



Buffalo Promise
Neighborhood
Needs Assessment Study

Spring 2011

UB Regional Institute
University at Buffalo *The State University of New York*

University at Buffalo Regional Institute

Acknowledgements

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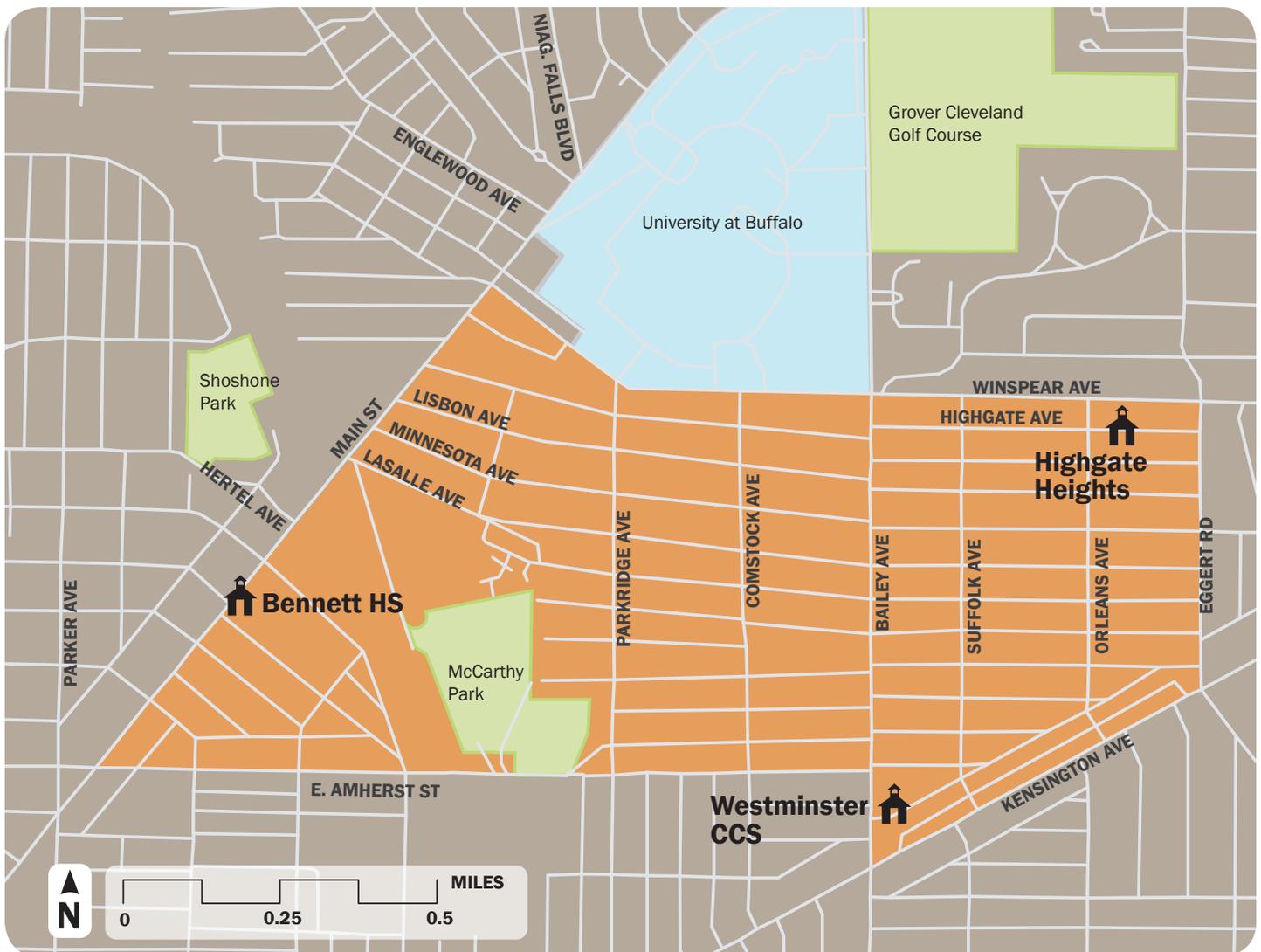
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About This Report

The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Initiative

On the northeastern corner of the City of Buffalo sits a neighborhood with all the signs of a severely distressed community—high poverty, teen pregnancy, crime and blight. With more than 90 percent of high school students here at risk for not graduating on time, and many more never making it to college, it is easy to imagine this vicious cycle of poverty perpetuating into the next generation.

This is also a neighborhood bounding with promise, including dedicated community stakeholders, an ongoing commitment to educational reform and rich physical, cultural and economic assets. With the right support and guidance, students will graduate from high school, go to college and pursue sustainable careers—and start a new, hopeful cycle for this community.

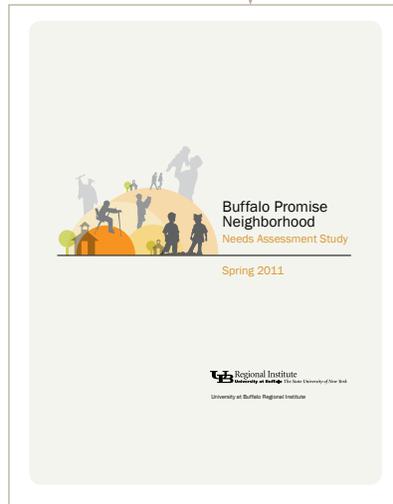


Background

The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood (BPN) initiative seeks to leverage these strengths and tackle poverty head on with a “cradle-to-career” continuum of supports for schoolchildren, from quality early childhood education and academic reform to improved community health and effective parenting skills. Sponsored by M&T Bank and a broad network of community partners, including the Buffalo Public Schools (together forming the Westminster Foundation), the effort is part of the federal “Promise Neighborhoods” program modeled after the Harlem Children’s Zone and its highly successful “pipeline of services” approach to combatting poverty. This effort also seeks to build on one of the city’s greatest educational success stories in recent years—the transformation and conversion of Buffalo’s lowest performing school into the Westminster Community Charter School through a nearly two-decade partnership between M&T Bank and Buffalo Public Schools. Buffalo Promise Neighborhood is only the first step—project partners plan to expand the neighborhood boundaries to the rest of the 14215 ZIP Code, and launch a new zone in another challenged part of the city. Awarded a major planning grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the initiative now seeks the next phase of funding to implement its continuum of programs and advance a new model of educational reform not only for this troubled neighborhood, but the City of Buffalo overall.

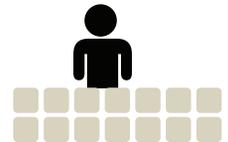
What Went Into This Report?

This report is based on extensive data analysis and input from diverse educational and community stakeholders beginning in 2010. Key data were gathered through a wide range of methods, including consultation with academic, community and institutional sources, a comprehensive review of educational literature and consultation with Buffalo Promise Neighborhood program residents and designers. Buffalo Public Schools and Westminster Community Charter School provided detailed, student-specific academic and demographic data, which allowed for this analysis to isolate correlative factors and identify trends in academic performance for each student. Data on student perceptions of school, community and family supports come from an April 2011 survey of more than 700 5th-12th grade students at Bennett High School, Highgate Heights Elementary School and Westminster Community Charter School. In total, over 20 data sources were consulted in the preparation of this assessment.



14 Indicators

These factors constitute building blocks for the assessment of need presented in the six-phase continuum. This report introduces a comprehensive set of 14 indicators measuring academic performance and levels of family and community support for students.



Six-Phase Continuum

A full understanding of student need is best revealed over time. Children’s experiences, influences and outcomes differ greatly as they pass through academic and developmental transitions. This assessment examines indicators in the context of a six-phase continuum, from kindergarten readiness to preparation for college and career to effective parenting for nurturing the next generation. The study also segments students by low, moderate and high need and highlights characteristics of each group.

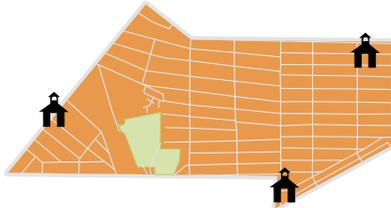


- Ready for Kindergarten
- Ready for Middle School
- Ready to Transition from Middle School to High School
- Ready to Graduate High School
- Ready for College and Career
- Ready to Parent Effectively

Executive Summary

Children at risk, a neighborhood on the edge

Buffalo's Promise Neighborhood, a predominantly African-American community in the northeastern corner of the city, is a neighborhood



on the edge, and one which could rise or fall depending on what action is taken now.

There are more than 3,000 children living in the neighborhood, often growing up poor in single parent families, often without caring adults to turn to, worried about safety, lacking regular access to quality health care, healthy foods and exercise, and prone to teen pregnancy.

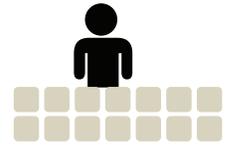
The physical fabric of the neighborhood appears intact, but families pay too big a share of their monthly income for rent and mortgage, one home in eight is vacant and the neighborhood shopping street needs revitalization.

Not surprisingly, neighborhood children tend to do poorly in school, treading a perilous path from cradle to career, failing in core academic subjects, not showing up for school, losing hope and dropping out.

The figures are staggering: nearly two children in five live in poverty; one-third of families with children live below the poverty line; two-thirds of households are headed by a single parent; a quarter of children are born to teenage mothers; and as poverty has increased, home ownership has declined.

The neighborhood is not without physical and social assets—most notably the children themselves—but people who know Buffalo recognize that this is a neighborhood that could go either way.

Signs of trouble: 14 indicators



When we understand student academic achievement and the quality of neighborhoods as interrelated and we track discrete **variables** that measure the two, we can see clear signs of trouble in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood.

-  Fewer than half of children under age 5 have a **“medical home,”** a regular place and approach to integrated health care.
-  Over one in four kindergartners exhibit academic competencies that are below **age-appropriate functioning.**
-  Two-fifths of BPN children don't **attend early education programs,** even though it is an important factor for later success.
-  Fewer than 20 percent of BPN **children are academically proficient** in math and English.
-  Between middle school and high school, chronic **absenteeism** skyrockets and **attendance rates** plummet.
-  At Bennett High School, the BPN 9-12 school, fewer than half the students entering in grade 9 **graduate** four years later.
-  Most high school seniors say they want to **go to college,** but the vast majority aren't ready.
-  Fewer than half get the recommended five daily servings of **fruits and vegetables** and nearly half don't get 60 minutes of **exercise** each day.
-  Nearly 60 percent of students say they don't feel **safe going to and from school;** they feel even more vulnerable at school.
-  Students **change schools** frequently. At Bennett High School alone, students enter and exit at a 35 percent mobility rate.
-  More than three out of five say they lack the support of a **caring adult at home or at school.**
-  Fewer than half have **access to the Internet** at both home and school.
-  Teenaged girls are more than twice as likely to get **pregnant** than girls throughout the state. BPN children are two and a half times more likely to have been born to a teenage mother.
-  One youth in eight is **neither employed nor in school**—double the statewide rate.

Sliding backwards: six key transitions

A child travels along a path from cradle to career, passing through six key transitions—moments where they either fall back or surge ahead. Students who do better on the relevant key indicators are more ready for kindergarten, proficient in elementary school subjects, ready for the move from middle school to high school, ready to graduate in four years, and ready for college. By focusing on programs and services that will advance these indicators, we increase the odds of each child’s readiness to meet the challenges at each stage along the path.



Children who are ready for kindergarten are more likely to succeed than those who are not. More than 70 percent of children entering kindergarten showed “age appropriate functioning” and those who did not were far less likely to have been enrolled in an early education program.



Children who are ready for middle school do better than those who are not. By the time BPN students reach the 5th grade, however, their proficiency in core subjects of English and math has slumped: only 18 percent of students scored proficient or above on all standardized tests taken.



Children who are ready to move from middle school to high school are also more likely to graduate. But only one 9th grader in 10 is both proficient in core academic subjects and registers high attendance. Nearly two-thirds are chronically absent or failing or both. Those who change schools, who lack a caring adult in their lives and who lack Internet access are most likely to fail.



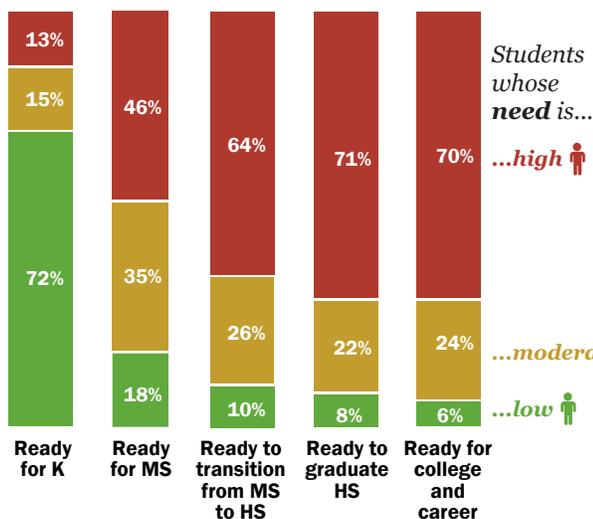
Children who are ready to graduate from high school are more likely to succeed beyond school. But more than 70 percent of all BPN high schoolers are chronically absent, failing in core academic subjects, have been suspended from school or have been held back a grade. Again, those who change schools and lack a caring adult in their lives are most in need. Those who come from low-income families are also more likely not to graduate.



Children who are ready for college are similarly more likely to succeed. But based on minimum scores on New York State Regents examinations, only six percent of BPN high schoolers are fully ready for college. Changing schools has a negative effect and the correlation between family income and college-readiness is even stronger. Students who attend high schools—such as Bennett where dropping out is more the norm than graduating—are also less likely to be ready for college.



The continuum starts again when children become parents. **Those who are ready to be effective parents** provide their children with a better opportunity to succeed in their own lives from cradle to career. But in the BPN area fully 86 percent of new families—those whose only children are 5 years old or younger—are headed by a single parent, typically a female.



Student readiness declines through the continuum

For each transition, this graphic shows the percentage of students who are low-need (and ready to advance) versus those with moderate or high need for additional support in order to advance. High-need students, in particular, are at risk of not advancing satisfactorily to the next stage along the path.

Furthermore, based on the specific indicator data used at each transition, children in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood start reasonably ready for kindergarten, but lose ground at each step along the way. By high school, only 8 percent are ready to graduate and only 6 percent are ready for college and career.

Neighborhood Characteristics

The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood is the right place in Buffalo to test the theory that educational success and neighborhood redevelopment go together. The area has a heavy concentration of school-age children, a high proportion of single-parent families, a predominance of African-American residents and concentrated pockets of poverty. Yet the fabric of community – social and physical – remains enough intact that action now can save the neighborhood.

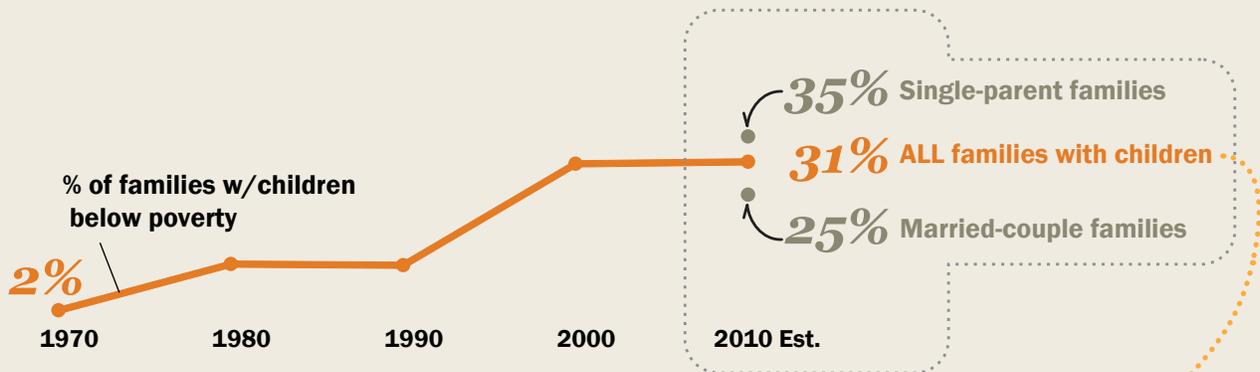
The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood

Area	0.94 Sq. Miles
Population	12,331
Families with Children	1,611
Children, Age 17 or Younger	3,119

Source: American Community Survey (ACS), 5-year estimates, 2005-09
Calculations adjusted for neighborhood geography

Context. The neighborhood is in the northeast corner of the city, an area of mostly modest single-family bungalows built between the two World Wars, and bisected by the once-thriving Bailey Avenue business district. It was the classic “streetcar suburb.” But the strip is now pocked by vacant lots and the housing stock is beginning to show signs of wear. Other neighborhoods of entrenched poverty and housing abandonment reach to the south, while the University at Buffalo’s Main Street campus lies to the north and more affluent suburbs abut the neighborhood on the east. It is a neighborhood on the edge, in more ways than one.

Poverty



Source: U.S. Census, 1970-2000, American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, 2005-09

Over the past 40 years, the poverty rate of families with children has ballooned from 2 percent in 1970 to 31 percent today. Although slightly lower than the city-wide rate of 34 percent, this escalating trend is cause for concern and affects nearly 500 families and 1,200 children under the age of 18.

Poverty in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood...



Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2005-09

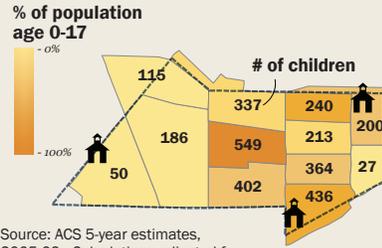
The rise in family poverty means that **38 percent of children in the neighborhood are living in poverty** – double the statewide rate. The vast majority of BPN children (88 percent) qualify for free or reduced-price lunch (based on income under 185 percent of the poverty level). Many residents are also “house poor” – in some cases paying half their monthly income, or more, for rent.

	BPN	City of Buffalo	NYS
% of children living in poverty	38%	42%	20%
Median gross rent as % of household income	37%	34%	31%
Students eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch	88%	77%	48%

Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2005-09; Westminister Community Charter School (WCCS) & Buffalo Public Schools (BPS), 2011

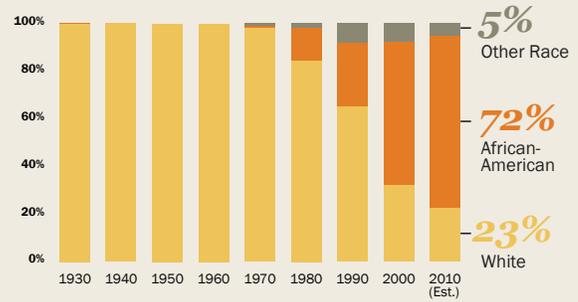
Children

The neighborhood has a **heavy concentration of children ages 0-17, especially at its core**. In five census block groups flanking Bailey Avenue, roughly two out of five residents are of school age, or about double the city-wide rate. Neighborhoods with so many children were common during the “Baby Boom” years but not since then. Population density is also higher in those areas, suggesting that many households there may have multiple children of school age.



Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2005-09. Calculations adjusted for neighborhood geography

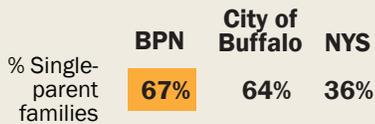
Race



The neighborhood is predominantly African-American but recently so. Through the 1970s the neighborhood was almost exclusively white. After that, the population became predominately African-American—72 percent in the most recent estimate. In the lower income core of the neighborhood on either side of Bailey Avenue north of Kensington about 90 percent of residents are African-American.

Source: US Census, 1930-2000, ACS 5-year estimates, 2005-09

Families

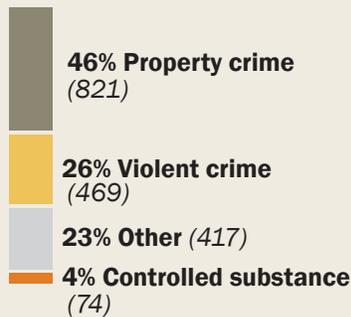


Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2005-09

Two-thirds of households in the neighborhood are headed by a single parent – slightly higher than Buffalo as a whole, and nearly double the rate across New York State. In the core of the neighborhood the proportion of single-parent households is even higher.

Crime & Safety

% of Reported crime, by type, 2010



Residents themselves are acutely aware of the disorder in their midst. They complain frequently about drug dealing, criminal activity, unkempt rental properties, litter, graffiti, vacant lots and more. With nearly five incidences of crime in the neighborhood every day, safety and security concerns are a critical priority for the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood.

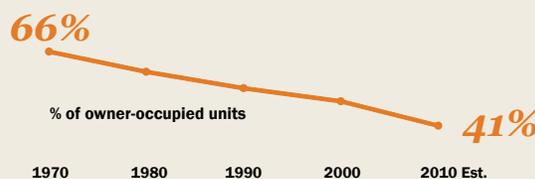
1,781 Total incidences of crime in 2010

5 incidences EVERY DAY 134 incidences per 1,000 pop.

Source: Neighborhood data from Erie County Central Police Services, 2010. Violent crimes include simple assaults. See Appendix 1.1

Housing

While the original housing stock remains largely in place (only 2 percent of housing stock has been lost through demolition, compared to 13 percent across the city as a whole), the neighborhood is manifestly vulnerable to familiar processes of decline. Rates of homeownership – often taken as a measure of neighborhood stability – are relatively low and in the core neighborhood distinctly below the city-wide average of 44 percent. More ominously, U.S. Postal Service data show roughly one home in eight is vacant.



1 in 8 homes is VACANT



Source: Vacancy data from United States Postal Service, September 2010; Owner-occupancy data from U.S. Census and ACS 5-year estimates, 2005-09

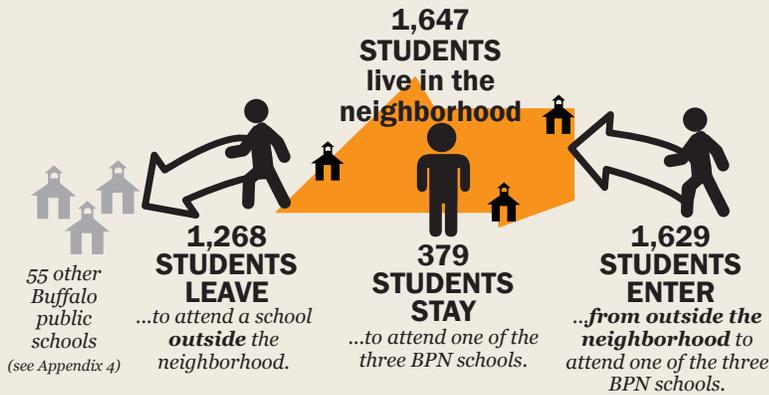
Educational Attainment

Highest level of education, ages 25+	BPN	City of Buffalo
Less than HS	14%	20%
HS graduate	29%	31%
Some college	36%	28%
Bachelor's degree	13%	12%
Graduate or professional degree	8%	9%

Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2005-09

Surprisingly, perhaps, the proportion of adults age 25 and over with a high school diploma is slightly higher than the city-wide average, and residents are as likely to have a college degree as elsewhere in Buffalo. However, these figures are partly explained by a university fringe effect; at the lower income core of the neighborhood, educational attainment is less.

Students and Schools of the Neighborhood

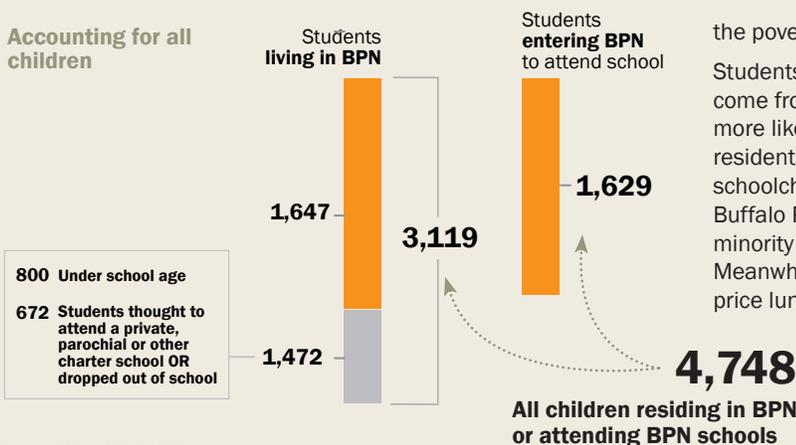


Source: BPS & WCCS, 2011. Excludes students attending private, parochial or charter schools other than WCCS

	LIVE IN BPN	LIVE OUTSIDE BPN	ALL BPN STUDENTS	CITY OF BUFFALO STUDENTS
% Free/Reduced Lunch	88%	87%	88%	77%
% African-American	92%	91%	91%	56%
% Non-Hispanic White	4%	4%	4%	23%
% Hispanic	2%	4%	3%	15%
% Asian	2%	1%	2%	4%
% Native American	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	1%
% English as Second Language	2%	3%	2%	9%

Source: BPS & WCCS, 2011

Accounting for all children



Source: BPS, WCCS & ACS 5-year estimates

What is the scope of the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood?

The Buffalo Promise Neighborhood is home to 1,600 school-age children and three participating public schools.¹ However, due to the city's school choice policy, which allows parents to enroll their child in any school district-wide, the scope of this initiative actually encompasses twice as many students. Another 1,600 students from across the city enter each day to attend the three BPN schools—Highgate Heights School, Westminster Community Charter School and Bennett High School. At the same time, the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood sees 1,200+ of its young residents disperse daily to 55 different schools. In the end, fewer than one in four neighborhood children attend a BPN school. Yet whether they live in the neighborhood or just attend school here, these 3,300 schoolchildren are shaped by their experiences in and the conditions of the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood.

Who are the students living and attending school in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood?

Students living in the BPN and commuting in for school have similar socioeconomic backgrounds, coming mostly from low-income households and representing racial or ethnic minority groups. All but 4 percent are non-white, with 91 percent African-American. Most are economically insecure. Eighty-eight percent of children living or getting their education in the BPN qualify for free or reduced-price lunch because they live in households earning below 185 percent of the poverty rate.

Students who travel into the neighborhood for school come from all over the city. Nevertheless, they are more likely to mirror Buffalo Promise Neighborhood residents in their socioeconomic background than district schoolchildren overall. For instance, only 77 percent of Buffalo Public Schools students are from racial or ethnic minority groups and 56 percent are African-American. Meanwhile, the district-wide average for free or reduced-price lunch eligibility is 77 percent. Students living in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood or attending one of its schools are less likely to have English as a second language compared with all students across the entire school district.

¹ A fourth non-participating public school, Buffalo United Charter School, is currently counted as an "outside" school although future participation is possible

BPN SCHOOLS

	Westminster Community Charter School	Highgate Heights School	Bennett High School	Remaining BPS Schools attended by BPN students	All BPN students
Student enrollment	554	584	870	1,268	3,276
Mobility rate	4%	15%	35%	5%	16%
% of students who live in the neighborhood	39%	16%	8%	100%	50%
Graduation rate			46%	63%	51%

Source: BPS & WCCS, 2011; NYSED School Report Cards, 2010
Graduation rates for all BPN students and BPN students not attending Bennett HS are weighted averages based on school enrollment

The three schools of the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood enroll a total of 2,008 students, including 379 neighborhood residents and 1,629 district students from other communities. Of those children who remain in the neighborhood to attend school, the bulk, or 220 students, attend Westminster Community Charter School, the only BPN school with a community enrollment model. In fact, most other Westminster students, though outside BPN, live within about a one-mile radius of the school. While Highgate Heights is similar to Westminster in enrollment, significantly fewer students live in the neighborhood, with more than 80 percent coming from other parts of the city. Bennett High School has the largest population of non-resident students, at 92 percent. And while the demographic backgrounds of students enrolled in these three schools are similar, measures of school quality vary widely. As one example, the mobility rate, or percent of students either enrolling in or transferring out of the school after the start of the academic year, ranges from 4 percent at Westminster to 35 percent at Bennett.

The more than 1,200 neighborhood children who attend school elsewhere in the city are enrolled in 55 different schools scattered across Buffalo, representing all grade levels and including magnet schools and standard public schools. The diversity of these schools points to the varied paths the children of the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood take to attend school, including meeting rigorous admission requirements or navigating lottery-based application processes for competitive magnet or other high-performing schools, or simply being placed in a school by the district for purposes of increased diversity.

Westminster Community Charter School

A high-performing, high-poverty success story, Westminster Community Charter School's transformation began in 1993 when M&T Bank stepped forward to "adopt" Buffalo's lowest performing school. Converted to a charter in 2004, the school includes renovated school facilities, data-driven educational curriculum, an on-site health clinic and a healthy diet dining facility. Westminster now performs considerably above the city-wide average on a range of standardized assessments and is at full capacity with a waiting list for admission.



Highgate Heights School

Located in the northeastern part of the neighborhood, Highgate Heights is a traditional elementary/middle school serving grades pre-K through eighth. With substandard test scores and the highest poverty rate of the three BPN schools, Highgate Heights faces challenges experienced at many urban elementary schools. Only 16 percent of its students reside in the BPN with the remainder bussed from all over the City. The school building, constructed in 1929, underwent extensive renovations in recent years, including new classrooms, state-of-the-art media center and cafeteria.



Bennett High School

For much of the first half of the 20th century, Bennett High School was a preeminent high school in the region, serving as the alma mater for many who became doctors, lawyers and civic leaders. In recent decades, however, Bennett's performance and reputation has steadily declined. Identified as a persistently low-achieving school, Bennett struggles with low academic performance, chronic absenteeism, poor graduation rates and gang activity and violence.

Despite significant challenges, steps have been taken in recent years to transform the educational quality and learning environment at Bennett. In 2007, the school underwent a \$34 million reconstruction project that included a new school wing rich with science labs and a full-scale courtroom for the school's specialized law program. Additionally, in 2010, the school was targeted for a thorough transformation to change its status as a persistently low-achieving school. Much of this transformation model is grounded in its inclusion in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood initiative, with efforts focusing on its low graduation rate (46 percent) and high student mobility rate (35 percent).



Measuring Ourselves: The 14 Buffalo Promise Neighborhood Indicators

The neighborhood, school and student profiles reveal a community of great promise burdened by signs of economic, physical, social and academic trouble.

To obtain a systematic set of measures and provide a basis for comparison to other Promise Neighborhoods, the U.S. Department of Education has specified 12 academic, family and community indicators—measures of performance—on which all Promise Neighborhoods must assess themselves. To these dozen, BPN leaders have added two indicators—on Teenage Pregnancy and Youth Neither in School Nor Employed—measuring conditions of special concern to the community.

Baseline assessments of these 14 indicators provide a yardstick to measure current conditions and track progress from cradle to college and career. Each indicator is valuable in its own right, revealing attributes and allowing comparisons to focus community attention where intervention is warranted or more data collection needed. Combined with one another and additional economic, social and physical factors, as presented in the continuum analysis later in this report, the indicators serve as building blocks for a holistic view of the BPN, its students, families and community.

Continuum Cycle



-  Medical Home
-  Age-Appropriate Functioning at Pre-K and K
-  Enrollment in Early Education Programs
-  Academic Proficiency
-  Attendance Rate Grades 6–9
-  Graduation Rate
-  High School Graduates Ready for College
-  Daily Physical Activity and Diet of Fruits and Vegetables
-  Safety at School and Traveling To and From School
-  Student Mobility Rate
-  Caring Adult at Home and School
-  Access to the Internet at Home and School
-  Teenage Pregnancy
-  Youth Neither in School Nor Employed



Medical Home

The majority of children ages 0-5 from ZIP code 14215 do not have a place they usually go, other than an emergency room, when they are sick or in need of advice about their health.

Why it Matters

Young children without a regular and trusted place to obtain routine or special health care are at risk for health problems, from underdevelopment to chronic illness, that hinder brain development, cause absences and diminish readiness to learn. Research affirms the link between health status and brain development, a connection that starts with the mother's health in preconception (Mustard, 2006). As a recent report summarized the literature, "Sound health [...] provides a foundation for the construction of sturdy brain architecture and the achievement of a broad range of skills and learning capacities" (Center on the Developing Child, 2010). Having a medical home—defined by the American Pediatric Association as an integrated approach to providing accessible, family-centered, continuous, comprehensive, coordinated, compassionate and culturally effective primary pediatric care (CAHMI, 2009)—provides young children and their parents with the foundation to support a lifetime of academic and social success.



More to Learn

There is much more to learn about this indicator. A comprehensive survey of parents, identified through hospitals when their children are born and followed through preschool programs through young adulthood, would permit collection of individual-level data on a host of health care variables relevant to parents and children. Among these are whether the parents and children have a medical home, satisfaction with health care professionals, level of health care access, affordability and insurance, and the frequency and quality of health communications between doctors and schools. To support comparisons, Medical Home surveys should mirror those administered at the state and national levels. Provider surveys, including routine data collected from the Community Health Center of Buffalo, would verify and extend current data on how many children have a medical home.

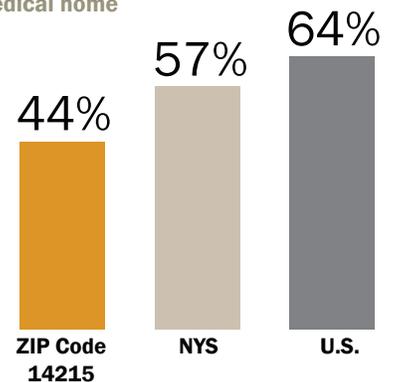
About the Data

The 2007 National Survey of Children's Health Medical Home (<http://medicalhomedata.org>) reports medical home profiles for the state and nation but not for smaller geographic units such as the BPN. Provider records from the Community Health Center of Buffalo combined with income data from the U.S. Census permit an estimate of the BPN Medical Home. Data represent all children ages 0-5 from ZIP Code 14215, a geography that includes almost all of the BPN and neighborhoods to the south and east (see Appendix 3 for geographic relation to the BPN).

BPN Performance

Compared to young children in New York State and the nation, children ages 0-5 year olds from the BPN's ZIP Code are far less likely to have a medical home. Of the 3,285 infants and children under age 6, only 1,447 of them, or 44 percent, have a place other than an emergency room where their parents or caring adults can seek health care treatment and advice. This leaves the majority, 1,838 children, without a medical home, putting them at risk for entering kindergarten not ready to learn.

Percent of children ages 0-5 with a medical home



Sources: 14215 data from Community Health Center of Buffalo, 2011, and American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates, 2005-09; state and national data from 2007 National Survey of Children's Health Medical Home. See Appendix 1 for calculations.

For more information on data sources and notes, see Appendix 1.



Age-Appropriate Functioning at Pre-K and K

Seventy percent of BPN students exhibit age-appropriate functioning as measured by screening tests for current students in pre-K (CIRCLES assessments for shape identification) and kindergarten (DIBELS and Running Record assessments for letter, sound and phonics identification).

Why it Matters

The implications of being behind by kindergarten entry are profound and sobering: “children who score poorly on tests of cognitive skills during their preschool years are likely to do less well in elementary and high school than their higher-performing preschool peers and are more likely to become teen parents, engage in criminal activities and suffer from depression. Ultimately, these children obtain less education and are more likely to be unemployed in adulthood” (Rouse, Brooks-Gunn & McLanahan, 2005). Such challenges are compounded by family socioeconomic conditions, particularly living in poverty (Calkins, et al., 2007). Frequent screenings for age-appropriate functioning are crucially important in spotting delays early and providing preventive services and interventions for developmental delays and behavior issues that can greatly diminish gaps in later years.



More to Learn

The academic metrics used to support this indicator not only vary by school and preschool venue, they also reflect only a thin slice of age-appropriate functioning. A broader assessment is needed to account for emotional, physical and social readiness of pre-K and kindergarten students. The United Way of Buffalo & Erie County is supporting development and administration of a multi-faceted “readiness to learn” gauge for young children in the county. This will provide an opportunity for future data collection in the BPN. To meet Department of Education definitions for this indicator, data must be gathered at the “beginning of learning” and also for 3-year-olds in preschool programs.

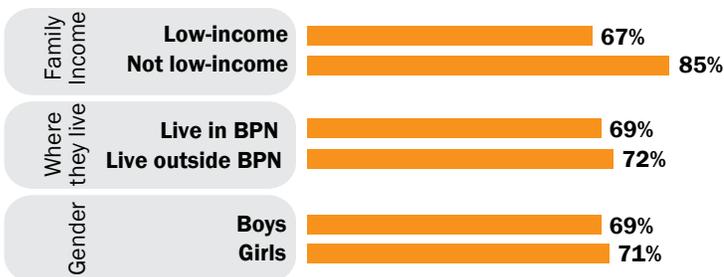
About the Data

The performance indicator for age-appropriate functioning varies by level (pre-K vs. kindergarten) and school type (Buffalo Public Schools vs. Westminster Community Charter School). For the pre-K children, typically ages 3 and 4, age-appropriate functioning is assessed by a CIRCLES test. The Buffalo Public Schools gauge age-appropriate functioning for its kindergartners with a DIBELS test administered at the start of the school year. Westminster Community Charter School administers a Running Record assessment for kindergarten students during the month of September.

