

HOW ARE STUDENTS IN THE FOSTER SYSTEM FARING IN **NEW YORK'S BIG 4 SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND SURROUNDING COUNTIES?**

Buffalo Public Schools and Erie County

Key Findings (2017–18 through 2024–25 school years):

In a typical 180-day school year, **Buffalo Public Schools students in the foster system missed about forty-one days (eight weeks) of school, or about one day a week**—more than three and a half times the number of days than their peers in the foster system in Rest of Erie County.

Buffalo Public Schools had high rates of out-of-school suspensions for all students, with rates more than twice as high for their students in the foster system as compared to their peers who weren't in the foster system in Buffalo Public Schools.

Black or African American students in the foster system in Buffalo Public Schools had out-of-school suspension rates that were nearly twice as high as those same students who weren't in the foster system.

Overall, **Black or African American students had the highest rates of out-of-school suspensions of any racial group** across the region.

Average Enrollment (Number of Students)

SFS = Students in the Foster System SNFS = Students not in the Foster System

Buffalo Public Schools		Rest of Erie County	
SFS	SNFS	SFS	SNFS
58 ¹	30,693	183	90,586

Average Enrollment By Race (Number of Students)

Buffalo Public Schools			Rest of Erie County		
	SFS	SNFS		SFS	SNFS
Black or African American	31	13,332	Black or African American	58	10,486
Hispanic or Latino	16	6,418	Hispanic or Latino	26	6,075
White	18	5,524	White	84	64,817

Lowest Average Attendance Rates (Regionally)

Lowest average attendance, by foster status:

Buffalo Public Schools students in the foster system



77%

On average, in a typical 180-day school year, Buffalo Public Schools students in the foster system missed the most school in the region at 23 percent of school days, or forty-one days (eight weeks).

Lowest average attendance, by foster status and race:

Black or African American Buffalo Public Schools students in the foster system



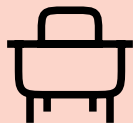
74%

On average, in a typical 180-day school year, Black or African American Buffalo Public Schools students in the foster system missed about 26 percent of school days, or forty-seven days (over nine weeks), the most of any student subgroup by race and foster status.

Highest Average In-School Suspension Rates (Regionally)

Highest average in-school suspension rate, by foster status:

Rest of Erie County students in the foster system



8%

(1 in 13 students)

On average, in a typical school year, students in the foster system in Rest of Erie County received in-school suspensions at a rate *more than twice as high* as their peers who weren't in the foster system in Rest of Erie County (3 percent or 1 in 33 students).

Highest average in-school suspension rate, by foster status and race:

Rest of Erie County Black or African American students in the foster system



10%

(1 in 10 students)

On average, in a typical school year, Black or African American students in the foster system in Rest of Erie County received in-school suspensions at a rate *slightly higher* than their Black or African American peers who weren't in the foster system in Rest of Erie County (8 percent or 1 in 13 students).

Highest Average Out-of-School Suspension Rates (Regionally)

Highest average out-of-school suspension rate, by foster status:

Buffalo Public Schools students in the foster system

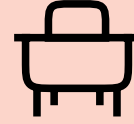


26%
(1 in 4 students)

On average, in a typical school year, students in the foster system in Buffalo Public Schools received out-of-school suspensions at a rate *more than twice as high* as their peers who weren't in the foster system in Buffalo Public Schools (11 percent or 1 in 9 students).

Highest average out-of-school suspension rate, by foster status and race:

Buffalo Public Schools Black or African American students in the foster system



35%
(1 in 3 students)

On average, in a typical school year, Black or African American students in the foster system in Buffalo Public Schools received out-of-school suspensions at a rate *more than twice as high* as their Black or African American peers who weren't in the foster system in Buffalo Public Schools (17 percent, or 1 in 6 students).

Policy Recommendations:

- **Child Welfare.** New York State Office of Children and Families (OCFS) and the Erie County Department of Social Services (DSS) should conduct an in-depth analysis of the attendance and discipline outcomes of students in the foster system served by schools in the region and provide targeted support to students and school staff, where necessary, to improve outcomes. Particular attention should be paid to the experiences of Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino students due to their greater risk for lower attendance rates and suspensions.
- **Education.** New York State Education Department (SED), Erie County school districts, Erie County schools, Buffalo Public Schools, and Erie County charter schools should partner with Erie County DSS to identify students in the foster system; develop and provide trauma-informed practices trainings and restorative discipline practices training for school staff that addresses the unique needs of foster youth; and provide holistic social-emotional and behavioral supports for students.

Notes

¹ It is important to note that the average enrollment number for students in the foster system in Buffalo Public Schools is likely higher as there was no enrollment data reported for students in the foster system from the 2017–18 through 2019–20 school years. Additionally, the annual enrollment ranged from twenty-four to forty-two students from the 2020–21 through the 2023–24 school years with a significant uptick of 157 students in the 2024–25 school year. The significant increase in the number of students is likely due to more accurate reporting.

This data sheet is informed by data received from the New York State Department of Education (NYSED) regarding foster and non-foster students. The data is a cumulative assessment of data inclusive of the 2017–18 through 2024–25 school years.

For more information about the data and methodology, see the Appendix section of "[Lost Time: Foster Students' Educational Experience in New York's Big 4 School Districts and Surrounding Counties.](#)"