

THE SUNY CHARTER SCHOOLS INSTITUTE

*RENEWAL RECOMMENDATION REPORT
BUFFALO UNITED CHARTER SCHOOL*

*REPORT DATE: FEBRUARY 24, 2026
VISIT DATE: OCTOBER 1 – 2, 2025*



Charter Schools Institute
The State University of New York

CONTENTS

- 1** SCHOOL BACKGROUND
- 2** EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
- 5** ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE DATA
- 7** FISCAL ANALYSIS
- 8** COMPLIANCE REPORTING
- 9** COMMUNITY SATISFACTION AND RETENTION

SCHOOL BACKGROUND

BUFFALO UNITED CHARTER SCHOOL

325 Manhattan Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14214 | Grades: K-8 | Buffalo City School District



MISSION

Buffalo United Charter School will offer families and students a public charter school, which focuses on high academic achievement and instills a sense of family, community, and leadership within all of our students.

BUFFALO UNITED CHARTER SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES¹

CHAIR

Robert Lowery

VICE CHAIR

Ashia Martin

TREASURER

Mark Weppner

SECRETARY

Kathy Wood

TRUSTEES

Lee Thomas

CURRENT CHARTER INFORMATION

Year Opened: 2003

Serves: Kindergarten – 8th

Chartered Enrollment:
681

Charter Expires on:
July 31, 2026

FUTURE CHARTER INFORMATION

Serves: Kindergarten – 8th

Chartered Enrollment:
646

Charter Expiration
July 31, 2031

KEY DESIGN ELEMENTS

Academic excellence



Strong parent partnerships



Accountability



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

"+" : This indicator is generally present.

"-" : This indicator is generally not present.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FULL-TERM RENEWAL

The Charter Schools Institute (the “Institute”) recommends the SUNY Trustees’ Charter Schools Committee approve the Application for Charter Renewal of Buffalo United Charter School (“Buffalo United”) for a period of five years with authority to provide instruction to students in Kindergarten through 8th grade in such configuration as set forth in its Application for Charter Renewal, with a projected total enrollment of 646 students. The Institute makes this recommendation as Buffalo United meets the requirements for renewal set forth in the Policies for Renewal of Not-For-Profit Charter School Education Corporations and Charter Schools Authorized by the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (the “SUNY Renewal Policies”).²

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Buffalo United demonstrated consistent progress toward meeting its Accountability Plan goals in the final years of the charter term after experiencing considerable teacher, leader, and board turnover since its last renewal. The school’s newly established leadership team recommitted to Buffalo United’s key design elements, emphasizing consistent academic programming, strong community engagement, and defined accountability structures to improve school culture. Buffalo United contracts with National Heritage Academies (“NHA”), a Michigan for-profit corporation that serves as an educational management organization for over 100 charter schools across nine states, to provide academic resources and back office support. At the time of the renewal visit, the Institute observed clear systems to support the delivery of the academic program and increased board capacity to hold NHA accountable for responsive, high quality services tailored to the needs of the Buffalo United community.

The school stabilized staff and student culture over the charter term to set a strong foundation for leaders’ strategy to improve instruction across the program. From the 2021-22 to the 2024-25 school year, teacher attrition rates decreased by 48 percentage points, and staff members expressed high levels of satisfaction with the support and development provided by school leaders and NHA. Similarly, the school has decreased student behavior infractions and suspension numbers in recent years, as consistent parent communication and clear schoolwide expectations have led to calm, focused learning environments across the program. Finally, Buffalo United reversed declining enrollment trends with an extensive family outreach initiative and shift to an in-house enrollment platform away from the centralized Buffalo charter application system. The school has established a consistent organizational culture over the charter term, and while leaders are still not satisfied with overall student performance, Buffalo United has produced steady academic gains. If renewed, the school demonstrates the capacity to maintain an upward trajectory in a future charter term.

FINDINGS & INFORMATION

Is the school an academic success?

