United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name  Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32)
other names/site number  B.U.I.L.D. Academy, Bennett Park Montessori
name of related multiple property listing  N/A

Location

street & number  342 Clinton Street
not for publication

city or town  Buffalo
vicinity
state  New York code  NY county  Erie code  029 zip code  14211

2. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this X nomination _ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X_ meets _ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Signature of certifying official/Title  Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official  Date

Title  State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register ___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register ___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper  Date of Action
#### 5. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership of Property</th>
<th>Category of Property</th>
<th>Number of Resources within Property</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>X building(s)</td>
<td>Contributing: 1 noncontributing: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X public - Local</td>
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<td>[ ] public - Federal</td>
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**Name of Property**                   **County and State**

- Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32)
- Erie County, NY

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

- N/A

#### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**

- EDUCATION/school

**Current Functions**

- EDUCATION/school

#### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**

- LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS/Tudor Revival; Modern movement

**Materials**

- **foundation:** limestone
- **walls:** Brick, precast concrete
- **roof:** membrane
- **other:**
Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32) is a single building that reflects two distinct building phases. The east portion reflects the original construction in 1913, with a three-story steel-framed brick school with an H-shaped plan. The west portion, which is non-historic, was constructed in 2009 and consists of a three-story brick and metal clad modern addition extending west and north in an L-shaped plan. The two portions are visibly distinct in terms of massing, materials, style, and plan; they are connected through an internal connecting corridor with an entrance near the center of the entire building. The east portion is a good example of a Tudor Revival style school building from the early twentieth century, with concrete details such as spandrels, arches, and parapets above a rusticated stone raised basement. The west portion exemplifies early twenty-first-century construction, with contemporary cladding, one-over-one metal sash windows, and a horizontal design emphasis. Inside, the plan features a systematized path of double-loaded corridors that traverse the building in an L shape, connecting both portions of the building. The classrooms receive light from the exterior walls. An auditorium is located at the center of the east portion on the first two stories, and other large areas include a pool and cafeteria in the raised basement. Overall, the building’s form, style, materials, and plan demonstrate the building’s function as a purpose-built school through the entire period of significance.

Narrative Description

Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32), known historically as B.U.I.L.D. Academy and today as Bennett Park Montessori, is located at 342 Clinton Street in Buffalo, New York. The school uses the address of 342 Clinton Street, but the parcel is identified as 32 Cedar in city and county records. Despite Cedar being renamed Essex Lane, the parcel remains known as 32 Cedar, referencing the previous Cedar School, which occupied the site before the present building. The site is bound by Clinton Street to the south, Essex Lane to the east, adjacent dwellings toward Pine Street to the west, and William Street to the north. The building is set back from the Clinton Street sidewalk and surrounded by a grassed lawn to the south and north, with a small playground surrounded by meandering asphalt pathways to the north. A wrought-iron fence follows the Clinton Street elevation and a later iron fence, which sits on a concrete wall with brick end posts, follows the Essex Lane side. A group of trees planted at the rear of the playground visually separates the rear of the site from neighboring dwellings, with a small school garden planted in raised beds nearby. Asphalt parking lots are located to the southeast and northwest. The surrounding area includes a mix of modest frame dwellings, the low-rise Towne Gardens housing complex to the east, the Buffalo Technical School and JFK Recreation Center to the south, and public housing complexes and small churches in the broader vicinity. The site is located approximately one mile east of Buffalo’s central business district and city hall.
The building’s exterior conveys its two distinct periods of construction, with two, distinctive three-story brick portions, each under a flat roof. The east portion (1913) is a steel-framed brick building with H-shaped massing; Tudor Revival style concrete and stone details are indicative of its period of construction. The stone foundation is visible in the raised basement of the east portion. The western, non-historic portion (2009), has a horizontal emphasis, sprawling east-west and turning north on the site in an L-shaped massing. The two portions are visibly different in material, form, and plan, connected in 2009 by a brick and glass enclosed walkway on all floors above the entrance.

**Exterior – Original Building (1913)**

The east portion conveys the original form of the school on the exterior, stylistically distinct from the addition to the west. Built in 1913, the east portion is a Tudor Revival style brick school with an H-shaped plan rising three stories above a raised basement. The brick building rests on a rusticated stone foundation, with a raised basement with paired, square, double-hung two-over-two wood sash windows. The primary elevation faces Clinton Street to the south, with the central section set back and flanked by two large outer wings. The original main entrance is located at the center. The central entrance bay extends to a brick parapet that interrupts the roof line. A castellated Gothic stone staircase leads to a wide English Gothic arch over the main entrance. Polygonal end piers mark the first floor and parapet. Above the arch is a Gothic arcade, four windows wide and two stories high, separated by a spandrel inscribed Bennett Park School. Tudor-arched molding surmounts the central third floor windows.

The projecting wings have end piers with rectangular molded panels accenting the parapet area. On the outer bays, one-over-one double-hung wood sash windows are set in pairs within concrete quoins in the brick wall. Quatrefoil spandrels separate each window between the second and third floors on the remainder of the building. The top two stories are united by two-story quoins around the paired windows and spandrels. Molded eyebrow window heads cap the third-floor windows. A stone cornice wraps around the east portion below the flat roofline with parapets.

The rear of the east portion generally matches the primary elevation, with paired windows, spandrels, and a three-bay-wide organization with setback central bay. The auditorium protrudes from the central bay, visible as a two-story, brick-enclosed rectangular form with regularly placed brick piers on the solid brick walls on all three sides. The rusticated stone is visible at the raised basement level along the auditorium as well. Twin entrances access the auditorium at the east and west ends of the north elevation, set within enclosed brick vestibules with flat roof and round stone arches.

