



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



BTF RELEASES DEVASTATING STUDENT ABSENTEE REPORT

The BTF today released a devastating study of student absenteeism in the Buffalo Public Schools.

The study was based upon K-6 absenteeism records, obtained from school district records, that were analyzed by Drew Cullen of NYSUT, the BTF's State affiliate, and the BTF.

Ever since the District eliminated almost all of the attendance teachers, the BTF has been advocating for their return based upon teacher concerns.

Attendance teachers make home visits, contact parents or guardians, secure assistance from agencies and if necessary have the authority to seek court intervention if a parent needs help.

"One of the biggest concerns of teachers is student absenteeism. If students are absent, they not only fall behind in their studies but also slow down the rest of the class's progress. Yet, teachers are blamed for poor performance when they have no control over student absenteeism", stated Phil Rumore, President of the Buffalo Teachers Federation.

The chart released by the BTF covers the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years and the combination of both school years for grades K-6.

The results show a staggering absenteeism. (See Chart)

Some Important Findings

- In 2007-08, 43% of the students in K-6 were absent more than 21 days
- In 2008-09, 44.6% of the students in K-6 were absent more than 21 days
- In 2007-08, 1,398 students of 15,182 students in K-6 were absent 21-25 days (9.21%)
- In 2008-09, 1,537 students of 15,690 were absent 21-25 days (9.8%)
- In 2007-08 and 2008-09, Almost 10% of the students missed more than 35 days of school

"This is confirmation of what teachers have been saying for years – student absenteeism is horrendous and is severely impacting on all students' success.

The study shows the horrific magnitude of the student absenteeism problem and shows how misleading it is to use attendance averages.

Although an average student absence of 17 days is terrible, the average masks the true absenteeism problem that finds thousands of students absent 16-30 days.

If it is this bad in the elementary schools, I can guarantee it is far worse in the high schools.

Until we address and correct the horrendous student absenteeism problem, we are dooming our students to failure," Rumore continued.



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"Students' absenteeism in Buffalo is horrendous, yet parents were told to keep their children home on May 16th, sending the message to their children that it's all right to skip school if you don't like what is occurring in their school. What a great message," Rumore continued

BTF Suggestions:

- Bring back attendance teachers (truant officers) who were cut several years ago. There should be one at each school.
- Bring parents and students together in focus sessions to determine why students are absent and what we can do to assist them.
- Identify student absenteeism problems when they start in the beginning of the year.
- Since absenteeism problems begin in the elementary grades, ensure that attention is also directed there.
- Have a District attendance policy that is enforced.
- Find out why parents are having difficulties enforcing their child's attendance and work with them or, if necessary, have attendance teachers work with them to use social services or the courts to solve the problems.
- In short, bring all stakeholders together to find solutions to the devastating absenteeism in B.P.S.

"I understand that the District has been working on this issue with a consultant; however, it is important to begin corrected action "yesterday" and to advise everyone of the extent of the problem," Rumore concluded



**BUFFALO CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT STUDENT ABSENCES, GRADES K-6
2007-08 AND 2008-09**

Student Days Absent	2007-08			2008-09			2007-08 and 2008-09 Combined		
	Count of Students in Each Absences Range	% of All Students	Cumulative % [A]	Count of Students in Each Absences Range	% of All Students	Cumulative % [A]	Count of Students in Each Absences Range	% of All Students	Cumulative % [A]
0-4	2,360	15.54%	100.00%	2,014	12.84%	100.00%	4,374	14.17%	100.00%
5-10	3,685	24.27%	84.46%	3,867	24.65%	87.16%	7,552	24.46%	85.83%
11-15	2,548	16.78%	60.18%	2,812	17.92%	62.52%	5,360	17.36%	61.37%
16-20	1,999	13.17%	43.40%	2,155	13.73%	44.60%	4,154	13.46%	44.01%
21-25	1,398	9.21%	30.23%	1,537	9.80%	30.86%	2,935	9.51%	30.55%
26-30	1,009	6.65%	21.02%	1,054	6.72%	21.06%	2,063	6.68%	21.04%
31-35	676	4.45%	14.38%	707	4.51%	14.35%	1,383	4.48%	14.36%
36-40	465	3.06%	9.93%	475	3.03%	9.84%	940	3.04%	9.88%
41-45	332	2.19%	6.86%	357	2.28%	6.81%	689	2.23%	6.84%
46-50	228	1.50%	4.68%	208	1.33%	4.54%	436	1.41%	4.61%
51-55	139	0.92%	3.17%	147	0.94%	3.21%	286	0.93%	3.19%
56-60	109	0.72%	2.26%	99	0.63%	2.28%	208	0.67%	2.27%
61-65	54	0.36%	1.54%	73	0.47%	1.64%	127	0.41%	1.59%
66-70	45	0.30%	1.19%	53	0.34%	1.18%	98	0.32%	1.18%
71-75	45	0.30%	0.89%	45	0.29%	0.84%	90	0.29%	0.86%
76-80	22	0.14%	0.59%	25	0.16%	0.55%	47	0.15%	0.57%
81-85	19	0.13%	0.45%	20	0.13%	0.40%	39	0.13%	0.42%
86-90	19	0.13%	0.32%	8	0.05%	0.27%	27	0.09%	0.29%
91-95	11	0.07%	0.20%	8	0.05%	0.22%	19	0.06%	0.21%
96-100	1	0.01%	0.13%	3	0.02%	0.17%	4	0.01%	0.15%
101-125	14	0.09%	0.12%	12	0.08%	0.15%	26	0.08%	0.13%
126+	4	0.03%	0.03%	11	0.07%	0.07%	15	0.05%	0.05%
Grand Total	15,182			15,690			30,872		
Average	17.00			17.42			17.21		

[A] - The percentage of students who had absences in that range or higher. For example, in 2007-08, 21% of the K-6 students missed more than 25 days of school (5 weeks of instruction). Also, almost 10% of the students missed more than 35 days of instruction.