

# THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*SCHOOL EVALUATION REPORT*  
**BUFFALO COMMONS CHARTER  
SCHOOL**

*VISIT DATE: MARCH 10 – 11, 2026*  
*REPORT DATE: MAY 5, 2026*

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**Charter Schools Institute**  
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## INTRODUCTION

### INTRODUCTION

This School Evaluation Report offers an analysis of evidence collected during the school visit to Buffalo Commons Charter School (“Buffalo Commons”) on March 10 – 11, 2026. While the SUNY Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) conducts a comprehensive review of evidence related to all the [State University of New York Charter Renewal Benchmarks](#) (the “SUNY Renewal Benchmarks”) near the end of a charter term, most mid-cycle charter school evaluation visits focus on a subset of these benchmarks addressing the academic success of the school and the effectiveness and viability of the charter school organization. The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks provide a framework for examining the quality of the educational program, focusing on teaching and learning (e.g., curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and services for at-risk students), as well as instructional leadership, organizational capacity, and board oversight. The Institute uses the established criteria on a regular basis to provide schools with a consistent set of expectations leading up to renewal.

The Institute provided the school an Accountability Summary that outlines the school’s previous year of performance and the extent to which the school is meeting, coming close to meeting, or not meeting its Accountability Plan goals. For more information about the school’s performance, see the 2024-25 School Performance Review section below.

This report serves as a summary of the school’s program based on the Qualitative Education Benchmarks. The Institute intends this selection of information to be an exception report in order to highlight areas of concern. As such, limited detail about positive elements of the educational program is not an indication that the Institute does not recognize other indicators of program effectiveness.

The Appendix to the report contains a School Overview with descriptive and historical information about the school, as well as background information on the conduct of the visit. Together this information puts the visit in the context of the school’s current charter term.

While the Institute posts the evaluation report on its website and makes it publicly available, the Institute encourages school leaders to share the report with its stakeholders including, but not limited to, the full board of trustees, staff members, and families.





## SCHOOL BACKGROUND

# BUFFALO COMMONS CHARTER SCHOOL

833 Michigan Ave Buffalo, NY 14203 | Grades: K-4 | Buffalo City School District



### MISSION

*Buffalo Commons is an academically rigorous, creative, and collaborative Kindergarten – 8<sup>th</sup> grade learning community that uses research-based teaching practices and innovative programming to eliminate the opportunity gap and prepare a diverse student body for successful lives that strengthen their communities.*

### CURRENT CHARTER

Opened:  
2022-23

Serves:  
Kindergarten – 4<sup>th</sup>

Chartered Enrollment:  
250

Charter Expiration:  
July 31, 2027

### KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

Rigorous, research-based curriculum	-	Robust social emotional learning program	+
Effective instruction	-	Partnering with families	+
Data driven approach	-	Summer professional development	+
Creative problem solving	-	Small professional learning communities	+
Value-driven school culture	+	Individualized coaching	-

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the 2024-25 school year, Buffalo Commons did not meet its Accountability Plan goals in English language arts (“ELA”) or mathematics based on the school’s first administration of the New York State assessments. The Institute’s visits during the first, third, and fourth years of Buffalo Commons’ initial charter term identified multiple areas in which the school struggled to deliver an effective, compliant academic program. Given that Buffalo Commons does not have a record of meeting or coming close to meeting its Accountability Plan goals and does not implement a program on the ground that meets the standards established in the SUNY Qualitative Evaluation Benchmarks, the school’s prospects for initial renewal are in jeopardy.

Although Buffalo Commons made changes to its leadership structure to clarify roles and responsibilities in its fourth year of operation, the school continues to struggle with foundational systems to ensure a high quality educational program. Following the departure of the school’s director of teaching and learning in early September, the executive director took on all instructional leadership responsibilities, and the board established a new director of operations position to handle several administrative areas. The school continues to lack fundamental operational systems required to support an effective program, particularly in the areas of student enrollment, recruitment, attendance, and financial and compliance reporting.

The school’s actual enrollment as a percentage of its chartered enrollment has declined throughout the term and has fallen below 50% in the last two years, limiting leaders’ ability to fully resource the program. The Buffalo Commons board of trustees has struggled to recruit and sustain membership, and as a result, the board’s accountability mechanisms for the school’s leadership team have not yet been effective. Given the school’s enrollment trends and the Institute’s comprehensive review of the education corporation’s financial reporting, Buffalo Commons demonstrates indicators of fiscal stress that could impact the school’s viability. The education corporation’s status is presented in the fiscal dashboard on page eight of this report. The education corporation must make urgent improvements to its fiscal standing to make a compelling case for renewal in 2026-27.

Buffalo Commons maintains an instructional model with two teachers in each classroom, which benefits both adult and student culture. Teachers highlight the collegial support they receive from their co-teachers and grade band learning communities, as well as the social emotional support structures for students prioritized in the school’s design. Classrooms are generally calm environments with minimal disruptions, and students demonstrate an understanding of the school’s cultural expectations. Although the school improved some academic routines to facilitate small group instruction since the Institute’s Spring 2025 visit, leaders have not yet implemented systems to support instructional rigor, data use, and effective planning. The Institute observed limited evidence of higher order thinking and strategic questioning to advance student mastery during lessons and in document review. Although the school has clarified its structures for intervention, teachers lack sufficient training and development to deliver effective supports to all learners as measured by a consistent assessment strategy. The school must demonstrate significant and sustained improvement to instructional systems, organizational capacity, and student outcomes to make a compelling case for earning renewal according to the SUNY Renewal Policies.

## ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

### 2024-25 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE REVIEW

At the beginning of the Accountability Period,<sup>1</sup> the school developed and adopted an Accountability Plan that set academic goals in the key subjects of ELA and mathematics. For each goal in the Accountability Plan, specific outcome measures define the level of performance necessary to meet that goal. Throughout the charter term, the Institute examines results for the required Accountability Plan measures on an annual basis and provides an Accountability Summary to each school detailing the school's progress toward meeting its Accountability Plan goals. Because The New York State Charter Schools Act of 1998 (the "Act") requires charters be held "accountable for meeting measurable student achievement results"<sup>2</sup> and states the educational programs at a charter school must "meet or exceed the student performance standards adopted by the board of regents"<sup>3</sup> for other public schools, The SUNY Trustees' required accountability measures rest on performance as measured primarily by statewide assessments. More information about the required Accountability Plan measures can be found on the [Institute's website](#).

Buffalo Commons is in the fourth year of its initial charter term, and is due for renewal in 2026-27. In 2024-25, the first year the school produced data on the state's ELA and mathematics exams, Buffalo Commons did not meet its key Accountability Plan goals in ELA or mathematics. In addition, the school did not meet the test participation requirement with only 73% of all students tested in both subjects. Given the low enrollment of the school, Buffalo Commons' results are a reflection of only 10 students tested in both subjects. The SUNY Renewal Policies outline three options for schools in an initial charter term: full-term renewal of five years, short term renewal (typically three years), and non-renewal. Based on its record of performance, Buffalo Commons' initial renewal is in jeopardy. The school must demonstrate unambiguous improvement in ELA and mathematics to make a compelling case for earning renewal in 2026-27.

Buffalo Commons did not meet its ELA goal in 2024-25, meeting the target for none of the four applicable required measures included under the goal. The school posted a proficiency rate far below the absolute target of 75%. Among tested students enrolled in at least their second year, no student scored at or above proficiency. The school's ELA proficiency rate fell below the local district's proficiency rate of 32%. Over half of the school's tested students scored at Level 1, the lowest possible level of performance. Buffalo Commons posted an effect size of -1.96. This level of achievement is lower than the target of 0.30 and indicates the school performed lower than expected in comparison to schools across the state enrolling similar percentages of economically disadvantaged students. The Institute will report on Buffalo Commons' growth measure next year when the school's 4<sup>th</sup> grade students have produced New York State exam results.

The school posted a similar record of achievement in mathematics in 2024-25. Buffalo Commons did not meet its mathematics goal, meeting the target for none of the four applicable required measures included under the goal. The school posted an 13% proficiency rate for tested students enrolled in at least their second year, falling short of the 75% target by 62 percentage points. The school's mathematics proficiency rate fell below the local district's proficiency rate of 34% by 21 percentage points. Approximately half of the school's tested students scored at Level 1, indicating performance far below grade level expectations. Buffalo Commons posted an effect size of -1.60. This

1. Because the SUNY Trustees make a renewal decision before student achievement results for the final year of a charter term become available, the Accountability Period ends with the school year prior to the final year of the charter term. In the case of initial renewal, the Accountability Period covers the first four years of the charter term.

2. Education Law § 2850(2)(f).

3. Education Law § 2854(1)(d).

## ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

level of achievement is lower than the target of 0.30 and indicates that when compared to schools across the state enrolling similar percentages of economically disadvantaged students, the school performed lower than expected. The Institute will report on Buffalo Commons' growth measure next year when the school's 4<sup>th</sup> grade students have produced New York State exam results.

Under the state's Every Student Succeeds Act ("ESSA") accountability system, schools must annually test at least 95% of all students, as well as at least 95% of student subgroups. In 2024-25, Buffalo Commons tested 73% of students in both subjects. Buffalo Commons must take steps to increase its tested rate in the 2025-26 school year.