The rhythm, fenestration, ornamentation, and materials continue on the side elevations, although they do not have projecting wings. Secondary, central entrance bays are located on the east and west elevations and feature two doors enframed in a Tudor arch, a two- and one-half story Tudor-arched opening enframing straight headed windows, and two-story Perpendicular Gothic end piers at second and third floor levels. The west elevation entrance is currently enclosed within the 2009 connecting portion, but still visible through the glass exterior and inside the building. The Gothic end pier of the west elevation is still visible from the primary south elevation at
the connection point, where a modern glass wall with fixed panes rises to the full height of the original building to the east.

**Interior – Original Building (1913)**

The interior plan and materials illustrate a clear distinction between the original 1913 construction and the 2009 west addition. The original portion to the east forms an H plan, with a double-loaded corridor running east-west with extensions to the north and south at the ends. Today these north-south extensions have been enclosed in classroom suites. The central east-west corridor connects to the addition through the glass and brick enclosed connecting walkway on all floors, where the original exterior spandrels are still visible. From the connection, the corridor continues westward, turning at the west end to extend to the north in an L-shaped plan.

Generally, the plan repeats on all floors, with the primary east-west corridor connecting the east and west portions. Classrooms are located on both sides of the primary corridor on all floors, illuminated and ventilated by windows on the exterior. Exceptions occur in the raised basement and first floor, where the auditorium is located to the north of the primary entrance in the 1913 portion and the cafeteria and gymnasium are located to the west.

The east portion has been carpeted, but original hardwood remains visible in some classrooms. The stairwell and landings have terrazzo floors. Non-historic doorways with metal trim and modern fixed-pane transoms along the primary corridor suggest later alteration to enclose the north-south corridors into classroom suites with cloakrooms, but a sense of the original H-shaped plan can still be understood.

The auditorium is at the north end, spanning the first two floors. The space currently functions as a study hall and thus the audience seats have been removed. Hardwood floors and a stage with a large, curved plaster proscenium arch with central medallion clearly convey the space’s function as an auditorium. Wood beams cross the ceiling with lighting fixtures at regular intervals in the grid the beams create. The ceiling trim has a curved plaster molding. At the south end, a second-floor balcony is supported by five, round, painted columns with compound capitals. The balcony has wood paneling with a round-arched pattern facing the stage to the north.

On the floor below, the pool is located beneath the auditorium along the west end of the raised basement. The pool is set within a simple concrete surround in a room with glazed tile-clad walls and a flat ceiling with cross beams. Fluorescent lighting is exposed on the ceiling. Windows have been infilled with glazed tile to match the walls. Changing rooms and restrooms are located at the north end. The cafeteria is a rectangular space at the east end of the basement, with four columns and a set of straight stairs leading to the exterior at the east end.

The 1913 portion connects to the 2009 portion through an enclosed connecting walkway located to the west of the original west exterior elevation.
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Exterior – 2009 addition

The non-historic 2009 west portion is stylistically distinct from the original building as a contemporary embrace of materials and form. The design complements the architectural style of the original school, yet it creates a clear distinction between the original and the contemporary counterpart. The brick addition is L-shaped in plan, stretching west from the east portion and turning north towards the rear.

Connection to the east wing occurs at its original west end. An entrance is located at grade in the connection, with glass doors under a rounded awning. A set of paired one-over-one non-historic metal sash windows is located on each floor in the brick-clad connection point, rising to a flat roof. Paired quatrefoil spandrels are located above the second floor, a contemporary reference to the original building to the east. Tan brick surrounds the windows, referencing the concrete quoin surrounds to the east.

The primary elevation faces south and is three bays wide, with the outer bays clad in red brick and the central bay containing brick on the first floor and contemporary construction cladding on the slightly cantilevered upper floors. Tan brick creates belt courses in the otherwise red brick at the outer bays, with irregular fenestration such as an oculus and square window at the west end. The center bay has four sets of windows on each floor, conveying a horizontal emphasis in bands of five windows each. The one-over-one metal sash windows feature lower pivots, with a central fixed-pane window flanked by fixed sidelights and transom in each band. Ornamental polygons reference the ornamentation of the original building near the flat roofline.

The east and west side elevations face the sides of the property and generally mimic the rhythm, fenestration and materials of the primary elevation. The rear elevation of the addition is entirely brick, and the windows are the same as on other elevations.

Interior – 2009 Addition

The west addition clearly conveys its 2009 construction, with contemporary flooring and finishes in the corridors, classrooms, and gathering spaces. Windows are one-over-one metal sash, with the top pane fixed and lower casements opening outwards. Classrooms feature laminate tile floors or carpet. Lockers line the walls and acoustical tile ceilings with inset lighting are present.

Material differences are evident in the 1913 and 2009 construction. The older east portion has two-over-two double-hung wood sash windows set within wood casing, some with ornamental motifs or an entablature. The primary stairwell in the east portion, located at the south end, features iron baluster rails with square-paneled newel posts with rounded top and a wood handrail. Acoustical tile dropped ceilings are present in most areas, but in many places the original ceiling height has been maintained around the windows.

The gymnasium is located towards the east end of the west addition, occupying the basement and first floor. The rectangular space features treated hardwood appearing floors and basketball nets, accessed from the primary corridor as well as form the exterior to the north through double doors. The ceiling rises to the first
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story, where ductwork and fluorescent lighting is hung. Four sets of glass-block windows are located on the north end of the gymnasium with an additional window facing east at the first-floor level.