BPN Performance

Slightly more than two in three BPN young children perform at standard on entry or mid-year tests to assess age-appropriate functioning. The level varies little by gender or residential location, but children from low-income families seem to perform less well—only 67 percent of children eligible for free and reduced-price meals, a measure of household income, exhibit age-appropriate functioning, while 85 percent of higher-income peers do.

Percent of pre-K and kindergarten students who have age-appropriate functioning by demographic characteristics



Sources: BPS & WCCS, 2011

Performing at age-appropriate level...

...66% of pre-K 3-4 year-olds (60 of 91)

...72% of kindergarten 5-6 year-olds (121 of 169)

Sources: BPS & WCCS, 2011



Enrollment in Early Education Programs

Sixty percent of BPN children ages 3 and 4 participate in early learning, including Head Start, Early Head Start and formal preschool programs.

Why it Matters

One of the more consistent findings in the education literature is that young children who participate in high-quality center care or formal preschool programs “enter school more ready to learn” (Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2005). Particularly for children from low-income and undereducated families, the benefits of preschool instruction in high-quality linguistic and numerical skills include not only higher performance in reading and math in later years, but also reduction in special education placements and grade retention (Ramey & Ramey, 2004; Magnuson, Ruhm & Waldfogel, 2007). Done well, early education can help mitigate “word gap” effects that set back children who hear fewer words in their early years (Hart & Risley, 1995).



More to Learn

There is much more to learn on this indicator. To satisfy Department of Education definitions, the BPN must gather data on early education participation from birth to kindergarten entry. This includes attendance in both center-based and formal home-based programs, as well as child care facilities with a quality learning program. Only a portion of these data currently exists. Understanding the landscape for early education thus requires a comprehensive inventory and quality assessment of child care and other preschool programs located in or attended by students in the BPN.

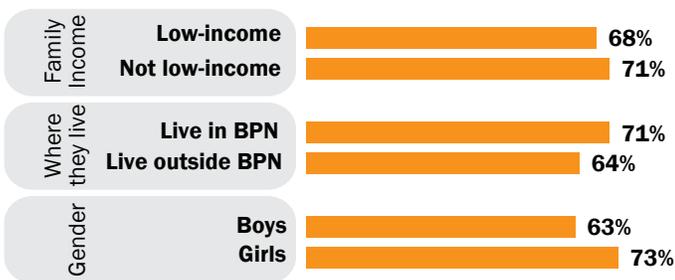
About the Data

Data for this indicator are provided by household heads through American Community Surveys taken from 2005 to 2009. They are reported by the Census Bureau by census tract boundaries, which do not match precisely those of the BPN (see Appendix 3: Geographic Units of Analysis). Data on current kindergartners’ early education experience are reported by the Buffalo Public Schools and Westminster Community Charter School.

BPN Performance

A compilation from recent surveys reveals that roughly three in five, or 60 percent, of the BPN’s 3- to 4-year-olds are enrolled in an early education program, a number slightly higher than the 57 percent reported for New York State overall. This level is slightly lower than early education participation levels reported by the Buffalo Public Schools and Westminster for current kindergarten students—some of whom attend school outside the neighborhood.

Characteristics of current kindergarten students who attended early education programs

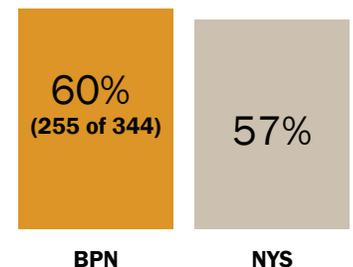


Sources: BPS & WCCS, 2011

Of program interest is the finding that, of current kindergarten students, girls are more likely than boys (73 percent compared to 63 percent) to have attended an early education program. By a margin of 71 percent to 64 percent, prior early

education participation is also slightly higher for young children living in the BPN than for those who commute into the neighborhood to attend kindergarten.

Percent of current 3-4 year-olds enrolled in early education programs



Sources: ACS, 5-year estimates, 2005-09



Academic Proficiency

Only 13 percent of BPN students perform at or above grade level according to state mathematics and English language arts assessments in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school.

Why it Matters

Children who fall behind in core subjects are not only at higher risk of failing to graduate from high school and succeed in college or a career, they also confront low self image and greater likelihood of practicing high risk behaviors, particularly through adolescence. Reading fluency is a particularly critical milestone. Research finds that children who struggle to read in grade 3 will continue to struggle in high school, and students who are not reading at grade level in middle school are as likely to have disciplinary problems, fail classes and drop out as they are to attain grade level or graduate on time (Miller, 2009). Difficulties in reading often correlate with problems in mathematics (Jordan, 2002) and math difficulties often persist over time (Geary, 1994), creating pervasive academic problems across a learning continuum.

Use in Continuum Cycle

Ready for Middle School
Ready to Transition from Middle School to High School
Ready to Graduate High School

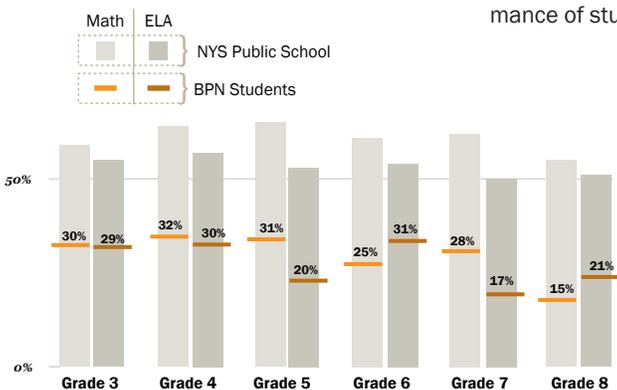
More to Learn

Although academic proficiency data are ample for class cohorts or by exam, data tracking individual students by subject and over time would enable more targeted personal interventions to address academic gaps.

About the Data

The Buffalo Public Schools, Westminster Community Charter School and the State of New York provide a wealth of data on academic proficiency. For grades 3 through 8, English language arts (ELA) and math assessments occur annually, with proficiency defined as achieving 3 or better on a four-point scale. High schoolers take an assessment exam in math (any grade 9 through 12) and ELA (taken typically in grade 11), for which proficiency requires a certain score (75 percent for ELA, 80 percent for math) on a scale of one to 100. Data reflect performance of students living in or attending one of the three BPN schools.

Academic proficiency by subject, BPN and NYS, grades 3-8



Source: BPS & WCCS, 2011; NYSED 2009-10 School Report Cards

BPN Performance

The data reveal dangerously low levels of academic proficiency, with no cohort having more than one in five students achieving proficiency in both math and English language arts. This pattern holds whether students live in the BPN (and attend a BPN school or commute to a non-BPN school) or live outside the BPN (and attend a BPN school). Performance starts low and falls steadily through middle and high school, implying serious challenges for current student cohorts.

Levels of proficiency are higher for math and ELA alone than for the two subjects together, but levels for students in the BPN are significantly below those for all students in New York State, never climbing above 32 percent proficiency for either subject in any grade. Without effective intervention, students face serious academic challenges in the future.

Grade of Assessment	Number of Students Assessed	Proficient in BOTH Math AND ELA	
		#	%
3	211	34	16%
4	215	43	20%
5	208	27	13%
6	212	39	18%
7	208	23	11%
8	225	18	8%
12	246	15	6%

Sources: BPS & WCCS, 2011
Notes: High school data reflect achievement rates for current seniors who may have taken their ELA and math assessments at different years



Attendance Rate, Grades 6-9

Attendance rate of BPN students declines steadily from the 6th through the 9th grade.

Why it Matters

The positive association between attendance and academic achievement is well-established, particularly affecting progress towards literacy in lower grades and potential to graduate in higher grades (Johnston, 2000). Along with academic proficiency and a school's graduation rates, student attendance rates are one of three key correlates of dropping out. A recent study of Milwaukee Public Schools, for example, found that eventual dropouts had absence rates four times higher than those of eventual graduates, and only 6 percent of students with very high absenteeism—over 30 days missed per year—eventually graduated (Meyer, Carol & Cheng, 2010).



More to Learn

Ample data exist for tracking attendance at the individual student level. Additional insights would come from interviews and surveys to determine the reasons for absenteeism and what kinds of interventions are most effective in boosting attendance rates. National research on dropout prevention shows that patterns of chronic absenteeism show up very early, sometimes even in kindergarten. Early detection and intervention is a key part of emerging national best practice for keeping students on track.

About the Data

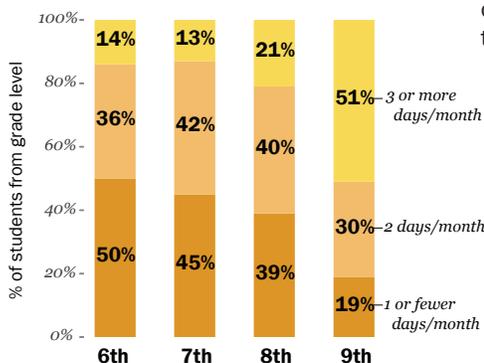
The Buffalo Public Schools and Westminster Community Charter School track attendance at the individual student level. The attendance rates reported show actual days attended divided by total possible attendance days for the academic year 2010-2011, through February 2011. Data reflect attendance of students living in or attending one of the three BPN schools.

BPN Performance

The overall attendance rate for students in grades 6-9 is 87 percent, considerably below the 93 percent district-level attendance rate in recent years for all New York State public schools (New York State Report Card 2011). Attendance rates fall steadily from 92 percent for students in grades 6 and 7 to 77 percent in grade 9. This means that on any given school day, roughly one in 10 middle school students of the BPN is not in school, a level that jumps in 9th grade to more than two in 10 students.

Although occasional absenteeism is expected for poor health or non-routine factors, chronic absenteeism is of particular concern. Roughly one in seven—14 percent—of BPN 6th and 7th graders missed three or more days per month, a level that climbs to one in five—21 percent—for 8th graders and a highly troublesome one in two—51 percent—for BPN students in grade 9.

Average days missed by grade level



Sources: BPS & WCCS, 2011

Attendance rate, by grade level

	Total Student Days of Enrollment	Total Absences through 2/11	Attendance Rate
6th	23,901	1,825	92%
7th	23,798	2,028	92%
8th	23,215	2,428	90%
9th	28,969	6,591	77%
6th-9th TOTAL	99,883 total student days	12,872 total absences	87%

Sources: BPS & WCCS, 2011



Graduation Rate

The four-year cohort high school graduation rate is below 50 percent for the high school in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood.

Why it Matters

Because high school graduation is a prime marker of academic achievement, a credential for college eligibility, a correlate of better life outcomes and a vital goal for society, graduation rates are a critical indicator of school and community performance (Greene & Winters, 2005). Measured at the school level, graduation rates assess “whether or not the nation’s public school system is doing what it is intended to do: enroll, engage, and educate youth to be productive members of society” (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009). Many states use graduation rates as a primary reporting and accountability measure toward the goal of making a diploma a reality for all students.



More to Learn

Data available from the state and Buffalo Public Schools are sufficient to monitor graduation rates, a carefully watched gauge. Additional survey research could reveal the impact of attending a school with low graduation rates, including the degree to which students rise or fall to the “norms” in their school. Data on the economic and social status of BPN dropouts would also detail the implications of not staying in school and the effects of an economically and educationally polarized community.

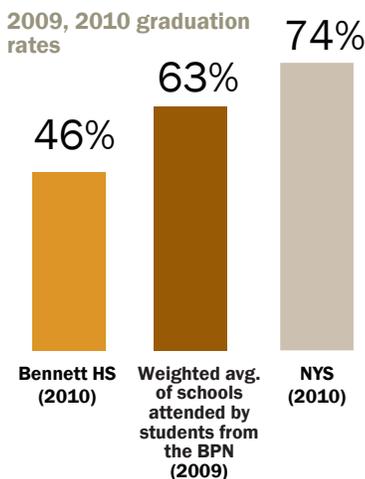
About the Data

The four-year cohort graduation rate reflects a method that follows individual students from their entry into ninth grade to graduation from high school. The universe of high schools assessed for this measure consists of Bennett High School plus 13 high schools outside the BPN attended by students who live in the BPN. Data come from the New York State Education Department and the Buffalo Public Schools, which track students and report graduation rates.

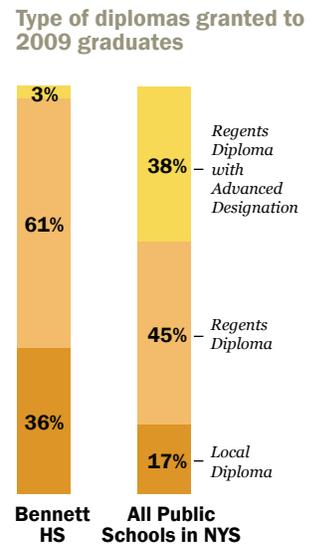
BPN Performance

Reflecting its status as one of the district’s persistently low-achieving schools, Bennett has a four-year graduation rate of 46 percent, a level that rises to only 52 percent for a five-year graduation rate. This compares to a significantly higher four-year graduation rate of 63 percent (weighted average for 2009) for 13 other high schools attended by teenagers from the BPN. The underlying graduation rate range for these schools is 31 percent to 90 percent. These four-year rates are significantly below the New York State graduation rate of 74 percent. For students at Bennett and for other students depending on their destination high school outside the BPN (see Appendix 4), a majority of students living in or attending school in the BPN spend four years in a sub-par secondary school environment.

New York State grants three types of diploma: a Local Diploma (pass 4 of 5 required Regents exams), a Regents Diploma (pass 5 of 5 required Regents exams), and a Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation (pass all 5 required Regents exams, plus three additional Regents Exams). For 2009 graduates of Bennett, 36 percent earned a Local Diploma, more than double the statewide rate. Only three percent of Bennett graduates, compared to 38 percent statewide, earned an Advanced Regents Diploma. Given that New York State will no longer grant Local Diplomas after 2011, aggressive intervention is required to prevent likely additional drops in the four-year graduation rates at Bennett.



Sources: BPS, NYSED, 2009, 2010



Sources: NYSED, 2009-10 School Report Cards



High School Graduates Ready for College

Only six percent of BPN students obtain a high school diploma and are ready for college without the need for remediation.

Why it Matters

Two generations ago, a high school diploma was sufficient preparation for good career opportunities and a solid middle class life. With the shift to a knowledge-based economy and with growing wage differentials between high school and college graduates, postsecondary education has become an increasingly important qualification for economic opportunity. Leaving school with the skills to succeed in college is thus a critical indicator for realizing individual and social potential (Greene & Winters, 2005). Students who earn a high school diploma but lack the qualifications to be admitted to or perform well in college must spend time and money taking remedial courses to become minimally prepared for a next educational step.



More to Learn

The Department of Education seeks to know the number and percentage of BPN students who “graduate from high school with a regular diploma and obtain postsecondary degrees, vocational certificates or other industry-recognized certifications or credentials without the need for remediation.” Meeting this definition will require creating a data infrastructure and relationships with students, vocational schools, colleges and other relevant entities to regularly obtain and manage data on students’ postsecondary experiences. It will also be useful to survey and interview students and their counselors—starting in elementary school—to understand their progress toward a college ready degree, and what other factors might shape postsecondary outcomes.

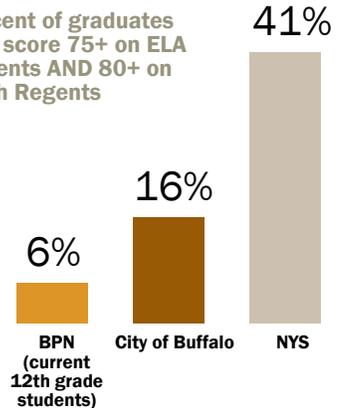
About the Data

The New York State Regents use scores on Regents exams to define and quantify readiness for college. Students scoring above 75 percent on their English Language Arts (ELA) exam and 80 percent on their math Regents are deemed “college ready.” BPN data are for 12th graders graduating in 2011; data for the City of Buffalo and New York State are for the cohort of students entering high school in 2005 and graduating in 2009. Data on postsecondary plans are from exit surveys of high school completers in 2010 incorporating responses from Bennett High School and a weighted average, based on enrollment of students living in the BPN who attend other high schools.

BPN Performance

Of the 246 seniors living or attending school in the BPN, only 6 percent are deemed ready for college. This level is nearly three times lower than that for peers in the City of Buffalo and seven times lower than the rate for New York State. Thus, even with a high school diploma, very few BPN graduates are prepared for college success.

Percent of graduates who score 75+ on ELA Regents AND 80+ on math Regents

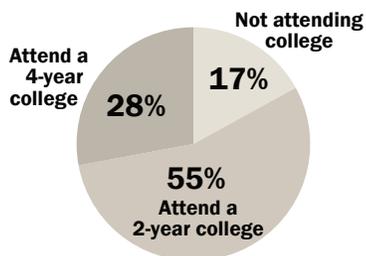


Sources: BPS, 2011; NYSED 2010

Readiness data stand in sharp relief to the aspirations of graduating seniors. Five in six, or 83 percent, indicate plans to attend college, with most of these, 55 percent, planning to attend a two-year school. Only 17 percent do not have plans for college.

Although the aspiration to pursue higher education is positive, the disconnect between student intentions and college readiness suggests the need for strong counseling throughout the elementary and secondary years as well as postsecondary remediation to make college plans a reality.

Postsecondary plans of BPN graduates



Sources: NYSED, 2009-10 School Report Cards
Data reflects weighted average of school survey results based on BPN high school enrollment.



Daily Physical Activity and Diet of Fruits and Vegetables

Fewer than a third of students attending BPN schools participate daily in at least 60 minutes of physical exercise and consume five or more servings of fruits and vegetables.

Why it Matters

Regular aerobic exercise and good nutrition are increasingly understood as essential building blocks for good health and strong brain function. Exercise has powerful effects, ameliorating a wide range of conditions, including obesity, ADHD, depression, aggression, diabetes and stress (Ratey, 2008). The effects of sound nutrition are equally profound. Scientists tie consumption of certain nutrients, particularly vitamins and minerals in plant foods including fruits and vegetables, to brain function (Joseph, 2007). One study found that two simple changes in the lunch and breakfast programs at New York Public Schools—reduction in sugar and banning two artificial food colorings—coincided with a 16 percent rise in academic performance on standardized tests (Schoenthaler, Doraz & Wakefield, 1986).



