



THE FUTURE IS NOW

Say Yes Buffalo Report to the Community



2020-2021

About Say Yes Buffalo

Say Yes Buffalo is a landmark partnership that brings together the Buffalo Public School District, parents, the Buffalo Teachers Federation, the Buffalo Association of Administrators and Supervisors, higher education, the City of Buffalo, Erie County, and a diverse group of Buffalo area corporate, non-profit, and philanthropic organizations to organize people, time, money and resources to provide holistic, year-round support to Buffalo Public School District students throughout their K-12 years and beyond. The mission of the Say Yes Buffalo partnership is to remove barriers to educational attainment, workforce participation and economic mobility for students in public and charter schools in Buffalo, NY.

Say Yes Buffalo partners facilitate comprehensive supports including tuition scholarships to one of more than 170 colleges and universities for those who meet residency, graduation and admission requirements. These supports are aligned with what research indicates is needed to enable every child in the program to achieve his or her potential and include:

- Summer programming
- College preparation supports
- College scholarships
- Health care
- Legal services
- Mental health care
- Mentoring
- Paid internships
- Social services and family supports

To date, thousands of Buffalo students have received more than \$18 million in scholarships from Say Yes and more than 2,400 have earned a postsecondary degree. Our endowment campaign to ensure these scholarships are available to Buffalo students in perpetuity has achieved more than 50% of its goal.

See page 26 for more details on each program area.

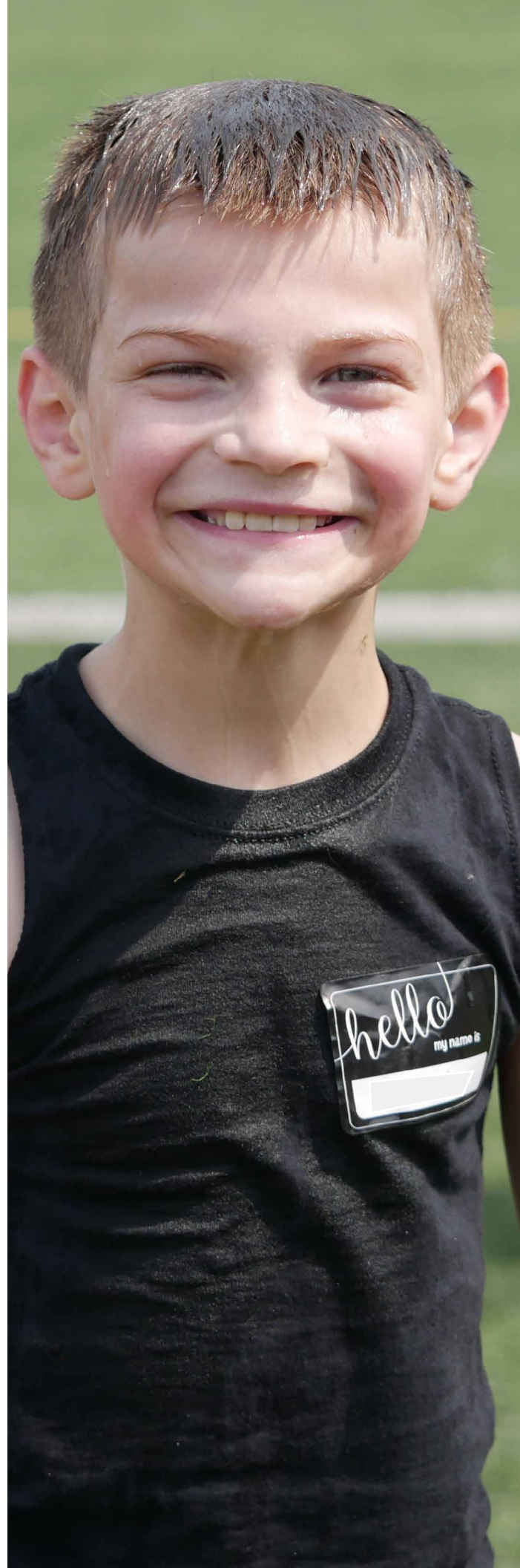


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THE FUTURE...



“Financial assistance from Say Yes ensured that I could focus on my studies without worrying about the cost of furthering my education. I now have my master’s degree and am practicing in my field.”

Avery Roper

City Honors ‘16
University at Buffalo ‘20

...IS NOW

From the Chair of the Say Yes Buffalo Board of Directors

Dear Say Yes Buffalo Investors, Partners and Friends,

Since my involvement with Say Yes Buffalo began, we have been focused on building a better future for our community by investing directly in the educational attainment of its youngest members. And we're making significant progress. Today, there are thousands of Say Yes Buffalo Alumni—graduates of Buffalo public or charter high schools who have achieved associate degrees, bachelor's degrees, or other professional certifications through our efforts. Further, many of them are now helping us strengthen the Western New York economy directly by having joined our local workforce.

These alumni have begun their careers or entered graduate programs, in most cases, unencumbered by significant student loan debt. This is thanks to the generosity of our investors – thank you for making this possible. The financial implications of the Say Yes Buffalo scholarship will help close the generational wealth gap and will go a long way in addressing the stark disparities we see between attainment of education and wealth in racial minority and non-minority communities.

The pandemic has hit us all hard and it's changed the way we all look at the world and our economy. Everywhere, there are businesses hiring and the greater demand for jobs is driving up wages. At Say Yes Buffalo, we didn't predict a pandemic and its economic impact, but we did anticipate a growing market for jobs that demand completion of postsecondary credentials. That demand will only grow as the true impact of the pandemic is borne out over the years to come. The need to reach, support, and equip our young people with the tools they need to be successful is not only the right thing to do, it's not only the imperative thing to do as a community that seeks to support each other, it's the smart thing to do. There is no greater investment than the one we make in our own future.

Welcome to our annual Report to the Community. We hope you take the time to read about how the mission and values of Say Yes Buffalo impact the lives of thousands of people, alumni like Deja Middlebrook, scholars like Emmanuel Wright, and investors like Dr. Wendy Mistretta and KeyBank. Thank you for everything you do to make Say Yes Buffalo the engine for economic transformation that it is. Like many of our alumni building their careers right now, we are just getting started and have so much to look forward to accomplishing together.

Sincerely,



Bill Joyce





The Say Yes Mission

Since launching in 2012, much about the day to day reality of our agency and our community has shifted. This past year has brought a lot of our work into stronger focus, especially with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing reforms to address racial and economic equity. With Say Yes Buffalo now standing on its own two feet from a governance perspective, we felt now to be an important moment to retool our mission and vision statements to reflect our values as an organization today, with an eye toward building a better future.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Say Yes Buffalo partnership is to remove barriers to educational attainment, workforce participation and economic mobility for students in public and charter schools in Buffalo, NY. Our collective impact partnership, centered on racial equity and inclusion, provides a postsecondary tuition promise and cradle to career comprehensive supports to increase the rates of high school and postsecondary completion and the achievement of fulfilling professional employment.