**Integrity**

Overall, the building clearly conveys a historic understanding of its original function as a school constructed in two major stages. The east portion is distinctive in its H-shaped plan, with wood sash windows, wide double-loaded corridors, and terrazzo stairwells. The west portion was constructed in 2009 with a clear sensitivity to the original historic material and plan to the east, referencing and highlighting the distinction between the older portion and the new addition. The interior plan connects to create a unified building with classrooms located off of a double loaded corridor, illuminated by exterior windows. The 1913 portion to the east retains a good degree of architectural integrity, with form, materials, and plan demonstrating the historic function of the building as an early twentieth-century school.
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<tr>
<th>Name of Property</th>
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<td>Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32)</td>
<td>Erie County, NY</td>
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**Site Plan (Steiglitz Snyder Architects, 2009)**

![Site Plan Image]
Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32)  
Name of Property:  Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32)  
County and State: Erie County, NY
Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32)
Erie County, NY
Name of Property
County and State
Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

X G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.
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Areas of Significance  
(Enter categories from instructions.)  
SOCIAL HISTORY/African American Civil Rights  
ARCHITECTURE  

Period of Significance  
1913; 1969-1977  

Significant Dates  
1913, 1969-1977  

Significant Person  
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)  
n/a  

Cultural Affiliation  

Architect/Builder  
Original school was likely architect built by Howard Beck  
Steiglitz Snyder Architects (2009 addition)  

Period of Significance (justification)  
The period of significance recognizes building’s construction in 1913 and encompasses the period in which it served as the B.U.I.L.D. Academy, from 1969-1977.  

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)  
Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32) (former B.U.I.L.D. Community School) meets criteria consideration G as a rare surviving historic resource that represents the history of B.U.I.L.D., an influential organization that succeeded in fighting discrimination in employment, labor, job training, education, and criminal justice in Buffalo. B.U.I.L.D. existed only between 1966 and 1983, a period that included the most important and volatile years of the Civil Rights Movement and years of great turmoil in Buffalo. B.U.I.L.D was a powerful advocate for Civil Rights for Buffalo’s Black citizens, and it played a crucial role in the mid-twentieth century Civil Rights struggle in the city; however, there are few surviving resources to represent its efforts. Among B.U.I.L.D.’s most important and successful programs was its educational component. The two B.U.I.L.D. Academies, Buffalo Public School #32 (PS32) and Buffalo Public School #92 (PS 92), are exceptionally rare and significant examples that reflect B.U.I.L.D.’s ideology and influence on Buffalo’s mid-twentieth century Civil Rights history.
Buffalo Public School 32 (PS 32) is significant under Criterion A in the area of Social History/African American Civil Rights for its affiliation with the educational program of B.U.I.L.D., an organization that used local strategies to dismantle racial discrimination in many aspects of urban life in Buffalo, Erie County. B.U.I.L.D. (Build Unity, Independence, Liberty, and Dignity) was established in 1966, at a time when nationwide efforts to end racial inequality coincided with an influx of African Americans to Buffalo. As residents continued to experience overwhelming inequality in all sectors of life, a group of the city’s Black community organizers formed B.U.I.L.D., uniting numerous local groups from Buffalo’s east side and drawing on the ideology of Black Power to develop a more assertive response to a wide variety of issues. As such, B.U.I.L.D. demanded rather than simply requested accommodation in such areas as job discrimination, police reform, and housing inequality. Among B.U.I.L.D.’s most important and successful programs was its effort to assist Buffalo’s disenfranchised public-school students by setting up its own school, B.U.I.L.D. Academy, in 1969 with a curriculum, learning methods, and policy board specifically focused on the needs of Black students. From its establishment, the B.U.I.L.D. Academy curriculum emphasized a Black-centric student experience, emphasizing a curriculum that prioritized Black cultures, experiences, and histories, established successful mechanisms for regular parent participation, and encouraged racial uplift through education. B.U.I.L.D. also pioneered many important educational features that were later incorporated into Buffalo’s magnet schools. B.U.I.L.D. Academy was exceptionally significant in combatting the effects of segregation and substandard education for a generation of Buffalo’s Black students. From 1969-1977, B.U.I.L.D. Academy was located in this building at 342 Clinton Street. After that, it was officially designated a magnet school and relocated to a new location at 340 Fougeron Street. B.U.I.L.D. Academy was perhaps the most successful initiative established by the B.U.I.L.D. organization, creating a lasting impact on the history of civil rights, racial uplift, and educational practices in Buffalo during the late twentieth century.

Built in 1913, the building also meets Criterion C for Architecture as a good example of an early twentieth-century school designed in the Tudor Revival style. The three-story brick building with raised basement on rusticated stone foundation was designed with an H-shaped plan, a common standardized plan for many of Buffalo’s public schools from the 1910s and 1920s. The brick exterior, as well as its form, materials, and interior plan reflect several elements of the Tudor Revival style. Ornamental details such as a castellated staircase, brick piers, pointed arches, and individually decorated spandrels exemplify the Tudor Revival style as applied to a school building. Known today as Bennett Park Montessori, the building retains a high degree of architectural integrity to convey its historic function as an early twentieth century Tudor Revival style school. The period of significance recognizes building’s construction in 1913 and the period in which it served as the B.U.I.L.D. Academy, from 1969-1977.
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Narrative Statement of Significance

The building at 342 Clinton Street was designed and built as PS 32 in 1913 and is a good, intact example of a Tudor Revival style public school building from the early twentieth century. Later, the building served as the first location for B.U.I.L.D. Academy from 1969-1977. B.U.I.L.D. Academy was an educational system pioneered by the B.U.I.L.D. organization that emphasized a Black-centric student experience. The building is significant for its affiliation with the B.U.I.L.D. organization, a large Black Power-influenced organization that addressed many issues facing Buffalo’s Black East Side residents during the 1960s and 1970s.

The Tudor Revival Style at PS 32: 1913

The building at 342 Clinton Street was originally constructed in 1913 as PS 32, replacing public schools already serving the surrounding Bennett Park neighborhood. PS 32 had been located on the site since 1851. The present building was constructed to replace two previous, older school buildings constructed for PS 32 in 1857 and 1872 on the same site. The first PS 32 building was built in 1857, with the building located on Cedar Street just behind the school’s current location at 342 Clinton Street. In 1872, PS 32 was expanded, with a second building constructed next to the first one on Cedar Street.

