Dear Buffalo Public Schools Community,

Our schools are facing tremendous challenges during the Omicron surge. Due to a large number of daily vacancies across the district related to positive COVID cases and quarantines, continuity of instruction and safe supervision of students is being impacted. When coverage of administrators, teachers, teacher aides/assistants, clerks, custodians, nurses and security staff fall short, the respective workloads are affected.

**TRANSPORTATION**

The Omicron variant of Covid-19 has had a negative impact on our driver shortage situation. There are currently 54 bus drivers absent either due to testing positive for Covid-19 or awaiting test results. The Transportation Department anticipates that staffing levels will return to pre winter break levels once Omicron begins to subside. The implementation of our innovative Early Release days strategy has helped to mitigate this compounded shortage. Afternoon buses are regularly clearing before 7:00 PM. Families should contact their yellow bus terminal to track pick-up and drop-off times for their children if they have a specific concern.

**BUS DRIVER HIRING**

The U.S. Transportation Department’s Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration recently announced that it is allowing states to waive the portion of the commercial driver’s license process that asks applicants to identify “under the hood” engine parts. Governor Kathy Hochul announced a plan yesterday to help address the critical shortage of truck and bus drivers in New York State. Her plan involves significantly expanding the availability of road tests for CDL applicants.

First Student has 12 candidates in behind the wheel training. Two new drivers passed their road tests and were hired last week. The Transportation Department will continue to assess and adjust route schedules for all BPS, Charter, Non-Public and Agency schools with the goal of increasing route efficiency and improving on-time pick-up and delivery of students.

**Bus Aides:**

Human Resources, in collaboration with the Adult Learning Center and Transportation Department held open interviews for the title of Bus Aide on 12/9, 12/14 and 12/16.

Candidates were interviewed, completed Civil Service Paperwork and HR onboard paperwork to close the gap between interviews and start date. There have been 11
candidates hired since 12/1/2022; 45 candidates are civil service approved and awaiting fingerprint approval.

**FOOD SERVICES**

The Child Nutrition Department works directly in collaboration with the City of Buffalo Civil Service office to recruit and submit paperwork for new candidates.

- 79 New Hires since 8/1/2021

There are no interview dates scheduled with Civil Service for January. Request has been made for February.

COVID absenteeism is ongoing within the Food Service Department. Average daily breakfast served in December was 17500. Average daily lunch served in December was 25900.

**COMPUTER DEVICES**

**Device Distribution**

As of January 13, 2022, end of day, 30,030 devices have been distributed to students. Based on current enrollment, we are at a 98% distribution rate. The remaining 2% of students represent a group of students using personal devices, as well as students who are currently transitioning in or out of the district.

![Number of Devices Distributed](image-url)
**Internet Access**

BPS is currently providing Spectrum Home Internet services to over 2100 households. In addition, any student who does not have Internet services is eligible to receive a wi-fi hotspot for use at home. An additional 1700+ households have been provided with hotspots to date, with an average of 50 families continuing to request hotspots each week. We encourage all families who need hotspot devices to come to the Center of Innovation, Technology & Training (1515 South Park Avenue) to pick one up.

**New Devices**

The district has completed receipt of the 14,000 new laptops and 5,000 new iPads ordered for students this year. We are now turning our focus to staff equipment with the receipt of 1000 new laptops ordered this fall. Instructional staff upgrades have been ongoing, and planning is now in progress to provide much needed upgrades to our 435 clerical staff members.