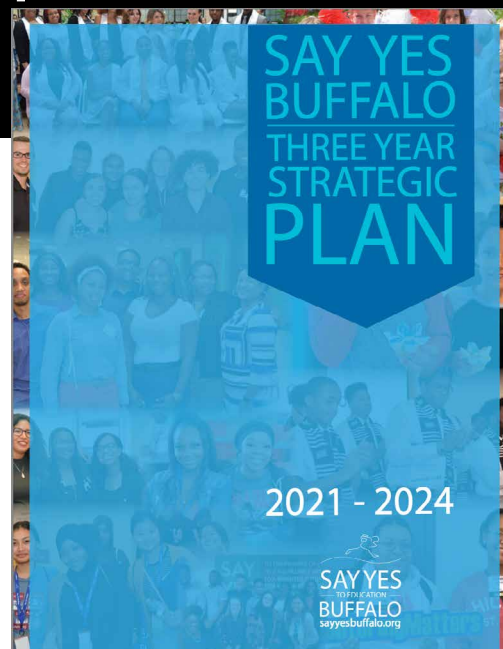
Vision Statement

Our vision is for a more equitable and thriving Western New York economy in which all students will have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Program Highlights 2020-2021

Leadership Team Charting the Course

Much more than a workable, organizational blueprint, the “Three Year Strategic Plan” developed by the administrative team and Board of Directors in spring of 2021 outlines a bold but scalable vision to establish a framework for the role of Say Yes Buffalo to continue in perpetuity. While we are proud of everything this organization has accomplished in its first 10 years, we have further to go if we are to accomplish our goals of equitable pathways to educational and economic attainment for all students in Buffalo.



School-based Services Meeting the Need

For those frontline workers in our community and in our agency, the past year has been extraordinarily challenging as the needs of an already vulnerable community have expanded. Our school-based preventive staff complete about 1,000 face-to-face contacts every month, providing crucial linkages to programs that assist with basic needs for families and services that assist with mental and physical wellness. Our Health Home program has over 200 youth currently enrolled. We recognize that meeting these needs are the building blocks for educational success for families.



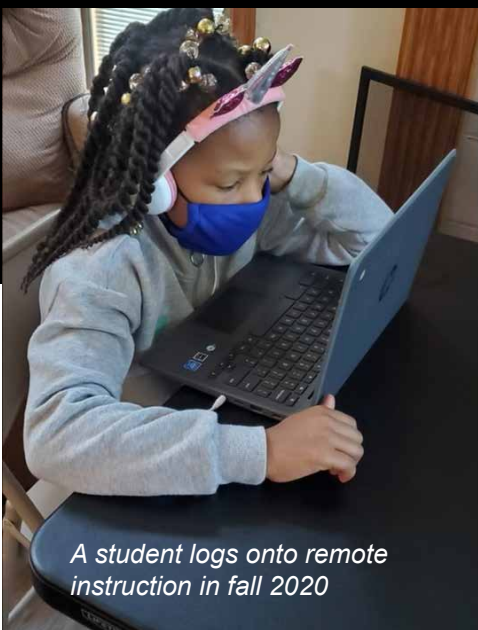
A family participates in Family Day, August 2021

Community Schools Doing What We Can

In a year where we were mostly unable to meet in person, our Community Schools team brought programming and enrichment into students' homes. Staff conducted 154 virtual Saturday Academies that drew 3,052 participants who received academic and technology supports, supplies, and specialty programming. A series of “Pop In” events for high school students last summer drew 5,167 unique engagements and 10,521 views. While we have now transitioned back to in-person Saturday Academies, our program has adapted and continues to utilize virtual platforms to increase overall engagement.



Two young chefs show off a meal they prepared during a virtual Saturday Academy



A student logs onto remote instruction in fall 2020

Extended Learning Time Virtual Reality

In the fall of 2020, 50 in-person sites throughout the City of Buffalo were launched with funding from the Live Well Erie CARES Act Child Care grant. These Virtual Learning Support Centers offered students access to remote learning with internet, food, and supervision during the day. In close partnership with Erie County, we helped facilitate the program within weeks of funding being made available, opening most sites by mid-October 2020. This program served as a critical bridge to the classroom for more than 1,500 of our most vulnerable students. Thanks to support from Buffalo Public Schools, elements of this program were extended through February 2021.

Boys & Men of Color Fostering a Virtual Brotherhood

Realizing that our youth needed more contact and support during a time when schools were operating remotely, the Breaking Barriers Youth Leadership Council's 50 members began meeting three times every week. Combining elements of mentorship, community service, and physical activity, members found themselves developing even deeper bonds. The group was able to start holding limited in-person, community service events in January and was able to hold its first ever camping retreat in August 2021.



Summer campers getting a good stretch in 2021

Extended Learning Time Extending Our Reach

After facilitating the popular in-person Virtual Learning Support Center program during a period when Buffalo Public Schools were operating remotely, the team expanded its summer camp offerings in 2021, enrolling over 1,400 young scholars in 31 different neighborhood sites. While following Covid-19 health and safety protocols, sites provided evidenced-based academic programming, social-emotional learning, physical activity, healthy meals, and service linkages to families.

Program Highlights, continued

Leadership Team SYB Grows Up

Transitioning to local governance in 2020 meant that SYB needed to become more self-sufficient. This was accomplished by bringing a human resources director in-house, full-time, and through the creation of a finance team. Three new team members were added: accountants Korin Frantz and Holly Schaefer, as well as Chief Financial Officer Laura DeLuca (*right, top*). Collin Gehl (*right, bottom*), who had been splitting time between SYB and our partner agency, Child & Family Services, transitioned to Say Yes full-time as our Director of Human Resources.



Development, Scholarship, and Mentoring Teams Technology for Tomorrow

In 2020, with so many of our students facing the reality of virtual college courses, we launched a campaign to raise funds to fill the technology gap faced by many of our scholars. It became another lesson in the annals of the pandemic: we understood there would continue to be a technological need for our scholars every year. With the support of our community, we raised over \$50,000 again in 2021, and used it to purchase hundreds of devices for our scholars.



Development Team Supporting the Cause

The challenges faced by our community in the light of Covid-19 only increased the urgency of our mission to remove all barriers to educational attainment. To ensure our ability to continue to support students, we held several virtual fundraising events including a Fall Breakfast, a recruitment event for like-minded social organizations called Say Yes to Say Yes, and the formation of the Say Yes Buffalo Alumni Network to establish professional networking and fundraising of and by our growing ranks of alumni. In the year, our Development Team raised over \$2 million towards the scholarship endowment, and built an Alumni Network of about 150 active participants.



