVICES**

There are ongoing national and local supply chain issues that are affecting all facets of the BPS Child Nutrition program. The national staffing shortages have negatively impacted the manufacturing industry and delivery service, causing the disruption of an ample supply of packaging materials, dairy, produce, grains, and proteins to our schools. We are relying more heavily on local producers, who are coming through with supplies for us.

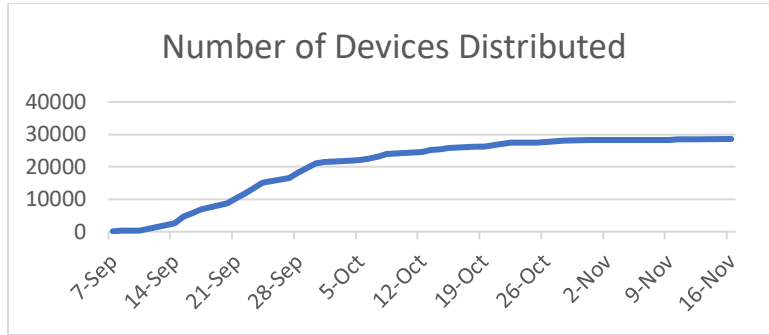
- An average of 800 students at the 8 Pilot schools are selecting the Halal menu options.
- 30 applications for food service workers were sent to Civil Service for processing on 11/8 and 11/15.
- Current vacancies in Food Service are at 14.
- As of today, there have been a total of 64 new hires for 20-21 school year.
- Ongoing recruitment is critical to fill vacancies and to provide substitutes for high absenteeism.
- October - ADP (Average daily participation) for breakfast is 18,624 and for lunch is 27,465.

## **COMPUTER DEVICES**

### **Device Distribution**

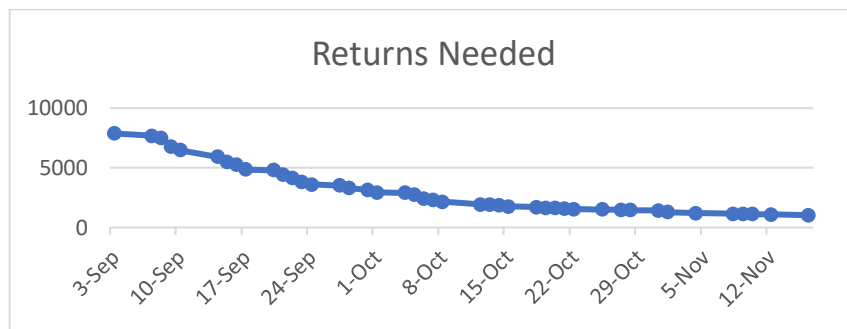
To date, 28,589 devices have been distributed to students. Based on current enrollment, there is a solid 94% distribution rate. The graph below illustrates there was significant and swift progress made toward getting devices into the hands of students, particularly between September and October. The distribution rate began to taper off in November which aligns to where we are currently with distribution efforts. At this

point, the IT Department is continually working with schools daily to fill in any gaps or exchanges of devices as needed.



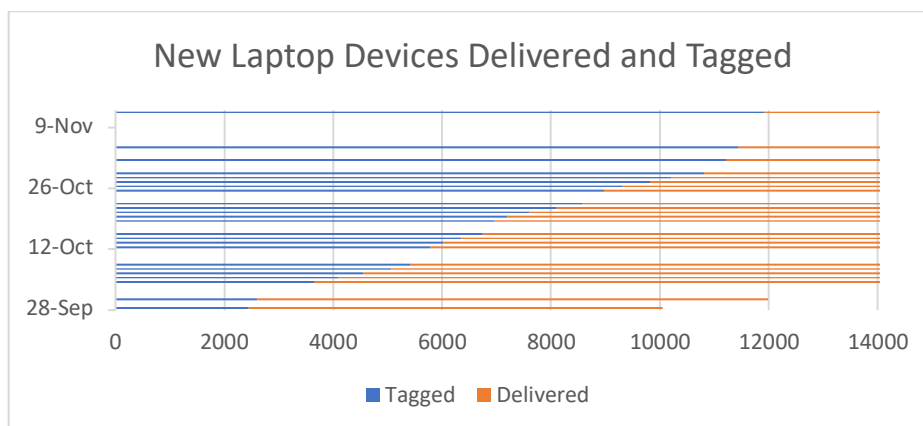
### Device Returns

Since the start of school in September, there has been a steady decline in the number of device returns needed from students. The decline has also begun to taper off. As of November 16, 2021, end of day, 1,113 devices are still needed to be returned (575 Laptops; 460 iPads). This is a drastic decrease based on the number of devices (~8000) that were needed at the start of the school year.



