THE CHALLENGE:
Building a Successful 21st Century School District
Putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all
Much gratitude goes to the Board of Education for their ongoing and continuous support of Buffalo Public Schools by putting children and families first to ensure high academic achievement for all.

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“The Champion of things become, not becoming...the dragon to be slain by him is precisely the monster of the status quo.”

_Hero with a Thousand Faces_ — Joseph Campbell, 1949

**Preface**

Today, more than ever before, the educational system of the United States of America is the key to securing our future as a nation. President Barack Obama has demonstrated a thorough understanding of the need to meet the challenges of the 21st century by establishing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to support the future of our schools. After inheriting a devastated economy and many other obstacles, the President realizes the significant role that education plays in developing the brain power and expertise to create solutions. Mr. Obama and his administration realize that by stimulating the economy in the short term and investing in education in an unprecedented way, our nation’s long term health economically, politically, and socially is ensured.

At the foundation of our advancements as a nation are the talent and skills of an educated populace prepared to meet the demands of the ever increasing complexity of our world. From the struggles of a fledgling democracy breaking free from British rule, to the reorganization of the union after the civil war to the sacrifices made during World War II to the victorious flight to the moon, Americans have put their minds to work, buoyed by the ever expanding knowledge that an educated populace can best meet the challenges of its times.

School districts today are faced with the need to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Classrooms today operate much the same way they have for decades. We must move away from the model of the 1950s when schools focused on the education of middle class white students and ignored other populations. The structural inequalities that exist must be addressed. We must educate all of our students, not just some. The racial, ethnic, and linguistic needs of our students demand a dramatic transformation of our educational system. The situation is urgent. The time is now to slay the dragon of the status quo. Our future as a nation depends upon our ability to respond heroically.
**THE CHALLENGE:**
Building a Successful 21st Century School District

**Introduction**

How many of us can say that who we are today is because of the teachers who helped to mold our intellectual, emotional, physical and, yes, even our spiritual beings? There are those of us who can say that it began with our first teachers, our parents. There are others who will say their development depended on the support of grandparents and/or guardians. But no matter how we describe it, we will probably say that a teacher or teachers were tremendously influential in shaping who we are today. Sometimes the influence of those teachers is memorable because of the positive expectations they had for us, the strength of character that they showed us, and, yes, the love and dedication that they demonstrated every day. Those teachers were and are our heroes. Of course, there were those who discouraged us and didn’t think much of us. Yet, in the face of their opposition, we latched onto other teachers who encouraged us to be the best that we could be, to aspire to the highest levels of achievement, and who stuck by us through it all.

When Joseph Campbell wrote his book, *Hero with a Thousand Faces* in 1949, he focused on the mythological aspect of our human journey and likened it to a hero’s journey. Of course, Campbell’s hero had parents or teachers who modeled the behaviors that would be needed in life to prepare the individual person for future heroic endeavors but, ultimately, in order to become a hero, the person had to leave home, leave her/his teachers, and set out on the journey of life. The vicissitudes of life always confront the potential hero. In myths these troubles take the form of dragons, monsters, or sirens, those who are the obstacles to success or the seducers who take the traveler off the righteous path and into confusion. The traveler must destroy those dragons and then return home to his/her roots with the prize in order to become the hero. Today those dragons are the status quo, those forces that want to keep us from transformation, from providing the best education to all of our children; from providing equitable opportunities and equal access to all.

Effective, quality teachers are today’s heroes. They are individuals who, after overcoming obstacles, have returned home to address the needs of children and adolescents, to teach them what they need to know and be able to do in order to succeed. These teachers have learned from their predecessors and have dedicated themselves to the life of dragon slayers. They find ways every day to prepare students from many cultures, speaking many languages, coming from all kinds of backgrounds, to face the world as it is and to gain the ability to meet the demands of their world. Buffalo Public Schools is beginning to address the challenges of the 21st century by building a firm foundation in early literacy and mathematics, which must be maintained and expanded. In a phased in, tiered approach, these first steps will lead towards a system that can foster global literacy and global awareness in students based on the necessary secure building blocks. For this to succeed, we must engage teachers in professional learning opportunities to improve instruction and ultimately to improve student academic performance and results.

This volume includes a series of brief documents that describe the Buffalo efforts to improve student achievement in the Buffalo Public Schools. The first
section is an executive summary of the original three-year academic plan initiated in January 2006. It gives the backdrop for the District’s strategic plan and lays the foundation upon which all of the work has been built. This plan is designed to ensure that all BPS students are meeting or exceeding grade level standards in reading, writing, and mathematics by outlining the overall literacy goals for Buffalo’s teachers and students. It describes the need for the development of literacy competencies across grade levels and subject areas.

The second section, Literacy across the Curriculum Framework, includes descriptions of four focal areas or modules: reading across the curriculum, writing across the curriculum, metacognition, and culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning. This is followed by a section that describes the District’s special education program. The next two sections deal with the Superintendent’s School Improvement District and Extended Learning Opportunity program. The final section that describes Buffalo efforts is about the Leadership Academies.

Following the series of brief documents is the section dealing with the plan for utilizing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) 2009. The documents address the ARRA “stimulus funds.” This outlines the District’s response and plans for aligning all of the work, sustaining and improving what is in place, pre-k to 8, while focusing on further development of the middle and high school reform, with particular emphasis of building capacity in teachers and school leadership to improve drop-out rates.