Madison Carter and Nick Sinatra participate in the Virtual Fall Breakfast in 2020

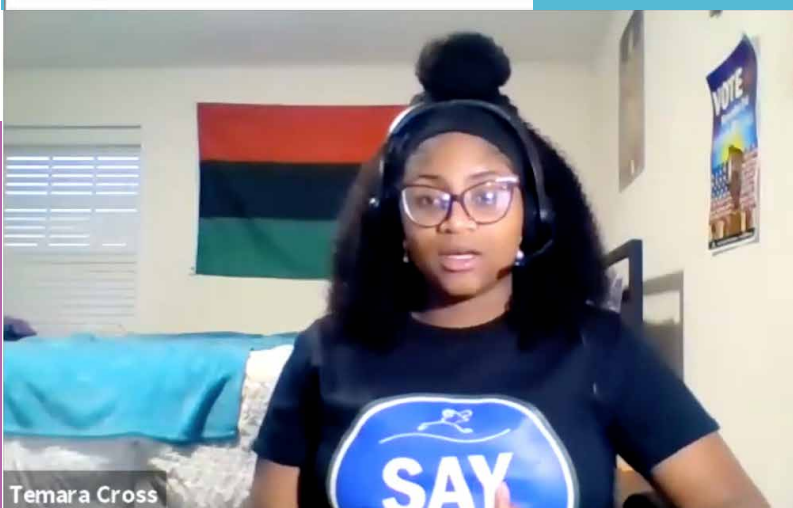


Private College Compact Member Institutions

- Adelphi University, NY (2)
- Bates College, ME
- Baylor College, TX
- Benedict College, SC
- Bennett College, NC
- Boston University, MA
- Bowdoin College, ME
- Brown University, RI
- Bryant & Stratton, NY
- Buffalo State University, NY
- California Institute of Technology, CA
- Carnegie Mellon University, PA
- Clemson University, SC
- Clarkson University, NY
- Colby College, ME
- Colgate University, NY
- College of Worcester, MA
- Colorado College, CO
- Columbia University, NY
- Cooper Union, NY
- Cornell University, NY
- Cornell College, NY
- Dartmouth College, NH
- Drexel University, PA
- Duquesne University, PA
- Duke University, NC
- D'Yonville College, NY
- Franklin & Marshall College, PA
- George Washington University, DC
- Georgetown University, DC
- Greenwood College, NC
- Guilford College, NC
- Hamilton College, NY
- Harvard University, MA
- Harvey Mudd College, CA
- Wesleyan University, MA
- Hebrew College, NY
- Hobart College, NY
- Hofstra University, NY
- Johns Hopkins University, MD
- Kean College, NJ
- Laurel University, NC
- Lehigh University, PA
- Lipscomb College, TN
- Marist College, NY
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MA
- Medaille College, NY
- Monroe College, NY
- Moravian College, PA
- Muhlenberg College, PA
- Northeastern University, MA
- Northwestern University, IL
- Oberlin College, OH
- Occidental College, CA
- Ohio Northern University, OH
- Ohio Wesleyan University, OH
- Paul Smith's College, NY
- Penn State University, PA
- Pitzer College, CA
- Pomona College, CA
- Princeton University, NJ
- Providence College, RI
- Rice College, OH
- Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, NY
- Rhodes College, TN
- Rice University, TX
- Rochester Institute of Technology, NY
- St. Joseph's College, NY
- St. John's College, MA
- Salerno College, NJ
- Scripps College, CA
- Seawanee College, TN
- Seawanee College of Kentucky, KY
- Smith College, MA
- Springfield College, MA
- Stanford University, CA
- Swarthmore College, PA
- Syracuse University, NY
- Texas Christian University, TX
- The University of Southern California, CA
- Trinity College, CT
- Trinity College, NY
- Tufts University, MA
- Tulane University, LA
- Union College, NY
- University of Chicago, IL
- University of Notre Dame, IN
- University of Pennsylvania, PA
- University of Rochester, NY
- University of San Diego, CA
- Vanderbilt University, TN
- Vassar College, NY
- Villanova University, PA
- Washington University at St. Louis, MO
- Washington & Lee University, VA
- Wellesley College, MA
- Wesleyan University, CT
- Whitman College, WA
- Williams College, MA
- Yale University, CT

Scholarship Team Taking the Lead

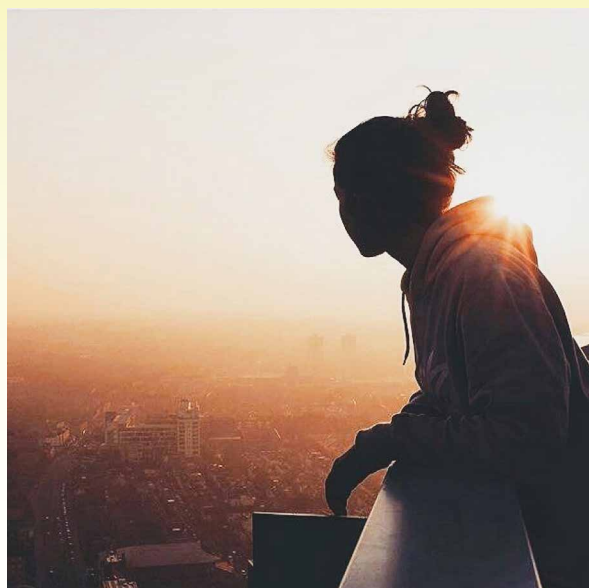
In July of 2020, Say Yes chapters in Buffalo, Cleveland, Guilford, and Syracuse achieved an important milestone that was established at each of our respective launches; a transition to entities independent from Say Yes to Education National, with governance at a local level. As part of this, Say Yes Buffalo was selected to manage the Say Yes to Education Private College Compact, on behalf of all Say Yes communities. The Compact is comprised of the more than 100 private colleges and universities around the country that have committed to providing free tuition scholarships to students from Say Yes communities with annual family income below \$75,000. Say Yes students with family income above \$75,000 who attend a Compact partner institution are eligible for a Say Yes Choice Grant of up to \$5,000, funded by their respective community's scholarship fund. The Compact is a key part of Say Yes Buffalo's scholarship program and currently our students are enrolled at more than 50 member institutions.



SYB Scholars Showing the Promise

Say Yes scholar and board member Temara Cross shared her story and drive in a video organized by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation promoting promise scholarships with the title of "Refuse to Lose." The profile highlights how our community is working to close racial gaps for students journeying from early education to careers and how our partnership is refusing to lose our youth to the effects of systemic racism while now also addressing the hurdles presented by Covid-19.

THE FUTURE...



"The Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship had a great impact on my academic journey through college. It provided financial aid to pay for my college, tuition, supplies, etc. They covered the gap for the last two semesters of my senior year, after applying for the FAFSA and TAP. Thank you Say Yes Buffalo."

