



Buffalo Commons Charter School

2022-23 ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

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2022-23 ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Daniel Brink-Washington, Executive Director, prepared this 2022-23 Accountability Progress Report on behalf of the school's board of trustees:

Trustee's Name	Board Position	
	Office (e.g. chair, treasurer, secretary)	Committees (e.g. finance, executive)
Trey Thompson	Chair, Interim Treasurer	Ex-officio All
Jesi Miller	Vice Chair	Development, Academic Excellence
Krystle Hinton	Secretary	Governance and Nominating
Danielle Bruno	Trustee	Academic Excellence
Kevin Southern	Trustee	Academic Excellence
Latricia Davis	Trustee	Academic Excellence
Mark Baetzhold	Trustee	Development
Sabrina Robazza	Trustee	Development, Finance
Royce Woods	Trustee	Finance

Daniel Brink-Washington has served as the Executive Director since 2021.

SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Buffalo Commons is an academically rigorous, creative, and collaborative K-8 learning community that uses research-based teaching practices and innovative programming to eliminate the opportunity gap and to prepare a diverse student body for successful lives that strengthen their communities.

Opening in 2022-23, Commons served 62 students in grades K-1. The student body is diverse like the city of Buffalo itself. In terms of Race/Ethnicity we serve a population that identifies as 59% Black, 23% White, 4% Hispanic, 7% Asian, and 7% Other. Socioeconomically, 76% of our students are economically disadvantaged. In 2022-23 approximately 15% of students were eligible for Special Education Services.

Our Key design elements are as follows.

Academic Excellence

BCCS believes that all students can excel academically and that gaps in achievement between subgroups can be eliminated through the synthesis of rigorous curriculum, effective instruction, and the use of data to adjust instruction to meet students' needs. By holding our entire community to high expectations, we improve students' self-concept and prepare them for successful futures.

Creative Problem-Solving

BCCS not only prepares students to be successful academically but also intentionally fosters skill development in critical thinking and creative problem-solving so that students can strengthen their community. Critical thinking and creative problem-solving are interwoven throughout our curricula, and we specifically offer science and social studies courses that bolster students' academic and 21st-century skills and their creative problem-solving skills through a blend of project-based learning and design-thinking methods. Driven by our core values, these courses regularly provide real-world, community-based, problem-solving experiences that link students with the shared goals of contributing to their community.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In Buffalo, a city with stark lines of residential segregation along lines of race and class, we will intentionally enroll a diverse body of students with a wide range of socioeconomic and home language backgrounds and varying ability levels, including those needing special education programs. A diverse student body provides ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives that enrich the lives of all students.

Students working together toward shared goals can increase achievement and leadership skills and reduce racial bias. To facilitate these shared goals and connect students at deeper levels of culture, we emphasize a value-driven school culture, an explicit social-emotional learning curriculum, and deliberate connections with families.

Talent Development

When students are paired year after year with strong teachers, the benefits are long-lasting and compounded. We will have faculty with varying experience who will require different levels of development to be most effective for our diverse group of students. We develop teachers through a variety of structures, for example, our Summer Institute, grade-level meetings, and individualized instructional coaching.

ENROLLMENT SUMMARY

School Enrollment by Grade Level and School Year														
School Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
2022-23	48	14												

GOAL 1: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

All Students at BCCS will be proficient in English Language Arts.

BACKGROUND

Launching Commons’ ELA Program

The 2022-23 academic year marked the launch of an ELA program aligned with what we described in our charter. We focused on implementing a proven curriculum with a diverse student body.

Curriculum

As described in our charter, we implemented the EL K-2 curriculum which consisted of “Reading Foundations” and the “EL Modules”. We emphasized aligning it with the latest educational standards and incorporating diverse perspectives. Teachers collaborated to create units integrating literature, writing, and critical thinking skills. A commitment to fostering a love for reading was evident in including contemporary and culturally relevant texts.

Instructional Strategies

The instructional approaches incorporated a variety of approaches including direct instruction, station teaching, project-based learning, and technology integration. Teachers differentiated lessons according to student readiness and used various modalities and resources to engage students, recognizing the importance of catering to diverse learning styles.

Professional Development

Recognizing the need for ongoing teacher development, Commons invested heavily in an instructional coaching program. Teachers worked with a coach weekly to improve their ELA subject knowledge (with an emphasis on phonics) and instructional proficiency.