Buffalo’s student enrollment almost doubled between 1880 and 1900, requiring the construction of new, larger school buildings by the early 1900s. In 1898 Buffalo had a population of 383,000 people and there were eighty-five school districts in the city, each with its own building. In the first decade of the twentieth century the Buffalo school system continued to grow. By 1910 Buffalo’s population had risen to 423,715 people. Annual reports from the 1910s reveal that several schools were already overcrowded. In response, nine new schools were constructed during this decade, including the building at 342 Clinton Street, which was constructed in 1913.

A citywide construction program was conducted by the City of Buffalo and the Board of Education, in conjunction with architects that were specifically hired to design a set of standardized plans that could be adapted to suit many of the new schools simultaneously. In the first decade of the program, Howard Beck served as the city architect, designing and constructing schools such as No. 56 (1909, extant) and No. 44 (1907-1909) into the early 1920s. Beck worked as a member of the Associated Buffalo Architects, a group composed of leading architects such as E.B. Green, Duane Lyman and Max Beierl that worked together on multiple public buildings for the city of Buffalo.

Given the construction of PS 32 in 1913, it is likely that Howard Beck designed the building. Regardless, the building’s plan and materials reflect the standards that were becoming common in all of Buffalo’s public schools by the early twentieth century. Like other schools built in the early 1900s, PS 32 embraced the H-form plan rather than the rectangular plans that were more popular by the 1930s. A large auditorium was placed on the ground floor, rather than on the floors above, encouraging an efficient exit strategy in event of a fire.
emergency. The 2009 addition to the west connected to this older plan, increasing fire exits and circulation flows to reflect more modern concerns.

In the 1930s, the old Cedar Street school buildings were demolished, as PS 32 no longer used them, and all activity was concentrated in the 1913 building instead. The building continued to serve as PS 32 from 1913 until 1969, when B.U.I.L.D. Academy used the building as its first location.

**Tudor Revival Style**

The Tudor Revival style grew in popularity in Buffalo around the turn of the twentieth century and remained popular into the 1930s. In the late nineteenth century, architects looked to the traditions of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. The style is based loosely on the architectural characteristics of Tudor (early sixteenth-century) England. A variety of late Medieval English examples inspired the style in its nineteenth- and twentieth-century incarnations in America, ranging from thatched-roofed cottages to grand manor estates. In response to the Industrial Revolution, designers were looking for a more honest expression of materials, craftsmanship and form. They created a response, similar to the Arts and Crafts movement, in which a taste for nostalgic values, pre-industrial materials, and a seemingly pastoral lifestyle resulted in distinctive architectural forms and embellishment. The Tudor Revival style became popular in the United States by the early 1900s.1

Influenced by the medieval architecture of Europe and England (the Tudor period), the style is commonly identified by its stucco and faux half-timbered surfaces or the use of brick or stone to add texture and character. Asymmetrical massing, a steeply pitched gable roof, multi-light casement windows, and massive chimneys are common in residential examples. Brick and stucco clad walls with decorative half-timbering often add texture to the composition, or other decorative stone elements achieve a similar effect. Projecting bays, orielis, or entire second stories were common elements. Brick walls were the most common subtype of Tudor Revival style building, typically adorned with stone or concrete ornament, as at PS 32.

In America, the style was more commonly applied first to the design of wealthy residences followed by institutions, churches, and entertainment spaces. Soon, the style was also adapted for more modest middle-class residences as well. The style was initially affiliated primarily with the elite, capitalizing on associations with English manors and estates. Early nineteenth century examples in Buffalo include several large residences built near Delaware Park in the Parkside West Historic District (NR Listed 1986) on Middlesex Road and Nottingham Terrace, whose streets names alone recall Tudor-period England. Many of the grandest Tudor Revival style residences in Buffalo are located in this area, as the former Pan American Exposition grounds were developed with residences right after the famous world’s fair ended in winter of 1901, at a time when the style was gaining in popularity.

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1 Lee Goff, *Tudor Style: Tudor Revival Houses in America from 1890 to the Present* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan, 2002).
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When applied to institutional buildings, the Tudor Revival style was often combined with elements of the Gothic Revival style, forming a subgenre commonly referred to as Collegiate Gothic. Many examples of the Collegiate Gothic were constructed at American universities from the 1890s-1920s, evident at Ivy League schools like Yale, Harvard, and Cornell, amongst others. Woodrow Wilson, when president of Princeton, remarked on the effect of the revival style, stating “By the very simple device of building our new buildings in the Tudor Gothic style we seem to have added a thousand years to the history of Princeton.” Often, the style was applied partly to create associations with tradition and history in a place that was still relatively young compared to Europe.

By the 1910s, Tudor Revival style institutional buildings were constructed in Buffalo with more frequency, reflecting a scholastic association with the style as well. Examples of schools built in this style in Buffalo during the 1910s are Buffalo Seminary (1909; NR listed 2010) and Albright Hall at Nichols School, both constructed 1910 in the Tudor Revival style with brick walls and stone ornamental details. These private, prestigious schools adopted the Tudor Revival style shortly before PS 32 was constructed in 1913. Given the elite associations of both the style and the school, the choice of the Tudor Revival style at PS 32 reflected not only its growing popularity among institutional construction but also perhaps a desire to affiliate the school with notions of prestige as well. A few other examples of a Tudor Revival style school building from the early 1910s exist in Buffalo, although these are relatively early examples compared to the numerous examples that followed in the 1920s. The Associated Buffalo Architects utilized the Tudor Revival or Collegiate Gothic style for many schools designed in and around Buffalo in the 1920s, including PS 69.

PS 32 is an excellent, relatively early example of the application of the Tudor Revival style to a public school building in Buffalo. Constructed in 1913 before the style became popular for schools throughout the City of Buffalo, the building features brick walls with stone ornamentation that typifies the style. English Collegiate Gothic style arches over the primary entrance and varied decorative motifs in the spandrels exemplify the style. Crenellations, parapets, and piers amplify the effect, suggesting that the building is a prestigious, scholastic institution. Today the building’s form, materials, and details still clearly convey the original construction as a Tudor Revival style public school.