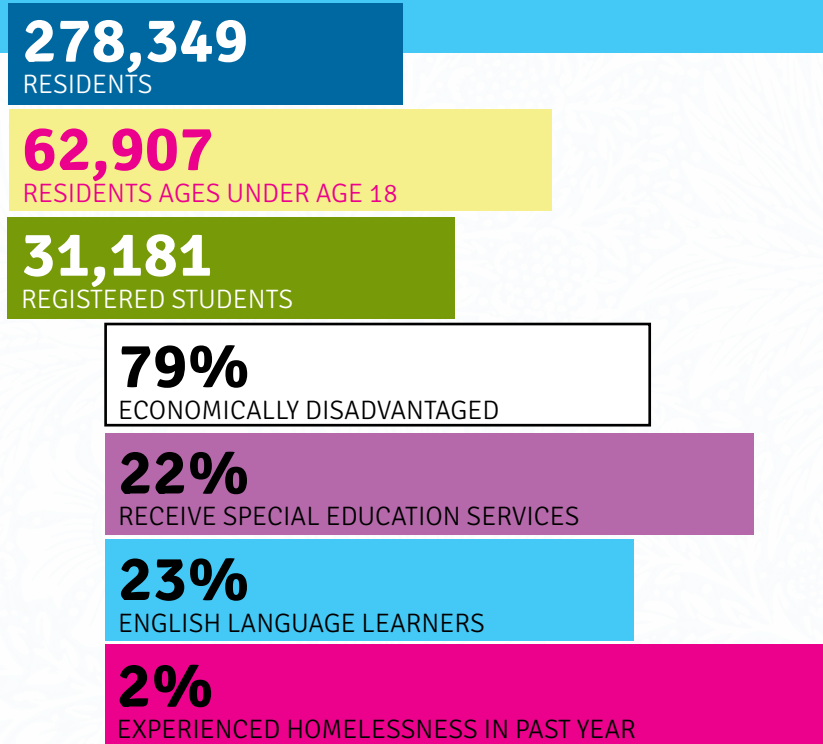
Abeer Alwaisi

Riverside High School '18
Buffalo State College '21

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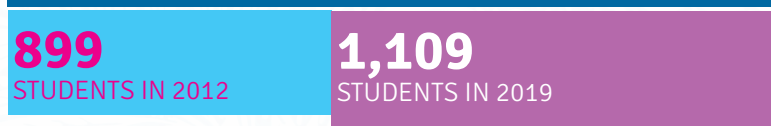
Impact Dashboard 2021

Overview



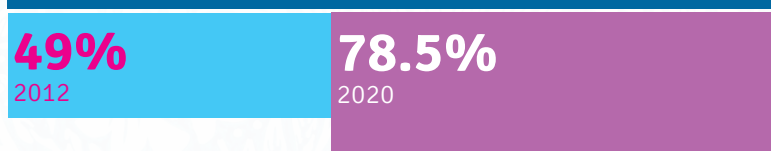
Nationally, since 2012, postsecondary enrollments have decreased overall by 2% and in New York State they have dropped by 10%. But in Buffalo, the overall number of students who enrolled in postsecondary education has increased **8%**.

Postsecondary Enrollment Rate

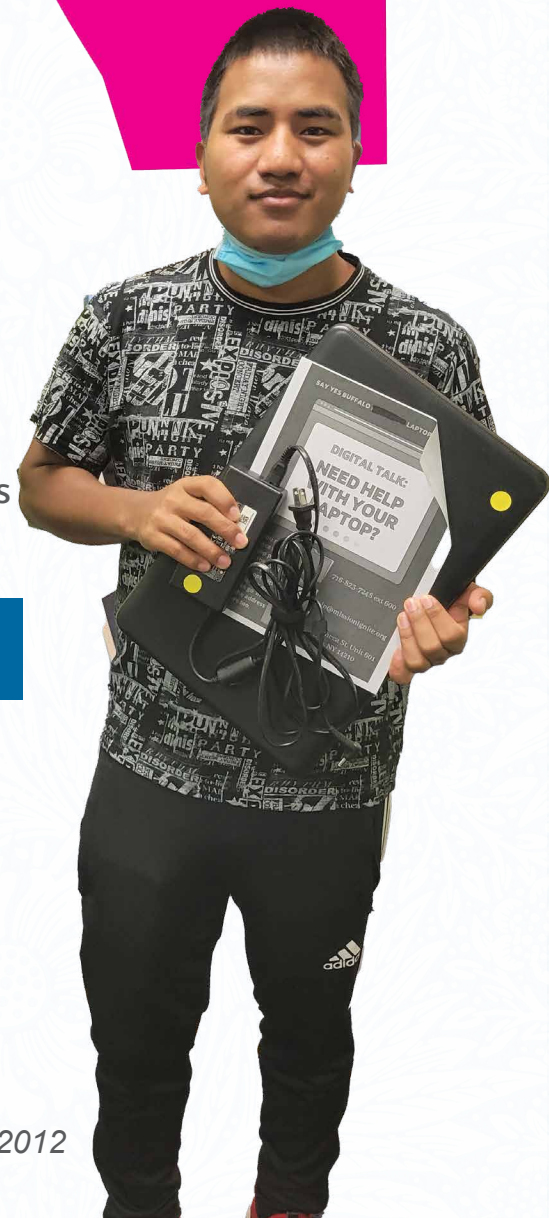


**entering postsecondary education, a rise of 23 percent*

High School Graduation Rate



**27 percentage point increase since the launch of Say Yes Buffalo in 2012*



Impact Dashboard **2021**

Postsecondary Completion

2,481 College Completers

IN SAY YES COHORTS 2013-2020

Bachelor's Degrees - 60%

14% SOCIAL SCIENCES, 13% BUSINESS & MARKETING, 13% COMMUNICATIONS

Associate Degrees - 36%

38% GENERAL STUDIES, 15% MEDICAL, 8% CRIMINAL JUSTICE, 8% BUSINESS

Certificates - 4%

34% MEDICAL, 19% CRIMINAL JUSTICE, 8% BUSINESS

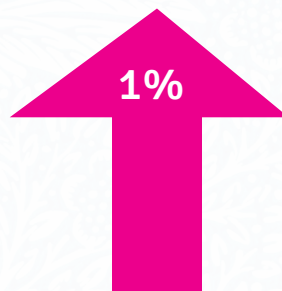


Completion in Context

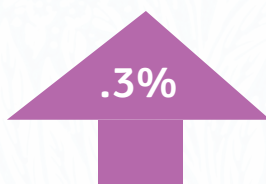
Completion is up more significantly in Buffalo than in New York State and the nation.



New York State



United States



918 FAFSA/TAP Completions

Average FAFSA completions 2013-2021: **1,021**.
In 2012, there were **719**.