Buffalo United increased its English language arts (“ELA”) and mathematics performance over the charter term to meet or come close to meeting its Accountability Plan goals. The SUNY Trustees placed conditions on Buffalo United at its last renewal and the school met its conditions as leaders and the board remained in consistent communication with the Institute regarding Buffalo United’s progress and renewal status. The school increased coaching and support for teachers in collaboration with the NHA curriculum and instruction team. Leaders set clear

2. SUNY Renewal Policies (p. 14) are available on the [Institute’s website](#).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

instructional priorities and conducted regular walkthroughs, or “calibrations,” to identify pedagogical strengths and weaknesses and assess teachers’ curricular implementation. In the final year of the Accountability Period, the school improved its performance in both subjects by substantial margins compared to the local district. Buffalo United must work to sustain the commendable growth and comparative performance it achieved in the final years of the term. The school demonstrates success in the following ways:

- Buffalo United outperformed the district in ELA in the majority of years of the charter term with data suitable for analysis. Notably in 2024-25, the school increased its proficiency rate for tested students enrolled in at least their second year by nine percentage points from the prior year and outperformed the district by eight percentage points.
- In mathematics, Buffalo United demonstrated substantial growth over the charter term. From 2021-22 to 2024-25, the school increased its proficiency rate for tested students enrolled in at least their second year by 18 percentage points. In alignment with this large increase in absolute proficiency, the school posted mean growth percentiles that surpassed the target of 50 in the final two years of the Accountability Period.
- The school’s English language learners (“ELLs”) demonstrated laudable growth in ELA during the term. From 2022-23 to 2024-25, Buffalo United’s ELL students increased their overall ELA proficiency rate from 0% to 36%. In alignment with this increase in absolute proficiency rates, the school posted an ELA mean growth percentile for ELLs 11 percentile points above the target of 50 in 2024-25.

Is the school an effective, viable organization?

Buffalo United is an effective, viable organization. Despite experiencing significant turnover in the first half of the charter term, leaders stabilized the school and established a supportive culture for both students and staff members. Buffalo United reduced teacher attrition through retention bonuses and increased clarity for schoolwide behavioral and academic expectations. The board’s membership evolved over the charter term and current members demonstrate a clear understanding of their governing responsibilities. The board focused on evaluating the quality of the program using an external expert, holding NHA accountable for services and supports, and evolving programming to better meet the needs of students and families. Given the improvements to organizational and board capacity throughout the charter term, Buffalo United is well positioned to continue its trajectory of progress.

Is the school fiscally sound³?

Buffalo United is fiscally adequate based on the Institute’s review of the renewal documentation. For the entirety of the current charter term, Buffalo United’s contract with NHA has been a sweep contract that provides NHA all revenues received by the education corporation as NHA’s fee in exchange for paying all expenses related to implementing the educational program. The board retains at a minimum \$50,000 to spend at its discretion. The education corporation experienced fluctuations and a slight overall decline in enrollment throughout the current charter term. In response, the school requested to adjust its chartered enrollment targets to better align with current actual enrollment levels. The revised proposed chartered enrollment is more realistic and represents appropriate realignment to support reasonable budgeting. The 2024-25 annual financial audit did present a significant deficiency in the maintenance of student files which is a reoccurring deficiency from the previous year’s audit. The school acknowledges the need to urgently rectify the issue and the Institute will monitor the school’s progress to ensure compliance.

3. The U.S. Department of Education has established fiscal criteria for certain ratios or information with high – medium – low categories, represented in the table as blue – gray – orange. The categories generally correspond to levels of fiscal risk, but must be viewed in the context of each education corporation and the general type or category of school.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Buffalo United demonstrated an adequate financial performance during the current charter term. The education corporation has taken proactive steps to realign its operations with current enrollment and cash flow projections which can support the school's ability to operate sustainably over the next charter term. The school maintained net assets of \$0.3 million and 0.2 months of cash on hand as of the 2025-26 school year.

The future budget provided in the renewal application contains reasonable revenue and expense projections for the proposed charter term. Buffalo United maintains a separate bank account with appropriate dissolution funds as required by the charter agreement.

If the SUNY Trustees renew the school, are the education corporation's plans for the school reasonable, feasible, and achievable?