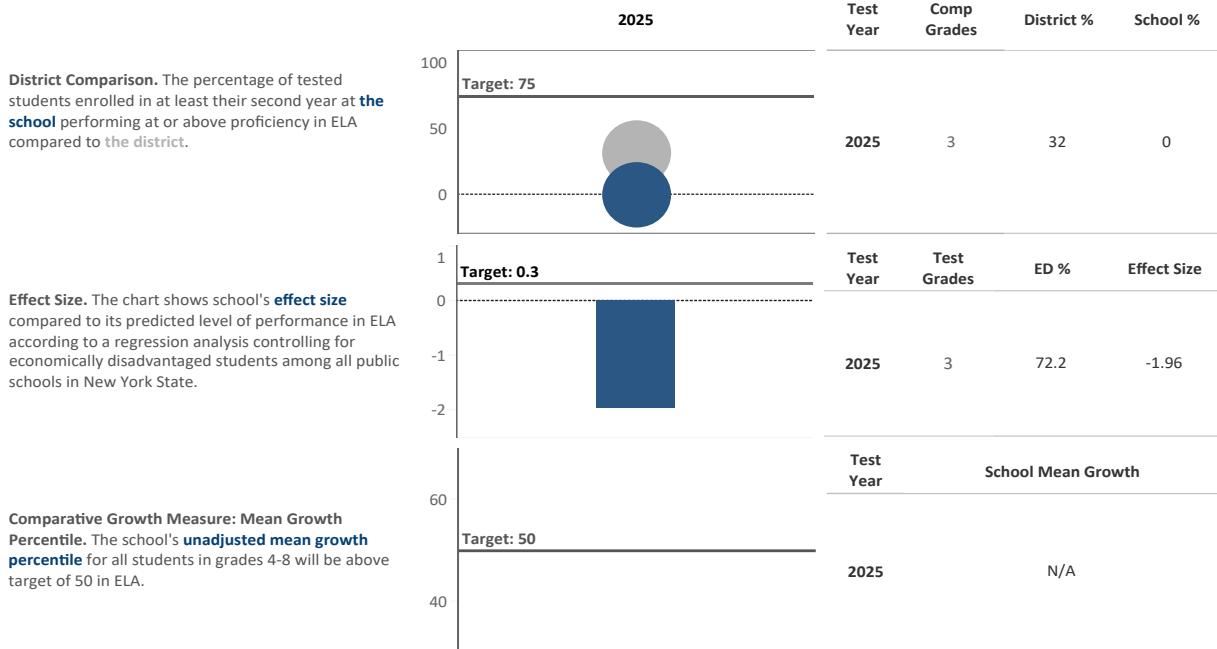


# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

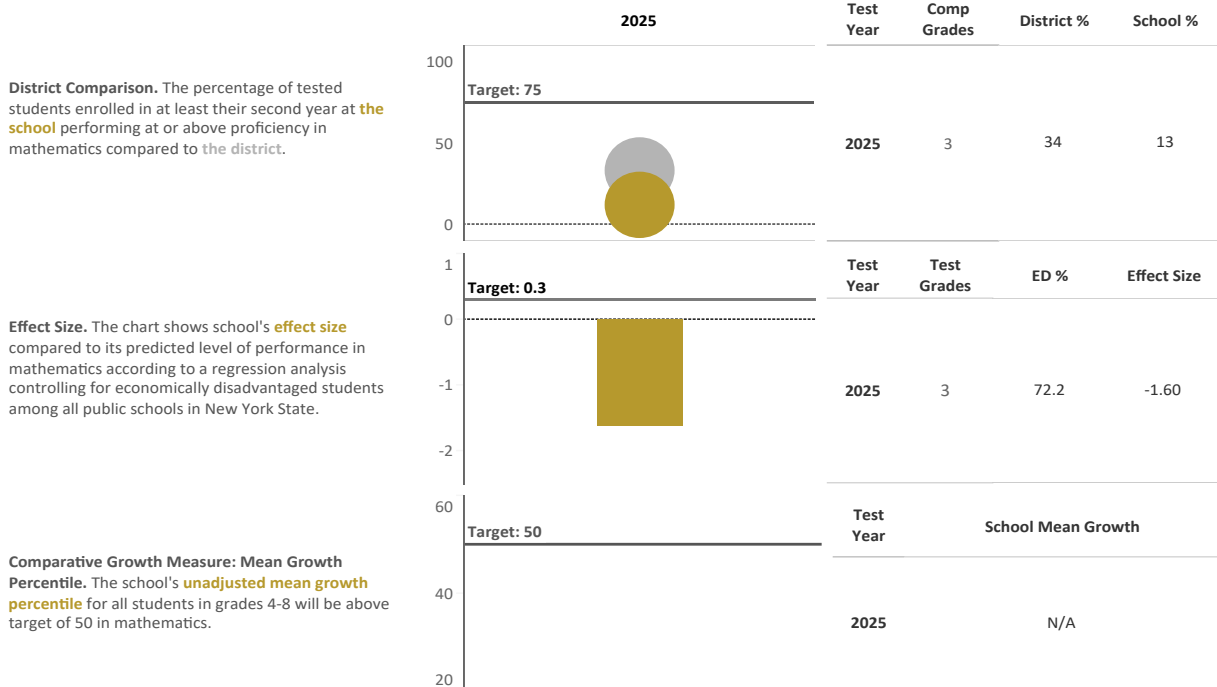
## BUFFALO COMMONS CHARTER SCHOOL

Buffalo City School District

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL



### MATHEMATICS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL





# ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

## BUFFALO COMMONS CHARTER SCHOOL

Buffalo City School District

### SCIENCE ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

**Science: Comparative Measure.** The percentage of tested students at **the school** in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in science compared to **the district**. Schools may administer a science Regents exam in lieu of the regular grade 8 exam.

N/A

Through 2022, the NYS science exam was administered to grades 4 & 8. In 2023, the science exam was administered to grade 8 only. As of 2024, the science exam is administered to grades 5 & 8.

### TESTED PERCENTAGES

	2025	
	ELA	Math
School Tested Number (N)	10	10
School Tested %	71.4	71.4
District Tested %	87.0	89.9

### PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS\*

	2025	
	ELA	Math
Students with Disabilities Tested on State Exam (N)	0	0
School % Proficient on Exam	N/A	N/A
District % Proficient	18.9	24.6