Impact Dashboard **2021**

Program Outcomes

Community Schools

625 High School Students

PARTICIPATED IN SUMMER 2020 "POP-IN" PROGRAMMING

5,167 Unique Engagements

SUMMER 2020 VIRTUAL COLLEGE TOUR PROGRAMMING

107,310 Views

ACROSS 14 VIRTUAL SATURDAY ACADEMIES, SEPTEMBER 2020-FEBRUARY 2021

3,052 Participants

ACROSS 154 VIRTUAL SATURDAY ACADEMIES, FEBRUARY-JUNE 2021



School-based Services

Preventive Services Program

3,001 Face-to-Face Contacts

WITH DISTRICT FAMILIES IDENTIFIED AS IN NEED OF SUPPORT

1,111 Family Members Served

824 Linkages to Support Services

INCLUDING 213 FOR FOOD ACCESS



Health Home Care Coordination Program

268 Youth Enrolled

YOUTH WITH CHRONIC MEDICAL OR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH NEEDS

87% of Youth

ENROLLED BECAME UP TO DATE ON WELL VISITS

90% of Youth

ENROLLED BECAME UP TO DATE ON IMMUNIZATIONS



700+ Students Enrolled in Mental Health Clinics

127 Pediatric Appointments at our Mobile Health Clinic

INCLUDING 335 IMMUNIZATIONS AND 117 WELL VISITS

Impact Dashboard **2021**

Program Outcomes

Summer Camp Program 2021

1,460 Students Enrolled

IN GRADES PRE-K THROUGH 6TH

31 Sites

ACROSS ALL AREAS OF BUFFALO



Mentoring Program

86 Scholar Participants

89% Matriculated to College

76% Persisted in College

Near Peer Mentoring Program

Recruited 26 Mentors and 95 Mentees

60 Participants

AVERAGE ATTENDANCE IN BIWEEKLY VIRTUAL MEETINGS

85 Laptops Provided

TO SCHOLARS ENTERING COLLEGE



Internship & Career Pathways Program

30 Internships Completed

99 APPLICATIONS SUPPORTED WITH RESUMÉ AND COVER LETTER ASSISTANCE

5 Scholars

EARNED CAREER PREPARATION CERTIFICATES

Impact Dashboard **2021**

Program Outcomes

Breaking Barriers Youth Leadership Council

50 New Participants

FROM 85 NEW APPLICATIONS

147 Virtual Meetings Conducted

BEFORE IN-PERSON ACTIVITIES RESUMED IN JANUARY 2021



THE FUTURE...



"Say Yes Buffalo has not only provided me with affordable postsecondary education, but also with various supports throughout. The program helped me with the interview process and stayed in touch to see if I needed any additional support. Say Yes helped me kickstart my education and career."

Victoria Faltisco

City Honors '17
University at Buffalo '21

...IS NOW

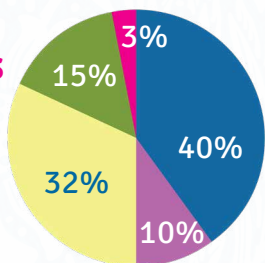
Impact Dashboard 2021

Racial Equity & Inclusion

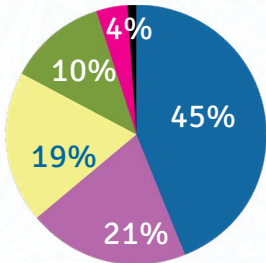
Racial equity and inclusion are top of mind in all that we do, as an employer, services provider, purchaser and partner. We’ve worked hard to create a workplace that models these tenets and have put staff (trained diversity & equity coaches), practices and policies (purchasing guidelines that prioritize women and minority owned businesses) in place to help us maintain and grow our capacity with respect to these principles. To hold us accountable, we provide this annual snapshot of our work with an equity lens.

Our Scholars

Reflect the larger Buffalo community



2019 Say Yes Scholars

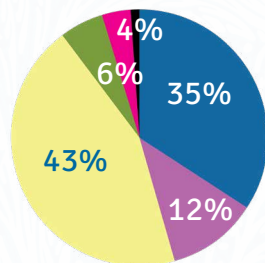


2019-2020 Buffalo Public Schools Enrollment

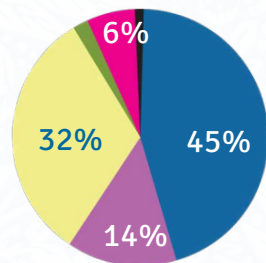
- Black or African American
- Asian
- Multiracial
- White (non-Hispanic)
- Hispanic or Latino
- American Indian or Alaska Native

Our Staff & Leadership

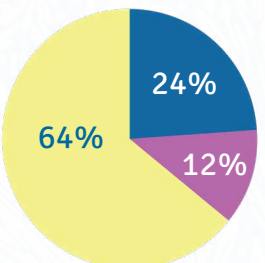
Reflect the larger Buffalo community



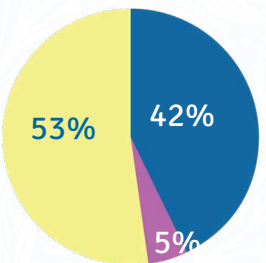
City of Buffalo



Say Yes Buffalo Staff

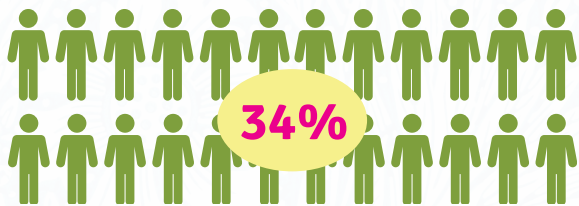


Say Yes Buffalo Board of Directors

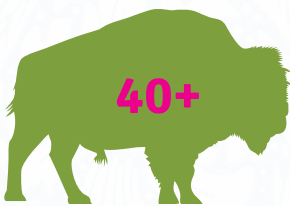


Say Yes Buffalo Operating Committee

We are focused on growing our spending with
Minority and Women Owned Businesses (MWBE)



of the vendors we work with are now MBWE



Number of local MWBE we’ve given business to since our inception

“Equity will be achieved when we can all just wake up and live freely; be valued and respected; live free from structural impediments based off of perceived racial characteristics; and have fair representation and opportunity.”

~Collective Statement Developed by Say Yes Staff at 2019 Retreat

Say Yes Buffalo Operational Budget 2021-2022

\$15.7M total budget

Less Passthroughs:

\$838K Summer Camp subcontracting

\$275K Apprenticeship subcontracting

\$2.5M Administering financial commitments on behalf of George Weiss, founder of Say Yes to Education, to Cleveland, Hartford, and Harlem

\$2.6M Scholarships for Buffalo public and charter school graduates

\$226K Preventive Services (Child & Family Services)

Budget excluding passthroughs \$9.3M:

Overhead \$1.7M (18%)

Program direct expenses \$7.6M (82%)

	Program Direct Expense	Overhead Expense	Total Expense
Wages, Benefits & Payroll Taxes			
Salaries	\$ 5,544,000	\$ 801,000	\$ 6,345,000
Fringe Benefits	646,000	76,000	722,000
Payroll Taxes	637,000	63,000	700,000
Total Wages, Benefits, & Payroll Taxes	\$ 6,827,000	\$ 940,000	7,767,000
Other Expenses			
Auto Expense	\$ 39,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 41,000
Events	281,000	33,000	314,000
Purchases Of Services	120,000	147,000	267,000
Meals	2,000		2,000
Supplies & Equipment	49,000	18,000	67,000
Rent	89,000	205,000	294,000
Software Maintenance	24,000	5,000	29,000
Telecommunications	52,000	12,000	64,000
Postage	1,000	2,000	3,000
Dues And Subscriptions	7,000	11,000	18,000
Administrative Expense	22,000	186,000	208,000
Staff Development & Recruitment	69,000	48,000	117,000
Professional Fees		33,000	33,000
Insurance	15,000	6,000	21,000
Depreciation	2,000		2,000
Marketing	26,000	8,000	34,000
Total Expense	\$ 7,625,000	\$ 1,656,000	9,281,000
%	82%	18%	100%

Community Spotlight – Donor

KeyBank

Gary Quenneville

When KeyBank's Upstate NY Regional Executive Gary Quenneville started hearing about Say Yes Buffalo in the early 2010s, it was the team that impressed him. "There were very strong and reputable community and business leaders," he recalled. "It was very convincing to me that this was going to be successful just based on the people that were behind it."