Buffalo United's plans for the future are reasonable, feasible, and achievable. The school's board and leadership team recognize the need to sustain improvements to the educational program and meet the school's Accountability Plan goals consistently in a future charter term. Additionally, the school's board is working to recruit additional members to ensure it comprises the statutorily required minimum number of trustees. The school does not plan for any changes to its one leased facility over the proposed charter term.



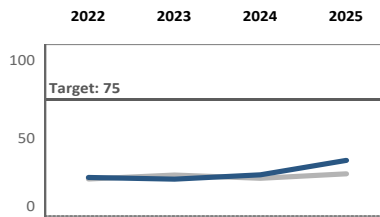
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

BUFFALO UNITED CHARTER SCHOOL

Buffalo City School District

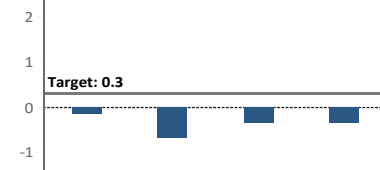
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

District Comparison. The percentage of tested students enrolled in at least their second year at **the school** performing at or above proficiency in ELA compared to the district.



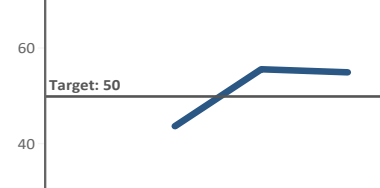
Test Year	Comp Grades	District %	School %
2022	3-8	24	25
2023	3-8	27	24
2024	3-8	25	27
2025	3-8	28	36

Effect Size. The chart shows school's **effect size** compared to its predicted level of performance in ELA according to a regression analysis controlling for economically disadvantaged students among all public schools in New York State.



Test Year	Test Grades	ED %	Effect Size
2022	3-8	95.5	-0.15
2023	3-8	94.6	-0.68
2024	3-8	94.2	-0.36
2025	3-8	96.2	-0.37

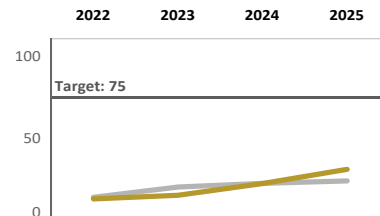
Comparative Growth Measure: Mean Growth Percentile. The school's **unadjusted mean growth percentile** for all students in grades 4-8 will be above target of 50 in ELA.



Test Year	School Mean Growth
2022	N/A
2023	43.8
2024	55.7
2025	55.1

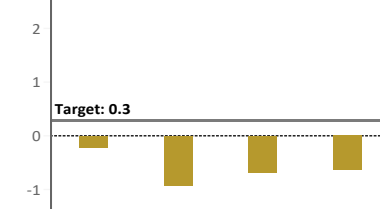
MATHEMATICS ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

District Comparison. The percentage of tested students enrolled in at least their second year at **the school** performing at or above proficiency in mathematics compared to the district.



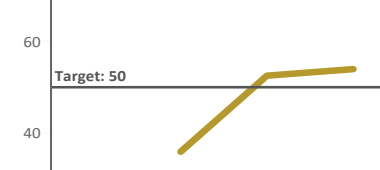
Test Year	Comp Grades	District %	School %
2022	3-8	15	14
2023	3-8	21	16
2024	3-8	24	24
2025	3-8	25	32

Effect Size. The chart shows school's **effect size** compared to its predicted level of performance in mathematics according to a regression analysis controlling for economically disadvantaged students among all public schools in New York State.



Test Year	Test Grades	ED %	Effect Size
2022	3-8	95.5	-0.23
2023	3-8	94.6	-0.91
2024	3-8	94.2	-0.67
2025	3-8	96.2	-0.62

Comparative Growth Measure: Mean Growth Percentile. The school's **unadjusted mean growth percentile** for all students in grades 4-8 will be above target of 50 in mathematics.



Test Year	School Mean Growth
2022	N/A
2023	36.1
2024	52.7
2025	54.1



ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

BUFFALO UNITED CHARTER SCHOOL

Buffalo City School District

SCIENCE ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN GOAL

Science: Comparative Measure. The percentage of tested students at **the school** in at least their second year performing at or above proficiency in science compared to the district.