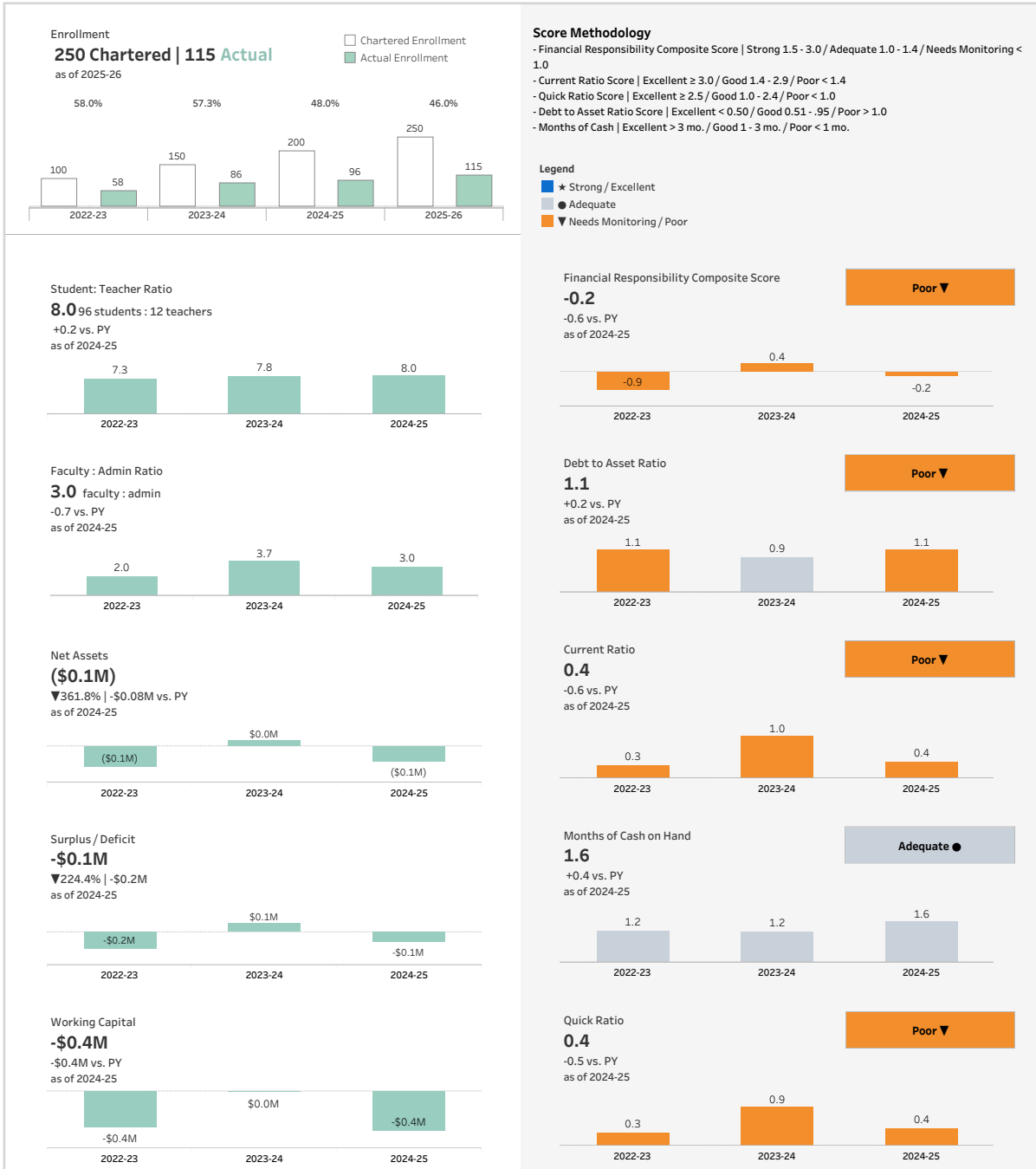
	2023	2024	2025
Tested on NYSESLAT Exam (N)	0	0	0
School % Making Progress	N/A	N/A	N/A

\*Academic outcome data describing the performance of students with disabilities and English language learners ("ELLs") are not tied to separate goals in the charter school's formal Accountability Plan. The New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test ("NYSESLAT") is a standardized New York State assessment given annually to students classified as ELLs. Student scores are categorized into five proficiency levels: Entering, Emerging, Transitioning, Expanding, and Commanding (the highest proficiency level). For elementary and middle school students, "Making Progress" is defined as: testing at the Commanding level, or moving up at least one proficiency level from the prior year, or testing at the Expanding level and testing proficient on the NYS ELA exam in that same year. For high school students, "Making Progress" is defined as: testing at the Commanding level, or moving up at least one proficiency level from the prior year. To comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ("FERPA") regulations on reporting education outcome data, the Institute does not report assessment results for groups containing five or fewer students, and indicates such instances with an "s".

The reported outcome data for students with disabilities and English language learners reflect the state report card. Due to the school's error in data reporting, data for students with disabilities and English language learners are not available.

# FISCAL DASHBOARD

## BUFFALO COMMONS CHARTER SCHOOL



Schools report actual enrollment on a quarterly basis to the Institute, and the actual enrollment for 2025-26 reflects the most recently submitted quarterly submission.

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

### QUALITATIVE BENCHMARK ANALYSIS

The SUNY Renewal Benchmarks, grounded in the body of research from the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University,<sup>4</sup> describe the elements in place at schools that are highly effective at providing students from low-income backgrounds the instruction, content, knowledge, and skills necessary to produce strong academic performance.

#### ASSESSMENT

In its fourth year, Buffalo Commons is developing the necessary systems to provide teachers with actionable data insights and support lesson planning, but the school's assessment system does not yet improve instructional effectiveness and student learning. The school does not regularly administer all planned assessments. While the school routinely administers the STAR and DIBELs assessments, teachers do not consistently implement curricular assessments with fidelity. The school lacks a process to determine which assessments are non-negotiable. Teachers exercise discretion in both choosing the method of assessing student progress in small group instruction time and choosing which curriculum based assessment to administer. The school does not implement comprehensive oversight of these selections. As a result, it is unclear if Buffalo Commons' full battery of assessments is adequately aligned to the rigor and content of state standards. Although Buffalo Commons made the decision to escalate the frequency of STAR assessment administration to capture more actionable student information, the school has not established a plan for strategically using these data to improve teaching and learning.

The school does not have a reliable process for analyzing assessments. Teachers and leaders can speak to data trends with some specificity, but it is unclear how teachers and leaders then analyze the data to inform action steps or schoolwide instructional strategies. The school does not make assessment data readily accessible to teachers. Buffalo Commons has shared data trackers, but teachers do not receive complete and timely updates to the available datasets. Instructional leaders do not effectively use assessment results to evaluate teacher effectiveness, identify professional development topics, or develop coaching strategies.

Teachers do not consistently use assessment results to meet students' needs by adjusting classroom instruction. While the school uses its initial diagnostic assessments to identify student groupings for special interventions, the lack of systematic, standardized progress tracking inhibits the ability of the school to determine if teachers are sufficiently adjusting instruction to meet those students' needs.