Segregated Education in Buffalo and the B.U.I.L.D. organization

The B.U.I.L.D. Unity, Independence, Liberty, and Dignity (B.U.I.L.D.) organization was a Black community group organized in Buffalo in 1966, with an office at 588 Jefferson Avenue. Initially founded with the assistance of Saul Alinsky’s IAF (Industrial Areas Foundation Foundation), B.U.I.L.D. became a self-sufficient and independently run organization one year later. Affiliated with over 150 groups on Buffalo’s East Side,

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B.U.I.L.D. served as an umbrella organization that united and mobilized disparate, smaller volunteer groups and block clubs.

At its original establishment, B.U.I.L.D. had an exclusively Black and exclusively local membership. This was foundational to the organization’s mission to embrace national Black Power ideology and apply it specifically to Buffalo-based issues. B.U.I.L.D. was created strictly for Black Buffalonians, based on the assertion that an exclusively local approach was necessary to fix the immediate needs of the community. B.U.I.L.D. did not accept white members because their Black members “did not want a White outside organization which must answer to the White power structure to lead them.” B.U.I.L.D. viewed the Buffalo NAACP and Buffalo Urban League as inefficient or outdated because they collaborated with white institutions and accepted integrated membership. Embracing newer Black Power ideology than those older organizations, B.U.I.L.D. drew a thicker line in the sand for its membership. Class also played a role, although membership was not exclusively restricted based on class. While some of B.U.I.L.D.’s leaders were middle class, the membership and platforms were clearly “structured to represent and be represented by the poorest and least privileged African Americans from the city.”

Over its nearly twenty-year existence, B.U.I.L.D. focused on a variety of issues, including education, employment, job training, labor discrimination, condemned and vacant buildings, parks, policing, and racial uplift. Education was one of its areas of emphasis, where it initiated substantial changes to the existing system and impacted hundreds of students and families. The foundation and operation of B.U.I.L.D. Academy was one of its most successful initiatives; yet, it was only one of dozens of substantial actions taken by B.U.I.L.D. Throughout all of B.U.I.L.D.’s efforts, the organization placed a central emphasis on community control and input to achieve positive change for Black communities on Buffalo’s East Side.

When B.U.I.L.D. was established in 1966, Buffalo’s Public School system was in dire need of reform. Compared to other northern cities, Buffalo was falling far behind in terms of desegregating its schools after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision. Black students were substantially underserved by the public school system, with dramatically lower test scores and reading capabilities than white students. This resulted in lower rates of completion, reduced ability to obtain employment, and increased rates of poverty among Buffalo’s Black East Side residents. In the 1950s, the schools on the East Side were known to be crowded full of people of color, with few white students and a smaller number of staff with greater turnover. School supplies, desks, and other equipment were in disrepair, and funding was more difficult to come by than in the white student dominated schools elsewhere in the city. Black students had a substantially lower chance of completing high school than white students, leading to poorer test rates and subsequently, lower paying jobs and unemployment.

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5 Corrallo, 101.
During the early 1960s, the Board of Education was composed of some members who were notoriously resistant to forced busing of public school children. Busing, or race-integration busing, was the practice of assigning and transporting students to schools within or outside their local districts in an effort to diversify the racial composition of schools. In 1962, Alfreda Slominski was elected to the board for a five-year term on an anti-busing platform. In 1964, a biracial group named Citizens Council on Human Rights (CCHR) petitioned New York State Education Commissioner James Allen to address the issue of segregation in the Buffalo Public Schools. This action led Allen to order the desegregation of the schools, an order that was ignored by the Board of Education at the time.6

In 1966, Slominski spoke out against busing white students into Black neighborhoods. Slominski even urged a boycott of the schools in opposition to busing and led a picket line demonstration of these values. Even with three Black councilmen elected along with Mayor Sedita for his second term in office, these figures were unable to counteract the voice and press given to white anti-busing members of the Board of Education like Slominski.7 Slominski was elected to the Common Council on an anti-busing platform, leading the fight against any effort to bus white students into Black neighborhood schools. Using the term ‘integration’ as a code word for busing Black students into white schools, campaigns like Slominski’s also implicitly reinforced a narrative of Black inferiority.8

In 1967, Buffalo was identified as the fourth most segregated school system in the North by the US Civil Rights commission. It was not until that year that the Board of Education complied to implement a comprehensive plan for school integration. The Quality Integrated Education (QIE) program was launched in 1967.9 In its first iteration, the QIE program was inadequate in its desegregation policies and enforcement. It reflected the Board of Education’s resistance to busing white students into Black areas and focused primarily on the reverse. It also allowed white students to go to schools outside of their attendance zone when their home school was predominantly Black for spurious reasons, including ‘fear of Black children.’10 It is no surprise, then, that the QIE program was ineffective at achieving a true desegregation of Buffalo’s public schools during the late 1960s.

B.U.I.L.D. began the radical process of setting up its own school, rather than trying to fix the system as it existed. B.U.I.L.D. decided to start its own B.U.I.L.D. Academy with a new curriculum, learning methods, policy board for an entirely Black student population. They based these models on the results of their research, published in Black Paper Number One.

