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Buffalo's "Out of Time" Schools and Plans to Keep Them in the Public School System

There are four "Out of Time" schools in Buffalo. They are East High School, Lafayette High School, Bennett High School and Martin Luther King (MLK) Multicultural Institute K-8.

Because these schools have not met the NYSED standards of achievement in the allotted time, they will be phased out. Bennett and MLK will phase out by July 2017. East and Lafayette will phase out by 2018. These schools will close if a new school proposal is not approved for the site.

Among the options that the Buffalo Board of Education is considering to "phase in" at the schools are:

- Conversion Charter School: a previously Buffalo Public School becomes a Charter School
- EPO (Educational Partnership Organization): the school is run by a non-profit organization with a proven record of success in reforming low-performing schools.
- State University of New York Lead Partner: SUNY would take over the school
- Local Innovative Program: a highly innovative new school proposed and operated by the Buffalo Public Schools with approval of the SED
- Independent Charter School: A Charter Management Organization may choose to apply to the Board of Regents to operate an Independent Charter School.

The Buffalo District has issued a request for proposals (RFP) from interested parties. The proposals are due on December 12, 2014. On January 28, 2015, the Board of Education will vote on the proposals. In February, they will be submitted to the Board of Regents.

So far, Lafayette High School has developed a plan which has been submitted to the Board of Education and has been approved. It must also be approved by the State Education Department. Under this plan, Lafayette would remain a Buffalo Public

School. It has been struggling against the challenges of a population in which 70% of the students speak little or no English. A sample of the languages spoken by Lafayette students are: Thai, Arabic, Burmese and Somalian. The graduation rate is a mere 26%. Johns Hopkins University, an EPO with the school, left unsuccessfully. There is now great hope that the formation of a two-year Newcomer Academy set up to immerses students in English quickly and effectively will ease the way for the diverse group. Once English has been mastered further studies will be offered with an emphasis on career ed.

Bennett High School is also preparing a plan to keep the school a Buffalo Public School. Bennett High would become a neighborhood school for zip codes 14214, 14215 and 14216. The preparation of the plan is under the auspices of the Bennett High School Alumni Association whose members are vested in keeping Bennett as a public school. The vision is to have every student who enters the 9th grade find a pathway to graduation through a number of programs that the school would offer. There will be an honors program for both college-bound and career-bound students. Coursework preparation will lead to senior internships and journeymen positions. Trades and business councils will be formed to create a bridge between the school and the workplace. 9th graders in the general education population will be in the Freshman Academy. Their schedules will allow for intense skills building in English language arts, science and mathematics. After exploratory courses in 9th grade, students will self-select into the college prep or CTE curriculum. Evening credit-recovery programs would be offered for overage/under credited students. Provisions have been made for special education and ELL students to benefit fully from the program. Finally, there would be an in-house GED program. The entire program is designed to find a clear pathway to graduation for every student. The culture of the school would be changed to one where positive relationships will hold the key to having students feel supported and nurtured.

Bennett will hold a public meeting at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, December 2, to unveil the entire plan to the community.