Already the District is seeing results from these plans. In 2005 Superintendent Dr. James A. Williams and Deputy Superintendent Dr. Folasade Oladele assumed their leadership positions. The District was designated as a District in Need of Improvement with the highest percentage of Schools Under Registration Review (SURR) in New York State. As a result of planning, implementing and monitoring the Academic Achievement Plan, there have been significant improvements in student performance in English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics.

ELA and mathematics test scores have increased dramatically as demonstrated by the May 2009 release of NYSED state assessment data. ELA testing data showed that 54% of Buffalo Public Schools’ third-through-eighth grade students are now scoring at or above the New York State benchmarks compared to 30% on the 2006 assessment. That represents an 81% increase in ELA test scores over a three-year period. State Education Commissioner Richard P. Mills praised the Buffalo Public Schools as a statewide model of academic improvement. In mathematics, 63% of students were at or above proficiency compared to 29% in 2005-2006. Out of every 100 students, 63 were proficient compared to 29 in 2005-2006. That represents a 117% improvement.

These data reflect merely the beginning of an upward trend in student performance in the District. The task before the Buffalo Public schools, as Secretary of Education Arne Ducan has often stated, is to “challenge the status quo and pursue real reform.” This challenge presents a tremendous opportunity to educate all of our students to be productive citizens to the benefit of our city, nation, and world.
This is the third year of the Buffalo Public Schools implementation of an ambitious academic plan to turn a failing school system into a thriving educational model for urban districts. The cornerstone of this program is the Academic Achievement Plan document, approved by the Board of Education in January, 2006. The plan established four goals:

- Improve student academic achievement.
- Establish professional growth system.
- Develop efficient and effective support operations.
- Provide equity and universal access to academic opportunities to all students.

As we move into the fourth year of this plan, it has been revised and renamed the Literacy Across the Curriculum Framework: Academic Achievement Plan of the Buffalo Public Schools. This executive summary discusses the District accomplishments during the 2006-2009 school years when the plan was first implemented.

**Goal Number One:**

**IMPROVE STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

The District is focused on academic achievement as the primary goal of our work. We have developed and expanded our delivery of scientifically based instruction in all of our elementary schools.

**Direct Evidence**

- Fully implemented core reading program in all schools.
- Implemented reading intervention programs K-10 for students in need of strategic and intensive interventions.
- Implemented core and intervention mathematics programs.
- Established Superintendent’s School Improvement District comprised of thirteen elementary and three high schools under registration review.
- Instituted advanced placement courses in high schools.
- Restructured Student Support Services, including Special Education and Student Support Teams (SST).
- Established District Support Team for reading and mathematics.
  - Placed mathematics and reading coaches in elementary schools (K-8)
  - Created staff developer positions to support reading and mathematics in elementary and high schools
Continued the work of the Cross Functional Team to support teaching and learning through planning and professional development in all content areas and training of the District Support Team.

Developed site visit instrument for monitoring instructional effectiveness.

Continued site visits by Cross Functional Teams and Office of School Performance Community Superintendents.

Implemented AESOP system for placement of substitute teachers.

Established Secondary Curriculum Think Tank partnership and process for evaluating proposals.

Developed New Teacher Recruitment Team and Student Teacher Placement Team with local universities and colleges.

**Goal Number Two:**

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH SYSTEM

In order to ensure the continued focus on improved student academic achievement, teachers, principals and district support team and administrators participate in a professional growth system that supports their work.

**Direct Evidence**

- Provided and continue to provide on-going professional development for teachers, principals, assistant principals, district support staff, and central office administrators.
- Focused on developing instructional skill in explicit, systematic instruction.
- Continued to conduct on-going research based literacy study sessions at different levels of the organization.

- Invited Louisa Moats, national reading expert on scientifically based reading research to speak to teachers, principals and district administrators.
- Continued Annual Leadership Retreat at Beaver Hollow to build capacity in district leadership and to build professional relationships.
- Achieved 95% of the goal to have qualified teachers in every classroom.
- Established district staff development to support all schools.
- Placed literacy and math coaches in all elementary schools.

**Goal Number Three:**

EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE SUPPORT OPERATIONS

It is important that every part of the organization function in support of the central focus, ensuring that all students achieve academic improvement and success in their instructional programs. The alignment of all divisions in support of students is essential.

**Direct Evidence**

District Cross Functional Team

- Continued focused weekly meetings of the team to discuss district wide support system issues. Participants include following departments:
  - Finance
  - Student Support Services
  - Teaching and Learning Directors and Supervisors
  - Grants
  - Human Resources
  - State and Federal Programs
- Continued inclusive dialogue related to instructional walkthroughs and on-going participation in support of teaching and learning.

Finances and Operations

- Improved District financial position as evidenced by a record fund balance, three consecutive years of surpluses through 2006-2007 and the addition of instructional positions in each of the last three years compared to the previous four years of position cuts averaging 250 per year.


New Construction

- Successfully completed additional work at all the JSCB (Joint School Construction Board) Phase I schools.

- Successfully completed JSCB Phase II.

- Began Phase JSCB Phase III.

Goal Number Four: EQUITY

Universal access to education is a significant aspect of the Academic Achievement Plan in Buffalo Public Schools. All students must have equal access to teaching that assists them in meeting and exceeding state standards.

Direct Evidence

- Continued to provide a scaffold of instructional practices to support the learning of all students.

- Developed and implemented multilingual instructional programs.

- Instituted Advanced Placement classes at high schools.