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William Gaiter, president of B.U.I.L.D., had denounced the slow pace of school desegregation in Buffalo in 1966. Following this, B.U.I.L.D. began a study of the Buffalo Public Schools, issuing the results the next year in a report titled “Black Paper Number One.” This document, part report and part manifesto, outlined many injustices embedded in the Buffalo Public School system and called for a series of changes to the very core of the way that Black students were educated in schools. Ultimately, it was this paper that catalyzed B.U.I.L.D. Academy, as it was with these findings that B.U.I.L.D. officials decided they wanted to open their own school. This was unheard of at the time in Buffalo, but it was in keeping with the alternative school movement that was in vogue at the time around the country.\footnote{Aaron Besecker and James Heaney, “B.U.I.L.D. Academy Was City’s First ‘Charter’ School,” \textit{Buffalo News}, April 7 1997.}

Between January and April 1967, B.U.I.L.D.’s Education Committee, led by Miriam Beale, visited thirty-five Buffalo Public Schools to conduct a study of their approach to Black students and parents. During these systematic visits, B.U.I.L.D. identified problems with faculty, administration, equipment, supplies, and curriculum content. The effects and results of school segregation were at the core of each of these problems. In Black schools, less than one-third of the teachers were Black. In the three white-dominated schools visited, there were two Black teachers and ninety-eight white teachers. There was only one Black administrator in the thirty-five schools visited. In the Black schools, students were exposed to substitute teachers for significantly longer, and the faculty turnover was extremely high.\footnote{B.U.I.L.D. Black Paper Number 1, April 1967.}

B.U.I.L.D. produced its report on this study in “Black Paper Number One,” providing tangible quantitative and qualitative evidence as well as a clear approach rooted in the Black Power movement. Even on the introductory page, this ideology is woven into the text. The report states it was written under the leadership of “B.U.I.L.D.’s Soul Sister #1, Mrs. Miriam Beale.”\footnote{William Gaiter and Clarence Cooper, “B.U.I.L.D.: The Second Year,” (1968), 12. Buffalo Civil Rights Era: Theresa J. White Papers, Monroe Fordham Regional History Center, Buffalo State, State University of New York.} Alfonso suggests that the use of the term ‘Soul Sister’ by B.U.I.L.D. was an example of Black Power ideology in practice. “When Black Buffalonians used terms like ‘soul sister’ to refer to each other, they not only subscribed to Black Power ideology within the United States but affirmed their connection to the larger Black world, the global African diaspora.”\footnote{Rowena Ianthe Alfonso, “Crucial to the Survival of Black People”: Local People, Black Power, and Community Organizations in Buffalo, New York, 1966-1968,” \textit{Journal of Urban History Vol 43(1)} (2017), 144.} The inclusion of terms like ‘soul sister’ displayed B.U.I.L.D.’s embrace of this ideology.

“Black Paper Number One” was specifically, unabashedly written to represent B.U.I.L.D.’s exclusively Black membership base. The paper states:

\begin{quote}
This is a Black paper. Historically, American officials have issued white papers when they want to justify an action, cover it with official whitewash. This paper
\end{quote}
does not cover up anything- it pulls the covers off and shows the Negro schools for what they are…This paper is the product of Black people, who in Buffalo, through B.U.I.L.D., are declaring that we will no longer tolerate this abomination of inequality imposed on us because of the color of our skin. We will no longer tolerate the murder of our children.  

This strong language conveys the severity of the school segregation issue for B.U.I.L.D., its Education Committee, and its members. Viewing the failure of the education system as no less than the subsequent ‘murder’ of its children, the paper continues to support this premise. Acknowledging that Black children in Buffalo are at least two to five years behind their white peers in reading, they outline the eventual consequences of this fact. The paper states, “they are doomed to the worst jobs, which in turn are rapidly disappearing in a changing job market. Therefore, what the schools are really doing is dooming generations of children to unemployment, impossibly low income, family disintegration, and therefore desperation and the death of human creativity and spirit. That adds up to mass murder.”

Linking education to overall success later in life, B.U.I.L.D. condemned the Buffalo Public Schools for its failure to properly prepare Black students to become effective, healthy contributors to society.

The report concluded that two major problems in the school system were the lack of parental involvement and the curriculum itself. It stated, “Schools must be seen as COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, without walls of alienation cutting off the community. Parents must be heavily involved in the basic decision-making processes of the schools.” Regarding the curriculum, and the way testing relates to it, B.U.I.L.D. suggested, “Dump the track system. Replace it with a greatly expanded program of compensatory education, with heavy emphasis on non-graded sections where students can work in small sections at their own pace. Add tutorial programs and challenging field trips and materials that use genuine community issues and NEGRO history. Use testing to diagnose students rather than classify them.” Both of these suggestions became major aspects of the educational system at B.U.I.L.D. Academy two years later.

After releasing “Black Paper Number One,” B.U.I.L.D. began to put into motion a plan to open its own school. B.U.I.L.D. began applying for the necessary permits, looking for a location, and seeking faculty and assistants. The 1969 B.U.I.L.D. annual report identified this goal and revealed the steps already taken: “After extensive study by B.U.I.L.D.S Education Committee, it became very clear that if education was to become relevant and meaningful to core area children, steps would have to be taken to involve the community and the experiences of the children into the curriculum and philosophy of the schools. With this thought in mind, a plan was devised placing the major emphasis on parental and community decision making.” Parents and community activists were involved in the initial planning stages as well. Frustrated with the quality of education

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17 Black Paper Number 1, April 1967.
18 Black paper Number 1, April 1967.
Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32)  
Name of Property:  
Erie County, NY  
County and State:

provided to their children, they supported B.U.I.L.D. in planning for their own school as the organization negotiated a deal with the Board of Education for money and control.

Although the plans for B.U.I.L.D. Academy were already well underway, a series of events in 1968 provided the necessary catalyst to finally bring the new school to fruition. This occurred at PS 48, which “Black Paper Number One” had identified as a failed school. B.U.I.L.D. identified the principal as a particular problem to the school, suggesting that leadership was insensitive to the needs of a school, disconnected from Black children, and inaccessible to parents. The organization started a campaign to remove the principal, passing out pamphlets, contacting parents, and discussing the situation with faculty and staff. While the campaign was ultimately unsuccessful, it raised significant awareness both within the school’s administration and in the community. A few weeks later, a Black third-grade teacher was transferred out of PS 48 with little notice. The teacher had been a supporter of B.U.I.L.D.’s campaign, so the community viewed this as retribution. A boycott ensued, and most students stopped attending third grade.