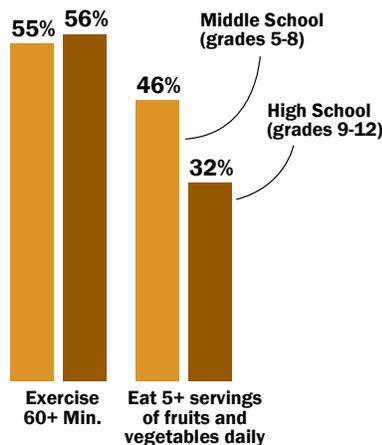
More to Learn

Surveys of all Buffalo Public School students would yield data on BPN students attending school outside the neighborhood and build a knowledge foundation for comparing students of the BPN with their peers elsewhere. Because nutrition and exercise choices are influenced by parents, a parent survey eliciting data on exercise and diet would add to understanding of this indicator. Tracking and reporting outcomes from Westminster Community Charter School's nutrition program for breakfast and lunch would provide insights for program interventions.

About the Data

Data are from 715 students in grades 5-12 attending Westminster Community Charter School, Highgate Heights School and Bennett High School, as self-reported on a survey administered in the schools on April 15, 2011. Students who said they “agree” or “strongly agree” with both of two statements (“I participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity/exercise daily” and “I eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily”) were recorded as meeting the criteria for this indicator.

Percent of students who exercise 60+ minutes/day OR eat 5+ servings of fruits & vegetables/day, by school level



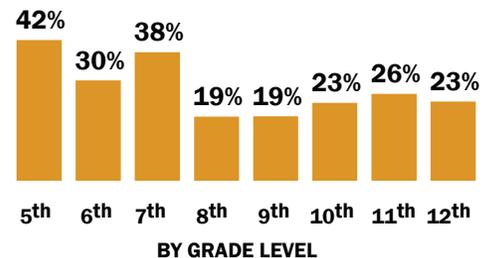
Sources: Closing the Gap Survey, 2011

BPN Performance

Overall, only 201 of 715, or 28 percent, of students who responded to both questions about their lifestyle reported healthy daily behaviors. Regardless of grade, fewer than half of students surveyed reported a daily habit of exercise and diet of fruits and vegetables. Levels were highest in the lower grades, dropping to a low of 19 percent in grades 8 and 9, and increasing to the mid-20 percent range for the remainder of high school. If this is a representative sample of all BPN students, then 58 percent to 81 percent of the students do not have a healthy lifestyle considered a key influence on brain function.

A closer look at survey results reveals that students are more likely to get a daily 60 minutes of exercise—roughly 56 percent with no difference between middle schoolers and high schoolers—than they are to consume a diet rich in fruits and vegetables. Middle schoolers, at 46 percent, are more likely to have a nutritious diet than are Bennett students, only 32 percent of whom report they consume five or more daily servings of fruits and vegetables.

Percent of students who say they eat 5+ servings of fruits/vegetables and exercise 60+ minutes daily



Sources: Closing the Gap Survey, 2011



Safety at School and Traveling To and From School

Only about 40 percent of students attending BPN schools say they feel safe at school and traveling to and from school.

Why it Matters

Regardless of the source—physical, environmental, social, demographic or other—an actual or perceived lack of safety at school or traveling to and from school will damage a child’s sense of security and ability to focus on schoolwork. Although bullying and violence in and around schools is of particular concern (Bucher & Manning, 2005), leading potentially to absenteeism, physical and mental health problems, any factors of safety and school climate that distract students from their education are of concern.

Use in Continuum Cycle

Ready for Middle School
Ready to Transition from Middle School to High School
Ready to Graduate High School

More to Learn

Surveys of all Buffalo Public School students would yield data on BPN students attending school outside the neighborhood and build a knowledge foundation for comparing students of the BPN with their peers elsewhere. Because safety conditions are influenced by a complex set of factors, including physical environment, transportation modes, educational programming and school culture, a safety audit of buildings, facilities and programs would add to understanding sources and responses to this indicator. Follow up surveys of students, parents, teachers and staff would be useful to better understand the reasons for feelings of safety and the nature and targets of mitigating programs and policies.

About the Data

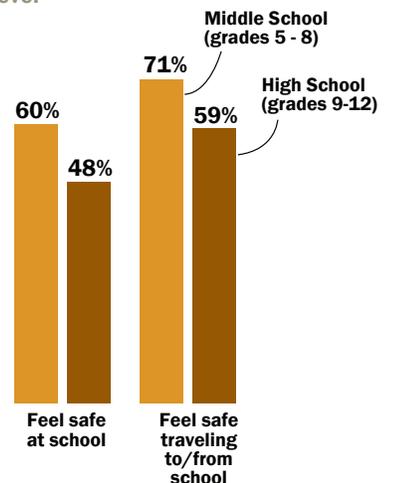
Data are from 715 students in grades 5-12 attending Westminster Community Charter School, Highgate Heights School and Bennett High School, as self-reported on a survey administered in the schools on April 15, 2011. Students who said “agree” or “strongly agree” with both of two statements (“I feel safe at school” and “I feel safe traveling to and from school”) were recorded as meeting the criteria for this indicator.

BPN Performance

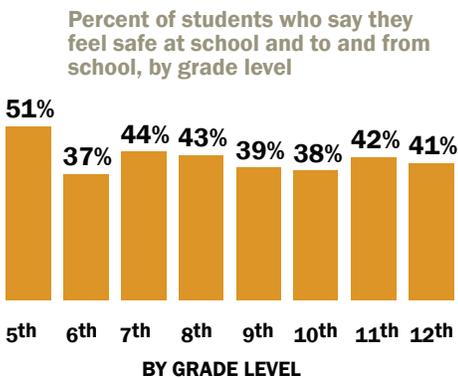
Overall, 42 percent, or 303 of 715, students who responded to both questions about safety reported that they feel safe at school and traveling to and from school. Variation by grade was relatively low around this average, with the high at 51 percent reported by 5th graders and the low at 37 percent reported by 6th graders. Other levels by grade hovered in the high 30s to low 40s in percentage.

Examined separately by question and cohort, survey responses reveal that, by 12 percentage point differences in each case, students in grades 5-8 feel safer at or traveling to and from school than do students in grades 9-12. Notably, both sets of students report feeling safer on the journey to and from school than they do while at school, a consideration for school administrators and BPN leaders.

Percent of students who say they feel safe at school OR to and from school, by school level



Sources: Closing the Gap Survey, 2011



Sources: Closing the Gap Survey, 2011



Student Mobility Rate

Based on student exits and entries during the academic year, the BPN has an official mobility rate of 16 percent.

Why it Matters

Student mobility presents challenges for both students and schools. Studies so far find it hard to disentangle mobility itself from a host of related socio-economic factors that may prompt household movement (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2010). Outcomes are clear, however: students who move more frequently have lower scores on reading and math tests and higher propensity to drop out (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2010, Rumberger & Larson, 1998). These effects are often diminished for moves within the same district or disappear if students move to higher performing school districts. Schools accommodating large numbers of entrants and exits face challenges in curriculum, instruction, assessment and recordkeeping.



More to Learn

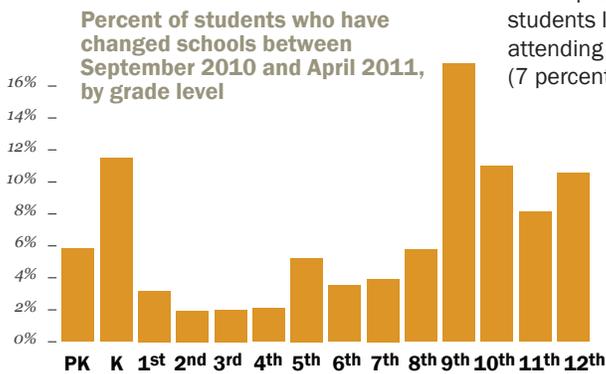
Schools regularly track student mobility, making this a standard indicator of educational performance. In future years, the BPN could collect full-year mobility rates, reporting them after the end of a school year. Surveys of parents, students and teachers to better understand the reasons for and effects of movement would help in targeting interventions to address student mobility.

About the Data

Data on student exits and entries are tracked and reported by administrators from the Buffalo Public Schools and Westminster Community Charter School. The data record mobility from September 8, 2010, the date of the first official enrollment number, and April 25, 2011, the latest date available for this report.

BPN Performance

As of April 2011, 235 unique students living in the BPN or attending one of its schools (7 percent of total enrollment) either changed schools, dropped out or enrolled after the start of the school year.



Sources: BPS & WCCS, 2011

Mobility rates of BPN schools	Students exits and entries between 9/8/10 and 4/25/11		Mobility Rate
	Enrollment on 9/8/10	4/25/11	
Bennett High School	910	320	35%
Highgate Heights Elementary	570	87	15%
Westminster Community Charter School	554	20	4%

Sources: BPS & WCCS, 2011. Table above does not include 113 entries and exits for children residing in the BPN, but not attending one of the three BPN schools.

In total, these 235 students represent 550 exits and entries, giving the BPN an official mobility rate of 16 percent. The total masks significant differences between schools. Bennett experienced a 35 percent mobility rate² over the period, seeing 320 changes—roughly 2.25 student moves per school day or 11 per week—over the period. Highgate Heights had a mobility rate of 15 percent (an average of 0.6 changes per school day or three per week) while Westminster at 4 percent had only 20 changes (< 1 per week). National studies consider any school with a mobility rate higher than 10 percent to have a “high mobility rate,” putting two of three of the BPN schools in this category.

Mobility rates also vary widely by grade level. Stability was greatest during the mid-elementary grades. Four grades—kindergarten and grades 9, 10 and 12—have mobility rates exceeding 10 percent. Switching at kindergarten tends to be common as beginning students and their families settle in to the new experience of formal education. The spike of 19 percent in grade 9 is in part due to students who transfer early in the school year as slots open at different high schools.

²Because more than half of new student entries occur during the first month of school, the mobility rate used in this report is higher than the district definition of student mobility which controls for students changing schools early in the the school year.



Caring Adult at Home and School

Only 38 percent of students attending BPN schools say they have a caring adult both at home and at school.

Why it Matters

Students who know they have someone who cares for them are more likely to have aspirations, a strong sense of self-worth, and a belief they can achieve academically, socially and personally (Quaglia Institute, 2011). Numerous studies document the link between the presence of caring adults—parents, teachers, mentors, coaches, religious figures and friends—and school attendance, academic achievement, mental health and behavioral stability (Wiggs & Ogolsky, 2009).

Use in Continuum Cycle



Ready for Middle School
 Ready to Transition from Middle School to High School
 Ready to Graduate High School

More to Learn

Surveys of all Buffalo Public School students would yield data on BPN students attending school outside the neighborhood, and build a knowledge foundation for comparing students of the BPN with their peers elsewhere. The current indicator does not fully match that requested by the Department of Education, which seeks data also on a caring adult in the community. Interviews and in-depth surveys of students and adults could be used to gather this information.

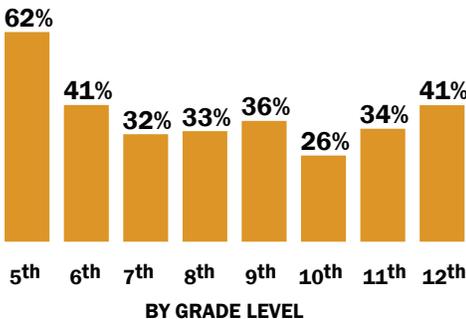
About the Data

Data are from 715 students in grades 5-12 attending Westminister Community Charter School, Highgate Heights School and Bennett High School, as self-reported on a survey administered in the schools on April 15, 2011. Students who said they “agree” or “strongly agree” with all of three statements (“My teachers listen to me when I need to talk to them,” “I have someone in my family who talks to be about how I am doing in school” and “I have someone in my family who assists me when I need help”) were recorded as meeting the criteria for this indicator.

BPN Performance

Overall, only 38 percent (274 of 715) of students responding to the survey reported having caring teachers and family members who would listen to them, engage them about school and assist when needed. Results vary by grade level, with the highest scores, 62 percent, reported by 5th graders and the lowest, 26 percent, reported by 10th graders at Bennett. The level climbs thereafter to 41 percent of 12th graders reporting a caring adult at home and school.

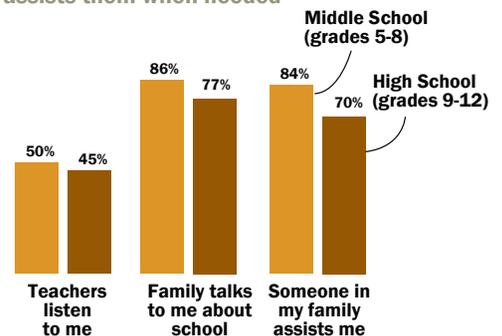
Percent of students who have a caring adult at home and in school, by grade level



Sources: Closing the Gap Survey, 2011

A closer look by question and cohort reveals that most respondents have a caring adult at home, with fewer, around half, indicating they have a teacher who listens to them when needed. Notable are the 14 to 30 percent of students who do not report a caring adult at home. Analysis by cohort finds that high school respondents are less positive than are students in the middle grades, a pattern similar to that for other survey questions.

Percent of students who say their teachers listen, family talks to them about school OR assists them when needed



Sources: Closing the Gap Survey, 2011



Access to the Internet at Home and School

Fewer than half of students attending BPN schools report they have access to the Internet both at home and at school.

Why it Matters

Over the span of little more than a decade, the Internet has become an essential 21st century learning tool. The focus of research has moved from studies of the Digital Divide, which typically confirmed that students with more educated and affluent parents were more likely to have Internet access, to issues of developmental psychology, in which the Internet itself becomes a canvas for understanding patterns of youth communication, cognitive development and global connectivity (Greenfield & Yan, 2006). For example, a study of underperforming African-American students from low-income, single-parent households found a positive correlation between the amount of Internet activity at home and these students' GPAs and scores on reading achievement tests (Jackson, et al., 2006).

Use in Continuum Cycle

- Ready for Middle School
- Ready to Transition from Middle School to High School
- Ready to Graduate High School

More to Learn

The Department of Education wants to understand not just whether students have access to the Internet at home and at school, but also what proportion of the day students have access and whether it is through a broadband connection. Surveys of parents, students and school personnel could provide such detail. Also of interest is how computers and Internet access are used at home and in school, including levels of teacher training to effectively use new technologies and how Internet access informs the school curriculum.

About the Data

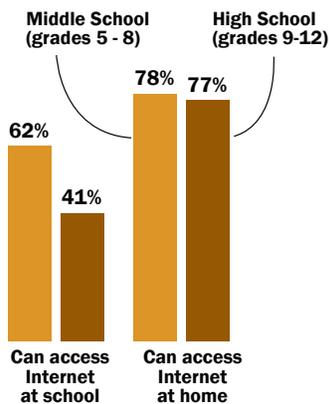
Data are from 715 students in grades 5-12 attending Westminster Community Charter School, Highgate Heights School and Bennett High School, as self-reported on a survey administered in the schools on April 15, 2011. Students who said they “agree” or “strongly agree” with both of two statements (“I am able to use the Internet on a computer at school” and “I am able to use the Internet on a computer at home”) were recorded as meeting the criteria for this indicator.

BPN Performance

Roughly 43 percent (307 of 715) of students who responded to both questions about the Internet reported they have access at both home and school. The percentage falls steadily from a high of 63 percent for 5th graders to 31 percent for 11th graders. The level bumps up to 45 percent for Bennett students in grade 12.

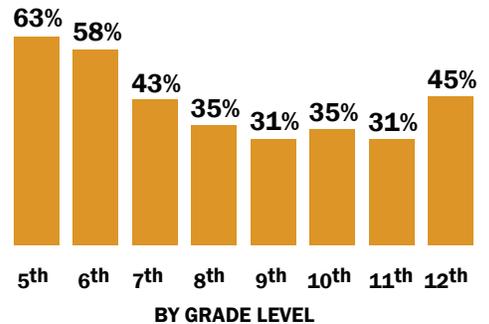
A closer look at survey responses by separate question and cohort finds relatively more students reporting access to the Internet at home than at school. That the percentage is so much lower for high school students (41 percent) versus middle grade students (62 percent) suggests an impact from Bennett policies that may limit Internet access to certain times, sites or people. Internet access at home shows little difference between the age cohorts, with over three in four students in each group reporting access.

Percent of students who say they have access to Internet at home OR school, by school level



Sources: Closing the Gap Survey, 2011

Percent of students who say they have access to Internet at home and school by grade level



Sources: Closing the Gap Survey, 2011



Teenage Pregnancy

Girls ages 15-19 who live in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood ZIP code are more than twice as likely to get pregnant than girls throughout the country.

Why it Matters

Teenage pregnancy and teen parenting are barriers to academic success and high school graduation, and may severely limit college and career options for girls. According to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2009), only 40 percent of teens who become mothers before age 18 will graduate, making pregnancy the number one reason that girls drop out. Pregnancy also affects teen fathers who are less likely to complete high school, attend college and have high economic earnings (Brien & Willis, 1997). Studies show that children of teen mothers are more likely to live in poverty, have low academic achievement, have behavioral problems, be incarcerated and become teen parents themselves (National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2006).



More to Learn

There is much more to learn about the prevalence and impacts of teen pregnancy in the BPN. Data zeroing in on smaller geographies and attributes of the teen mom and dad, including educational attainment, pre- and post-natal care, economic earnings, household structure and demographics, would shed new light on the dynamics of teen pregnancy. It also would be useful to understand the effectiveness of support from BPN schools, health agencies and other social institutions in mitigating the impact of teen pregnancy on the community and families. Also useful would be data tracking the children of teen pregnancies—their health, status, educational achievement and social and behavioral issues.

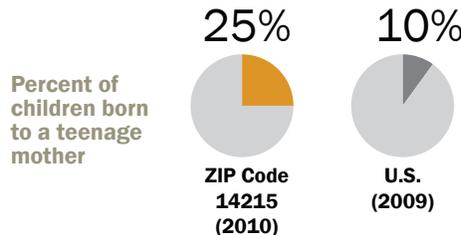
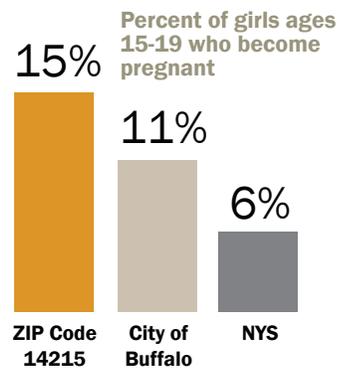
About the Data

The New York State Department of Health reports teen pregnancy rates by ZIP Code. Rates reflect a three-year average, 2006-08, of the number of teen pregnancies per 100 girls ages 15-19. Data on children born to a teenage mother come from Every Person Influences Children (EPIC) and reflect an estimate for 2010.

BPN Performance

At 15.3 percent, teen pregnancy rates for the 14215 ZIP Code encompassing the BPN are roughly 50 percent higher than those for the City of Buffalo (10.6 percent) and approaching three times higher than the teen pregnancy rate for New York State (6 percent). Teen pregnancy tends to concentrate in areas of high poverty and where female-headed households predominate, as is true of the BPN.