- Provided additional instructional time for students.
  - Four week extended learning opportunity program for Pre-K-8
  - Summer enrichment program for students who have achieved proficiency in Math and ELA
  - Summer SAT prep classes
  - Summer Camps
    + Band
    + Art
    + Music
    + Math & Science with College Partners

- Focused on establishment of Pre-K-16 partnership with universities to support academic plan.

The District has made progress and continues to make progress towards achieving the relative growth that our students need to make in their academic performance. In order to achieve our goals, we have been building capacity at all levels of the organization by developing three significant elements — our knowledge base, the tools we need to do the work and the support system of accountability.
Success in the twenty-first century requires that educators prepare students to live in a fast-paced, economically competitive, highly technological, global environment. Basic skills are not enough. Students must learn to read, but reading entails far more than the basic skills learned in elementary school.

Beginning in pre-kindergarten, the foundation for literacy must be established with instruction in phonemic awareness and the alphabetic principle. Kindergarteners need automaticity in their understanding of the alphabet, a full consciousness that words are made up of sounds, and the knowledge that letters combine to form words on the page. In order to be fluent readers by the end of first grade, students must have the knowledge they need to decode words accurately and rapidly. They must have automaticity in the code, which means they must be consciously aware of the purpose of words and understand how to use the phonemes and graphemes of English. They need to understand that English is an alphabetic language, and they must begin to comprehend the pattern and meaning layers of the language.

Those students who fail to achieve these basic skills by the end of first grade will probably have a “one in eight chance of ever catching up” without the aid of expensive interventions (Juel, 1988). This is because by second grade, students begin to experience different textual requirements than those encountered during prior reading instruction, and by third grade, students encounter and are responsible for learning much more content vocabulary in different subject areas. In addition, the years between pre-kindergarten and third grade are the time to develop students’ academic language in reading and writing by building their prior knowledge, focusing on vocabulary growth, and stressing text comprehension. Writing and critical thinking must be built into this progression.

Academic Achievement Plan

Although we have made significant gains, there is still a long way to go to improve student achievement for all Buffalo Public School children. As the Academic Achievement Plan further evolves, the District must continue to pay particular attention to the developmental stages of reading while simultaneously extending its focus to content area instruction in reading, writing and critical thinking. This includes instruction in the mechanics and process of writing and the development of metacognitive processes in students to help them make critical, informed decisions about their own learning.

This document addresses the District’s approach to building literacy in the content areas in much the same way as it addressed early literacy development in the Three Year Academic Achievement Plan. The focus in this document is literacy through reading, writing, critical thinking, metacognition, and culturally and
linguistically responsive teaching. This introductory paper is followed by a schema that addresses these four areas: instruction, accountability, support, and universal access. Although literacy has been more broadly defined (i.e., intercultural literacy, financial literacy) this document does not focus on instruction in those areas.

**Intermediate and Secondary Literacy**

**Reading to Learn**

A great deal of the District’s effort has been centered on early literacy; it is now necessary to focus on intermediate and secondary literacy development.

Teachers need to understand that literacy proficiency grows through developmental processes that continue over a lifetime. (Jetton & Alexander, 2007).

By fourth grade, the demands of text become significantly more complex. Students are expected to build background knowledge and vocabulary, developing a schema for more and more difficult tasks. The primary focus of reading shifts to learning new content and to building deeper knowledge for future academic success. The purpose of literacy development in grades four to six is to prepare students for high school, college and/or technical school, as well as the world of work.

“If students are to be truly prepared for college work and citizenship, they cannot settle for a modest level of proficiency in reading and writing...Without ongoing literacy instruction, students who are behind in reading when they enter the middle grades likely will never catch up (Heller and Greenleaf, 2007).”

More than half of the eighth and twelfth graders in the United States are not proficient in reading, and half of those students are operating below basic levels. In high poverty, low performing schools, students are entering the ninth grade reading two to three grade levels below standard (Balfanz, McPartland, & Shaw, 2002). Even though these numbers are unsettling, the good news is that adolescents can learn to read, write, and use critical thinking at proficient levels with appropriate intervention and support. Schools can help struggling students make significant gains by:

- assessing students as they enter school and using that information to place them in the correct intervention classes;
- providing intensive intervention instruction in fluency, vocabulary development, comprehension, and schema building;
- motivating them by modeling literate behaviors, building morale and confidence, as well as providing them with reading and writing activities that are age appropriate and engaging.

**Who teaches reading?**

Because literacy instruction is part of every teacher’s responsibility, all teachers need to have a clear understanding of the developmental stages of reading. Jeanne Chall, one of the seminal thinkers in scientifically based reading research, documented six stages of reading development. The first three stages deal with the skills that have to be mastered by a student in order to learn how to read. The next three stages deal with skills that have to be mastered in order to read to learn (Curtis, M. & Longo, A., 1999).
Six Stages of Reading
Stage 0 - Prereading Stage
Stage 1 - Decoding Stage
Stage 2 - Confirmation
Stage 3 - Reading to Learn
Stage 4 - Multiple Viewpoints
Stage 5 - Construction/Reconstruction
(Curtis & Longo, 1999)

Content area teachers are not responsible for providing instruction in the first three stages. Their work focuses on teaching students literacy skills within the context of their subject area so that students can learn the information. This means that every teacher must be familiar with the literacy framework of his/her subject area, having knowledge of the text structures and specific reading and writing tasks that are required in that content area. For example, in order for students to become knowledgeable about history, they have to master the literacy skills related to history, reading, writing and discussing history with their classmates under the instructional supervision of a skilled teacher.