Quenneville, who also serves as a board member for the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, saw in the founding nonprofit an effort to strengthen the local economy by partnering with the public school system to produce a better educated and prepared workforce. Long before pandemic-impacted labor shortages and supply chain issues, Quenneville and others saw the need to invest in the education of the area's young people and to support them to get the skills they need to be successful.

"One of KeyBank's four strategic pillars for considering foundation support is education and not just secondary education but a lifetime of education," Quenneville said.

Quenneville has served on the Say Yes Buffalo Board of Directors since 2018 and has been instrumental in its efforts to raise funds to support the promise of postsecondary scholarships for Buffalo students. It's been the incremental success that Say Yes Buffalo has enjoyed that encourages him to stay involved.

"I had an opportunity recently to address an organization, with a fairly large number of constituents," Quenneville told us. "Some of my comments included that there is no more important time for us to provide financial resources and support. In support I mean even our own talent to help mentor and guide students in programs where necessary, but the time to do that is right now. Not just for the kids, but for local businesses to start to reopen the economy and take it out of pandemic stage and start moving forward. With Say Yes, you now have a history behind you of some success and incremental improvements in the graduation rates and the success of the students now entering the workforce, and if you haven't been supporting that success along the way there's no more important time to do it than now."

"Many of us are closer to the end of our careers than the beginning of our careers and we have to continue to build the next generation of leaders that will take on the shaping of what the future is going to look like in Western New York. Say Yes is that feeder pool to that leadership group."

Quenneville recalled the period of his life, growing up in the northern New York town of Malone, when he would have benefitted from the many services that Say Yes offers. "I would have benefited from appropriate guidance, counseling, mentoring, direction and other support type services that are available to the kids as a result of Say Yes," he reflected, describing how a student's individual support mechanism is an enormous driver of postsecondary success.

"There is evidence of success not just with Say Yes scholarships but the supporting programs that were built out and put in place to help the students to be successful because it's not just about having a scholarship, it's about the wrap-around support that we provide to the student that helps them be successful."

For Quenneville and many Buffalo business leaders, the economy is filled with as many challenges as opportunities and a clear need to recruit, train, and mentor future business leadership that is stronger and more diverse than the one in place currently.



Community Spotlight - Parent

Dr. Wendy Mistretta

District Parent Coordinating Council

Dr. Wendy Mistretta is a shining example of branching multilingual education awareness in New York. Born in Falconer near Jamestown, Wendy experienced a semester in a study abroad program while attending PACE University. After earning her degree in international management and working in the field for a few years, she moved to Buffalo to attend Buffalo State's Student Personnel Administration Master's Degree program, with the goal of working with students wishing to study abroad. She was subsequently hired as the Assistant Director of International Education at Buffalo State College, where she worked for six years.

"I accomplished my PhD. My father was custodian of school and my mom worked at home," Wendy said. "It took me 10 years. It was my entire 30s. I accomplished this two months before I hit 40."

A mother of two, Wendy has spent many years working alongside Say Yes Buffalo. "I made the decision to put them at Buffalo public school International School #45. It was our community school, it was kids from all over the world, which meant a lot to me. I had no idea how engaged I would become!"

She served on a newly-formed Multilingual Education Advisory Committee.

"There was a Council for Great City Schools report that I participated in as a parent in the development of how education was going for English language learners. Then, I got more involved with the District Parent Coordinating Council because they reached out to me. We weren't hearing enough about the challenges from our multilingual families." Wendy has served all executive roles for DPCC, including Parliamentarian, Corresponding Secretary, Vice President, and President.

Her son is now a Say Yes scholar in college and her daughter is a senior in high school. "Two kids will be in college at the same time, so I'm grateful to be a recipient."

Wendy reminisced about being a first-generation college student herself and how her high school business teacher was a role model who guided her through the process. "We picked majors, went through what colleges we wanted to go to, applied, wrote our essays. If I had not had her, I don't know where I'd be."

She expressed her concerns in education today. "Kids come into our country who don't understand our system of education and don't speak the language. Not only do they not know who to ask, they can't. There's an additional level of challenge that is beyond what most of our families experience. Early on, I went to all the Say Yes Committee meetings and I was always asking, what are you doing for the multilingual families?"

"Say Yes does benefit everyone. It benefits our students and our families. It benefits our schools and our local colleges, and our communities because of the great outreach and partnership. When I worked at Buffalo State, I saw kids who were struggling academically to perform the college level work and I didn't understand at the time why that was."

Wendy encourages people to consider what a donation could do. "Just 20 years ago, we were lucky if we had 15% of Buffalo Public School students graduating from college. That is not sustainable in our economy. Say Yes is so, so valuable because it does so much to help every family."



"Education keeps people here. If someone has to leave to get an education, it is so much harder to get them back."

Community Spotlight - Scholar

Emmanuel “Manny” Wright

Medaille College

Emmanuel “Manny” Wright is not only a first-generation college student with four consecutive Dean’s List semesters in a row, like many Say Yes scholars, he’s also a first-generation American.

Studying law, Manny gained crucial experience as a paid intern at the Legal Aid Bureau and Hodgson Russ through Say Yes Buffalo’s Internships & Career Pathways Program.

“With Legal Aid, I did an internship in summer of 2020,” he said. “I was working on the philosophical and legal aspect of crime. My next internship with Hodgson Russ really left a mark. With Hodgson Russ, that was my first real experience with law. I worked alongside the Human Resources team and alongside attorneys. I was part of the diversity team, and I helped them create a pipeline for high school students in Buffalo.”

Manny has made long-lasting change for their legal teams. “I actually made a mentorship program for Hodgson Russ called the Mentorship Web where I came up with a mentorship concept. They needed a system to keep the mentors in touch with the mentees.”

Without the relationship to Say Yes at Medaille College, a member institution of the Say Yes to Education private college compact, Manny said he wouldn’t have had such a strong connection to the services of Say Yes Buffalo.

“Say Yes has helped me beyond words, really.” Manny recalled. “There’s a level of comfort and consolation that Say Yes and Medaille give students of color. The Say Yes team opened doors for me like getting my internships with Legal Aid and Hodgson Russ. The community aspect of Say Yes has me stay in touch with a lot of people. I’m seeing faces coming through the Say Yes pipeline and it’s always inspiring meeting people.”