B.U.I.L.D.’s response eventually led to the initial infrastructure for B.U.I.L.D. Academy. In support of the boycott, B.U.I.L.D. set up an alternative learning system with two certified teachers in the basement of St. Andrew’s Methodist Church for those students. At the same time, the two-year negotiation process to open a new school had just finished. The PS 48 boycott had coincidentally occurred at just the right time. With recent B.U.I.L.D. approval, the St. Andrew’s group was identified as the pilot program for the new school, moved to PS 6, and taught by elementary supervisor Muriel Green in the spring. This effectively laid the groundwork for B.U.I.L.D. Academy, which officially opened the next fall.


B.U.I.L.D. Academy opened in fall 1969 at 342 Clinton Street in Buffalo’s Bennett Park neighborhood. Formerly known as Public School 32, then later as Bennett Park Montessori, this building served as B.U.I.L.D. Academy from 1969 until 1977. Built in 1913, the school opened as B.U.I.L.D. Academy to 396 students in pre-kindergarten through fourth grade in 1969. The school building’s previous classrooms, corridors, and gathering spaces were easily converted from PS 32 to B.U.I.L.D.’s purposes. There was a waiting list for enrollment by the second year, and the school expanded to 500 students and added the sixth grade. By 1970, it was the first public school in the city to provide poor children with free breakfast and the first with full-day kindergarten.

Upon establishing B.U.I.L.D. Academy, the organization defined its objectives at a press conference, as follows: “To fight for real quality education for Black students; to secure strong effective community participation in educational decision making; to develop high-quality education for ghetto schools; to develop

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more creative teachers… We will not be a party to another glorified experiment.”22 Even the language adopted for the school administration reflected a new approach. B.U.I.L.D. Academy was led by a chief officer, instead of principal, to reflect that leader’s different position in relation to the community as the source of authority. The chief officer was named to reflect that they had come through a process where the community had been involved in the selection process. The position, as Miriam Beale described it, “had expectations of being recognized by and working within the community in that school.”23 The term reflected community involvement in that hiring decision, rather than the Board of Education’s typical appointment policy. As Beale stated, “For the first time we had an institution that was of the people, by the people, and our intention was to be for the people.”24

There are at least four main components at the core of a B.U.I.L.D. Academy education: a curriculum that includes Black history and racial uplift, a responsive environment model, an emphasis on parental involvement, and the Academy Policy Board.25 Underlying all of these is the Black Power-informed approach to education that embraces a Black-centric education for an exclusively Black student population. Rather than trying to fit Black students into a white system, B.U.I.L.D. Academy sought to create a new educational environment based on black experiences instead. To achieve this, B.U.I.L.D. actively created new learning environments, curriculum content, community-centric programs, and administrative paths. Each of these aspects will be discussed in the following subsections.

Curriculum

B.U.I.L.D. Academy made a conscious effort to teach Black history to its students, in direct contrast to the primarily white-centric material taught in Buffalo’s Public Schools. B.U.I.L.D. stated, “There are no electives in the Buffalo System for the study of Negro history. Part of the alienation of the school from the community is because the school is terribly ignorant of the life and history of the community. One of the great quests of students today is for identity, a place in history. That is one of the most basic education requirements.”26 Embracing history as a means of fostering identity and pride, B.U.I.L.D. created a curriculum that included several aspects of Black history and Black experiences to counterbalance the white history taught in the public schools. History was viewed as an important, essential way to “give students an understanding of how their culture had positively contributed to the world in its present state.”27 This emphasis on Black history was one of

25 Siskar identifies three of these, the author added the curriculum as a key component as well.
27 Siskar, 33.
Black Power’s most important tenets, the idea that Black people needed to define their own history and values.  

Student testimonies reveal the incredible impact of this curricular approach. When questioned about what made the school so unique at the time, former student Pam Roach recalled, “Black history. We knew who we were, we knew we were valued as people, and there was an expectation that we were gonna make a contribution to society in some way shape or form, like those who came before us. So we carried that responsibility everywhere.” Learning Black history not only grounded students in a sense of Black identity and pride, but it also aimed to give them a sense of responsibility. In understanding those who came before, students were also encouraged to contribute to society as they grew. Black history at B.U.I.L.D. Academy was not just about connecting students with the past, but with their future as well.

Another former student, Kim Keenan, appreciated the school’s focus on not just Black history, but the Black experience. Remembering fondly the “new school with a decidedly Black focus,” Keenan stated,

Imagine a school with the first Black principal, numerous Black teachers, and a decidedly Afro-American flair (I have the afro-puff pictures to prove it). We studied Black history, we used Ebony magazine to explore creative writing, and we celebrated with Black Santas and Black Easter Bunnies. For Christmas, we received Temptations albums. My favorite recollection was studying Bach, Brahms, and Stevie Wonder in music class, with James Brown and the Jackson 5 serving as our incentives to listen and appreciate all music. At B.U.I.L.D. Academy, I learned to be proud of my history, proud of my people, and proud of myself. Unfortunately, the B.U.I.L.D. Academy experience ended at sixth grade, but the roots of my love for all culture, especially my culture, were planted by these pioneers who taught me that brilliance comes in all colors.

This type of educational experience was not available to so many Black children in the Buffalo Public School system at this time. B.U.I.L.D. offered an alternative approach to education and development, designed specifically to connect Black students with many aspects of their world. Learning about popular music by Black artists alongside Bach and Brahms not only provided a well-rounded education, but also implied that all of these artists are worthy of study at the same level. B.U.I.L.D. instilled a sense of worth and joyful celebration of Black cultures into its students at a young age, invaluable roots to plant in a new generation of Buffalo’s citizens.