If students do not have the opportunity to learn subject area concepts and vocabulary, their word knowledge and capacity to read a broader range of texts will be further diminished. Inequalities in students’ access to a rigorous academic curriculum contribute significantly to the achievement gaps that separate relatively affluent and/or white students from low-income and minority students (Barton, Heidema, & Jordan, 2002).

Teachers need to show students the organizational patterns used by their subject area texts. The best way for teachers to do this is to practice reading, writing, and thinking like experts in their academic fields. Perfect practice makes perfect. Students will become literate in the subjects they study by observing and experiencing what teachers model and by practicing themselves.

Who teaches writing?
Just as secondary teachers must familiarize students with the text structures that they encounter while reading different content area selections, they also need to explicitly instruct students to write for different contexts. Reading and writing are not automatic, natural processes. Students must be explicitly taught the mechanics and grammar of the language, the technical process of letter formation (manuscript and cursive), the tenets of various writing genres, as well as the writing process itself. Teachers need to model all of these elements in their classrooms. They have to provide numerous opportunities for students to practice writing, revising, and, ultimately, publishing for a larger audience.

The failure to teach students how to write has some alarming consequences. Colleges and universities report higher and higher numbers of students requiring
remediation. Employers indicate that students are not prepared to do the type of writing necessary to accomplish simple tasks in the workplace, beginning with completing a job application. Internationally, U.S. students' literacy skills are well below the levels of their peers from developed countries.

Research indicates that there are eleven elements that must be implemented by teachers to improve the overall nature of writing instruction.

**Effective Elements to Improve Writing Achievement in Grades 4-12**

1. Writing Strategies
2. Summarization
3. Collaborative Writing
4. Specific Product Goals
5. Word Processing
6. Sentence Combining
7. Prewriting
8. Inquiry Activities
9. Process Writing Approach
10. Study of Models
11. Writing for Content Learning

(Writing Next, 2007)

In order for teachers to improve student achievement in writing, they need professional learning opportunities to prepare them to provide explicit, systematic writing instruction in their content areas. Although writing is central to professional and academic success in our culture, many people experience great difficulty structuring their writing. Teachers who avail themselves of professional learning opportunities and share collaborative, cooperative experiences with their colleagues and writing experts in how to teach writing will be more capable of helping students improve their writing achievement.

**Who teaches thinking skills?**

Every teacher must provide opportunities for students to develop the thinking processes necessary to succeed in a specific subject. Conscious awareness of one's individual thinking processes is fundamental to learning about how to think in an academic setting. Metacognition is the process of thinking about one's thinking and is central to the mastery of content area subject matter. Metacognition is not automatic; the metacognitive process must become conscious, and it must be both taught and learned.

**Metacognition**

Readers who understand their own metacognitive processes are strategic, or purposeful, in their learning. They know how to think through reading and writing assignments in a systematic, thoughtful way. They employ the necessary strategies to work through difficulties and to monitor their own progress. These young readers and writers have conscious awareness of the purpose for their work. They understand the types of questions they need to ask as they read and write. When they need help, they know how to ask for it. Students who have been taught how to use their own metacognitive processes are aware of how to talk about what they are learning, how to discuss their areas of strength, and how to seek support for those areas where they have challenges.

Teachers need to be aware of how to effectively provide the training that students need to develop their metacognition. A teacher must plan lessons effectively and be willing to organize instruction to meet the needs of each student. This requires focused preparation so that all lessons are thought through and the knowledge of what students need to know and accomplish is supported by instruction that is explicit, direct and
systematic. Consequently, the teacher must analyze her own thinking to achieve results that meet the needs of individual students. This process is recursive; teachers reflect on what has been accomplished and begin the process of planning, preparing, thinking, and reflecting all over again to ensure further student growth and academic achievement. Teachers who practice and model megacognitive processes lay the foundation for students to develop their own metacognition.

Teachers need to work collaboratively and cooperatively in grade level meetings, department meetings, common planning time, and faculty meetings to discuss their work and to share their successes and results. Buffalo Public Schools has already begun the process of encouraging teachers to use metacognitive strategies by implementing the Planning, Preparing, Thinking, Reflecting (PPTR) document that structures the kind of work teachers must do in order to provide explicit, systematic and direct instruction to students. Likewise, professional learning opportunities that allow teachers to hone their skills and to master new ideas are essential to success in deepening metacognition.

### Conclusion

The urgent need to improve student achievement is the basis for the District’s focus on the effective development of literacy skills in all of our students. Educated people have the ability to read, write and think about information in ways that allows the meaning they gain to be applied to real life situations in a productive manner. A great deal of effort has been invested in the development of early literacy skills, teaching young children how to read. Ongoing literacy instruction is needed to assist older students in how to learn from the material that they read. In order to improve student achievement, there are two essential questions that support the development of the teachers who work with our students, and those questions are: What knowledge base do teachers need

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**Who teaches children from diverse populations?**

More and more, teachers are being confronted with the need to teach children who come from diverse linguistic, racial/ethnic, religious, national and cultural backgrounds. Buffalo Public Schools has a very diverse population, including children from many different countries who speak over seventy different languages. In order to meet the needs of our students, teachers must be culturally and linguistically responsive. Teachers must meet students where they are and take them where they need to go. This will require ongoing professional learning opportunities in how to deliver ESL instruction,
to successfully assist students in learning content? And, how will we ensure that they have it?