Test Year	Comp Grades	District %	School %
2022	4, 8	38	29
2023	8	15	21
2024	5, 8	12	15
2025	5, 8	19	33

TESTED PERCENTAGES

	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
School Tested Number (N)	356	342	366	370	357	354	333	336
School Tested %	89.4	87.2	88.8	90.2	96.7	95.9	96.5	97.4
District Tested %	82.9	80.4	86.8	86.4	86.1	87.6	86.9	89.0

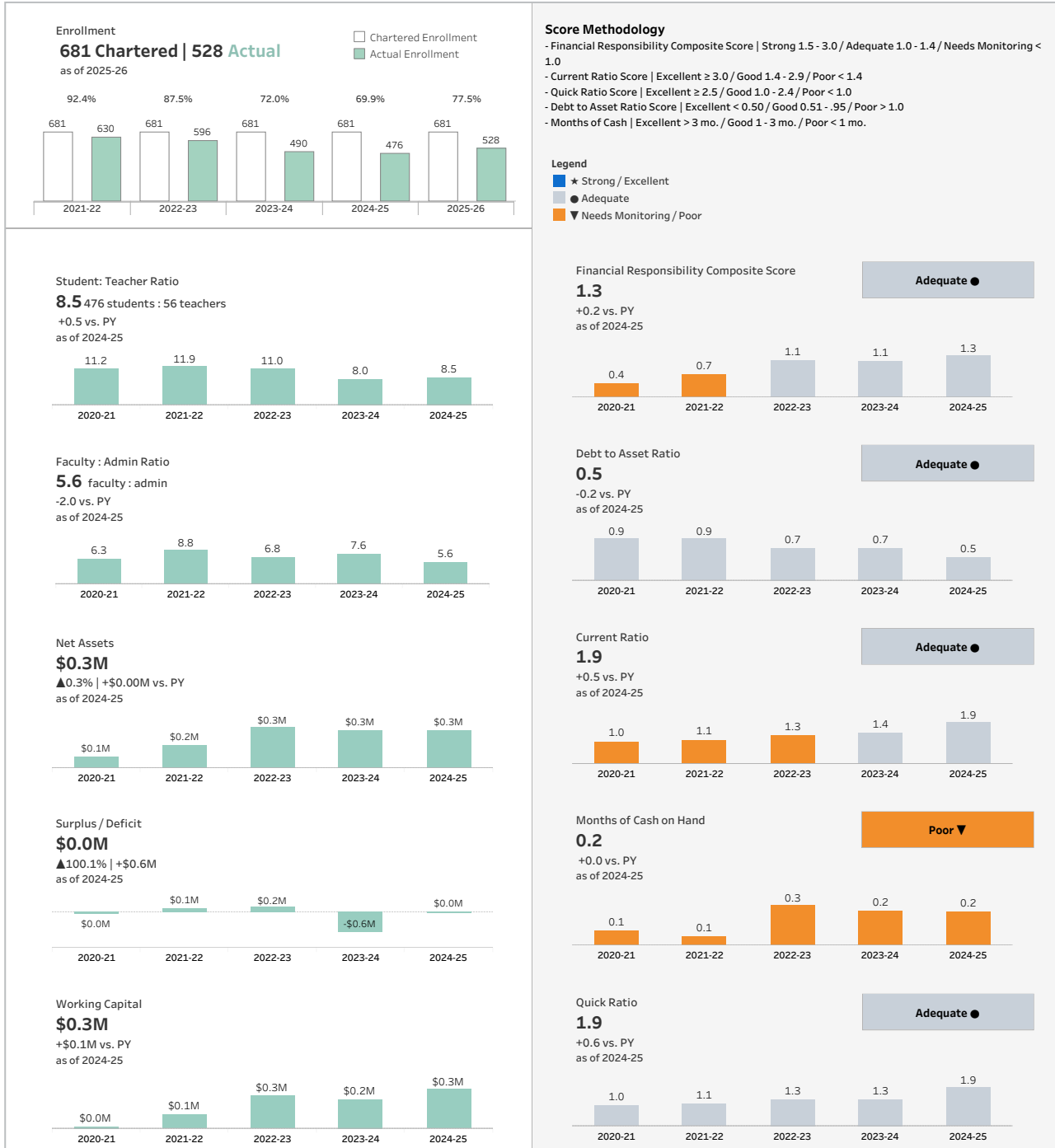
PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS*