### New Devices

Fourteen thousand new laptops have been ordered and almost all have arrived. New devices are being used to cover any shortage of legacy devices due to non-returns, damaged devices, and to also refresh our student device inventory. To date, we have received 13,903 of an expected 14,000 new Dell laptop devices (99%). All 13,903 laptops have been tagged and are ready to be distributed. We have also received 1,600 of 5,000 new iPads.



## HUMAN RESOURCES

### **New Service Center Positions Openings:**

- 2 Carpenters, \$61.13/hr.
- 1 Glazier, \$52.07/hr.
- 2 Plumbers, \$65.67/hr.
- 2 Electricians, \$68.66/hr.
- 2 Steamfitters, \$65.67/hr.

Announced to the following Community Organizations:

**Development Center, Adult Learning Center, Hispanics United, Buffalo Urban League, City of Buffalo Website, BPS Website**

### **School Clerical:**

All School Clerks positions are filled.

### **School Typists:**

- 1 Spanish speaking typist vacancy at 207; must hire from recent typist exam list
- 1 typist vacancy at 32; position posted
- 2 Rotating typists vacant

### **Security:**

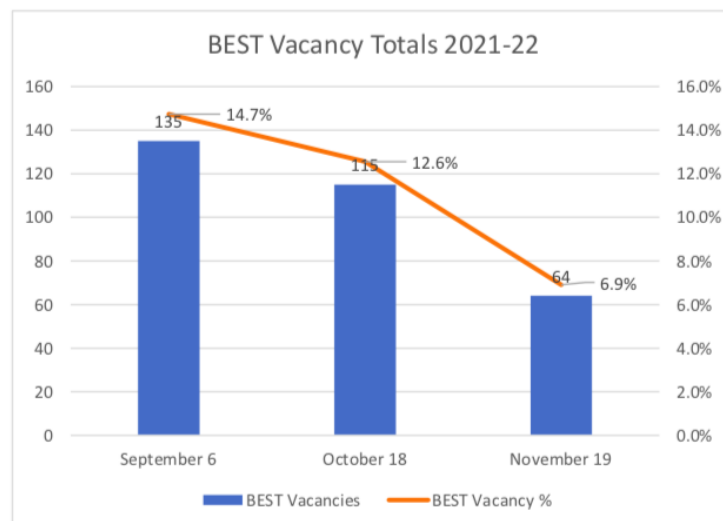
There are 64 budgeted security officers with 12 provisional vacancies and 5 temporary vacancies. We have candidates nominated to fill all 17 vacancies.

### **Teacher Aide/ Assistant**

Teacher Aide and Assistant vacancies have been more than halved since the start of September, from 135 (14.7%) to 64 (6.9%). A chart of 2021-22 BEST vacancies over time, see the attached chart.

**BEST Vacancy Totals 2021-22**

	September 6	October 18	November 19
BEST Vacancies	135	115	64
BEST Vacancy %	14.7%	12.6%	6.9%

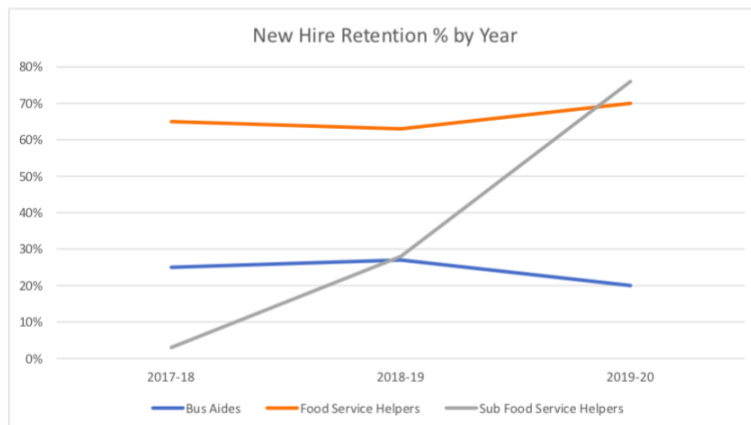


## **Transportation/ Bus Aides**

Transportation Department interviewed and hired 37 candidates and paperwork sent to COB. However, candidates did not send complete packet and COB is currently awaiting the additional documents needed to process. There are 15 newly hired bus aides that started work Nov 1. As they're cleared from civil service, the BPS department approves candidates to start and shares this information with the transportation department.

Since 2017-18, Bus Aide new hire retention has slipped from 25% to 20%, see the attached chart.