Research tells us that literacy instruction is part of every teacher’s responsibility, and that all teachers need a clear understanding of the developmental stages of reading as well as the literacy competencies needed in their content subject areas. In addition, all teachers need to be able to teach students how to develop an understanding of their own thinking processes. Literacy requires conscious thinking and a structured approach to content learning. In order for Buffalo Public Schools to develop knowledgeable teachers, a systematic professional growth system focused on literacy is essential.

At every step of the District’s efforts to produce literate students, there must be a focus on equity. Equity for students depends on the recognition of three elements: building a rigorous and challenging curriculum for all students at all levels; developing culturally and linguistically responsive instructional practices to meet student needs; and using technology in teaching to improve student achievement and to prepare students for the twenty-first century global economy. In addition, the District must address issues of disproportional identification and placement of African American and Hispanic students in special education as well as the disproportional suspension rates of these populations. Our city and country face many demands and challenges in the twenty-first century. Improving student achievement is essential to our successful production of leaders and citizens who will meet those demands and challenges. The first step is the development of literate students who are capable of thinking through the issues of the times and who have the knowledge needed to create solutions.

References:


Special Education
A 21st Century special education program uses data for self-examination and uses research to improve results.

**What We Know**

- We have too many students in Special Education [SE] nationally and in Buffalo.
- Research is clear: A school district should have no more than 3%-5% of its students in SE for academic disabilities.
- In the BPS, we have 17% classified for academic disabilities. Our total Students with Disabilities [SWD] population is 24.6%.
- While we spend twice as much to educate a SWD, our graduation rate for SWDs is half that of General Education [GE].
- Most SE teachers were not sufficiently prepared by colleges for this work. They will require substantial professional development to improve results.
- Effective instruction can mitigate and even eliminate the effects of an academic disability.
- The U.S. Congress still believes that the purpose of SE is to treat student difficulties so they can be returned and supported in GE.
- Nationally, there is a 5% annual return rate to GE. In Buffalo, it is less than that.
- Preparing special education for the 21st Century begins with addressing what we know about ourselves and planning strategically to improve our results.

**IDEA Strategic Priorities**

- Assess and reorganize structures in our district that may prematurely assign too many students to special education.
- Substantially improve the effectiveness of instruction in SE classrooms.
- Return students to GE when ready and support them so they are successful.
- Develop and execute a Strategic Plan that causes us to think differently about SE.

**Focus Areas (6)**

1. Response to Instruction (aka Intervention) RtI
2. Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports [PBIS]
3. Student Support Team [SST] Development
4. Individualized Education Plan Audits
5. Special Education Curriculum Audit
6. Pre-Graduate Intervention
Resources


*Athletics and physical exercise are essential to developing healthy, well-adapted youngsters whose minds are prepared for productive lives.*
The Superintendent’s School Improvement District [SSID] is comprised of the sixteen lowest achieving schools in the Buffalo Public Schools, all designated as Schools Under Registration Review by the New York State Education Department. Using the New York State Contract for Excellence funds to support this initiative, each school was provided with an extended school day, an extended school year, extensive and on-going professional development and support, and embedded literacy and math coaches and teachers. The schools were also supported by external educational partners.

Mrs. Fran Wilson, the Community Superintendent who has oversight of these schools, works closely with SSID principals to strengthen their skills as instructional leaders focused on supporting effective teaching and improved student learning. School visits are conducted with principals to review multiple data points, conduct walkthroughs, and discuss the strengths and weaknesses in instructional practices and strategies and student performance, as evidenced by the data and the walkthroughs. Professional learning opportunities, as well as the need for modeling with individual teachers or grade levels, are discussed and identified. This work is supported by building literacy and math coaches and building reading and math teachers, the Teaching and Learning Department, and external educational partners of each of the reading and math programs.

These strategic, intense, and collaborative efforts produced very credible results in the elementary schools, with steady academic growth being demonstrated. In 2008, the New York State Department officially removed six elementary schools from the School Under Registration Review list, though the academic and support initiatives for these schools remain in place.
Extended Learning Opportunity Program
The Buffalo Public Schools Extended Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP), free to all students, is designed to enhance students’ learning in reading, writing, and math; allow for review of courses for the Regents exams, and afford students the opportunity to earn needed credits through our Credit Recovery Program. Students in PreK – 8 who are identified by District criteria and school staff are expected to attend, but all students in these grades are encouraged to participate. ELOP will reinforce what students have already learned and will give them a head start in the upcoming school year.

Other than the Superintendents’ School Improvement District Schools, and the Jump Start ESL Program, ELOP will be a half-day program for students. The elementary program, along with the Jump Start program, will be held July 6 to July 31, with the secondary program starting July 15 and ending August 11. Regents exams will be held August 12, 13, and 14th. Our Special Education program will be held for six weeks, July 6 to August 14. In the full day for students at the SSID schools, students will also participate in art, music physical education, and media center classes. Breakfast and lunch will be served to all PreK – 8th grade students, and transportation will be provided. Community Agency programs will be utilized for the “second half” of the day for our half-day programs, with transportation provided to the agency site.

Enrichment classes will balance the schedule for the 7th and 8th grade students only needing one class. Enrichment programs will also be offered this summer, and are targeted to groups of students, such as those interested in “music” Camp. These classes will not conflict with the basic ELOP.
3 Year comparison ELA and Math (Elementary/Middle)
ALL - students - General Education - Students with Disabilities

Percent of students attaining proficiency (Levels 3 & 4)

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<td>34%</td>
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<td>42%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWD</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>SWD</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OSA/ 6/2/09 wck
SOURCE: NYStart for BPS accountability schools
The vision of the Leadership Academies is to create a common understanding of leadership practice in the Buffalo City School District and to identify, nurture, train, and support aspiring, novice, and experienced school leaders. Academy strands are designed to offer participants opportunities to hone their leadership practice so that they may effectively improve and transform the organizations of which they are a part. As the challenges of educational leadership continue to increase, the Academies endeavor to create ways for leaders at all levels of the organization to engage in collegial learning and disciplined inquiry as a part of their professional lives. The Leadership Academies are the cornerstone of the Buffalo City School District’s strategy for ensuring that every school or District office is led by an outstanding principal, assistant principal, or Central Office administrator.