	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
Students with Disabilities Tested on State Exam (N)	38	37	40	44	43	41	42	42
School % Proficient on Exam	5.3	0.0	5.0	0.0	9.3	9.8	9.5	7.1
District % Proficient	7.2	5.5	9.0	8.1	9.2	10.4	10.6	11.2

	2022	2023	2024	2025
Tested on NYSESLAT Exam (N)	24	24	19	43
School % Making Progress	25.0	37.5	21.1	39.5

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

BUFFALO UNITED CHARTER SCHOOL



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

COMPLIANCE REPORTING



HAS THE SCHOOL SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLIED WITH APPLICABLE LAWS, RULES AND REGULATIONS, AND PROVISIONS OF ITS CHARTER?

The education corporation substantially complies with applicable laws, rules and regulations, and provisions of its charter. During the current charter term, the education corporation demonstrates a clear record of compliance with the terms of its charter including the timely submission of required reporting to the Institute.

Teacher Certification

The Act allows charters to hire up to 15 uncertified lead teachers contingent upon those teachers meeting certain requirements including: two years of Teach for America experience; three years of teaching experience; status as a higher education professor; exceptional experience in a subject; or, teaching science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (“STEM”) or career and technical education courses.

Teachers at Buffalo United who are working toward certification are eligible for tuition reimbursement and receive guidance from an NHA credentialing consultant. Buffalo United also partners with Study.com and Passage Preparation to offer resources, study guides, and practice tests to support teachers in earning their certification. Additionally, teachers receive voucher codes to cover their first-time test fees. The school also partners with Canisius University to provide its teachers with support for certification.

At Buffalo United, five out of the 40 teachers are uncertified, which is within the allowable limit under the Act. All five uncertified teachers meet the additional qualifications under the Act.

COMMUNITY SATISFACTION & ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION

To report on parent satisfaction with the school’s program, the Institute used satisfaction survey data, information gathered from a focus group of parents representing a cross section of students, and data regarding persistence in enrollment.

Parent Survey Data

The Institute compiled data from the school’s final annual family survey. The school conducts two annual surveys to gauge family satisfaction. In 2024-25, 16% of families responded to the survey. Of those respondents, 82% indicated satisfaction with the school. The Institute recognizes that the low response rate may not be representative of the whole community.

Parent Focus Group

The Institute asks all schools facing renewal to convene a representative set of parents for a focus group discussion. A representative set includes parents of students in attendance at the school for multiple years, students new to the school, general education students, students with disabilities, and ELLs.

The six parents and caretakers in attendance at the focus group indicated high levels of satisfaction with Buffalo United. Families shared they feel well-informed about events at the school and their children’s academic performance due to effective communication from teachers and leaders. Representatives noted the school creates a welcoming environment for families. Families appreciate Buffalo United’s efforts to engage families through traditional events like trunk or treat, where the school community comes together for a fall festival in October. Overall, families expressed satisfaction with Buffalo United’s academic program and presence in the local community.

Public Comments

In accordance with the Act, the Institute notified the district in which the school is located regarding the school’s Application for Charter Renewal. A summary of any district and public comments appears below.

Buffalo Public Schools (“BPS”) held its required hearing regarding the renewal application for Buffalo United on September 16, 2025. The attendees included representatives from BPS, the BPS Board of Education, Buffalo United leadership and staff members, as well as community members. Buffalo United leadership presented on the school’s strong community, staff members, and parent partnerships, which include monthly meetings, events, and the “Most Valuable Parent” program that recognizes family involvement. Buffalo United highlighted its academic growth, stable re-enrollment, and positive school culture. Six school staff members and one former parent spoke in support of the renewal application, citing satisfaction with the school’s sense of community and vision of success. Two Buffalo United board members praised the school’s family atmosphere and school growth and supported the renewal application. A BPS Board of Education member expressed pleasure with Buffalo United over the years, while another commended the school’s increases in literacy and mathematics proficiency rates. In response to a BPS Board of Education member’s question about suspension rates, the school shared that suspensions have declined due to restorative practices, Positive Behavior Interventions