“Say Yes has helped me beyond words, really. There’s a level of comfort and consolation that Say Yes and Medaille give students of color. The Say Yes team opened doors for me like getting my internships with Legal Aid and Hodgson Russ.”

moves like a stream, flowing like a river. But someone who is first-generation or whose parents don’t know how to support them, it’s an obstacle course. There are emotions occurring all the time. You might have to work to fend for yourself. You’re learning new concepts; you’re trying to navigate your career while navigating your life as a student. It’s really an obstacle course.”

Manny will be graduating with a Bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice in 2023.



Community Spotlight - Alumna

Deja Middlebrook, JD, MSW

Staff Attorney, Legal Aid Bureau

Deja Middlebrook works at Legal Aid of Buffalo where she spends most of her time at Buffalo City Court, representing low-income criminal defendants, from teenagers to senior citizens. She attributes her success to Say Yes Buffalo.

“When I first heard about Say Yes, it was surreal just to think that I can go to whatever college in New York that I get accepted to, that was a big deal for me,” Deja said. “I found out I was graduating in December, so I didn’t have a lot of time for my parents to plan, so it came in the best time possible.”

Born and raised in Buffalo, Deja attended City Honors and McKinley High School. She moved from high school to eight years of college, collecting a law degree and Master’s in Social Work along the way. At each step, there was Say Yes.

“Say Yes launched and swooped right in to help me figure which colleges I wanted to apply to, helped me to ensure I did my SATs and they helped me from there even through grad school.” Deja also interned at Say Yes Buffalo to assist students in Buffalo Public Schools.

This experience offered Deja more insight on how Say Yes impacts students in Buffalo Public Schools. “I feel like I was exposed to so much in just the one year that I was here, but for me the part that made me smile the most was they allowed me to facilitate youth groups for middle school students and we did a lot of different topics like bullying or just goal planning,” she explained.

“Say Yes is allowing a pipeline of exposure, so for people who may think they want to go to law school or not sure, or don’t know anyone who is a lawyer, it gives people an opportunity to give that access that I know I didn’t have at first. Say Yes helped me get there.”

As someone who has benefitted from the Say Yes investment in young people like herself, Deja feels strongly about the return this investment promises. “I would definitely say donate to Say Yes,” she said. “It makes all the difference.” She knows firsthand, and she backs it up, having become a regular contributor to the scholarship endowment fund herself.



“I can tell just from the generations below me from the internships, even young kids are becoming conditioned to the fact that they can go to college. I don’t think that’s how it was before 2013. I think this is the change: the education that allows kindergarteners that they can go to college and be whatever they want to be. It’s that hope, it’s that dream, it’s attainable for all of us. I would say definitely donate, please donate. It makes a difference.”

Community Leadership Council

The Say Yes Buffalo Partnership gets much of its strength from the collaborative governance bodies that govern and guide its work. At the top of the structure is the Say Yes Buffalo Community Leadership Council, which is chaired by the Mayor, Deputy Erie County Executive, President of the Board of Education, the New York State Department of Education Regent, New York State Senator, New York State Assemblyperson for our region and the Say Yes Buffalo Board of Directors Chair. This body meets three times per year to tackle barriers to the work of Say Yes Buffalo, share updates on the partnership's overall progress and provide opportunities for public input and dialogue.



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Board of Directors

The Say Yes Buffalo Board of Directors provides oversight for all Say Yes Buffalo programs and operations and focuses on fundraising and policy related to the program's scholarships. This board is comprised of private individuals who are volunteering their time to raise the funds needed to provide the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship in perpetuity. Board members also determine eligibility and administrative guidelines and advocate on behalf of the program.



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Operating Committee

The Say Yes Buffalo Operating Committee meets every three weeks to monitor progress and ensure stability of programs. This body is comprised of city officials, the County Commissioner of Social Services, parent leaders, the Board of Education, Superintendent, teachers' and administrators' union presidents, higher education officials and leaders from the region's two largest private foundations.



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EMMANUEL WRIGHT
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Say Yes Forever Endowment Campaign Committee

The Say Yes Forever Scholarship Endowment Campaign Committee, chaired by Nick and Courtney Sinatra, focuses on fundraising for the Say Yes Buffalo Endowment Fund. The Say Yes Forever Campaign is a 5-year, \$100 million campaign that is seeded by a \$25 million anonymous challenge grant and will ensure the Say Yes Buffalo scholarship is funded in perpetuity. The committee is comprised of business, community, religious and parent leaders.



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The Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship Eligibility



A group of scholars welcoming Say Yes to Education founder George Weiss back to Buffalo.

Say Yes Buffalo provides scholarships and grants to eligible graduates of Buffalo public and charter schools to all State University of New York (SUNY) and City University of New York (CUNY) and nearly 100 private colleges and universities. Eligible students who enroll at a Say Yes participating college can receive a scholarship to cover up to 100% of the cost of tuition after Federal, State and institutional aid have been applied.

Say Yes Buffalo scholarships and grants are available to students who:

- 1. Reside in the city of Buffalo.**
- 2. At minimum, complete grades 9-12, in consecutive years, at a public or charter school in the City of Buffalo or enroll in and complete the Buffalo Public School Adult Education College Career Institute.**
- 3. Graduate from a public or charter school in Buffalo in June 2013 or after.**
- 4. Enroll full-time at a Say Yes college within one year of high school graduation; and,**
- 5. Apply for all federal and state financial aid programs available (FAFSA and TAP), including Selective Service as required by law.**

Programs and Supports

Birth - 12th Grade

The Say Yes Buffalo Partnership brings support services directly into school buildings, making them easier to access for students and families. The programs and services explained here are available to assist Buffalo Public School students reach their full academic potential and prepare them for high school graduation, college and career.

Social Services & Health Home Care Coordination

Say Yes Buffalo school-based staff, called Family Support Specialists (FSS), provide services to every school building. They are responsible for working with students struggling with attendance or behavior problems and their families to get back on track. FSS connect students and their families to physical health, mental health, after school and basic needs programs. They also provide individual and group mentoring for the student and/or family and assist families with navigating school processes including registration, enrollment and parent-teacher conferences. Service is provided to students and families through two programs, school-based preventive services and Health Home care coordination.

Mental Health Care

Mental health counseling is available to students within their school buildings, at clinic sites, and during the pandemic, virtually through Telehealth. Participation in counseling can be self-identified or referred by teachers, parents and other school building administrators. Services are provided by licensed clinical mental health professionals and are billed to the student's health insurance, which includes Medicaid.

In-School and Mobile Health Care

Some schools have in-school health clinics that provide students with basic health care, including physical screenings and immunizations. Mobile health clinic buses are parked at various school locations to provide primary and reproductive health care to students where in-school services are not available. Services are provided by licensed medical professionals and are billed to the student's health insurance (private insurance or Medicaid). Families who do not have health insurance receive assistance obtaining it.

Legal Advice

In partnership with the Erie County Bar Association's Volunteer Lawyers Project (VLP), free legal advice is available for all Buffalo Public School students and families on non-criminal legal matters. While in-person clinics have been suspended due to Covid-19, legal matters are currently being facilitated over the phone and online. In addition, the VLP facilitates monthly legal clinics online offering information and consultation on housing, taxpayer rights and family issues.