One in four, or 25 percent, of children born in the 14215 ZIP Code during 2010 has a teenage mother, a rate 2.5 times that for children nationwide. This concentration in the BPN reinforces the cross-generational impact of educational outcomes.



Sources: EPIC, 2010; U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009



Youth Neither in School Nor Employed

Nearly one in eight people ages 16-19 living in the BPN are neither in school nor employed.

Why it Matters

Being young and out of work is a particularly common phenomenon in a lingering economic recession. As of October 2010, the Bureau of Labor Statistics puts the national unemployment rate at 33.4 percent for recent high school graduates not enrolled in college and 42.7 percent for high school dropouts (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Young people who did not complete or are not continuing their education are likely to face particularly dire prospects in a knowledge economy, including lower lifetime earnings and higher rates of unemployment. The social effects of a large cohort of unemployed and potentially undereducated youth are equally of concern.

Although being out of work and not in school may be a temporary condition, an influential study of disadvantaged, unemployed dropouts in the 1980s found a large proportion with criminal records and far higher rates of unemployment following incarceration (Freeman, 1992).



More to Learn

There is much more to learn about this indicator. Additional data to illuminate the indicator are hard to collect, in that people in these categories are, by definition, neither tracked by schools nor employers. Without in-depth interviews or other methods, it is difficult to interpret findings. Being young, out of work and out of school describes both a 19-year-old married homemaker with a high school degree and a 16-year-old dropout with few aspirations or prospects. Untangling the differences requires more sophisticated data collection methods outside BPN schools or formal employment.

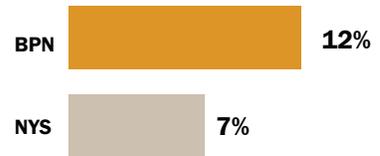
About the Data

Data on employment and schooling by age are available from the U.S. Bureau of the Census through the American Community Survey. To obtain a sufficient sample size for small area geographies such as the BPN, the surveys are combined across years. These data are aggregated for 2005-2009.

BPN Performance

Of the 1,138 people ages 16-19 living in BPN block groups, 135 are neither enrolled in school nor employed, a rate of 12 percent. This contrasts with the comparable rate for New York State of 7 percent. Ultimately this indicator reflects the impact of a high dropout rate and poor employment prospects for those without a high school degree—a combination that breeds poverty and crime.

Percent of youth ages 16-19 who are not enrolled in school or employed



Sources: ACS, 5-year estimates, 2005-09

Measuring Ourselves: The Cradle-to-Career Continuum

Breaking the generational cycle of poverty requires an appreciation of the wide range of factors influencing the academic, developmental and economic outcomes for students, particularly those in high-poverty, urban school districts. To achieve this holistic perspective, the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood needs assessment envisions students traveling along a continuum from cradle to career, passing through six key transitional milestones along the way. Providing the resources and supports that enable children to smoothly transition along this continuum is the heart of the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood initiative and can create opportunities to shift this vicious cycle of poverty into a virtuous cycle of sustainability.

Using the 14 BPN indicators as building blocks, this assessment maps, or segments, academic, community and family factors against the cradle-to-career continuum to create multi-dimensional metrics for each of the six academic transition points. This analysis also considers conditions beyond this set of indicators, such as poverty levels, single-parent households and school quality, to provide important, and often correlative, context for student performance along the cycle.

At each transition point along the continuum, students are categorized as high-, moderate- or low-need, reflecting the level of support or interventions required to get them back on track for academic and lifelong success.



High-need students

Have fallen behind and are in great danger of never meeting the academic requirements to eventually graduate and ascend to college.



Moderate-need students

Demonstrate some positive attributes but fall short on other measures and are still in danger of falling behind.

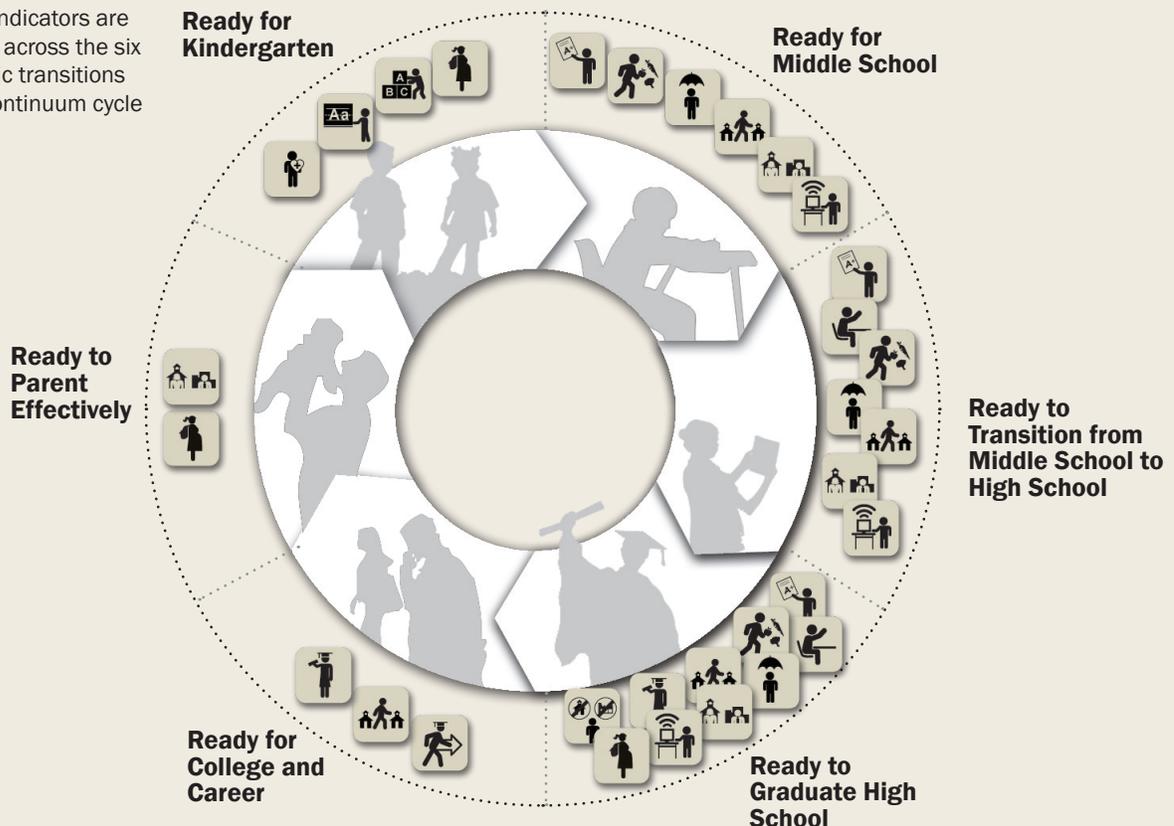


Low-need students

Are on track for educational success with few academic or related challenges.

Continuum Cycle

The 14 indicators are mapped across the six academic transitions of the continuum cycle





Ready for Kindergarten

174 Kindergarten Students

	Attend Westminster	40
	Live in BPN	17
	Live Outside BPN	23
	Attend Highgate Heights	50
	Live in BPN	8
	Live Outside BPN	42
	Attend a school outside neighborhood	84

Why it Matters

The start of kindergarten is a milestone moment in a child's development—the commencement of his or her academic career. Research shows that by this point, a child's developmental course has already been shaped by a range of factors during the first years of life. Yet significant numbers of children begin their school years developmentally behind and "not ready to learn." When a child enters kindergarten unprepared to learn, he or she is likely to follow a negative academic trajectory through high school, and has a greater chance of becoming a teen parent, struggling with depression or engaging in criminal activities (Rouse, et al., 2005).

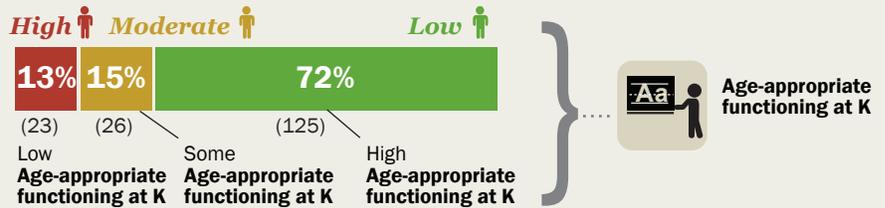
School readiness gaps at this stage, including delays in cognitive, language and social development, have been linked with poverty, low parental educational attainment, poor nutrition and crime and violence in the community (Duncan & Magnuson, 2005).

Studies show the first years of a child's life—from birth to five years—represents a critical period for overcoming developmental delays and directing children towards academic success by eliminating environmental causes, improving health and nutrition, and providing both general and individualized developmental learning interventions in homes, schools and child care centers.

FACT: Three out of 10 children enter kindergarten not fully ready.

In the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood, nearly three in 10 children enter kindergarten already behind in age-appropriate functioning, demonstrating moderate to high need in core areas and struggling with letter

Students by Need

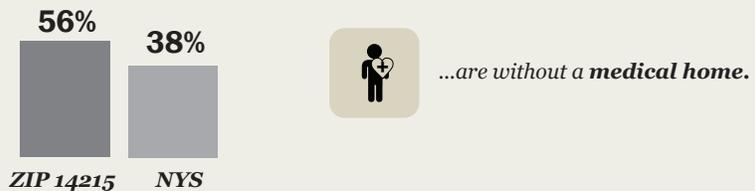


Students whose need is...

...high ...moderate ...low **By Indicator**

55% **23%** **27%** ...did not enroll in an early education program prior to kindergarten.

% of children ages 0-5



% of children born last year



For data details, see Appendix 1.2 and 1.3

recognition and comprehension of age-appropriate words. This cohort of moderate- and high-risk students will increase in size steadily through the high school years as students fall farther behind and are unable to catch up.

FACT: Children falling behind are more likely to have not attended an early learning program.

Enrollment in early learning programs such as Head Start or universal pre-K is correlated with school readiness in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood, reflecting national trends. Of high-need kindergarten students, 55 percent were not enrolled in any early education program prior to kindergarten, compared with 27 percent low-need children who didn't have any school prior to kindergarten. Quality early learning programs are critical to developing comprehension and behavioral skills essential for school readiness. Among the 174 kindergartners in the neighborhood, 70 percent attended a pre-K program, suggesting a need for greater access to such programs. Concerning for future generations is that, according to American Community Survey estimates, only two out of five 3- and 4-year-olds from the neighborhood are enrolled in school.

FACT: Children who are not ready are slightly more likely to come from low-income households.

The high rate of poverty in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood is a key factor behind cognitive gaps experienced by its youngest inhabitants. Nearly nine out of 10 kindergartners are low-income (eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, a key measure of poverty). A low-income kindergartner is much more likely (31 percent vs. 12 percent for higher income classmates) to have high or moderate need in age-appropriate functioning. Studies point to childhood poverty as the strongest predictor of gaps in academic performance, far outweighing race/ethnicity, family structure or other factors related to cognitive disadvantage (Calkins, et al., 2007). By age 3, children born into poverty will have acquired only half the vocabulary of those from more advantaged households (Hart & Risley, 2003), lag in letter recognition (Hart & Risely, 1995) and already have significant reading deficits (Wirt, et al., 2005). As a result, it is vitally important to work with low-income parents and their child care providers to increase vocabulary, language and reading skills before a child reaches kindergarten.

86% are low-income
73% are African-American
73% are boys



DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF HIGH-NEED STUDENTS

FACT: Over half of young children do not have a medical home.

Over half of the population under age 6 in ZIP Code 14215 are estimated to be without a medical home, or a primary care team that provides coordinated, continuous care. Without regular health care, children and their families are likely not receiving preventive care or even critical evaluations at developmental milestones. When care is needed, their parents often turn to emergency room facilities. A medical home is particularly critical for economically disadvantaged children considering they are more likely to have chronic health conditions, from lead poisoning to asthma to ADHD, which inhibit a child's cognitive development.

FACT: Single-parent families are the norm, especially among "new families."

Single-parent households present a challenging learning environment for young children, as parents work multiple jobs, have less time to engage with their child, including verbally, and have less access to social and financial support. Single-parent households are also significantly more likely to be low-income.

In the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood, 86 percent of new families having only young children under the age of 6 are single-parent families. Among all BPN families with children in the neighborhood, about two-thirds, or 67 percent, are single-parent families. These percentages are significantly higher than the 36 percent of families across New York State headed by a single parent. While this situation is likely behind the academic struggles of the neighborhood's current kindergartners, it also suggests future generations of young children are at risk.

Other Factors that Matter

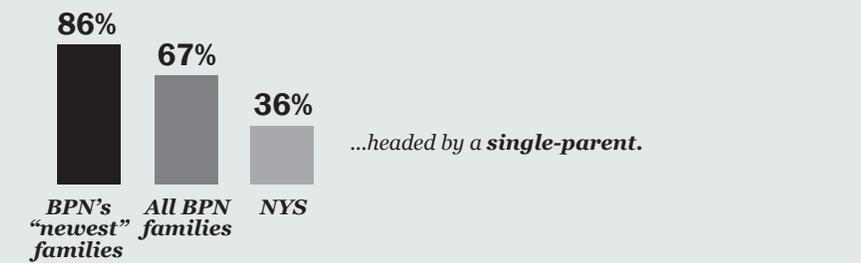
Students whose need is...

...high ...moderate ...low



HOUSEHOLD TYPE

% of families with children...



Source: BPS & WCCS, 2011; ACS 5-year estimates, 2005-09. BPN's "newest families" are all families whose only children are age six and younger.



Ready for Middle School

469 Students in 4th and 5th Grade

	Attend Westminster	140
	Live in BPN	52
	Live Outside BPN	88
	Attend Highgate Heights	139
	Live in BPN	23
	Live Outside BPN	116
	Attend a school outside neighborhood	190

Why it Matters

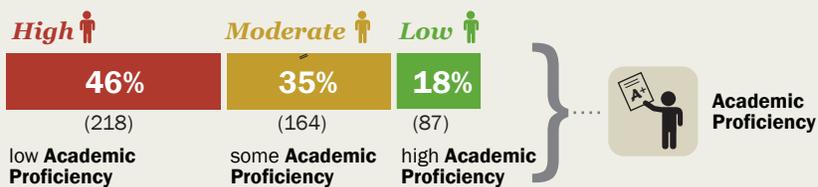
A child's proficiency in core subject areas by the end of grade school is crucial for a smooth transition into middle school, one of the most difficult of all academic transitions. Core cognitive competencies can provide stability as these students encounter the challenges of a new school, a heavier academic workload and the developmental changes and social pressures associated with adolescence. Studies have linked the transition to middle school with declining educational outcomes, decreasing motivation and negative attitudes toward school. In some respects, the elementary years represent a last opportunity to get students academically on track. A child who enters middle school behind in reading is more likely to become a disciplinary problem, fail classes or drop out altogether than they are to catch up (Miller, 2009).

A strong social network, including a healthy parent-child relationship, caring teachers and positive role models in the community, have been shown to help ease a child through this transition and stay on course academically (Duchesne & Ratelle, 2010).

FACT: Eight of 10 children are in moderate to high need as they transition from elementary to middle school.

Between kindergarten and 4th and 5th grade, the proportion of students displaying moderate to high academic needs balloons from 30 percent to 80 percent, the steepest drop-off in performance of all transitions in the cradle-to-career continuum. In 2010, nearly half of 4th and 5th graders living in or attending school in the BPN—more than 230 students—scored below proficiency levels on

Students by Need



Students whose **need** is...

...high	...moderate	...low	By Indicator
56%	62%	58%	...do not eat ample servings of fruits and vegetables and exercise daily.
41%	40%	26%	...do not have access to the Internet at home and school.
48%	53%	53%	...do not feel safe at school and traveling to/from school grounds.
19%	53%	45%	...do not feel they have a caring adult at home and in school.
3%	1%	3%	...have changed schools during the current school year.

For data details, see Appendix 1.2 and 1.3

all state assessments taken the prior year (3rd and 4th grade), while about one in three were proficient in only some subject areas.

FACT: Students falling behind disproportionately come from low-income households.

Low socioeconomic status among BPN students continues to correlate with poor academic performance during the elementary years. Practically all students who are falling behind at this transition (92-95 percent) are low-income.

Literature documents the importance of household income particularly for reading abilities at this stage. By 4th grade, children eligible for free or reduced-price lunch trail their counterparts by two or three grade levels. Also, those children who are not reading fluently by 3rd or 4th grade are at high risk of never learning to read fluently, and therefore never feeling comfortable “reading to learn” (Grigg & Donahue, 2007).

FACT: Students who struggle are more likely to not have Internet access at home and school.

Based on a survey administered to 5th graders attending school in the BPN, nearly two out of three students have access to the Internet at home and school. However,

access to this 21st century learning tool is far more common among students who are fully proficient in core subjects than among those who are struggling academically. Two out of five high-need students report not having access at home and school, compared with just a quarter of fully-proficient students who report no access. Students were more likely to report having Internet access at home than at school. These findings show a correlation between Internet access and higher academic performance; measures to remove barriers to access deserve further investigation.

FACT: Low-performing students are more common at low-performing schools.

High-need 4th and 5th graders living in or attending school in the BPN are concentrated in below-average schools, while low-need children are more likely to attend above average schools. About two-thirds of high-need children attend a low-performing school. At the other end of the spectrum, a good majority (57 percent) of high-proficiency students attend “above-average schools,” where standardized test scores are above the city-wide average. This finding suggests a vicious cycle taking place in the city’s low-performing schools, as high-need students contribute to poor school performance and dysfunctional schools fail to meet the needs of this challenged student population.

95% are low-income
95% are African-American
56% are boys



DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF HIGH-NEED STUDENTS

FACT: More than half of all students fail to regularly exercise and eat well.

Roughly three out of five 5th graders fall short in eating the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables every day and getting at least an hour of physical activity daily. Students are more likely to say they eat healthfully than they are to engage in regular physical activity. Research has documented a connection between diet and exercise and academic performance. One recent study found 5th and 6th graders more likely to meet academic standards if they were not overweight or obese, were physically active, ate at a fast-food restaurant no more than once per week or limited consumption of soda or sugar-sweetened beverages (Community Alliance for Research and Engagement, 2010).

FACT: Roughly half of students do not feel safe at school.

Neighborhood conditions, including safety, become increasingly important to school success as children enter adolescence (Duncan, et al., 2007). According to the survey conducted for this report, safety at school and home is a concern for about half or more of 5th graders. Of those students who feel their safety is compromised, more feel this way at school than during their travels to and from school, whether walking or taking the bus.

FACT: 5th graders don’t always feel adults are there when they need them.