**HUMAN RESOURCES STAFFING UPDATE**

**Districtwide Teacher Vacancies** – 99% of districtwide vacancies are staffed (45 vacancies)

**Teacher Paid Leaves of Absence Vacancies** – 58% of paid leaves are staffed (47 vacancies)

**Staffing Summaries** –

Teachers: 224 New Hires from traditional recruitment  
12 New Hires from UB Residency  
24 New Hires from Open Contracts  
**260 New Hire Teachers as of 1/13/2022**

Substitutes: 83 New Hire Substitutes, paperwork completed & entered into MUNIS  
18 New Hire Substitutes, paperwork processing  
**101 New Hire Substitutes as of 1/13/22**  
4 New Hire Substitute Admins as of 1/13/22

*** Substitute Hiring Event Scheduled for March 2022 (contingent on COVID-19 cases dropping)

*****Bus Aide, Teacher Aide and Security, In-Person Hiring Events have been placed on PAUSE until COVID-19 cases in Erie County drop
Teacher Aides/ Assistants:

Teacher Aide 137 New Teacher Aides have been hired (YTD)
*3 aides accepted assignment at McKinley to start in Jan 2022, awaiting 2 responses of acceptance

School Security Officers:

8 New Security Offers (5 provisional, 3 temporary) hired and assigned to school buildings since December
1 Temp Security Officer starting on 1/31/2022
9 Pending approval with civil service
8 Security Officers are out on Workers Compensation
1 Security Officer on Administrative Leave

*physicals are required for all Security Officer positions and set up by City of Buffalo Civil Service with ECMC.

Central Office Vacancies:

- Administrative Secretary for Plant - interviews done 1-12-22
- Administrative Secretary for HR - interviews to be scheduled 1-20-22
- Administrative Secretary for Athletics - posting closes on 1-21-22
- Audit/Finance:
  - Associate Account Clerk posted 1-5-22, closes 1-21-22
  - Assistant Auditor posted 1-12-22, closes 1-26-22
  - Senior Account Clerk Typist posted 1-12-22, closes 1-26-22
- Senior Personnel Clerk for HR posted 1-5-22, closes 1-21-22

Service Center Vacancies:

- Glazier re-posted on 1-5-22, closes on 1-21-22. Previous candidate did not live in the city of Buffalo
- Grounds Department - Temporary Grounds Worker re-posted 1-12-22, closes on 1-26-22. No qualified candidates from previous posting
- Interviews for Plumber scheduled for 1-13-22

Staffing Challenges

a. Currently over 150 current teachers are teaching an additional period to cover credit bearing courses such as Science, Foreign Language, Math, ELA, CTE, SS). Human Resources with CAI strategically provides
a 6th period opportunity to teachers to cover for vacancies. Please see chart below for usage.

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<th>Extra Period Assignment Annual Totals by Month - 2021-22</th>
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<tr>
<td>Extra Period Assignments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students Affected</td>
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<td>Basic Savings ($ thousands)</td>
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![Graph of Extra Period Totals 2021-22](image)

**Administrative Vacancies:**

b. Assistant Principal – Emerson PS#302 – Round II – 1/5/22  
c. Assistant Principal – BUILD PS#92 – Round II – 1/10/22  
d. Director CLRI – Round II – 1/19/22  
e. Supervisor CLRI – Currently posted - Round I – TBD  
f. Supervisor of Student Placement – Round II – 1/20/22  
g. Supervisor of Adult Education – Round I – 1/27/22  
h. Director of Libraries - Round I – 1/24/22  
i. Supervisor Early Warning Indicator – Round I – 1/24/22  
j. Principal – Herman Badillo PS#76 – Round I – 1/18/22
k. Assistant Principal – MST 5-8 PS#196 – Round I – 1/25/22
l. Director of Multilingual/Bilingual – Round I – 1/18/22
m. Instructional Specialist III – Human Resources – Round II – 1/21/22
n. Supervisor of Multilingual/Bilingual – Round I - TBD
o. Principal - Harriet Tubman PS#31 – Round I TBD
p. Assistant Principal – Bennett Park Montessori #32 – Round I - TBD

**Staff Vaccination**

Of the roughly 4000 staff members that have used the vaccination tracker, 3700+ have the vaccine, 240+ do not; a 94% vaccinated rate.

**STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Immunization Report:** The 2021-2022 school year began with 4,048 students who were non-compliant with up-to-date immunizations.
- As of Friday, 1/14/21 the number decreased to 455

**BPS COVID-19 Data Between 9/10/21- 1/12/21: Total- 4,938**
- COVID cases ending week 1/5/21: 2177 (Staff: 721; Students: 1456)
- COVID cases ending week 1/14: 2761 (Staff: 859 Students: 1902)

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

- Number of Vaccination Clinics: **11**
- Number of BPS students vaccinated (Includes 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and booster): 3,638
There is a BPS vaccination clinic being held at School 45 today from 3:30-7pm. 1000 of Home Rapid Test kits will be available for distribution at the clinic.

**Additional Medical Updates and Mitigation Strategies**

- COVID-19 cases increased 43% from the previous week.
- 20-39-year-olds continue to contribute substantially to case volume, accounting for 41.3% of all cases reported last week.
- 19,243 COVID-19 cases were reported for the week ending January 8, 2022, up from 13,460 COVID-19 cases for the week ending January 1.
- Weekly reported cases have nearly quadrupled from the week ending Dec. 25, 2021, which had 5,108 COVID-19 cases.
- The 7-day case rate per 100,000 persons was 2,017, up from 1,411 the previous week.
- Erie County remains in "high" COVID-19 transmission per CDC indicators.
- While reported COVID-19 hospitalizations are at a record high:
  - It is thought that a third to a half of hospitalized patients are “incidental” COVID-19. That means they showed up for some other reason and were found to test positive for COVID-19 with mild or no symptoms. The number of patients in the adult ICUs with COVID-19 has remained level.
  - The adult hospitals are running close to capacity.
  - Oishei Children’s Hospital is 30% below capacity and well below typical January norms.
- COVID-19 cases among city of Buffalo residents comprised ~39% of cases last week; the city of Buffalo population is about ~29% of Erie County residents.
- The ZIP codes 14203, 14202, 14215, and 14211 had the highest 7-day case rates in the City of Buffalo last week and had 4 of the 5 highest 7-day case rates for all of Erie County.
- 77,600 COVID-19 tests were reported last week, which is the highest reported total for Erie County ever.
- The weekly positivity rate for last week was 24.8%, representing about one out of four people with reported test results.
- ECDOH data does not include at-home COVID-19 test results.
- Positivity percentages increased in nearly every age group, with 14-17-year-olds and 18-22-year-olds having the highest percentages, with about 30% each.
- Case totals for persons under age 18 years increased about 48% compared to the previous week, with 3,114 COVID-19 cases.
**Testing Update:**

The district continues to implement a multi-layered COVID-19 testing strategy in schools which includes:

- **Surveillance Testing** - 30% randomized PCR testing each week of all staff and students who are consented to participate. Currently the number of consented individuals exceeds 1,100 and continues to increase.

- **Diagnostic Testing** - Every nurse’s office in each of our schools received rapid antigen test kits, donated by the ECDOH to provide onsite testing for students and staff who become ill with COVID-19 symptoms at school.

- **At Home Testing** - The NYS Governor’s office sent a total of 46,000 testing kits to the district for students to take home to be tested, to help screen and identify students who may be presenting as Asymptomatic, allowing them to quarantine and isolate (if needed) and to mitigate the spread of the virus. Additional test kits are expected from NYS and will continue to be disseminated upon receipt.

- **Test To Stay Testing** - BPS has signed up for the program in order to receive all of the promised test kits from the federal, state, and local levels; however, before the program can be implemented with fidelity for a large urban school district, the wellness of a full or nearly full complement of healthy staff who are able to report to work daily to support the intensive implementation will be needed. In addition, there will be a need to continuously receive a high volume of test kits to maintain support of the program.
Tracking Coronavirus in
Erie County, N.Y.

Updated Jan. 14, 2022

Cases have increased recently and are extremely high. The numbers of hospitalized Covid patients and deaths in the Erie County area have also risen. The test positivity rate in Erie County is very high, suggesting that cases are being significantly undercounted.

New reported cases by day
DAILY AVM. ON JAN. 13 2,512  14-DAY CHANGE +132%

Dr. Kriener Cash
Superintendent