Buffalo, like many other cities across the nation, has faced an increase in administrative vacancies due to retirements, and the demand for exemplary qualified leaders. At the same time, aspiring and novice administrators (those in their first five years) require leadership development opportunities and support mechanisms that are rigorous, relevant to the actual work, and responsive to the priorities of the Buffalo City School District with respect to its education reforms. By focusing on in-depth analysis, theories of organizational change, and the development of a deep understanding of how to accelerate learning for students and adults, Leadership Academy programs enable participants to strengthen their abilities to improve schools and the organization through instructional leadership.

The Leadership Academies key success factors include innovative program designs that incorporate problem-based and action-learning methodologies in program sessions and on-the-job training. Instruction is aligned with the unique and evolving context of the Buffalo City School District administrator responsibilities. Teaching and coaching are facilitated by expert educational practitioners, and support is tailored to each participant’s developmental needs. Academy curricula are focused on the skills needed to lead significant instructional improvement initiatives.

“Learning always occurs in a context where you are taking action. A learning organization is an organization in which people at all levels are collectively, continually enhancing their capacity to create things they really want to create.”

Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*
The following Academy strands of leadership work to meet the needs of aspiring, novice, and veteran school leaders:

- **The Aspiring Leaders’ Academy (ALA)** is open to teachers who have received administrative certification from an accredited college or university or who are within six graduate credits of doing so. The purpose of this strand is to familiarize those who are looking to become building administrators with the work of school-based leadership. Academy participants are organized into cohorts and become involved with a scenario school where they assume full responsibility for assessing the needs of the school and creating plans for school-based improvement.

- **The Aspiring Principals’ Academy (APA)** is specifically oriented to those who are Central Office administrators or assistant principals looking to assume the role of building principals. This Academy puts educational professionals on a rigorous and accelerated track toward successfully leading Buffalo’s most challenging schools. Like the Aspiring Leaders’ Academy, this strand utilizes the cohort design to engage participants in the authentic work of the school. Aspiring principals complete a demanding 10-month leadership development program that includes intensive sessions that use problem-based curriculum that simulates the principalship and prepares aspiring principals to lead their own schools.

- **The Instructional Leadership Development Academy (ILDA)** is designed for seated administrators who are interested in deepening their instructional leadership capacity. The purpose of the ILDA is to build the capacity of administrators to implement culturally responsive and distributed leadership within the school setting to ensure improved academic achievement for all students. Buffalo Public School students constitute a diverse population. In order to ensure academic success for these students, leadership in the District must exemplify the ability to address the intellectual, linguistic, cultural, and relational needs of the diverse teacher and student populations within the urban setting.

- **The Principal Coaching Program (PCP)**, established in 2008 – 2009 is a comprehensive leadership development program that offers customized support to all new principals of existing Buffalo City School District schools as they transition into their instructional leadership roles. The program plays an important role in ensuring that new principals are able to build a culture of excellence that fosters academic achievement by meeting adequate yearly progress for all students in their schools. The PCP offers participants a menu of resources, including on-site, one-on-one coaching, leadership development workshops, and targeted technical assistance throughout the school year. These resources are provided by current working principals who serve as skilled coaches who share their strong instructional expertise and current system knowledge. The coaches base the design of all leadership sessions on their field observations in order to respond to the principals’ specific leadership needs as they emerge in the contexts and life cycles of the schools. Through close collaboration, the coaches and the participants develop a candid and trusting professional relationship, allowing for focused, in-depth explorations of leadership issues and concerns during both group and individual sessions. The principal coaches are trained by national trainers and work closely with the Buffalo City School District to ensure that its support for new principals is aligned with District priorities and initiatives.
Areas of Focus for Title I Stimulus Funds
Today’s schoolrooms operate much the same way that they have for decades. However, the reality of the 21st century schoolroom requires a departure from the educational model of the 1950s that catered to the needs of middle class, white America. Embedded assumptions about student need based on this model no longer hold true. Rather, the racial and ethnic backgrounds and varied cultures of today’s students, the multiple languages and dialects, the educational background or lack of educational background of America’s newest immigrants, has precipitated a need for a radical overhaul of that system.

Today’s 21st century school districts need to help their students by ensuring, solidifying, and enhancing basic skills in reading and writing and mastery of core content before then moving to help foster global literacy and global awareness in these students. BPS has already established a firm foundation in mathematics and literacy at the early grades which must now be maintained and expanded. This entails district-wide training for both teachers and administrators in the research behind and strategies necessary to teach reading comprehension, writing and metacognition across the curriculum. Likewise, teachers and administrators need to be aware of the need for and the strategies used in culturally and linguistically responsive teaching.

A 21st century special education program uses data for self-examination and research to improve results. A school district should have no more than 3% to 5% of its students in special education for academic disabilities. Yet, in the Buffalo Public Schools, 17% of students are classified for academic disabilities. The total students with disabilities population is 24.6%. While BPS spends twice as much to educate a student with disabilities, Buffalo’s graduation rate for students with disabilities is half that of its general education population.