Overall, six out of 10 5th graders report having a caring adult in their life, including teachers who listen when they need to talk and a family member who talks with them about how they are doing in school and provides assistance when needed. Surprisingly, high-need 5th graders reported feeling highly supported by adults although judging by responses by other age groups, this finding may reflect a statistical anomaly. Among those students who feel they lack caring adults in their life, more feel neutral or disagreeable about the approachability of their teachers than feel this way about a family member.

Other Factors that Matter

Students whose need is...

...high ...moderate ...low



FAMILY INCOME

95% 92% 82% ...are from low-income families.

SCHOOL QUALITY

65% 38% 14% ...attend a below-average school.

13% 13% 29% ...attend an average school.

22% 50% 57% ...attend an above-average school.

Sources: BPS & WCCS, 2011; NYSED School Report Cards 2010. Average, Below Average and Above Average are in relation to the BPS district-wide performance on NYS Standardized test scores administered in 2010.

Ready to Transition from Middle School to High School



989 Students
in 6th-9th
grade

	Attend Westminster	181
	Live in BPN	63
	Live Outside BPN	118
	Attend Highgate Heights	217
	Live in BPN	33
	Live Outside BPN	184
	Attend Bennett High School	195
	Live in BPN	111
	Live Outside BPN	184
	Attend a school outside neighborhood	396

Why it Matters

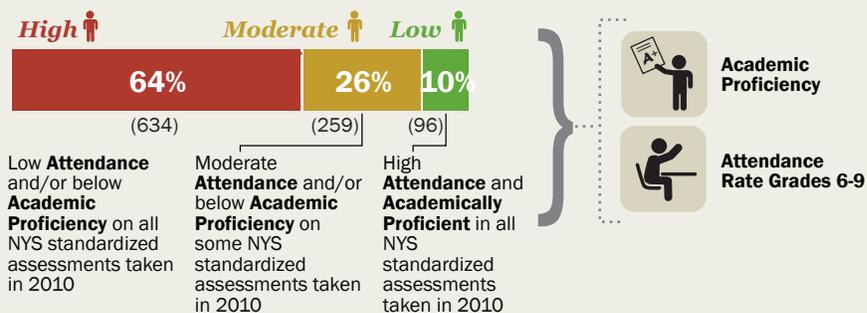
For many students, the transition from middle school to high school represents major life change as they encounter a completely new style of curriculum, increasingly competitive academic testing and persistent pressure to stay on track for graduation—all at a pivotal developmental stage. Adolescents entering ninth grade are negotiating puberty, exploring their own identities and facing other large-scale life changes, such as shifting levels of parental and peer influence.

Research shows that a student's academic deficits entering high school often become magnified, which can further inhibit progress and increase the risk of dropping out. Studies consistently document an across-the-board drop in academic achievement during the middle-to-high school transition. While some of this can be attributed to higher academic standards in high school, other factors include students' increased absenteeism and declining levels of engagement. Student health, emotional well-being, family life, socioeconomic status and neighborhood conditions also influence academic performance at this point. Dividing lines in scholastic achievement performance based on gender and race and ethnicity have also been documented.

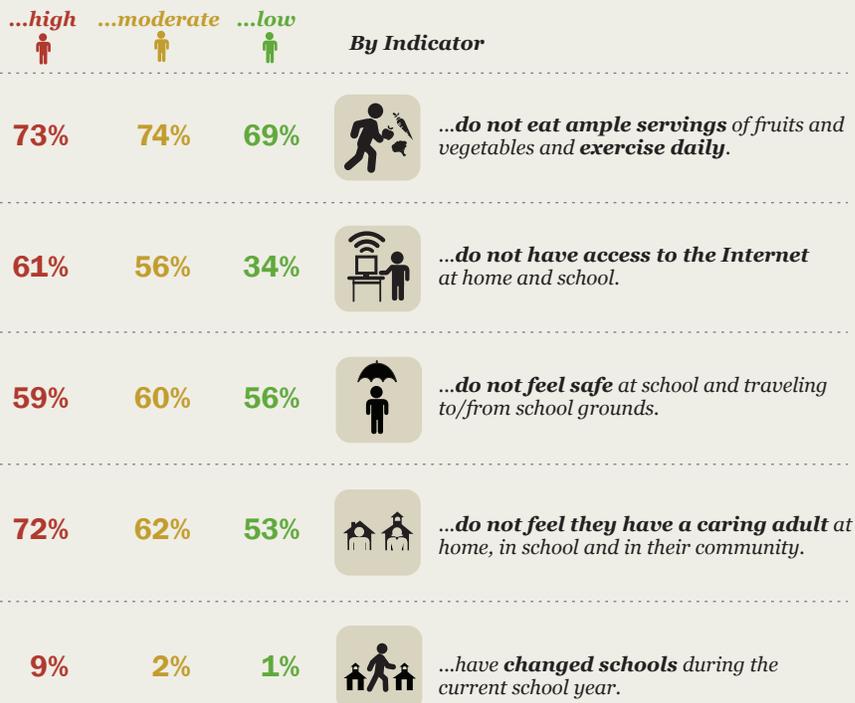
FACT: Between 6th and 9th grades, absenteeism increases and student proficiency declines.

High absenteeism is a problem that gets worse as students progress through middle school, becoming a chronic problem by the first year of high school. Half of 6th graders miss two or three days of school a month—by 8th grade, four out of five students exhibit this level of absenteeism. Between 8th and

Students by Need



Students whose **need** is...



For data details, see Appendix 1.2 and 1.3

9th grades, the proportion of students with high absenteeism (missing three or more days of school monthly) more than doubles from 21 percent to 51 percent.

In the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood, academic proficiency drops drastically as students enter high school. Between 7th and 9th grades (when students with high absenteeism jumps from 14 percent to 51 percent) the percent of students fully proficient in all core subject areas falls from 18 percent to 6 percent.

FACT: Students who are struggling the most are much more likely to have changed schools.

About 10 percent of high-need BPN students changed schools in the 2009-10 academic year, compared to just 2 percent of moderate-need students and 1 percent of fully-proficient students. This trend is consistent with studies linking students who change schools frequently with poorer performance on standardized reading and math tasks (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2010).

FACT: Students lagging academically are disproportionately from low-income households.

Poverty and low socioeconomic status continue to correlate with academic

proficiency. Students who are falling behind are more likely to come from low-income families. Of the highest need students, 93 percent are low-income, compared to 87 percent of moderate-need students and 81 percent of low-need students.

FACT: Students who are falling behind are more likely to feel that they aren't supported by adults.

Students with a caring adult at home and in school are more likely to transition smoothly into high school. Conversely, students lacking caring adults in their life may be struggling academically because of it. Nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of high-need students attending BPN schools do not feel they have a caring adult at home and in school. At the same time, only slightly more than half of low-need students report not having a caring adult in their life. Moderate-need students fall in between, with 62 percent saying they lack a supportive adult at home and in school. Also notable is that these older children are more likely than their younger counterparts to report not having a caring adult in their life, a trend that stems from the greater proportion of older students saying they don't feel their teachers are available or approachable.

FACT: Lower-performing students are more likely to lack Internet access at home and school.

Among the students most in need, 61 percent do not have

93% are low-income
91% are African-American
49% are boys



DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF HIGH-NEED STUDENTS

Internet access at home and school, compared with only about a third of fully-proficient students. Overall, 43 percent of 6th through 9th graders say they are able to use the Internet at both home and school. This is significantly lower than the 62 percent of 5th graders who report such access, suggesting perhaps greater competition among older students for access to 21st century learning tools.

FACT: Only one student in four meets the recommended standard for healthy eating and exercise.

According to the survey conducted for this report, close to three out of four students in 6th through 9th grades fail to eat the recommended five daily servings of fruits and vegetables and get at least an hour of physical activity every day. This represents a deterioration in the eating and exercise habits of younger 5th-grade students. Students in this older age group are more apt to be physically active than consume this level of fruits and vegetables, a flip from the elementary level, where a healthy diet is more commonly reported. Literature links physical activity and good nutrition with academic performance among students.

FACT: More than half of students do not feel safe at school.

Overall, six out of 10 students in transition from middle school to high school say they do not feel safe at school or in their travels to and from school, compared with nearly half of younger students in the neighborhood, perhaps signaling increasing exposure to violence as students advance in age. Students' perceptions of safety tend not to vary much with student need. As with 5th graders, 6th through 9th graders are more apt to agree they feel safe traveling between school and home than at their school. Only slightly more than half of students surveyed (54 percent) say they feel safe at school, suggesting many may be compromised in their ability to focus on their studies.

Other Factors that Matter

Students whose need is...

...high ...moderate ...low

...high	...moderate	...low	
93%	87%	81%	...are from low-income families.
75%	53%	27%	...attend a below-average school.
7%	6%	6%	...attend an average school.
18%	41%	67%	...attend an above-average school.

Source: BPS & WCCS, 2011; NYSED School Report Cards 2010. Average, Below Average and Above Average schools are in relation to the BPS district-wide performance on NYS Standardized test scores administered in 2010.

Ready to Graduate High School

1,236 Students in High School

🏠	Attend Bennett High School	870
	Live in BPN	70
	Live Outside BPN	800
🏠	Attend a school outside neighborhood	366



Why it Matters

A high school diploma is the minimum requirement in today's knowledge-driven economy favoring highly specialized skills and, increasingly, a college degree. Even for students opting for vocational or workforce training programs, a high school diploma is prerequisite. The picture is bleak for those who fall short of this academic milestone—high school dropouts are more likely to live in poverty, depend on public assistance, end up in prison and be in poor health compared with their graduating peers. They also have a greater chance of becoming a single parent and perpetuating the cycle of poverty, as research shows children of single parents are more likely to drop out than those raised by two parents (Bridgeland, et al., 2006).

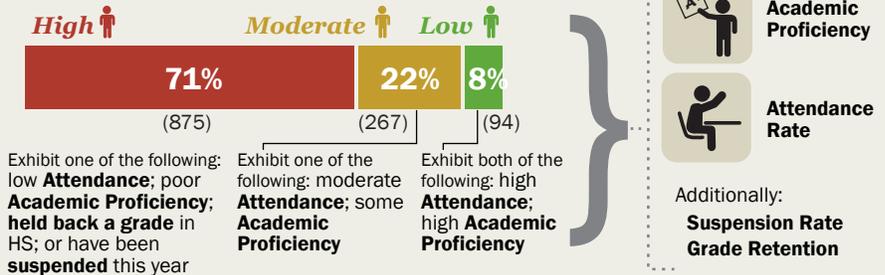
Failure to graduate from high school in the United States disproportionately affects low-income, minority, urban and single-parent youth attending large public high schools in the inner city.

FACT: There are several warning signs for students falling behind.

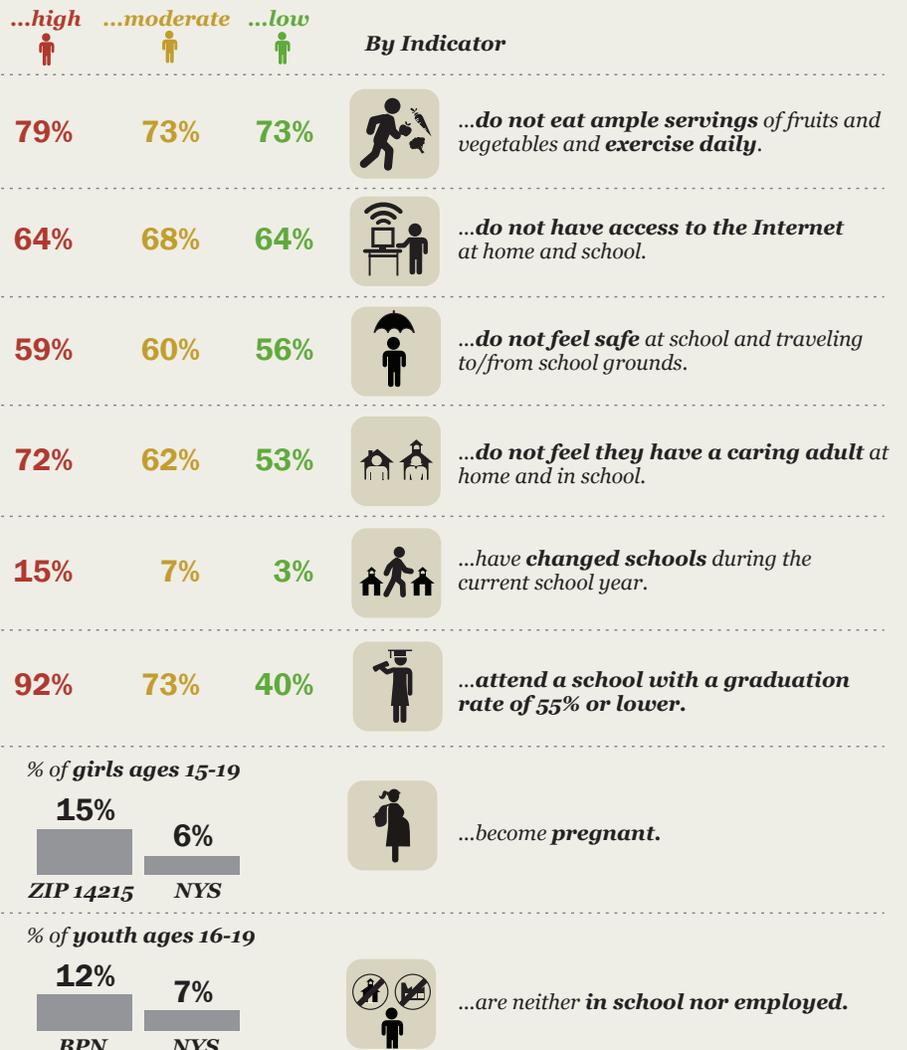
More than one in 10 BPN students has been held back a grade since entering high school and, by definition, will not graduate on time. Of the remaining factors identified as strong predictors for failing to finish high school within four years, high absenteeism and lagging academic performance are the top challenges faced by students. Nearly six in 10 high school students miss an average of three or more days of school per month, demonstrating high absenteeism. Four in 10 have minimal to no proficiency in core subjects and will not meet graduation

For data details, see Appendix 1.2 and 1.3

Students by Need



Students whose need is...



requirements without remediation. Also, one-quarter of students have been suspended from school, at risk of becoming repeat offenders with chronic delinquency.

FACT: For students in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood, not graduating from high school is the norm.

More than 80 percent of BPN high school students attend a school where 55 percent or fewer students graduate in four years. This puts all but the most academically proficient and determined students at risk, and suggests a further threat—a dropout “culture,” including negative peer pressure and outside influences. BPN students at risk for not graduating on time are significantly more likely to attend schools with low graduation rates. In fact, nine out of 10 high-need students attend a school with a graduation rate of 55 percent or lower, compared with about three-quarters of moderate-need students and only 40 percent of fully-proficient students.

FACT: Family income matters even more at high school.

Overall, 83 percent of BPN high school students are from low-income families. However, when looking at the students who are on-track versus those who are off-track, these figures are drastically different. Nearly nine in 10 off-track students are low-income, compared with just two-thirds of on-track students. While at previous transition points the difference of family income was between 10 and 15 percentage points, it jumps to 20 percentage points by the time students reach high school.

FACT: Students not ready are more likely to have changed schools.

Of high- and moderate-need BPN students, more than one in 10 has changed schools since the beginning of the current school year. Conversely, of the students on-track in high school, almost all have remained enrolled in the same school throughout this academic year. The stress associated with being at a new school, making new friends and adjusting to different routines may contribute to absenteeism or put students behind in their classes.

FACT: Off-track high school students are more likely to feel they don't have adults in their life who care for them.

Almost three-quarters of 9th through 12th graders who are most off-track feel they don't have a caring adult at home or in school. Just slightly more than half of on-track students feel this way. Moderate-need students fall in between, suggesting a correlation between staying on track for graduating and feeling supported by adults. Compared to younger children, high school students are more likely to feel they lack supportive adults in their lives, suggesting a trend of increasing disengagement at home and school. Similar to younger students, 9th through 12th graders are more likely to say they have a caring adult at home than a teacher to talk with when needed at school.

FACT: Teenage pregnancy is three times higher than the state average.

About 15 percent of teen girls in the BPN ZIP code get pregnant while in high school, the greatest risk factor for girls dropping out of high school, according to the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Only 40 percent of teens who become mothers before age 18 will graduate. Without a high school education and with the prospect of raising their children as single parents, these teen moms have a high chance

86% are low-income
88% are African-American
49% are boys



DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF HIGH-NEED STUDENTS

of living in poverty. Moreover, their children will have to fight the strong current of the perpetuating cycle of poverty, with greater chances for poor birth outcomes, learning problems later in life and low educational attainment.

FACT: More than three-quarters of high school students fail to eat healthy foods and exercise.

BPN students continue to become less physically active and less likely to eat healthfully as they progress in age, according to this report's survey. More than three-quarters of 9th through 12th graders don't meet the recommended standards for diet and exercise, or five servings of fruits and vegetables and an hour of physical activity daily. While 57 percent say they are physically active for at least an hour a day, only one-third say they eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables.

FACT: Access to the Internet is limited for high school students.

Only one in three 9th through 12th graders reports having home and school Internet access, a learning tool essential to strong academic performance. This is considerably lower than the 43 percent of 6th through 9th graders and 62 percent of 5th graders with access. It leaves about two-thirds of high school students without access to an important learning tool, with students reporting greater access challenges at school than at home. This suggests the possibility of insufficient computers or access restrictions at Bennett High School (the only high school surveyed for this needs assessment).

FACT: Student safety concerns continue, particularly in schools.

Six out of 10 high school students say they do not feel safe at school and getting to and from school, a rate on par with middle school students. While 61 percent of those surveyed agreed they feel safe traveling back and forth to school, fewer than half feel the same way when they are in school.

Other Factors that Matter

Students whose need is...

...high ...moderate ...low



FAMILY INCOME

86%

81%

66%

...are from low-income families.



Ready for College and Career

246 Students in 12th Grade

🏠	Attend Bennett High School	175
	Live in BPN	52
	Live Outside BPN	88
🏠	Attend a school outside neighborhood	71

Why it Matters

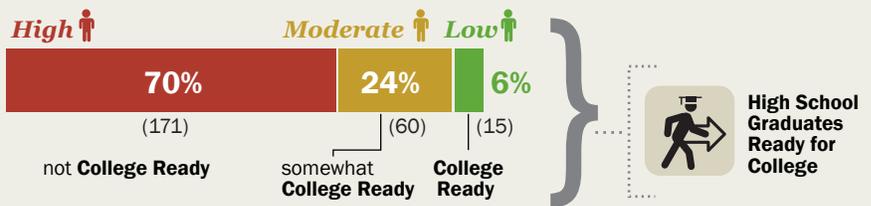
The path toward economic security does not stop with a high school diploma, and most careers offering a living wage require at least specialized workforce training or a two- or four-year college degree. The stakes are high. A college graduate earns, on average, \$13,000 to \$25,000 more annually than those whose education culminates at the high school level. Those with some college or a vocational degree earn \$15,000 more.

