

About Autism

(From Autism Speaks)

Autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication.* Autism affects an estimated 1 in 59 children. We now know that there is not one autism but many subtypes, and each person with autism can have unique strengths and challenges.

A combination of genetic and environmental factors influence the development of autism, and autism often is accompanied by medical issues such as:

- Gastrointestinal (GI) disorders
- Seizures
- Sleep disturbances

Many people with autism also have sensory issues. These can include aversions to certain sights, sounds and other sensations.

Autism's hallmark signs usually appear by age 2 to 3. Often, it can be diagnosed as early as 18 months. Some associated development delays can appear even earlier.



* In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association merged four distinct autism diagnoses into one umbrella diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). They included autistic disorder, childhood disintegrative disorder, pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS) and Asperger syndrome.



A Commitment to Our Students

City Honors School, Olmsted Middle/High School and the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts are public, grade 5-12, theme-based magnet schools. Established to bring together students of diverse backgrounds throughout the city, magnet schools foster lessons in understanding, cooperation and leadership for the benefit of future generations. For this reason, STARS (STudents with Autism Rising to Success) has become an important part of the mission and identity of our schools.

Students in the STARS program and those in the traditional education program at our magnet schools learn and grow from their experiences with one another.



Student Placement in STARS

Student placement in STARS is made through your child's Committee on Special Education team and the BPS Placement Office. The STARS Program is an academically based program and not equipped to support all manifestations of autism and related disabilities. In addition, not all students on the autism spectrum require a specialized program for students with Autism. Your Committee on Special Education (CSE) team, and BPS placement coordinators will work with your family to determine whether STARS may be a fit for your child's needs.

For more information, please contact

Buffalo Public Schools
Special Education Placement Office
33 Ash Street 14204
716-816-4746



Buffalo Public Schools Special Education Department Mission

The BPS Special Education Department supports students and families by providing an educational foundation that enables students to think, communicate, and apply skills in the real world.

The Buffalo Public School District does not discriminate on the basis of an individual's actual or perceived race, color, religion, religious practice, national origin, ethnic group, sex (including sexual harassment and sexual violence), gender identity, sexual orientation, political affiliation, age, marital status, military status, veteran status, disability, weight or any other basis prohibited by New York state and/or federal non-discrimination laws in its programs and activities.

The STARS Programs



STudents with Autism Rising to Success



Buffalo Public Schools



Students with Autism Rising to Success

The STARS Programs serve special education students who are on the Autism spectrum within the Buffalo Public Schools. Founded in 2005 at City Honors School, the success of the program led to the creation of STARS programs at the Olmsted Middle/High School and the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts.

The STARS Program at each location includes:

- A continuous grade 5-12 setting providing stability, familiarity and design for progressive student independence.
- Instructional practices and therapeutic programming specific to students with Autism.
- Staff with specialized experience and education in working with students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).
- Access to the general education curriculum within a small classroom setting for core classes.



The STARS programs are built on the understanding that the autism spectrum is wide and varies from severe to mild. Our curriculum and related services are designed to meet the individual student needs. We serve our students by committing to help them work to their greatest potential academically, while becoming active members of our school and city.

Multiple diploma options are available to the students based on individual need and pathways. The majority of STARS students work toward full Regents diplomas. All STARS students are prepared for the New York State Career Development and Occupational Studies Credential (CDOS) through specialized Career and Technical Education coursework and experiences.



Program Services

Social Skills: Social skills training is embedded into our daily curriculum including understanding social cues, daily living skills, job readiness, life skills, and self-advocacy.

Career & Technical Education: Students are involved in many entrepreneurial activities in the community to provide career exploration and link students with demanding industries. These goals are supported by on-site work experiences, volunteer opportunities, community outings and guest speakers/presentations.

Transition: Transition services include links with care coordination and The Office of Persons with Developmental Disabilities, meetings with ACCES-VR coordinators, and post-secondary planning, including college admissions.

Research-Based Behavior

Management: STARS utilizes research-based behavioral supports such as positive reinforcement and individual behavior modification plans.