How can BPS facilitate change? Effective instruction can mitigate and even eliminate the effects of an academic disability. However, most special education teachers were not sufficiently prepared by colleges for this work. They will require substantial professional development to improve results. Preparing special education for the 21st century begins with addressing what we know about ourselves and planning strategically to improve our results.
Another area of focus is the adoption of the Response to Intervention (RtI) model, which is, in effect, simply a response to instruction.

RtI, an instructional model designed to close achievement gaps for students at risk, students with disabilities, and English language learners, is a tiered approach to early identification of general education students experiencing difficulty in academic and behavioral areas. The RtI model provides these students with targeted instruction and intervention at ever increasing levels of intensity depending on their response to the intervention. It also includes basic components of effective instruction such as evaluation, data analysis, and observation of student progress.
Building Leadership Capacity

What we know

Effective instructional leadership of school administrators is key to improved positive changes in teacher behaviors.

- 21 of 64 principals (33%) in the Buffalo Public Schools are probationary.
- 33 of 73 assistant principals (45%) in the Buffalo Public Schools are probationary.
- Building the knowledge base of school administrators is critical to their success as instructional leaders.

The 21st Century Principal: A Call to Action (2004) states that while the importance of school leaders has been long acknowledged, the role, responsibilities, functions, contexts, and goals of leadership have significantly changed over the years. Unfortunately, changes in job expectations and practice have lagged behind the situational and contextual change forces, creating day-to-day job pressures and affecting the outcomes of leadership. As noted in the Institute for Educational Leadership report, Reinventing the Principalship (2000), “Demands placed on principals have changed, but the profession has not changed to meet those demands and the tension is starting to show.”

The National Association of School Boards of Education (NASBE) Study Group on School Leadership (1999) stated, “Good principals are more important than ever.” They further cautioned, “School principals now find that their job in the 21st century schools will have little in common with their job in years past.” An Educational Research Service (ERS) report in 2000 agreed, “The context of the principal’s job has changed dramatically in the last 20 years, shifting the emphasis from managerial functions to a balance of leadership and administrative functions across a wide spectrum of responsibilities.”

A fundamental difference in contemporary schools is that principals must now ensure systemic change rather than simply managing schools and the people in them. Effective principals have been described as the “lynchpins of school improvement” and the “gatekeepers of change” (ERS 2001). These characteristics stand in stark contrast to the roles of protector-of-the-status-quo, authoritarian manager-of-day-to-day-business, and schools-wide disciplinarian that characterized the job of yesteryear. As noted by Richard Elmore in “Building a New Structure for School Leadership,” the main problem facing today’s 21st century principal is that “Administration in education ... has come to mean not the management of instruction but the management of the structures and processes around instruction. That which cannot be directly managed must, in this view, be protected from external scrutiny.” The reality is that today’s principal cannot continue to serve as a buffer between the schoolroom and the outside world, protecting current practices from scrutiny but also inhibiting the growth and instructional change that is stimulated by scrutiny. The focus of a 21st century principal must be instructional supervision.

In Leading in a Culture of Change (2001), Fullan described the four critical roles of leadership as:

“...developing teachers’ knowledge, skills and dispositions; a culture characterized as a professional learning community; program coherence; and the materials, equipment, space, time and access to new ideas that comprise a school’s technical resources.”
These ideas complement Elmore’s summary of the contemporary principalship:

“The job of administrative leaders is primarily enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective results.”

While most principals and educators would theoretically agree with Fullan’s and Elmore’s positions, many find it difficult to design and construct structures, routines and priorities that allow for this kind of leadership, although the principalship in the 21st century demands it. Based upon a review of literature, the following responsibilities and conditions are those that contribute significantly to the success of principals in fulfilling their major and critical roles as 21st century school leaders:

- Establish moral purpose.
- Develop relationships, set expectations.
- Build capacity, model learning.
- Ensure the implementation of the Academic Achievement Plan.
- Manage effectively.
- Respond to constituent groups and community.
There are many reports which discuss the fact that outdated high schools built for a past era are yielding graduates unprepared for today's knowledge driven economy. These reports also discuss the need for high schools to provide students with access to a rigorous, high-quality curriculum that will equip them with the skills they need to succeed in the 21st century. The National High School Alliance report, “Academic Interventions to Help Struggling Students Meet Rigorous Standards” (April 2007) states, “While policies that increase rigor typically intend to improve educational outcomes for all students, these policies will not be successful with all students without strategies that specifically address the challenge of meeting the very different needs of students at different levels and circumstances.” The report examines programs and policies specifically designed to help those students who are already struggling under existing standards. The Alliance identified five categories of academic interventions directed to assist those struggling students:

1. Accelerated instruction
2. Extended learning time
3. Personalized learning environments
4. Dropout prevention and recovery program
5. Incorporating literacy instruction into the curriculum

The report further states that these interventions alone “cannot be effective unless they are part of a broader agenda to transform the entire school culture as it relates to learning, teaching, supports, expectations, and relationships among students and adults.” In A Call to Action: Transforming High School for all Youth six core principles and strategies are identified for redesigning high schools:

1. Personalized learning environments
2. Academic engagement of all students
3. Empowered educators
4. Accountable leaders
5. Engaged community and youth
6. Integrated system of high standards, curriculum, instruction, assessments and supports

The Buffalo Public Schools’ high school initiatives such as Credit Recovery, AP courses, College Board Schools and Standards in Practice, are designed to provide specific interventions to help students and schools with very different needs, interests, and challenges with a comprehensive approach to transforming high schools for all youth.
Universal Access and Equity through Multilingual/Multicultural Education

The Buffalo Public Schools are committed to providing high quality language learning to ensure access and equity for all students. One of the four core goals of the Buffalo Public Schools, outlined in our Academic Achievement Plan, is equity. We aim to:

- Support beliefs and practices that are just, impartial, and fair.
- Address all students as individuals, differentiating instruction to meet their specific needs and strengths.
- Engage in meaningful teaching and learning, in a school environment that values differences and encourages students to participate actively in the learning process.
- Maintain high expectations for all students.