#### CURRICULUM

Buffalo Commons' curriculum does not yet effectively support teachers in their instructional planning. The school's curriculum framework provides a fixed, underlying structure with which teachers can plan, but leaders have not established clear expectations to ensure teachers implement the materials with fidelity. The school uses EL Education for ELA, Really Great Reading for phonics, and Bridges in Mathematics for mathematics instruction. However, instructional leaders do not provide close oversight of teachers' delivery of the curricular materials, limiting their efficacy. The school lacks the necessary supporting tools to ensure that teachers can

4. An extensive body of research, including a [report from Harvard](#) and a [report from the United States General Accounting Office](#), identifying and confirming the correlates of effective schools dating back four decades.

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

effectively bridge the curriculum framework and daily lesson plans. The Institute’s review of lesson plans demonstrated significant variance in lesson planning quality across subjects and grade levels. For example, while some lessons plans included scripted questions and differentiation strategies to support students, others included only lesson agendas and linked materials. While teachers broadly know what to teach and when to teach it, instructional leadership has not established clear systems to ensure high quality implementation of the school’s programs.

While most teachers plan purposeful lessons aligned to state standards, teachers often use a variety of supplemental resources and create additional materials to meet the needs of their students. Grade teams use a pacing calendar to track units and lessons and decide when to administer their end of unit assessments, but instructional leaders do not provide close oversight on the pacing or quality of materials teachers select for their lessons. Teachers regularly modify the EL Education program to align with the school schedule and present student levels, adapting the lessons intended for 90 minute blocks to fit 45 minute class periods with mixed efficacy. Leaders provided a training in February 2026 to support teachers in identifying power standards and priority activities as they plan daily lessons. However, teachers’ challenges with adapting the EL Education materials have been evident since the first year school visit, and teachers continue to cite difficulty deploying the curriculum. Teachers also create supplemental materials for mathematics to ensure students are practicing skills and concepts consistently and indicate the lack of a linear progression in the program is a challenge for the school’s students given the low attendance throughout the year. When students miss a day of instruction, the material often does not appear again in the curriculum for multiple days, resulting in persistent gaps in student engagement with the relevant content.

Buffalo Commons does not have a process for selecting, developing, and reviewing its curricular programs. School leadership has collected teacher feedback on areas of opportunity with the current programs, but has not made timely adjustments to teacher support structures or classroom resources to address demonstrated needs. In staff member surveys throughout the year, teachers provided feedback on areas where the curriculum could be improved or adjusted, but leaders did not articulate a clear strategy to address the challenges. Teachers have turned to supplemental materials or significant revisions to the programs in response, diluting the overall quality and consistency of implementation.

### PEDAGOGY

High quality instruction is present in some Buffalo Commons classrooms, but is not consistently evident across the school. Most teachers deliver purposeful lessons with instructional activities aligned to learning goals. Teachers collaborate in grade teams and co-teaching pairs to plan instruction, but teachers’ persistent challenges with adapting the curricular programs to the school’s schedule and student needs result in inconsistencies in curricular implementation across grade levels. The Institute observed some strong examples of small group instruction, but teachers do not differentiate instruction for learners who are ready to advance in the lesson content. While teachers’ lesson delivery during the visit demonstrates improvement since the Spring 2025 visit, Buffalo Commons still lacks oversight from instructional leaders to ensure the improvements are sustainable and aligned to a shared vision for teaching and learning.

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

While teachers regularly use techniques to check for student understanding, their responsiveness to misconceptions varies in quality. During whole group instruction, teachers do not consistently use strategies to monitor student understanding or respond to student needs. Teachers' primary checks for understanding occur during small group instruction. In many co-taught classrooms, the second adult primarily monitors behavior rather than assessing understanding or providing academic support. As a result, teachers miss opportunities to adjust instruction in real time and effectively meet the needs of all learners.

Teachers do not consistently provide opportunities to develop higher order thinking skills and depth of student understanding. Many lessons lack the rigor of state standards and do not challenge students to engage in deeper analysis, problem solving, and discourse. In most classrooms, tasks remain procedural, limiting students' opportunities to engage deeply with the material, explain their reasoning, and defend their solutions. In some cases, teachers' use of supplemental resources reduced the lesson's intended rigor, as did teachers' modifications of the prescribed curricular materials.

Teachers do not consistently maximize learning time. Pacing is often slow, and whole group instruction lacks urgency. In several classrooms, some students quietly disengage from the lesson activities, and teachers do not adjust instruction to increase engagement or differentiate for varying levels of readiness. Teachers establish effective classroom management routines that support a focus on academic achievement and classrooms are orderly. Teachers maintain positive, respectful interactions with students. When addressing low level misbehavior, teachers reinforce expectations while maintaining a supportive tone, which contributes to a stable and encouraging learning environment. Buffalo Commons must build off the foundational classroom management systems evident at the school to ensure meaningful improvement in instructional quality and student outcomes.

### INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Buffalo Commons does not demonstrate strong instructional leadership. The school's instructional leadership systems are not yet adequate to support the development of the teaching staff. Following the departure of the director of teaching and learning at the start of the 2025-26 school year, the executive director manages teacher coaching, evaluation, and development and engages an external organization to support literacy coaching. While school leaders have taken initial steps to clarify roles under the new administrative structure, the current systems are not sufficient to improve teaching and learning.

The school's instructional leadership has not yet established an environment of high expectations for student learning and teacher performance. Leaders have set clearer goals for student outcomes, and teachers report that academic achievement is a priority. Since the Institute's Spring 2025 visit, purposeful instruction is more evident across classrooms. However, leaders do not consistently communicate or reinforce a clear vision for high quality instruction, and expectations for teaching and learning vary across classrooms. For example, teachers' lesson plans do not include consistent elements that reflect planning for instructional priority areas, such as the school's daily intervention blocks.

