

INSTRUCTIONS / NOTES

FOR 2023-24 ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT (“APPR”)

1. Schools that do not yet enroll students in state testing grades are still required to complete an APPR. In the absence of state test results, schools may report results from internally developed assessments, nationally norm-referenced tests, and/or any other evaluation method under each goal area. Schools should provide tabulated achievement or growth results if available under the “Results and Evaluation” section of each goal area.
2. The deadline for submission of the APPR is September 16, 2024. Schools with extenuating circumstances may request an extension as necessary. As it does every year, the Institute will validate and post the finalized APPRs onto its website.
3. **Text Highlighted in Grey = explanation or guidance for an entry.** As guidance, schools should remove the existing text entirely and replace it with information to complete the report.
4. Please do not include these instructions or the reference guide below in a submitted report.

REFERENCE GUIDE TO TEMPLATE SECTIONS

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The Accountability Plan Progress Report Template Is Below. Delete all information above before submitting.



Buffalo Commons Charter School

2023-24 ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Submitted to the SUNY Charter Schools Institute on:

October 21, 2023

By Daniel Brink-Washington

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2023-24 ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

Daniel Brink-Washington, Executive Director, prepared this 2023-24 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
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.

In 2023-24, Commons served about 80 students in grades K-2. The student body is diverse like the city of Buffalo itself. In terms of Race/Ethnicity we serve a population that identifies as approximately 59% Black, 23% White, 4% Hispanic, 7% Asian, and 7% Other. Socioeconomically, 76% of our students are economically disadvantaged. In 2023-24, approximately 18% 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
2021-22	N/A													
2022-23	48	14												
2023-24	17	49	16											

GOAL 1: ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

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

BACKGROUND

Growing Commons’ ELA Program

The 2023-24 academic year marked the growth of our ELA program aligned with what we described in our charter. We focused on implementing a proven curriculum with a diverse student body, and added some supplementary curriculum to address gaps that were surfaced in our data from the previous year.

Curriculum

As described in our 2022-23 Accountability Progress Report, we continued to implement and supplement the “EL Modules”, but we adopted “Really Great Reading” for the phonics component of our ELA curriculum. We continue to emphasize our alignment with the latest educational standards and incorporating diverse perspectives. Teachers collaborated to improve on past units and create new 2nd-grade 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

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

Additionally, teachers received comprehensive training in the new Really Great Reading Curriculum.

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 2023-24 we observed a gap in students getting sufficient at-bats with controlled readers to practice the isolated decoding skills they were gaining. As a result, we plan on the changes that include the following actions:

- Engaging in an Early Literacy Cohort funded by the Cullen Foundation with a specific emphasis on building classroom libraries and authentic decodable readers in particular.
- Increasing the professional development teachers receive in ELA - particularly as it relates to the decodable readers mentioned above.

METHOD

During the 2023-24 school year, Commons used the following methods for assessing student progress:

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

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

In 2023-24, Commons set an internal goal of achieving a Median Growth Percentile (MGP) of 70 on the STAR Early Literacy Assessment. Supported by our faculty and staff, students achieved an MGP of 55 by the spring administration of the STAR Early Literacy assessment. This put Buffalo Commons

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 2023-24 school year allowed us to see a second set of ELA growth data. Year to year the growth of students declined modestly, but not to the extent that we are concerned about students’ long term growth. We imagine that the implementation of a new curriculum may have had an impact on student outcomes, and hope to see further improvements in the near future.

ACTION PLAN

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

- Engaging in an Early Literacy Cohort funded by the Cullen Foundation with a specific emphasis on building classroom libraries and authentic decodable readers in particular.
- Increasing the professional development teachers receive in ELA - particularly as it relates to the decodable readers mentioned above.

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

- Continue implementation of the Thoughtful Classroom comprehensive teaching framework to codify and improve shared instructional practices
- Improved MTSS practices with interventions beginning earlier in the school year and a more disciplined approach to 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

Growing Commons’ Math Program

The 2023-24 academic year marked the growth of our Math program aligned with what we described in our charter. We focused on the continued implementation of a proven curriculum with a diverse student body.

Curriculum

As described in our charter, we continued and grew our implementation of the Bridges in Mathematics curriculum which consists 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 improve existing units and create new leading-edge 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

Commons invested heavily in an instructional coaching program, recognizing the need for ongoing teacher development. Teachers worked with a coach weekly to improve their Math subject knowledge 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 and growing our math curriculum, an area of weakness continues to be assessment for non-readers - although we provided greater access by moving STAR assessments into an interview posture, the school still lacks an efficient way to collect data for our youngest students. Accordingly, we plan on the changes that include the following actions:

- Securing a nationally normed assessment that works for all students (especially kindergarten and first grade)

METHOD

During the 2023-24 school year, Commons used the following methods for assessing student progress:

- STAR Math (administered to all grades 3 times per year)
- Curriculum-based assessments from Bridges

RESULTS AND EVALUATION

In 2023-24, Commons set an internal goal of achieving a Median Growth Percentile (MGP) of 70 on the STAR Math Assessment. Supported by our faculty and staff, and an emerging culture of excellence, our students achieved an MGP of 52 by the spring administration of the STAR Math 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 2023-24 school year allowed us to see a second set of Math growth data. Year to year the growth of students decreased somewhat, but not to the extent that we are concerned about students’ long term growth. We imagine we will see further improvements in the near future.

ACTION PLAN

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

- Securing a nationally normed assessment that works for all students - especially Kindergarten and some first grade students

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

- Continue implementation of 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.

BACKGROUND

Growing Commons’ Science Program

The 2023-24 academic year marked the growth of our Science 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 continued our implementation of the Project Lead the Way curriculum which consisted of several 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 enhance previous units and create new 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 continued to be one of our most engaging curricula for students this year. We made improvement in our alignment of curriculum and assessment to the long term accountability measure of the NYSTP. Accordingly, we plan on the changes that include the following actions:

- Continue 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.
- Increase vocabulary and literacy component of science to augment current curriculum.
- More fully differentiate science curriculum

METHOD

During the 2023-24 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, 67% of students were proficient in grade-level science expectations. This was slightly below our internal target of 70% proficiency for the year. 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 continue to report high levels of satisfaction with the program and students were highly motivated by the hands-on nature of the program.

ADDITIONAL CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE

The 2023-24 school year allowed us to see a second set of Science performance data. Year to year the growth of students slowed somewhat, but not to the extent that we are concerned about students' long term growth. We imagine we will see further improvements in the near future.

ACTION PLAN

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

- Continue 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:

- Continue implementation of 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

Goal 4: ESSA

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 2023-24. 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
2023-24	Not Applicable