The District recognizes that the achievement of this goal requires the collaboration and shared responsibility of staff at all levels, including central office, building principals, teachers, and instructional support personnel. To this end, we will provide equity-centered professional learning opportunities:

- Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching
- Sheltered Instruction
- Cognitive Coaching
- Standards in Practice

In our increasingly diverse society, understanding, speaking, reading and writing more than one language is not only desirable, but necessary if our students are to compete in the global marketplace. In order to prepare our students for the 21st century international society, we will value and promote multilingualism and multiculturalism through:

- High-quality bilingual and English as a second language instruction
- Expanding offerings in languages other than English (LOTE)
- District-wide and school-specific cultural explorations and celebrations
- International Baccalaureate programs
## Title 1 Stimulus Funds

### AREA OF FOCUS

### TARGET GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AREA OF FOCUS</th>
<th>TARGET GROUP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Professional Learning Opportunities</strong></td>
<td>All classroom teachers PK-8, Paraprofessionals, Building reading and math teachers and coaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Infuse literacy across the curriculum into all subject areas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop teacher content knowledge and pedagogical practices.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop an effective support system for teachers through coaching.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop ELA, mathematics and technology integration coaches.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assess instructional progress and provide individualized report.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Response to Instruction</strong></td>
<td>All Title 1 schools, Students at benchmark, strategic, intensive and advanced levels, All teachers and coaches grades 1-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide students with access to leveled reading materials.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide students with supplemental reading materials.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Building Leadership Capacity</strong></td>
<td>Building administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide administrators with cognitive coaching training to enhance administrators ability to supervise and support teachers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strengthen principals instructional leadership qualities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strengthen principals management qualities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. High School Reform</strong></td>
<td>Building administrators, Central office curriculum administrators, Classroom teachers 9-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transform industrial-era high schools into 21st century learning environments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide supports to increase the graduation rates.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop and execute a plan ensuring equity in all Buffalo Public High School curriculum and programs, teacher and school counselor quality and facilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase graduation rates and close the achievement gap.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Universal Access</strong></td>
<td>Building administrators, Central office curriculum administrators, Classroom teachers K-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase awareness of the need for culturally and linguistically responsive teaching methods.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Develop understanding of second language acquisition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
# IDEA Stimulus Funds

## AREA OF FOCUS

### 1. Response to Instructions (RtI)
- Build capacity to comprehend and execute the District Academic Achievement Plan (AAP) as an approach.
- Develop appropriate student record materials validating best practices for progress monitoring.
- Expand progress monitoring tools to mathematics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Group</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PK-6 Administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS)
- Expand district cohorts to include all schools.
- Reduce Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODR)s.
- Increase daily attendance rates.
- Reduce premature referrals for special education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PK-12 Administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central SE Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SST Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition Coordinators</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3. Student Support Teams
- Provide professional learning opportunities.
- Transition psychologists from Achievement/Discrepancy Model to RtI approach (SED, 2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PK-12 Administrators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraprofessionals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- Develop district-wide audit of IEP effectiveness utilizing Educational Benefit process for 100% of student IEPs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General &amp; Special Education Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PK-12 Principals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5. Program Audit
- Conduct district-wide audit of AAP program fidelity in special education classrooms.
- Provide corrective actions to remedy deficit areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PK-12 Principals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6. Pre-Graduate Intervention
- Offer intensive literacy and mathematics instruction for 16-20 year old students at risk for dropping out.
- Develop multiple pathways for student credentialing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office of Alternative Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adult Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education Centers</td>
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</table>
2007-2008 DISTRICT SUMMARY

Overview

The Buffalo School District is the second largest urban school system in New York State. Serving 33,712 students in nearly 65 facilities, the district strives to bring exemplary teaching practices and unparalleled opportunities to its diverse student population.

Enrollment Data

- American Indian or Alaska Native: 2%
- Black or African American: 25%
- Hispanic or Latino: 15%
- Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander: 2%
- White: 57%

*SOURCE: 2007-08 NYS District Report Card

Overall Accountability Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>Improvement (Yr 7)</th>
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<tr>
<td>ELA - Improvement (Yr 7)</td>
<td>Science - Good Standing</td>
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<td>Math - Improvement (Yr 2)</td>
<td>Grad Rate - Good Standing</td>
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Title I Part A Funding*

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<tr>
<th>Years the District Received Funding</th>
<th>2006-07</th>
<th>2007-08</th>
<th>2008-09</th>
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<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
<td><strong>YES</strong></td>
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*SOURCE: 2007-08 NYS District Report Card

Enrollment by Ethnicity*

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<tr>
<th>2007-08</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander</td>
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*SOURCE: 2007-08 NYS District Report Card
## 2007-2008 DISTRICT SUMMARY

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<td>Eligible for Free Lunch</td>
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<td>English Language Learners</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
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*SOURCE: 2007-08 NYS District Report Card*