Instructional leadership does not provide sustained, systemic, and effective coaching and supervision that improves teachers' instruction. Although instructional leadership schedules observations and coaching, these sessions do not occur consistently or frequently across staff members. Feedback, when provided, is often

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

verbal and lacks documentation, limiting the ability to track teacher progress over time. Leaders do not consistently deliver actionable guidance tied to instructional priorities. As a result, coaching does not translate to measurable improvements in instructional practice. While the school has previously leveraged literacy coaching through an external organization, it began reimplementing such coaching only during the latter half of the 2025-26 school year, resulting in missed opportunities to launch the year with clear and consistent frameworks for instructional support. Leaders do not regularly conduct teacher evaluations with clear criteria that accurately identify teachers' strengths and weaknesses, nor does leadership hold teachers accountable for quality instruction and student achievement. Buffalo Commons does not use student performance data to set professional goals with teachers, track teacher progress, or evaluate teacher effectiveness. As a result, the school lacks a coherent system to ensure accountability for instructional quality and student achievement.

Instructional leadership provides some opportunities for teachers to plan curriculum and instruction within and across grade levels, but oversight of planning quality is limited. The school provides whole group development every two weeks and staff meetings monthly. Leaders have also created opportunities for teacher collaboration through grade level teams with grade team leads, co-teaching structures, and vertical planning bands, which teachers value and rely on to support instruction. Teachers meet in Kindergarten – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade bands every two weeks. These structures contribute to some effective small group instruction and cross grade curricular alignment. However, leaders do not consistently monitor the quality of planning time or ensure alignment to state standards. Teachers report modifying purchased curriculum materials extensively, but leadership does not consistently evaluate whether these modifications maintain rigor or alignment. The school's current systems do not ensure that instruction prepares students to meet grade level expectations.

Instructional leadership does not implement a comprehensive professional development program that develops the competencies and skills of all teachers. While leadership has introduced professional development aligned to identified needs, such as English language learner ("ELL") supports, these efforts are not timely or systematically planned. For example, key professional development sessions such as EL Education curriculum adaptation and ELL support occurred well into the school year rather than at its outset. Teachers do not receive explicit professional development related to students receiving special education services. As a result, professional development does not consistently build teacher capacity to meet the needs of all students. Professional development activities are not consistently interrelated with classroom practice. Although leaders have increased the use of assessment tools and data collection, they do not yet effectively use these data analyses to inform professional development. Teachers report seeing the benefits of some schoolwide training on initiatives such as small group intervention programming, but leaders do not have unified progress monitoring systems to evaluate effectiveness and ensure professional learning consistently translates into improved classroom practice.

### AT-RISK PROGRAM

Buffalo Commons does not yet meet the educational needs of at-risk students as it does not implement sufficient training and development to ensure all teachers are prepared to support the full range of students' needs. The school has compliant procedures to identify students with disabilities and students struggling academically, but the school does not consistently and accurately report these students which may result in a delay of services. In addition, the school has not yet established consistent systems for identifying and monitoring ELL students. For instance, the school has struggled to consistently report an accurate number of

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

ELLs over the charter term, and in the 2024-25 school year, Buffalo Commons received a violation from the Institute for a non-compliant ELL program. The school provided a corrective action plan in the 2025-26 school year and administered the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (“NYSITELL”) to appropriately identify their enrolled ELLs. However, the school continues to require further development to deliver a compliant program. In the weeks before the visit, the school’s leadership team provided a training to three classroom teachers who work with ELLs. This served as the teachers’ first introduction to the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (“SIOP”) to support ELL students. While teachers have started to introduce some strategies to support ELLs in their acquisition of reading, writing, speaking, and listening proficiency, the program is still in the early stages of implementation. Buffalo Commons does not yet provide adequate training and professional development to ensure teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to support all learners and produce equitable outcomes for the school’s student population.

The school has adequate intervention programs to meet the needs of students struggling academically, but leaders do not yet provide consistent oversight to assess the impact of the school’s interventions. Teachers independently select intervention programs for their students, resulting in varied implementation across classrooms. The school uses several intervention programs to support students struggling academically, including University of Florida Literacy Institute (“UFLI”), Really Great Reading, and Blast for phonics, as well as Bridges intervention for mathematics. Teachers work with students during daily mixed grade small group instruction blocks to provide support. Teachers monitor student progress using a schoolwide data tracker spreadsheet every two weeks and consult the special education coordinator for additional support when necessary. While these routines demonstrate an improvement from the Institute’s Spring 2025 visit when the school struggled to enact any consistent intervention programming, Buffalo Commons still lacks a system to evaluate the effectiveness of the current interventions.

Buffalo Commons is developing its special education program to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The school provides consultant teacher services, resource room services, and integrated co-teaching classrooms to support students with disabilities in accordance with their Individualized Education Programs (“IEPs”). The special education coordinator is a stipended position for a full time teacher responsible for overseeing most aspects of the school’s special education services. As this is the first year the school has been able to support a coordinator position, Buffalo Commons is still developing consistent structures for supporting and monitoring students with disabilities. The special education coordinator advises teachers on different strategies and resources for students with disabilities as well as students who may be struggling academically. Currently, the special education coordinator delivers tier 3 interventions to students in Kindergarten – 2<sup>nd</sup> grade alongside a special education teacher who provides interventions for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students. While the two teachers coordinate with classroom teachers regularly and provide direct services to students, the school offers limited professional development opportunities to help general education teachers meet the needs of all students.

### ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

The Buffalo Commons organization does not yet work effectively to deliver the school’s educational program. The school has adjusted its administrative structure in response to low enrollment, turnover in core leadership positions, and evolving school demands, but the operational systems and policies present at the time of the

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

visit still do not support the school in carrying out its academic program as designed. Following the departure of the director of teaching and learning in Fall 2025, leaders made the decision to eliminate the position and shift instructional leadership responsibilities to the executive director while maintaining the director of school community role to oversee staff culture, student behavior, and external partnerships. The school added a director of operations position, but turnover on the operations team without clear underlying systems to support core school functions including enrollment, attendance, and reporting has limited the impact of this change to the organizational structure.

While leaders have improved the delineation of roles and responsibilities since the Institute's visit in Spring 2025, the school's mechanisms for accountability and oversight are still not clearly codified. For example, the school was not implementing a consistent attendance policy until late February despite persistent issues with student attendance. The school has also failed to accurately upload its enrolled student data to the Western New York Level 1 Regional Information Center ("RIC") for two consecutive years, despite repeated outreach and training opportunities from the RIC. This issue has resulted in incomplete or inaccurate reporting of the school's enrolled students with disabilities and ELLs to the Institute, as well as discrepancies in the New York State test results attributed to the school. Buffalo Commons also continues to be delinquent in finance and compliance reporting to the Institute, an issue raised to the school's board and leadership team during the Spring 2025 and Fall 2025 school visits.

Buffalo Commons has a clear student discipline system in place at the classroom and administrative level, and teachers and leaders consistently apply the school's processes to support student behavior. Students display an understanding of the school's behavioral expectations, and teachers establish orderly classrooms with limited disruptions. Leaders provide summer training on the school's social emotional learning curriculum and more intensive support in the early months of the school year to establish clear routines for behavior and interventions to address student needs. Teachers and leaders indicate that systems for culture and discipline have improved such that students are rarely out of the classroom, which Institute observations confirmed during the visit.

Following significant staff member turnover in the first three years of the charter term, Buffalo Commons has taken steps to stabilize adult culture within the building. The director of school community administers a staff member survey each quarter and facilitates listening sessions with staff members to understand challenges within the school's programs. The leadership team meets formally rather than relying on informal check-ins as it did in past years. However, the Institute's review of agenda items and notes from the leadership team's check-ins indicates that the meetings do not consistently yield actionable, measurable outcomes aligned to the most pressing needs of the school. Several items appear repeatedly in meeting notes without resolution, and there are frequent gaps in the meeting summaries, evidencing inconsistent meeting occurrence and documentation.

Buffalo Commons does not maintain adequate enrollment or implement procedures to monitor its progress toward meeting enrollment and retention targets through effective recruitment strategies. The school has averaged approximately 50% of its chartered enrollment throughout its initial charter term. The board and school leaders have adjusted staffing in response to enrollment trends, maintaining the two teacher model in every classroom but enrolling just one cohort of students per grade in most cases instead of the two cohorts

## BENCHMARK SUMMARY

leaders originally intended. While the school has maintained solvency by delaying the hiring of administrative positions outlined in the charter application’s organizational chart, the board and school leaders’ lack of urgency in addressing the enrollment trends throughout the charter term could pose a significant risk to the school’s viability. The school does not routinely monitor and evaluate the school’s programs to make timely, necessary changes in support of strong student outcomes. While Buffalo Commons increased its collection of qualitative and quantitative data on the program, leaders do not establish clear benchmarks against which to measure their progress and therefore do not act with urgency to make adjustments when the school does not make sufficient progress in core program areas.

### BOARD OVERSIGHT & GOVERNANCE

Although the Buffalo Commons board increased its oversight in the fourth year of the charter term, the board does not yet work effectively to achieve the school’s Accountability Plan goals. The board has struggled to maintain robust membership, and the three members in attendance at the board interview cited a need to add capacity in the areas of development, facilities, and finance. While the board is actively recruiting, turnover has contributed to uneven monitoring of the school’s overall health as the organization struggles with persistent enrollment and compliance reporting issues. Buffalo Commons has only produced one set of scores towards its Accountability Plan goals, but the board has not yet held the school’s leadership accountable for establishing an academically successful organization.

The board requests and receives some information to oversee the school’s program and finances, but the dashboards leaders provide are limited. Leaders provide the board with more frequent updates on academic progress than in previous years using the additional administrations of the STAR assessments, and the board monitors staff member satisfaction based on survey results. However, the board materials the Institute reviewed do not include data on progress towards student enrollment and retention efforts, despite both board and school leaders naming it as a priority. Further, the board has not yet established clear benchmarks for monitoring the progress of its stated priorities and long range goals. The board minutes, specifically committee reports, lack consistent discussion of progress toward academic, development, finance, and governance objectives. Board members report frequent touchpoints with the executive director throughout the year, but at the time of the visit, had not implemented their plans to solicit more interaction with other members of the school’s leadership team. While tools like staff member surveys and leader reports on listening sessions have added to the board’s ability to monitor the school, Buffalo Commons continues to struggle with communication between board members and the school community.

The board evaluates the school leader but does not regularly evaluate its own performance to hold the organization as a whole accountable for student achievement. Despite receiving the annual Accountability Summary two weeks prior to the Institute’s visit, the board had not yet reviewed the summary, which indicates the school’s prospects for renewal are in jeopardy. The Institute plans to follow up with the board to offer training on its governance and accountability practices, given the significant membership turnover and upcoming renewal visit in Fall 2026.