Reflections and Planned Changes

There were no changes in staffing this year.

While overall the school year was a success in terms of ELA, in 2022-23 we observed an influx of students entering school with significant delays in academic readiness. The scope and sequence of the EL Reading Foundations curriculum was inadequate in meeting their needs. We convened a curriculum committee to study our options. As a result, we plan on the changes that include the following actions:

- Engaging in an Early Literacy Cohort funded by the Cullen Foundation
- Implementing a supplementary phonics curriculum called Really Great Reading
- Increasing the amount of professional development that teachers receive in ELA

METHOD

During the 2022-23 school year, Commons used the following methods for assessing student progress:

- STAR Early Literacy (administered 3-4 times per year)
- Curriculum-based assessments from EL

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

In 2022-23, Commons set an internal goal of achieving a Median Growth Percentile (MGP) of 55 on the STAR Early Literacy Assessment. Supported by the tireless efforts of our faculty and staff, and an emerging culture of excellence, our students achieved an MGP of 62 by the spring administration of the STAR Early Literacy assessment. This put us in the category of being an “effective” school according to NYS, and has us well positioned to reach progressively higher levels of achievement in the coming years.

The MOY results helped us implement some changes in the method of our lesson planning, student work protocols, and ways of re-teaching content.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE

The 2022-23 school year allowed us to set a solid baseline for future growth. We look forward to having year-to-year comparisons starting soon.

ACTION PLAN

As mentioned above, Commons will take the following curriculum-based actions:

- Engaging in an Early Literacy Cohort funded by the Cullen Foundation

- Implementing a supplementary phonics curriculum called Really Great Reading
- Increasing the amount of professional development that teachers receive in ELA

Additionally, in a broader strategic sense, Commons will engage in the following actions:

- Implementing the Thoughtful Classroom comprehensive teaching framework to codify and improve shared instructional practices
- Improved MTSS practices with the addition of a Child Study Team that identifies students for specific, need-based interventions and monitors their progress

GOAL 2: MATHEMATICS

All Students at BCCS will be proficient in Mathematics.

BACKGROUND

Launching Commons' Math Program

The 2022-23 academic year marked the launch of a Math program aligned to what we described in our charter. We focused on implementing a proven curriculum with a diverse student body.

Curriculum

As described in our charter, we implemented the Bridges in Mathematics curriculum which consisted of "Bridges" and "Number Corner". As with all our courses, we emphasized aligning it with the latest educational standards and incorporating diverse perspectives. Teachers collaborated to create units that were foundationally strong, allowed for numerous hands-on conceptual explorations, and fostered a love of mathematic thinking.

Instructional Strategies

The instructional approaches incorporated a variety of approaches including direct instruction, station teaching, project-based learning, and technology integration. Teachers differentiated lessons according to student readiness and used various modalities and resources to engage students, recognizing the importance of catering to diverse learning styles.

Professional Development

Recognizing the need for ongoing teacher development, Commons invested heavily in an instructional coaching program. Teachers worked with a coach weekly to improve their Math subject knowledge (with an emphasis on concepts of cardinality, early operations, and geometry) and instructional proficiency.

Reflections and Planned Changes

There were no changes in staffing this year.

While overall the school year was a success in terms of implementing our math curriculum, an area of weakness was in assessment - the school largely relied on curriculum-based measures and only had nationally normed assessments for first graders. Accordingly, we plan on the changes that include the following actions:

- Securing a nationally normed assessment that works for all students

METHOD

During the 2022-23 school year, Commons used the following methods for assessing student progress:

- STAR Math (administered to first grade 3-4 times per year)
- Curriculum-based assessments from Bridges

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

One issue to be resolved is the lack of a nationally normed screener for mathematics. According to our curriculum-based assessments, 65% of students were proficient in grade-level math expectations. This was about 10% lower than our internal target of 75% proficiency for the year. Of significant note, though a very small sample size, was strong 1st-grade performance, with 85% of students achieving proficiency on the end-of-year math assessment.

Overall we view these scores as successful, but acutely felt the need to improve our ability to triangulate student data with additional, reliable assessments. The relative success of these scores (with the mitigating context explained above) is largely attributed to the clarity and efficacy of the Bridges curriculum. Students and teachers both reported high levels of satisfaction with the program and students were highly motivated by the hands-on, collaborative nature of the program.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE

We look forward to having year-to-year comparisons starting soon. It became clear that without a nationally normalized assessment of mathematics, we would struggle to successfully understand exactly where all of our students are strong and in need of improvement.