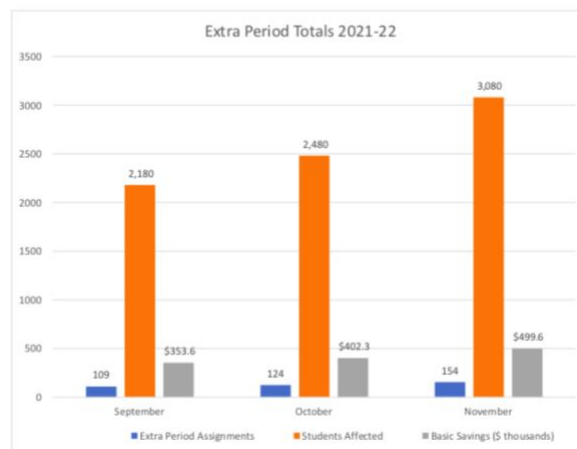
	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Bus Aides	25%	27%	20%
Food Service Helpers	65%	63%	70%
Sub Food Service Helpers	3%	28%	76%



## **Extra Period Assignments**

The District's use of extra period assignments for BTF members in order to cover 0.2 FTE vacancies provides quality instruction for classrooms while saving on hiring costs in hard-to-staff areas. 109 such assignments were made starting in September, and there are currently 154 in total. This positively affects an estimated 3,000+ students while saving almost half a million dollars on the employee benefits that new hires for these positions would incur, to say nothing of the countless man hours of processing work. The of extra period assignment totals illustrates these trends.

	September	October	November
Extra Period Assignments	109	124	154
Students Affected	2,180	2,480	3,080
Basic Savings (\$ thousands)	\$ 353.6	\$ 402.3	\$ 499.6



## **Staff Vaccination Update**



BPS has a designated portal for all teachers and building level staff to indicate whether they have been vaccinated or not. Staff uploads their vaccination cards as proof. Of the 3,535 user submissions to date, 3,404 (96.29%) are listed as Vaccinated, 131 (3.71%) not vaccinated.

## **STUDENT SUPPORT**

**Immunization Report:** The 2021- 2022 school year began with 4,048 students who were non-compliant with up-to-date immunizations.

- As of Friday 11/12/21 the number decreased to 487
- As of Friday 11/20/21 the number decreased to 450

### **COVID-19 Data Between 11/8/21- 11/18/21:**

- COVID cases 11/8- 11/12: Total: 89 (students 67/22 staff-)
- COVID cases 11/15- 11/19: Total: 174 (students 124 / staff 50)
- Total Number Quarantined: 1,666
- CUMULATIVE SINCE THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR: 630 students; 248 staff.  
TOTAL: 878
- Total # of classrooms quarantined 11
- Total # of school closings: 0

### **Request for Mask Exemptions and Medical Exemptions:**

- Approved medical exemptions requests: 173
- Mask Exemption Requests: 65 (concurrent instruction approved- due to high transmission status)
- TOTAL: 238

**BPS Vaccination Clinics:** The Buffalo Public School District has partnered with the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) and the Community Health Worker (CHW) Network to host clinics.

- Number of Vaccination Clinics: **6**
- Number Vaccinated at BPS Clinics: **331**

**In School Testing Data as reported by the Affinity Empowering Group:**

- Week ending 11/20/21: 4,033 staff and students consented to test
- Week ending 11/20/21: 3,295 completed tests

**ERIE COUNTY DATA**

- Erie County has reported 400 cases per 100K over the last 7 days.
- Highest age bracket remains 30-39.
- 27% of cases are in children.
- Cases are beginning to trend upwards in younger children, while the age bracket that is highest remains 30-39 years old.
- Hospitalizations are overwhelmingly in unvaccinated/ineligible children often who have unvaccinated siblings and adults residing with them.
- The week ending 11/13/21 had 3,568 new COVID cases in Erie County- 37 % increase from the week prior. Cases have increased 105%.
- Erie County reported 374 cases per 100,000 in the past 7 days for the week ending 11/13/21
  - CDC set a threshold of more than 100 cases per 100,000 to qualify as a community with high transmission.
- As of 11/16/21 there were 18 deaths from COVID-19 in the last 7 days.
- 33% of all new COVID cases were in the City of Buffalo.

**CITY OF BUFFALO STATISTICS**

- The highest rates of spread in the city are 14212 (498), 14220 (487)

**BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS STATISTICS**

- Total of 878 staff and students between 9/3/21 and 11/18/21 have been confirmed positive
  - Students: 630
  - Adults: 248 (Staff, School Partners, Student Teachers in Schools)
- All schools have reported at least a single case of COVID-19.
- BPS protocols are very strong and the key is the consistency in its implementation.



Dr. Kriner Cash  
Superintendent