Buffalo Commons

# Ax

APPENDICES

PAGES Ax 1-4

**SO**<sup>A</sup>  
SCHOOL  
OVERVIEW  
PAGE Ax 1



**BUFFALO COMMONS CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES<sup>1</sup>**

<b>CHAIR</b>	<b>TRUSTEES</b>
Trey Thompson	Jamien Eutsey
<b>INTERIM VICE CHAIR</b>	
Latricia Davis	
<b>INTERIM TREASURER</b>	
Ruqayyah Simmons	
<b>SECRETARY</b>	
Zakiyyah Missert	

**SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS**

<b>SCHOOL YEAR</b>	<b>CHARTERED ENROLLMENT</b>	<b>ACTUAL ENROLLMENT<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>ACTUAL AS A PERCENTAGE OF CHARTERED ENROLLMENT</b>	<b>GRADES SERVED</b>
2022-23	100	58	58%	K-1
2023-24	150	86	57%	K-2
2024-25	200	96	48%	K-3
2025-26	250	115	46%	K-4

1. Source: The Institute’s board records at the time of report finalization.

2. Source: Institute’s Official Enrollment Binder. (Figures may differ slightly from New York State Report Cards, depending on date of data collection.)



## Buffalo Commons Charter School

## Buffalo City School District

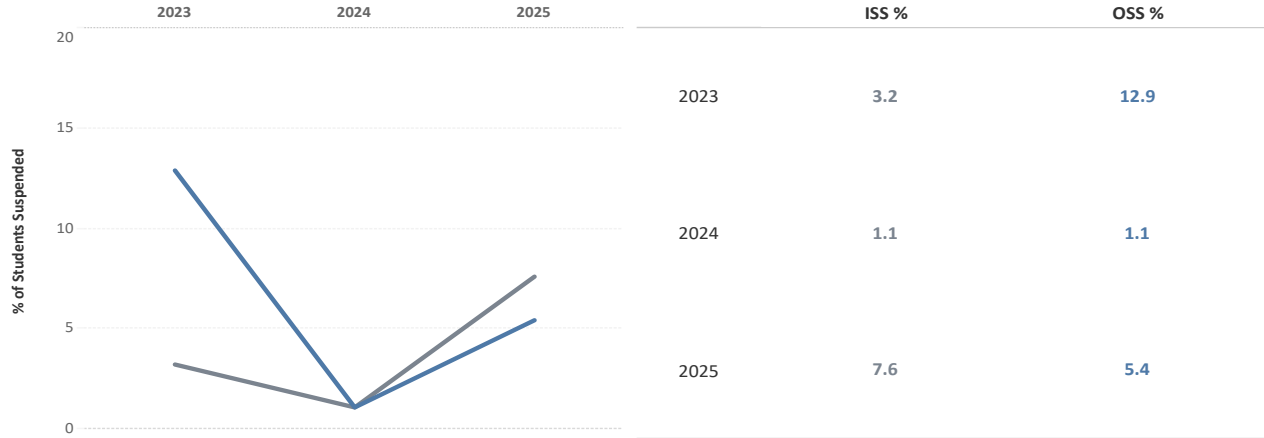
STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS: SUB-POPULATIONS							
	2023	2024	2025		2023	2024	2025
Economically Disadvantaged				School %	74.2	63.4	78.5
				District %	82.5	87.0	87.8
English Language Learner				School %	N/A	N/A	N/A
				District %	21.5	23.3	25.9
Students with Disabilities				School %	N/A	N/A	N/A
				District %	25.4	28.1	29.2

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS: RACE/ETHNICITY									
	Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	Black or African American	Hispanic	White		Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander	Black or African American	Hispanic	White
2023					School %	4.8	62.9	4.8	21.0
					District %	15.5	39.7	20.3	18.0
2024					School %	5.4	61.3	8.6	20.4
					District %	16.5	39.8	19.9	17.1
2025					School %	3.2	63.4	5.4	23.7
					District %	17.1	39.4	20.4	16.4

Data reported in these charts reflect BEDS day enrollment counts as reported by the New York State Education Department ("NYSED"). Due to an error in data reporting, enrollment rates for ELLs and students with disabilities are unavailable for the 2022-23, 2023-24, and 2024-25 school years. The school must work with its regional information center to ensure this data is available for future reporting.



**Buffalo Commons Charter School**



Data suitable for comparison are not available. The percentage rate shown here is calculated using the method employed by NYCDOE: the total number of students receiving an in school or out of school suspension at any time during the school year is divided by the total enrollment, then multiplied by 100.

**Persistence in Enrollment:** The percentage of students eligible to return from previous year who did return



**Expulsions:** The number of students expelled from the school each year

Year	2023	2024	2025
Expulsions	0	0	0

**Buffalo Commons Charter School's Enrollment and Retention Status: 2024-25**

		Target %	School %
<b>Enrollment</b>	Economically Disadvantaged	81.2	79.3
	English Language Learners	18.7	N/A
	Students with Disabilities	18.4	N/A
<b>Retention</b>	Economically Disadvantaged	93.6	76.3
	English Language Learners	95.3	N/A
	Students with Disabilities	94.1	N/A

Discipline data above reflect information reported by the education corporation and validated by the Institute. Enrollment and retention data reflect available BEDS day information as reported by NYSED. Due to an error in data reporting, enrollment and retention rates for ELLs and students with disabilities are unavailable. The school must work with its regional information center to ensure this data is available for future reporting.



**SCHOOL VISIT HISTORY**

SCHOOL YEAR	VISIT TYPE	DATE
2022-23	First Year	May 12, 2023
2024-25	Evaluation	May 14, 2025
2025-26	Leader Conversation Evaluation	October 3, 2025 March 10 – 11, 2026

**CONDUCT OF THE VISIT**

DATE(S) OF REVIEW	EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS	TITLE
March 10 - 11, 2026	Sinnjinn Bucknell	Managing Director for Accountability
	Katy Clayton	Associate Director of School Evaluation
	Ali Foglia	School Evaluator
	Kathleen Haywood	School Evaluator

**CHARTER CYCLE CONTEXT**

CHARTER TERM	YEAR IN TERM	ANTICIPATED RENEWAL VISIT
Initial	Fourth Year of its Five Year Charter Term	Fall 2026