A student who is “college- and career-ready” is equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to enroll and succeed without remediation in first-year courses at a postsecondary institution, from two- and four-year colleges to vocational programs or technical schools. These academic standards go beyond those required to earn a high school diploma. Being prepared for college and career also requires mastery of “soft skills” not typically assessed, including leadership, problem solving, critical thinking and collaboration.

FACT: Only 6 percent of BPN students in the 12th grade is prepared to succeed in college without remediation.

According to the New York State Regents, students are deemed ready to attend college without remediation if they have scored 80 percent or above on their math Regents exam and 75 percent or above on their English Language Arts (ELA) Regents exam. Of all 12th grade students served by the BPN, only 6 percent of all seniors—15 students—meet this threshold. One-quarter fail to meet these standards in both math and ELA, while seven in 10 students score below minimum levels on one of these assessments.

Students by Need



Students whose need is...

...high ...moderate ...low

12% 8% 0%

By Indicator



...have **changed schools** during the current school year.



...attend a school with a graduation rate of **55% or lower**.

For data details, see Appendix 1.2 and 1.3

FACT: Students are unlikely to be prepared for college or career if they attend a school with a low graduation rate.

Among BPN high school seniors who are at highest risk for not being ready for college and career, nine out of 10 attend a school with a graduation rate of 55 percent or lower. Not surprisingly, then, poor school performance is closely tied to low levels of college and career readiness. Within the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood, the overwhelming majority of students—80 percent—attend a low-performing school where most students fail to meet state standards in at least math or ELA.

At the same time, the overwhelming majority of college-ready students are in better performing schools, with only 13 percent attending schools with a graduation rate of 55 percent or lower. However, just 16 percent of students are served by such schools. Partially driving this trend are admission requirements at some of the higher performing schools; by definition, children attending these schools are more capable.

FACT: High school seniors who are not college ready are more likely to have changed schools this year.

Challenging academic performance for BPN

students as early as elementary school, student mobility reaches the level of a nearly insurmountable barrier by the late high school years. While only a minority of students in the BPN are college ready overall, not one 12th grader who changed schools during the 2010-11 school year is prepared for this transition. Rather, they are all at high or moderate risk for not being ready, accounting for 8 to 12 percent of students who are not college ready. These students score below state standards on one or both of their math and ELA Regents exams. This reinforces the need for making schools stable and working with families to establish continuity in the schools their children attend.

FACT: Low socioeconomic status continues to put students at a greater disadvantage as they prepare for transition to college or career.

Regardless of income level, college readiness is rarely achieved by BPN students. However, high school students who are not ready for college and career are more likely to be from low-income families. In

fact, there is almost a 30-percentage-point gap between the 82 percent of high-need students who are from low-income families and the 53 percent of BPN college-ready children who are low-income. Overall, 86 percent of all BPN 12th graders are low-income, though they account for only 53 percent of BPN college- or career-ready students.

FACT: Students unprepared for college and career are more likely to be female.

A slight percentage-point difference exists between girls and boys served by the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood in terms of not being prepared for postsecondary education or employment. Perhaps even more telling is that of the 15 students who are deemed college ready, two-thirds are males. This is surprising given the relatively lower graduation rates of African-American males in the City of Buffalo. With so few children actually college ready, it is difficult to confidently state what factors are driving this trend. However, with males in the City of Buffalo more likely to drop out than females, some of the poorest performing male students may have already left the system by 12th grade. Also, girls at this stage may be challenged by balancing motherhood and struggling to stay on top of their academics.

82% are low-income
89% are African-American
46% are boys

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF HIGH-NEED STUDENTS

Other Factors that Matter

Students whose **need** is...

...high **...moderate** **...low**

FAMILY INCOME

82% **72%** **53%** ...are from **low-income** families.

Source: BPS & WCCS, 2011



Ready to Parent Effectively *as Adults in the Community*

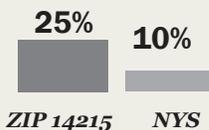
Why it Matters

Effective and strong parenting is a critical link in the cradle-to-career continuum, setting the stage for a child's emotional, social and intellectual development over the course of their lifetime. Strong parents provide their children with economically stable and secure homes, physical and emotional nurturance, rich opportunities to explore and learn, and positive relationships at home and in the community.

Low-income, single and teen parents are more likely to face a range of pressures that challenge their capacity for effective and strong parenting, thus increasing their child's risk of starting out behind. Research shows children growing up in low-income and single-parent households are at greater risk for developing health and behavioral problems as well as cognitive delays. For instance, low-income parents are less likely to provide their child with developmental resources such as toys, books or even quality child care and preschool education (Aber, et al., 1997). They are less likely to read to or engage with their child (Valladares and Moore, 2009; Olds, Sadler & Kitzman, 2007). Stressed parents are more likely to engage in child abuse or provide insufficient care (Olds, Sadler & Kitzman, 2007). Teen parents, with lower levels of education and a high likelihood of living in poverty, face similar challenges, including limited life and parenting skills.

Students and Families

% of children born in 2010



...born to a teenage mom.

% of 5th through 12th graders



80%

say they have someone in their family who talks with them about how they are doing in school



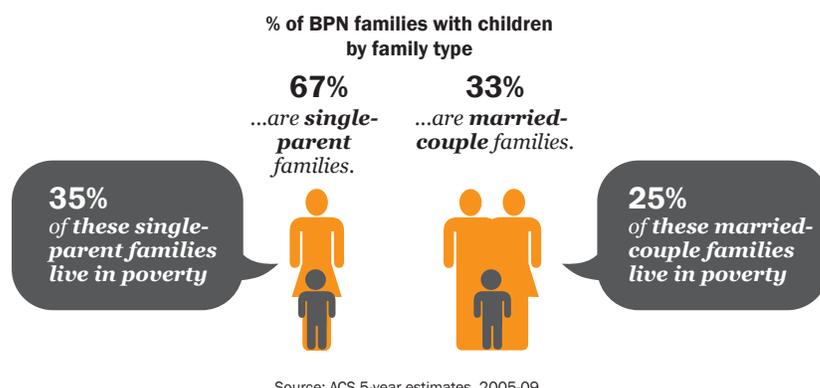
75%

say they have someone in their home available to assist them when they need help



...feel they have a caring adult at home.

For data details, see Appendix 1.2 and 1.3



What do we know about the parents of Buffalo Promise Neighborhood students?

A range of variables evaluated for the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood suggest parents are undergoing a range of stresses—from poverty and low educational attainment to single parenthood and teen motherhood—that threaten the development and academic readiness of their children and point to concentrated family support needs.

FACT: Many BPN parents, and especially those with young children, are raising their child alone.

Two out of three households with children under 18 are single-parent families; most of these are single mothers. These single-parent households represent a greater share

of family types in the neighborhood than what is seen overall for the City of Buffalo, as well as nationally.

For the neighborhood’s “newest families,” those where the only children in the household are under age 6, this trend is even more pronounced. Nearly nine out of 10 of these families (86 percent) with all children under age 6 are single-parent, and primarily female-headed, households. This proportion exceeds that for the City of Buffalo and the nation as a whole. In fact, there are more than twice as many female-headed new families in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood than the nation overall. Many of these single mothers are teen moms. During 2010, approximately 25 percent of all children born in ZIP code 14215 were born to a teenage mother, putting them at higher risk for health, behavioral and developmental problems.

FACT: About one-third of BPN families with children live in poverty.

Overall, one out of every three BPN parents with at least one child under age 18 earns less than the federal threshold for poverty—\$18,000 annually for a single-parent household in 2011. More than one in three single-parent households in the neighborhood lives in poverty compared with one in four married-couple families. Single mothers with school-aged children (ages 5 through 17) are most likely to struggle financially, with 43 percent of these households falling below the poverty line.

Even BPN families not in poverty are likely challenged to make ends meet, with 77 percent of jobs held by neighborhood residents paying \$40,000 or less annually. Many of these jobs are in the lower-paying health services and social assistance sectors.

FACT: BPN children feel their parents create a caring home environment for their children.

While parents in the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood face many socioeconomic challenges, BPN students feel cared for and supported at home. An overwhelming majority, or 80 percent, of 5th through 12th graders attending one of the three schools in the neighborhood agree they have someone in their family, whether a parent, sibling or other family member, who talks with them about how they are doing in school. Three-quarters say someone is also available at home to assist them when they need help.

Other Factors that Matter

For **families** whose first child was born between 2004 and 2009...

FAMILIES			
BPN	City of Buffalo	NYS	
57%	52%	23%	...were single mothers .
28%	15%	9%	...were single fathers .
14%	33%	68%	...were married .

Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2005-09. Families whose first child was born between 2004 and 2009 refers to any family whose only child is under age 6.

More to Learn...

A community “manages what it measures.” In its selection of measures for self-assessment, a community not only signals its greatest priorities, it also initiates a process of ongoing data collection, management, analysis, interpretation and action. The value of indicators is not solely in the numbers themselves, but in how the community uses their insights and knowledge to plan and act to achieve a future of great promise.

For the nation’s Promise Neighborhoods, the U.S. Department of Education, building

on ample research and practice, has identified a dozen indicators of importance to families, schools and communities. To these, the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood has added two more, bringing to 14 the list of measures against which the BPN will gauge its progress. This Needs Assessment Study reveals what we know about where the BPN stands on these measures. The picture is a sobering yet hopeful check on reality, showing the need for concerted effort in the days ahead.

The assessment also reveals that, at the outset of the Promise Neighborhood initiative, only some of the 14 indicators are supported by data that are regularly collected and precisely measured, that is, for the exact BPN geography and at the scale of analysis that allows for comprehensive tracking over time. As the BPN’s work progresses, the community will refine its measures and implement data collection processes to ensure regular and appropriate collection and interpretation of information of value.

Where we have the most to learn...

Upon school entry, much is known about children’s needs as it relates to their academic experiences. Information on whether a student is behind in reading, missing inordinate amounts of school or failing courses can all be pieced together to pinpoint the degree of need an individual child faces as he or she navigates through school and adolescence. Yet, at the two bookends of the academic spectrum, children not yet in school and children who have graduated or exited school, there is much more to learn. As the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood begins measuring its progress on breaking the generational cycle of poverty, a deeper understanding of the specific needs of children from birth to kindergarten age as well as children’s postsecondary plans is most needed. Additionally, as parents and families are critical to student success, learning more about the specific needs parents in the BPN are facing will enable planners to focus resources and expand its understanding of children’s need.

Ideally, the BPN will be able to track individual students from birth through postsecondary college or career. Currently not all data are available at this level.

From birth to school entry: Identifying ways to connect with parents of very young children is essential to both enlist children in programming at a very young age and to gauge a more precise understanding of needs for BPN’s youngest generation. Partnering with medical facilities and agencies, block clubs and child care/early education programs may provide the key to reaching these families. Subsequent family surveys and other assessments will allow the BPN to better gauge the need of this emerging group of students.

Parents and families: Learning more about all families with children—tied to the individual student—will aid in designing programming that responds to the unique needs that families in the BPN face. Information collected should be geared towards understanding challenges or barriers parents have to keeping students

on track via the cradle-to-career continuum. Parental surveys and engagement will be an important method for assessing this need and should be implemented systematically as the program progresses. Additionally, this should also include information about teens in the neighborhood who become pregnant, which may involve communication with individual families and the schools.

Postsecondary experience: The BPN should track children who have exited school, either through graduation, relocation or dropping out. For children who graduate, collecting information on any continued education, either at the collegiate or vocational level, should occur through post-graduation tracking at their high schools, or by remaining in contact with their families. For children who exit high school prematurely, contact with the individual students and their families should determine if the students re-enroll in school, work towards a GED, become employed, enter military service or pursue another pathway.

Across the six cycles, the BPN has collected...

...individualized indicator data on ALL students for:

Academic proficiency
Age-appropriate functioning at pre-K and K
Attendance rate grades 6–9
Mobility rate
Graduation rate

Academic data are tracked by individual schools. BPN planners should continue to collaborate on data tracking to enable assessment of the academic impact of program interventions.

... individualized indicator data on MANY students for:

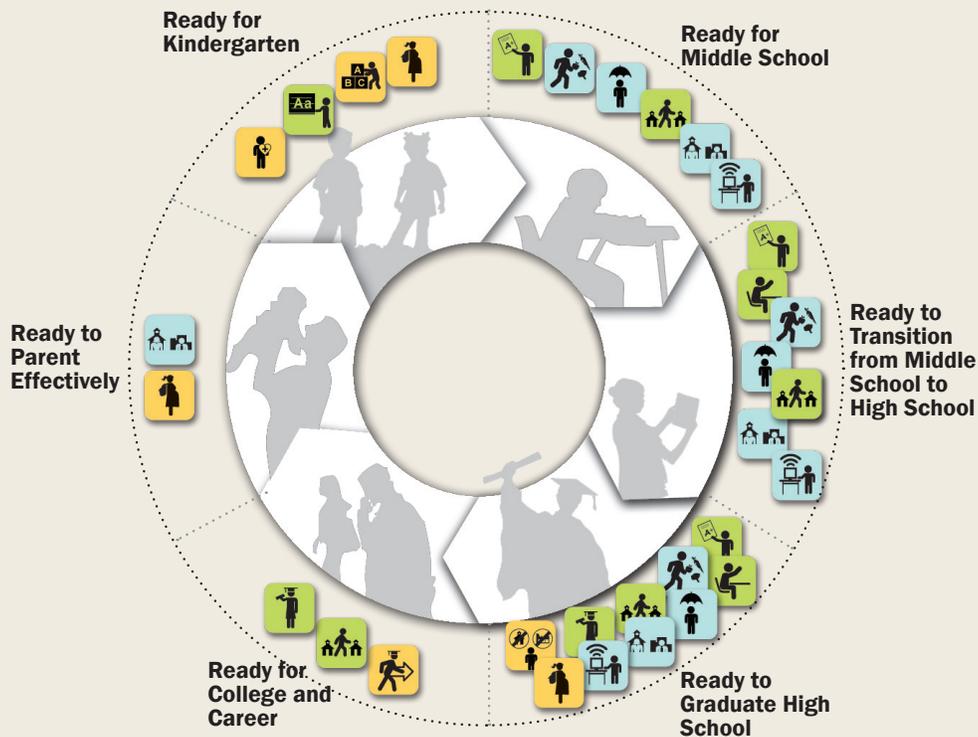
Daily physical activity and diet of fruits and vegetables
Safety at school and traveling to and from school
Caring adult at home and school
Access to the Internet at home and school

Data for these indicators were collected through a survey at the three BPN schools. Because the survey covered only a portion of the students, those attending school within the BPN, future surveys should expand to reach every BPN child. Additionally, to capture perspectives of students in younger grades, program planners should develop and administer survey instruments that are age-appropriate to students prior to middle school.

... Aggregated, non-individualized indicator data for:

Medical home
Enrollment in early education programs
Teenage pregnancy
Youth neither in school nor employed
Students enrolled in college or postsecondary programming who do not need remedial assistance*

Collecting data not currently available at the student level for any BPN students will require the greatest lift for future data collection and student tracking. Indicators that fall into this category primarily relate to children who have yet to formally enroll in school (from birth to school entry), children who have exited school either through graduation or dropping out, or information that may relate to their family and parental situation at home.



*Current indicator of college readiness, while available at the individual student level, does not capture actual postsecondary outcomes of students.

Appendix 1: Data Sources & Notes

1.1: Data Sources

Student-Level Data

Administrators from the Buffalo Public Schools (BPS) and Westminster Community Charter School provided detailed records of each student who either attends one of the three schools or lives in the neighborhood and attends a Buffalo Public School. To protect the identity of students, each student record omitted names or addresses, but included a randomized student identification number created specifically for this report and future tracking of Buffalo Promise Neighborhood students. Data provided were from the current year (2010-11 academic year) as of February 2011, unless otherwise noted.

School-Level Data

Data specific to schools are based on published District and School Report Cards of the New York State Education Department for the 2009-10 academic school year. School quality for the Buffalo Public Schools is from the *New York Times*, an analysis conducted as part of their New York School Test Scores program (projects.nytimes.com/new-york-schools-testscores)

Student Survey Data:

715 students in grades 5 through 12 at Highgate Heights School, Westminster Community Charter and Bennett High School completed a one-page, 28-question survey providing data for the development of four of the 14 promise indicators. The survey was prepared by representatives of Catholic Charities' Closing the Gap program, with input from the Buffalo Promise Neighborhood project team. Each survey was assigned a code to protect anonymity and permit matches to student-level data. Surveys were administered by the respective schools to all students present on Friday, April 15, 2011. Because this school day was the last before students' Easter break, student attendance may have been lower than normal, and the percentage of students in grades 5-12 completing the survey ranged from 77 percent at Westminster to 40 percent at Bennett. Survey data were coded and analyzed by the project team.

American Community Survey (ACS) Data

Most neighborhood data come from the American Community Survey 2005-09 5-year estimates. When available, neighborhood data are an aggregation of the 12 block groups that most closely match the geography of the BPN. Variables not available at the block group level reflect an aggregation of census tracts 47 and 43, the census tracts that most closely align with the boundaries of the BPN.

Other Data

Data not available from student records, surveys or the American Community Survey come from other public and private sources.

1.2 Promise Neighborhood Indicators Data Notes

Medical Home: An estimate of the number of children ages 0-5 with a medical home was created by combining data from the American Community Survey, 2005-09 estimates and the Community Health Center of Buffalo. Children under age 6 are estimated to have a medical home providing continuous access to primary care if they are from a higher-income household (at 200 percent of the poverty level or higher) OR are a patient of the Community Health Center of Buffalo, the only medical center in the area providing access to primary care for lower-income residents based on a sliding fee scale. The total "universe" of children under the age of 6, as well as the number who are from households on either side of 200 percent of the poverty level is provided by the ACS; the number of children ages 0-5 who have a medical home at the Community Health Center of Buffalo is from the center's patient roster.