ACTION PLAN

As mentioned above, Commons will take the following math-specific actions:

- Securing a nationally normed assessment that works for all students

Additionally, in a broader strategic sense, Commons will engage in the following actions:

- Implementing the Thoughtful Classroom comprehensive teaching framework to codify and improve shared instructional practices
- Improved MTSS practices with the addition of a Child Study Team that identifies students for specific, need-based interventions and monitors their progress

GOAL 3: SCIENCE

Goal 3: Science

All students at BCCS will be proficient in Science and will make strong annual progress.

BACKGROUND

Launching Commons' Science Program

The 2022-23 academic year marked the launch of a Science program aligned to what we described in our charter. We focused on implementing a proven curriculum with a diverse student body.

Curriculum

As described in our charter, we implemented the Project Lead the Way curriculum which consisted of a number of modules from their "Launch" Program. As with all our courses, we emphasized aligning it with the latest educational standards and incorporating diverse perspectives. Teachers collaborated to create units that were foundationally strong, allowed for numerous hands-on conceptual explorations, and fostered a love of scientific thinking.

Instructional Strategies

The instructional approaches incorporated a variety of approaches including direct instruction, station teaching, project-based learning, and technology integration. Teachers differentiated lessons according to student readiness and used various modalities and resources to engage students, recognizing the importance of catering to diverse learning styles.

Professional Development

Recognizing the need for ongoing teacher development, Commons invested heavily in an instructional coaching program. Teachers worked with a coach weekly to improve their Science subject knowledge (with an emphasis on scientific method and design thinking) and instructional proficiency.

Reflections and Planned Changes

There were no changes in staffing this year.

Science was one of our most engaging curriculum for students this year. However, an area for continued improvement was in aligning curriculum and assessment to the long term accountability measure of the NYSTP. Accordingly, we plan on the changes that include the following actions:

- Selecting units and emphasizing content that aligns with the NYSTP science assessments in terms of content and skills.
- Adding additional curriculum-based assessments as needed to isolate standards of relative strength and weakness.

METHOD

During the 2022-23 school year, Commons used the following methods for assessing student progress:

- Curriculum-based assessments from Project Lead the Way

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

According to our curriculum-based assessments, 78% of students were proficient in grade-level science expectations. This slightly exceeded our internal target of 75% proficiency for the year. Of significant note was strong kindergarten performance, with an average score of 81% on the end-of-year science assessment.

The success of these scores (with the mitigating context explained above) is largely attributed to the engaging nature of the PLTW curriculum. Students and teachers both reported high levels of satisfaction with the program and students were highly motivated by the hands-on nature of the program.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE

We look forward to having year-to-year comparisons starting soon. We are excited to further align our curriculum to the outcome measures of the NYSTP and thereby increase our ability to adjust curriculum and instruction appropriately to student needs.

ACTION PLAN

As mentioned above, Commons will take the following science-specific actions:

- Selecting units and emphasizing content that aligns with the NYSTP science assessments in terms of content and skills.
- Adding additional curriculum-based assessments as needed to isolate standards of relative strength and weakness.

Additionally, in a broader strategic sense, Commons will engage in the following actions:

- Implementing the Thoughtful Classroom comprehensive teaching framework to codify and improve shared instructional practices
- Improved MTSS practices with the addition of a Child Study Team that identifies students for specific, need-based interventions and monitors their progress

GOAL 4: ESSA

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Under the state’s ESSA accountability system, the school is in good standing: the state has not identified the school for comprehensive or targeted improvement.

METHOD

Because *all* students are expected to meet the state's performance standards, the federal statute stipulates that various sub-populations and demographic categories of students among all tested students must meet the state standard in and of themselves aside from the overall school results. As New York State, like all states, is required to establish a specific system for making these determinations for its public schools, charter schools do not have latitude in establishing their own performance levels or criteria of success for meeting the ESSA accountability requirements. Each year, the state issues School Report Cards that indicate a school’s status under the state accountability system. More information on assigned accountability designations and context can be found [here](#).

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

Buffalo Commons was in its first year of operation in 2022-23. It does not have a designation as yet.

Accountability Status by Year

Year	Status
2020-21	Not Applicable
2021-22	Not Applicable
2022-23	Not Applicable