

Buffalo Public Schools

Re-Culturing a School District: Buffalo's Three-Year Academic Achievement Plan

Buffalo Public Schools is in the second year of implementation of its Three-Year Academic Achievement Plan. This plan is being used as the catalyst to transform an entire system to focus on the teaching and learning of literacy and mathematics. A firm foundation grounded in an evidentiary base of scientific research supports the practices that will attain the standards established by the state.

The Three-Year Academic Achievement Plan includes four clearly defined system goals. The District's stated vision and its first goal is ensuring high academic achievement for all students. The three other goals include a focus on professional growth to support teacher effectiveness in implementing those programs that will improve student achievement; efficient and effective support operations to ensure that teachers get what they need to provide effective instruction, ongoing monitoring of student progress, and intervention; and equity to ensure that all students have equal access to the curriculum and to instruction that is differentiated to meet their academic needs.

The plan itself is systematic and sequential in that the target areas refer back to the four system goals. The outline for instruction for all subjects includes explicit, systematic, instructional materials; dedicated instructional time; and classroom organization. The support section includes professional development, embedded support, and technical support. Assessment, outcomes, and the person responsible are clearly stated in the accountability section. Universal Access is addressed by identifying supports for English Language Learners, Special Education Learners, and Advanced Learners. The plan provides a three-year sequence or pathway for children that raises the bar for all students and provides them with the skills and knowledge to succeed in reading, writing, and mathematics. Some of the sweeping changes call for extended learning opportunities either through an extended-day or extended-year program.

This Three-Year Plan ensures that everyone in the district is on the same page and speaking the same language. The five pillars of literacy are part of everyone's vocabulary regardless of subject specialty. The plan provides the basis for all professional development in the district, be it for teachers or administrators. It drives the focus of the cross-functional team that works with both curricular and business issues. Membership of this team spans all district departments and all levels. Fidelity to and ownership of the Three-Year Academic Achievement Plan provides the impetus for the change occurring in the Buffalo Public Schools.

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