This analysis reflects affirmations provided by representatives from the Community Health Center of Buffalo that their facilities are the only practical, near universal "go-to" option for primary care for uninsured and lower-income children in ZIP Code 14215. While some young impoverished children may access a medical home via a private-practice physician who accepts Medicaid and/or works on a sliding-scale basis, this

number is likely off-set by children at 200 percent+ of the poverty level who lack a medical home, but are assumed to have a medical home in this definition. **Source: ACS and Other Data**

Age-appropriate Functioning at Pre-K and K:

Indicator result is based on screenings performed for current kindergarten and pre-K students at the beginning of the 2010-11 school year. Screening mechanisms vary by school and grade level and are as follows: DIBELS test for kindergarten students enrolled in a Buffalo Public School; Running Record screening for kindergarten students at Westminster; and CIRCLES for pre-K students. Any student who has been assessed at 'Benchmark' on DIBELS, 'Above Average' on Running Records or 'Satisfactory' on CIRCLES is deemed to be age-appropriate functioning. **Source: School-Level Data**

The segmentation along the cradle-to-career continuum uses additional information as follows:

High age-appropriate functioning: in kindergarten and scored 'Benchmark' on DIBELS or 'Above Average' on Running Record

Some age-appropriate functioning: in kindergarten and scored 'Emerging' on DIBELS or 'Average' on Running Record

Low age-appropriate functioning: in kindergarten and scored 'Intensive' on DIBELS or 'Below Average' on Running Record

Enrollment in Early Education Program:

Because data on current enrollment in early learning programs are not available through any centralized source, the analysis uses 5-year estimates for Census Tracts 47 & 43 to calculate this figure. Specifically, this refers to the number and percent of children ages 3 and 4 who are enrolled in public or private schooling. **Source: ACS Data and Student-Level Data**

The segmentation along the cradle-to-career continuum uses additional information as follows:

Data from school administrators indicating if current kindergarten students had attended an early learning program prior to enrolling in kindergarten.

Academic Proficiency: This measure relies on results of spring 2010 NYS standardized test scores in ELA and math for students in grades 4-9 and Regents examinations results as of spring 2010 for students in grades 10-12. For students in grades 4-9, Academic Proficiency means that students have scored either a 3 (proficient) or 4 (exceeding proficiency) on both their ELA and math tests. For students in high school, Academic Proficiency means students have scored 75 or above on the ELA Regents exam and 80 or above on the math Regents exam. **Source: Student-Level Data**

The segmentation along the cradle-to-career continuum uses the following definitions:

Below Academic Proficiency: in 4th-9th grade and scored below proficient on all standardized tests taken in 2010; in 10th grade and have not passed any Regents examinations; in 11th grade and have passed no more than one Regents exam; or in 12th grade and have passed no more than two Regents exams.

Some Academic Proficiency: in 4th-9th grade and scored at or above proficient on some, but not all standardized tests taken in 2010; in 10th grade and failed at least one Regents exam; in 11th grade and have failed at least two Regents exams but also have passed two or three exams; or in 12th grade and have passed three to five Regents examinations, while failing at least one.

High Academic Proficiency: in 4th-9th grade and scored at or above proficient on all standardized tests taken in 2010; in 10th grade and have taken at least two Regents examinations and passing them all; in 11th grade and have passed at least four Regents examinations; or in 12th grade and have passed six or more Regents exams, or passed five exams with a 100 percent pass rate.

Attendance Rate, Grades 6-9:

Attendance rate is calculated by measuring the total number of days students have been present in school over the total number of days that students have been enrolled in school as of February 2011. **Source: Student-Level Data**

The segmentation along the cradle-to-career continuum uses the following definitions:

Low attendance: any student who has missed, on average, three or more days of school per month (attendance rate of 85 percent or lower)

Moderate attendance: any student who has missed, on average, two days of school per month (attendance rate between 85.1 percent and 94.9 percent)

High attendance: any student who has missed, on average, one or fewer days of school per month (95 percent or higher attendance rate)

Graduation Rate: As defined by 34 CFR 200.19(b)(1), the graduation rate refers to the percent of students who entered ninth grade in 2006 (2006 cohort) and earned a Regents or local diploma by August 31, 2010. **Source: School-Level Data**

High School Graduates Ready for College:

This indicator uses the NYS Board of Regents definition of college readiness, that is, any student who has scored 80 or better on the math Regents exam and 75 or better on the ELA Regents exam. **Source: School-Level Data**

The segmentation along the cradle-to-career continuum uses the following definitions:

College Ready: any student who has scored 80 or better on the math Regents and 75 or better on the ELA Regents exam

Some College Readiness: any student who has scored 80 or better on the math Regents or 75 or better on the ELA Regents exam, but not both

Not College Ready: any student who has scored below 80 on the math Regents exam and below 75 on ELA Regents exam

Daily Physical Activity and Diet of Fruits and Vegetables:

This indicator is based on the response to two survey questions: (i) I eat 5 or servings of fruit and vegetables a day and (2) I participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity/exercise each day. Students responded from 1 to 5, with 1 representing "strongly disagree," 2 representing "agree," 3 representing "neutral," 4 representing "disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree." Students met the indicator threshold if they agreed or strongly agreed to both statements; they

were classified as not having met this threshold if they were neutral or disagreed or strongly disagreed to both questions.

Source: Student Survey Data

Safety at School and Traveling to and from School:

This indicator is based on the response to two survey statements: (i) I feel safe at school and (ii) I feel safe traveling to and from school. Students responded from 1 to 5, with 1 representing "strongly disagree," 2 representing "agree," 3 representing "neutral," 4 representing "disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree." Students met the indicator threshold if they agreed or strongly agreed to both questions; they were classified as not having met this threshold if they were neutral or disagreed or strongly disagreed to both questions. **Source: Student Survey Data**

Student Mobility Rate:

A school's mobility rate is calculated by dividing the total number of new student entries and withdrawals at a school from the first day of school through April 25, 2011 (the date the data were collected) by the number of students enrolled at the school on the first day of classes, September 8, 2010. **Source: Student-Level Data**

The segmentation along the cradle-to-career continuum uses the following definitions:

A student is defined as having changed schools if she/he had enrolled or transferred into her/his current school after September 8, 2010 (the first day of class for the 2010-11 school year)

Caring Adult at Home and School:

This indicator is based on the response to three survey statements: (i) My teachers listen to me when I need to talk to them, (ii) I have someone in my family who talks to me about how I am doing in school and (iii) I have someone in my family who assists me when I need help. Students responded from 1 to 5, with 1 representing "strongly disagree," 2 representing "agree," 3 representing "neutral," 4 representing "disagree" and 5 representing "strongly agree." Students met this indicator threshold if they agreed or strongly agreed to all statements; they were classified

as not having met this threshold if they responded neutral, disagreed or strongly disagreed to any responses. **Source: Student Survey Data**

Access to the Internet at Home and School: This indicator is based on the response to two survey statements: (i) I am able to use the internet on a computer at school, (ii) I am able to use the internet on a computer at home. Students responded from 1 to 5, with 1 representing “strongly disagree,” 2 representing “agree,” 3 representing “neutral,” 4 representing “disagree” and 5 representing “strongly agree.” Students met the indicator threshold if they agreed or strongly agreed to both questions; they were classified as not having met this threshold if they were neutral or disagreed or strongly disagreed to both questions. **Source: Student Survey Data**

Teenage Pregnancy: Teenage pregnancy rate for ZIP code 14215 and New York State is from the Vital Statistics Data for 2006-08 from the New York State Department of Health. **Source: Other Data Sources**

The segmentation along the cradle-to-career continuum uses additional information as follows:

Percent of births in 2010 to teen parents from ZIP code 14215 is an estimate provided by Every Person Influences Children (EPIC). Based on birth records held by EPIC, which includes approximately 70 percent of births in the City of Buffalo, 25 percent of births to mothers residing in ZIP code 14215 were to women under the age of 20. The United States benchmark comes from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, National Vital Statistics Report, Volume 59, Number 3. Data are preliminary and representative of 2009.

Youth Neither in School Nor Employed: An estimate of youth neither in school nor employed comes from ACS 5-year 2005-09 data for census tracts 47 and 43. Youth neither in school nor employed are any person between the ages of 16-19 who is neither enrolled in high school or college and is either unemployed or out of the labor market. **Source: ACS Data**

1.3. Cradle-to-Career Continuum Transitions Data Notes

Ready for Kindergarten: Kindergarten readiness reflects age-appropriate functioning screening performed for current kindergarten students at the beginning of the 2010-11 school year. For students enrolled in a Buffalo Public School, the DIBELS test was used; at Westminster, where DIBELS is not administered, Running Record screening data were used. Definitions of need are as follows: high need—any BPS student assessed at ‘Intensive’ or any Westminster student assessed at ‘Below Average’; moderate need—any BPS student assessed at ‘strategic’ or any Westminster student assessed at ‘Average’; low need—any BPS student assessed at ‘Benchmark’ or any Westminster student assessed at ‘Above Average.’ Data were not available for five students (3 percent of total) who are estimated to be equally distributed to the three levels of need.

Ready for Middle School: Middle School readiness reflects academic proficiency of 4th and 5th grade students according to results of NYS standardized tests taken in the spring of 2010 (when the students were in 3rd and 4th grade). 3rd Grade assessments include the Grade 3 ELA and Grade 3 math; 4th grade assessments include Grade 4 ELA, Grade 4 math and Grade 4 Science. Definitions of need are as follows: high need—any student who has scored below proficiency on all NYS standardized tests taken; moderate need—any student who has scored proficient or above on one or more standardized assessment, but also below proficient on at least one test; low need—any student who has scored proficient or above on all standardized tests taken. Data were unavailable or insufficient for 47 students (10 percent of total), who were omitted in calculations.

Ready to Transition from Middle School to High School: Readiness to transition from middle school to high school is measured based on academic proficiency according to results of standardized NYS assessments during the spring of 2010

and students’ current year attendance rate (through February 2011). Definitions of need are as follows: high need—any student who has scored below proficient on a NYS standardized test and missed on average three or more days of school per month OR any student scoring below proficient on all NYS standardized tests taken; moderate need—any student who has scored proficient or above on at least one standardized test, but below proficient on at least one as well OR any student who has missed on average two days of school per month; low need—any student who has scored proficient or above on all NYS standardized tests taken and missed one or fewer days of school per month. Data were not available for 85 students (9 percent of total) who are estimated to be equally distributed to the three levels of need.

Ready to Graduate High School in Four Years: Readiness to graduate high school reflects four established warning signals that suggest a high school student is in danger of dropping out: grade retention (held back a grade while in high school); suspensions (suspended during 2010-11 school year); academic proficiency based on course failure (failing multiple Regents examinations); and low attendance rate (missing three or more days of school per month). Each high school student was assessed based on each of these warning signals. Definitions of need are as follows: high need—any student who meets one of the above warning signals (held back a grade, failing multiple Regents examinations, has been suspended, or has missed 3+ days of school per month); moderate need—any student who has missed on average two days of school per month or has failed at least one Regents examination, but is passing enough Regents examinations to stay on pace to graduate in four years); low need—any student who exhibits none of the four warning signals of dropping out of high school.

Ready for College and Career: According to the NYS Board of Regents, a high school graduate from New York State is determined to be college and career ready if she/he has scored 80 or better on the math Regents exam and 75 or better on the ELA Regents exam. Definitions of need reflect this criterion: high need—any student who has scored below 80 on the math Regents

exam and below 75 on the ELA Regents exam; moderate need—any student who has scored 80 or above on the math Regents or 75 or above on the ELA Regents, but did not meet this minimum requirement on both; low need—any student who has scored 80 or above on the math Regents exam and 75 or above on the ELA Regents exam.

1.4. Other Concepts Data Notes

Children Living in Poverty: ‘Children living in poverty’ is the total number of children who live in families whose income is below the national poverty line, divided by the total number of children who live in the neighborhood. Data are an aggregation of census tracts 47 and 43. **Source: ACS Data**

Crime Data: Crime data reflect 2010 reported crimes that occurred within the boundaries of the neighborhood. Data for District E, which includes the neighborhood, come from the Erie County Central Police Services. Crimes reported in District E were geocoded using Geographic Information Systems to determine crimes reported within the neighborhood boundaries. **Source: Other Data**

Family Income: Students eligible for a free or reduced-price lunch are categorized as coming from a low-income family and assumed to be at 185 percent of the poverty rate or lower (as defined by federal eligibility requirements). Students not eligible for free or reduced-price lunch are categorized as moderate- to high-income. **Source: Student-Level Data**

Historical Racial Composition: Historical racial data rely on historical census data and ACS 2005-09 5-year estimates. Figures are an aggregation of census tracts 47 and 43. **Source: ACS Data**

Housing Vacancy data: Data on housing vacancy is from the United States Postal Service’s undeliverable address data. Figures are an aggregation of census tracts 47 and 43. **Source: Other Data**

Historical Housing Occupancy: Rate of owner-occupancy for residential housing units comes from historical census data and ACS 2005-09 5-year estimates. Figures are an aggregation of census tracts 47 and 43. **Source: ACS Data**

Poverty Rate of Families with Children: Families with children describes any family household that includes at least one related person under the age of 18. The poverty rate of these families is defined as the total number of families with children whose income is below the poverty line, divided by all families with children. This figure is based on the aggregation of the 12 block groups that most closely match the boundaries of the neighborhood. **Source: ACS Data**

School Quality: Based on spring 2010 assessment data, schools were assessed based on how they compare to Buffalo Public Schools as a whole. For elementary and middle schools, performance index scores from the *New York Times* analysis conducted as part of their New York School Test Scores program (projects.nytimes.com/new-york-schools-testscores) are used. Any school where the index score is notably higher than the BPS average is considered ‘Above Average’; any school with a performance index score within a few points of the district-wide average are considered average; any school with a performance index notably lower than the district-wide average is defined as ‘Below Average.’ For high schools, the published 2005 cohort graduation rate was used. **Source: School-Level Data**

Single-Parent Families: A single-parent family is defined as any household where children under the age of 18 are present and the householder is either a male householder with no wife present, or a female householder with no husband present. This figure is based on the aggregation of the 12 block groups that most closely match the boundaries of the neighborhood. **Source: ACS Data**

Appendix 2: Works Cited

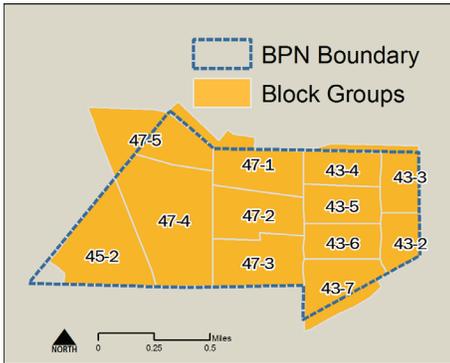
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Appendix 3: Geographic Units of Analysis

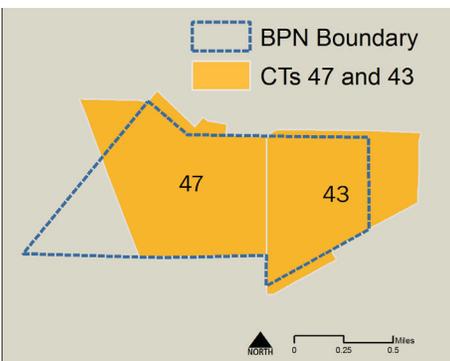
Block Groups:

To formulate representations of demographic characteristics of the neighborhood, the analysis uses American Community Survey data at the block group level whenever available. The portion of block group 5 from census tract 47 that extends well past Main Street in the northwestern corner of the neighborhood was deducted from estimates based on the number of the block group's housing units that are outside neighborhood boundaries. Variables measured at the block group level include population, families and families in poverty.



Census Tracts:

When data could not be retrieved at the block group level, the analysis used census tracts 47 and 43 as the geographic basis for data. These two census tracts constitute the closest representation of the neighborhood at the census tract level. Variables measured at the census tract level include children in poverty, historical racial composition change, early education enrollment and youth neither in school nor employed.

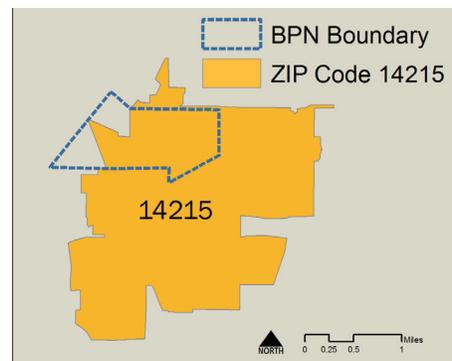


Appendix 4: School Distribution of Students

Over 2,000 students live in the BPN, but attend a school other than Bennett High School, Westminster Community Charter School or Highgate Heights School.

ZIP Code 14215:

The analysis uses ZIP Code 14215 when data are limited to that level. 14215 constitutes almost all of the neighborhood as well as neighborhoods to the south and east. Census variables are combined with ZIP Code variables using the United States Postal Service ZIP Code to block group crosswalk to calculate figures. Variables measured at the zip code level include - medical home and teenage pregnancy.



Distribution of BPN Students not attending a BPN school	# of Students at School
Dr. Lydia T. Wright School	88
Bennett Park Montessori School	61
MLK-Multicultural Inst.	61
Buffalo Academy for Arts	59
Stanley M. Makowski E.C.C.	53
Hutchinson Central Technical	48
Burgard High School	47
McKinley High School	45
East High School	41
Early Childhood Center #082	40
Early Childhood Center #061	40
B.U.I.L.D. Academy	39
City Honors School at FMP	36
North Park Middle Academy	34
Dr.C.R. Drew Science Magnet Museum	34
Campus West	33
Hamlin Park School	31
Dr G. Blackman Sch Of Exc #054	30
Futures Academy	27
Waterfront Elementary	26
Early Childhood Center #017	25
Dr.C.R.Drew Sci Magnet ECC 090	24
Frederick Law Olmsted Sch #056	23
Buffalo Public School #081	23
Harriet Ross Tubman School #31	20
Math Science Technology Prep	19
Riverside Inst. of Technology	19
Pfc. W. J. Grabiarz Sch Of Exc	17
Emerson School of Hospitality	17
International School	16
Southside Elementary	15
Frederick Law Olmsted Nor #064	15
Community School #53	14
Leonardo da Vinci High School	13
Middle Early College H.S.	13
Buffalo Ele Sch of Technology	13
Houghton Academy	12
Lafayette High School	12
South Park High School	11
Harvey Austin School	11
International Prep at Grover	10
West Hertel Academy	10
Lovejoy Discovery School #43	8
Hillery Park Elementary 27	6
Occupational Training Center	5
Frank A Sedita Academy	4
Lorraine Elementary	4
D'Youville Porter Campus	3
Dr. Antonia Pantoja Sch Ac Exc	3
Native American Magnet School	3
WNY Day Treatment	2
Herman Badillo Bilingual Academy	2
Roosevelt ECC #065	2
ECHC For Children #084	1

The background of the page features a series of silhouettes on a light yellow, rounded hill. At the top left, two figures are walking. In the center, a large figure is holding a smaller figure. At the bottom left, a figure stands holding a large sheet. At the bottom center, two children are standing. In the bottom left corner, there is a small silhouette of a building with a steeple and a tree.

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