Summer Camp

Free Summer Camp is available for Buffalo Public School students in Pre-Kindergarten through 6th grade. These full- and half-day programs combine academics with fun enrichment activities and are located throughout the city at churches and community centers. In summer of 2021, Say Yes returned to in-person programming.

Early Childhood Development

Our program provides services, resources, and free supports to families, caregivers, and educators to support children, birth through 6 years of age. We provide free developmental screenings ("Ages & Stages



Questionnaire”) to monitor child development, education on developmental milestones, and activities to support healthy development. We also provide connections to community-based organizations for resources such as diapers, clothing, parenting classes, counseling and free training to educators and community organizations around social-emotional development and supports.

Strong Community Schools

Say Yes is the Buffalo Public School’s strategic partner in managing and delivering their community schools programs. A Community School brings together school and neighborhood resources to improve student learning and create stronger and healthier families. The Community School staff integrate academics, health and social services, and community development and engagement. Twenty-one schools have become a hub of information and resources to meet the needs of students, parents, and community members. In the past year, Community School staff has brought its popular programming into the virtual realm, offering enrichment activity and vital community information, before transitioning back to in-person programming in fall 2021.

Parent Centers

The Parent Centers are a part of the Strong Community Schools Strategy and are located at four Community High Schools (Bennett, East, Lafayette, and South Park). The Parent Centers provide families with education, resources and programming that build parents’ knowledge, skills and networks for supporting and partnering in their child’s education. To achieve this goal a variety of activities, services, and learning sessions are offered daily and virtually in response to Covid-19.

Boys and Men of Color

The Say Yes Buffalo “Breaking Barriers” Youth Leadership Council is a program of the Greater Buffalo Racial Equity Roundtable’s Boys and Men of Color Initiative that is aimed at accelerating positive outcomes for boys and young men of color across the cradle-to-career continuum. Participation is open to young men 12 to 24 years. Participants agree to a one-year commitment where they learn how to elevate their voice to advocate for social justice, racial equity and policy change in our community. For more information visit breakingbarriersbuffalo.org.

College and Financial Aid Application Supports

Free college and financial aid application support is available to all Buffalo public and charter school students through our partnership with the University at Buffalo. Staff are embedded in every school building and virtually to help students and their families with group and one-on-one assistance with their FAFSA and TAP applications as well as with the requirements and guidelines of the Say Yes and Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo scholarships.

Programs and Supports for College Students and Alumni

Once a Buffalo public or charter high school graduate enrolls at any SUNY/CUNY or Say Yes partner private college, they become a Say Yes Buffalo Scholar. As a Scholar, they are eligible for additional supports and services after they graduate from high school.

College Kickoff for Incoming Freshmen

Each summer, Say Yes Buffalo hosts a free “College Kickoff” event to introduce students to college expectations and give them the tools to be successful. All graduating high school seniors are eligible to attend. This year’s event was held virtually in June 2021, and included technology giveaways so that students would be equipped for online classes.

Internship & Career Pathways Program

Buffalo Public School graduates who have completed their first year of college are able to apply for paid internships throughout Western New York. Students receive support with coaching, workshops, and trainings on topics such as resumés, preparing cover letters, interviewing skills and networking. These opportunities have been cultivated specifically to provide a direct pipeline from college to career after students earn their degree.



Scholar Mentoring Program

Buffalo Public School graduates entering their freshman year at a Western New York college or university can apply to be matched with a mentor. The pair meets consistently for 18 months and the mentor guides the student through the transition to college.

Summer Success Academies

Say Yes Buffalo scholars who attend Buffalo State College, SUNY Erie or Medaille College have the opportunity to enroll in free summer programs prior to the start of their freshman college year to help acclimate them to college life and routines. Students are eligible to be paid for participating through the City of Buffalo’s Mayor Summer Youth Employment program.

Program Funders

Thank you to our major public and private partners that help us fund programs and operations.

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Thank you to the individuals, families, foundations, businesses and organizations that have made gifts to fund annual Say Yes college scholarships for public and charter school students in Buffalo as of 12/1/21.

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THE FUTURE...



"If it wasn't for my interest in law and the direct career counseling I received from Say Yes Buffalo, I might not have been able to realize my true calling for social work. I never thought about social work before, but I realized I didn't need a law degree to do what I wanted to do career-wise when I started school."

Jennifer Ray

South Park High School, '13
Medaille College, '18

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Thank You!

Two long-time board members who have made a significant impact on the mission of Say Yes Buffalo completed their terms of service last year. We thank them for their service and commitment to the youth of Buffalo.



Dr. Danis J. Gehl



Daniel Lewis

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In Loving Memory: Hon. Hugh Scott

THE FUTURE...



The Say Yes Buffalo Alumni Network

As Say Yes Buffalo approaches its 10th anniversary, we are excited to announce the launch of the Say Yes Buffalo Alumni Network. The network aims to connect with former Buffalo public and charter school graduates who have earned a college degree or program certificate since our launch in 2013. Our mission is to connect with as many alumni as possible as to continue the pipeline of support from cradle to college to career. The launch of the Alumni Network was organized by a planning committee of recent graduates including Cheyenne Ketter-Franklin (Bennett High School '13, University at Buffalo '17), Danielle Burruss (McKinley High School '14; Buffalo State College '19), Deja Middlebrook (McKinley High School '13, University at Buffalo '17) and Amber Quinney (Hutch Tech High School '13, Canisius College '18).

The alumni network officially kicked-off on April 2, 2021. In lieu of an in-person event, the committee hosted a virtual event on Zoom with the theme "Rep Your College." In the spirit of being a college graduate, attendees wore attire that represented their alma maters. The event was a fun way for graduates to connect; it featured an overview of the Alumni Network, an interactive storytelling exercise and the opportunity for alumni to exchange introductions and engage in peer networking.

In addition to peer networking, the attendees learned about opportunities to give back and get involved with Say Yes Buffalo. Cheyenne Ketter-Franklin is one of a growing number of graduates who are choosing to give back. When asked about her commitment as a monthly donor to the Say Yes Buffalo Scholarship Endowment, Cheyenne said: "I am a donor to Say Yes Buffalo, both because I have seen evidence of its success through myself and my peers, and because I, like Say Yes, believe in the importance of investing in our future forever. As an alumna of Say Yes Buffalo, I encourage all who have benefitted from it to contribute so that others may receive the support we have to pursue their educational and professional goals."

To date, more than 250 graduates have signed up for the Alumni Network. Key benefits include assistance with finding employment, support with navigating life after college, opportunities to mentor other Say Yes scholars, and a supportive environment to cultivate relationships with other Buffalo public and charter school graduates. The vision is to provide alumni with a centralized point of connection to Say Yes Buffalo and a space to catalogue their achievements and life milestones. The Alumni Network is an initiative developed by Tanice Pendergrass, Say Yes Development and Strategic Partnership Manager. To get involved, alumni may contact her at tpendergrass@sayyesbuffalo.org.

- Amber Quinney

...IS NOW

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