COMMUNITY SATISFACTION & ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION

and Supports (“PBIS”), and strong classroom management. The school indicated it will provide BPS with its suspension rates. BPS Board of Education members inquired about the school’s teacher diversity initiatives, and the school discussed its partnerships with Canisius University, SUNY University at Buffalo, and SUNY Buffalo State University to recruit diverse educators. BPS Board of Education members also asked about the number of students who return to BPS district schools and urged charters to retain and support all students. No one spoke in opposition to the renewal application.

Enrollment and Retention

Buffalo United makes good faith efforts to meet its enrollment and retention targets. The school meets its enrollment target for economically disadvantaged students but does not meet its enrollment targets for other subgroups. Although the school did not meet its retention targets for economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and ELLs, 2024-25 retention rates of these populations are commensurate with the school’s overall 2024-25 persistence rate. Leaders recognize the need to improve overall student persistence with a particular emphasis on economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and ELLs.

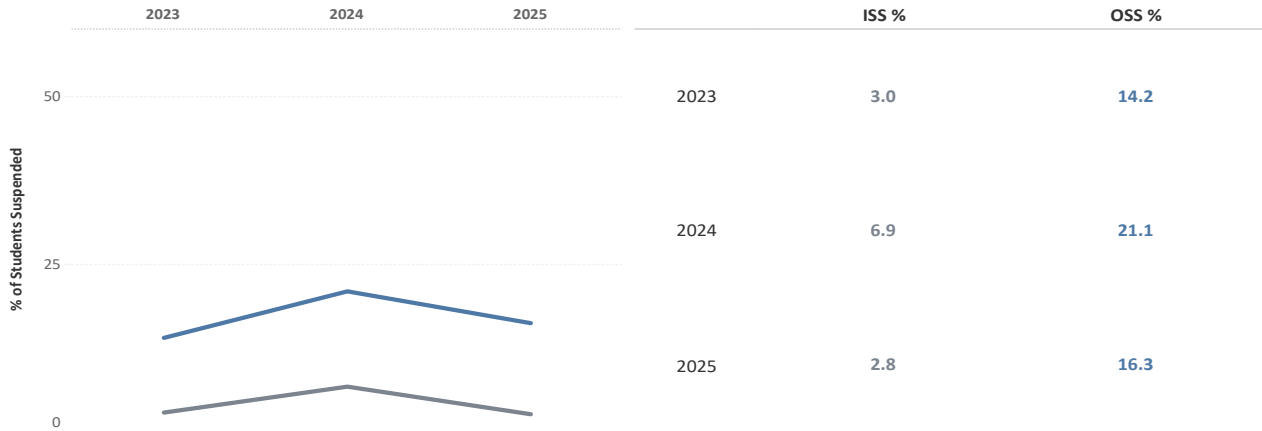
Persistence in Enrollment

An additional indicator of parent satisfaction is persistence in enrollment. In 2024-25, 71% of Buffalo United students returned from the previous year. Student persistence data from previous years of the charter term is available in the student demographics section of the report.

The Institute derived the statistical information on persistence in enrollment from its database. No comparative data from the NYCDOE or the New York State Education Department (“NYSED”) is available to the Institute to provide either district or statewide context.

COMMUNITY SATISFACTION & ENROLLMENT AND RETENTION

Buffalo United Charter School



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

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



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

Year	2023	2024	2025
Expulsions	1	0	4

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

		Target %	School %
Enrollment	Economically Disadvantaged	81.3	96.8
	English Language Learners	18.4	8.4
	Students with Disabilities	19.0	12.3
Retention	Economically Disadvantaged	93.3	70.8
	English Language Learners	95.6	76.0
	Students with Disabilities	94.0	69.6

Discipline data reported above reflect information reported by the education corporation and validated by the Institute. Enrollment and retention data reflect available BEDS day information as reported by the NYSED.



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