Responsive Environment Model

29 Griffin, 59.
B.U.I.L.D. Academy utilized a responsive environment model of education, which aimed to foster a learning model that was more conducive to learning for Black children. This included a combination of direct instruction and student-directed learning. The curriculum included direct instruction for subjects like history, math, and science, but also included these same subjects in student-directed learning approaches. As Siskar noted, “The curriculum was organized in a way that recognized that children learned at different rates and learned best when actively engaged in the learning process. Students were given time to choose activities that interested them, and each student was expected to explore his or her interests in a personal and non-structured way.”31

The responsive environment model approached student learning as a multifaceted process, one where students could engage with different types of materials with supervision by teachers. They could discover and solve problems in a range of subject matter at the pace and method that suited them best. A typical classroom at B.U.I.L.D. Academy contained a book center, a writing resource center, a viewing center, a listening center, an art center, a game center, a science center, and a math center. Students could choose or be assigned to a center where they would personally explore discovered problems with minimal direction from teachers.32 This was intended to provide more opportunity for a student’s individual learning styles to be embraced and, given the self-directed element, to find greater relevance in the work they produced.

Former student Willie A. Price fondly remembered the advantages of this learning model, which he experienced at the PS 32 building from 1970-1974. Price stated, “the way the teachers taught, it wasn’t just teaching from a curriculum, it was like you experiencing a lot of the things that they taught…We had a teacher’s aid from Guyana, so we would taste food and see clothes and different videos and different things of that country. It really enlightened us to things and to people and to cultures that we would’ve never been aware of if we were at another school.”33 Through a combination of direct instruction and student-directed exploration, B.U.I.L.D. Academy sought ways to bring the world into the classroom and encourage personal engagement with the material.

B.U.I.L.D. also trained the teachers in this learning model, emphasizing team building between teachers and community aides. Both teachers and aides were in the classrooms on a daily basis. This helped to encourage different types of student engagement with adults and the material itself. B.U.I.L.D. founders embraced the concept of team building, a new approach to teaching that was considered both innovative and systematic. In the school’s first year, there were fourteen teachers and twenty-two community aides from a variety of backgrounds. Before beginning, they participated in a preservice training program that brought them together in the classroom.34 The co-teaching between teachers and aides decentralized the traditional single-teacher authority model and also gave a more interactive approach to student learning. Teacher's aides were typically

31 Siskar, 33.
32 Siskar, 33.
33 Griffin, 59.
34 Dillaway, 150.
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Name of Property                          County and State

community members, teachers in training, or often parents, and this provided a form of job training as well as ensuring community involvement at B.U.I.L.D. Academy.

Parent Participation

B.U.I.L.D. Academy placed a great emphasis on parent participation and community involvement. As “Black Paper Number One” asserted, B.U.I.L.D. strongly believed “schools must be seen as community schools.” The goal was not to have the school be a completely separate, alienated space but to have it be an extension of the community itself. To achieve this, B.U.I.L.D. asserted that parents were essential to the decision-making process at every step of their child’s education.

B.U.I.L.D. created a number of ways in which parent participation and community involvement could be encouraged, measured, and confirmed. One full-time staff person has the designation of parent organizer, whose job was to pursue and organize parent volunteers and teacher’s aides for the school. Additionally, parents were asked to sign a contract that said they would be actively involved in their children’s education. They were encouraged, if not also required, to be involved in the day-to-day classroom and out-of-school activities to improve education at school and at home. A parental participation study conducted at B.U.I.L.D. Academy in 1971 indicated that these efforts were successful: of 126 parents contacted, 90 had visited the school more than four times that year and only twelve had not yet met with the chief officer.35 This level of parental engagement was far above the typical level of parental participation in Buffalo’s Public Schools.

Parents also participated as teacher’s aides at B.U.I.L.D. Academy. Placing parents in this role had a number of benefits; they were actively involved in their children’s education, they were actively involved with B.U.I.L.D. Academy, they came to know the teachers well, and it provided them with professional opportunities. As scholar Dillaway has suggested, involving parents on a paraprofessional tier made them invested in the success of B.U.I.L.D. Academy.36 To prepare them for the role, Buffalo State College offered courses on site for them. This provided a way for Black parents to begin careers in the educational system through the Career Opportunity program. If inclined, they could eventually complete a degree as a teacher’s aide as well, enabling them to seek gainful employment in the future.37 This related directly to B.U.I.L.D.’s platform addressing unemployment, channeled through B.U.I.L.D. Academy while also improving student education. This multifaceted approach to education and employment was a particular success of B.U.I.L.D. and B.U.I.L.D. Academy, as they continually sought ways to improve the quality of life for Black residents of Buffalo’s East Side at multiple levels of engagement.

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35 B.U.I.L.D. Papers, File 179, Archives & Special Collections Department, E. H. Butler Library, SUNY Buffalo State.
36 Dillaway, 150.
37 B.U.I.L.D. Papers, File 179, Archives & Special Collections Department, E. H. Butler Library, SUNY Buffalo State.
To achieve these educational goals and maintain control of this alternative learning environment, B.U.I.L.D. needed to develop its own policy board. Its Academy Policy Board was a local governing board responsible for school decisions, which was crucial to give parents and community members a voice in the school. The Academy Policy Board was responsible for the decisions for the school, but there was no legal restructuring of the district to give B.U.I.L.D. full autonomy. Yet, it still had more autonomy than other schools in the system.

The Academy Policy Board went through many iterations, but it consistently included members from three major branches of organizations. Originally it had five members from the Board of Education, five from Buffalo State College, and five from B.U.I.L.D. itself. Each entity provided expertise in its given area. Buffalo State College provided technical assistance, gave undergraduate courses for personnel, supplied guidance in testing, and assisted with grant applications. The Board of Education reviewed legal decisions, budget requests, and ensured that legal regulations were followed. B.U.I.L.D., in addition to establishing and running the school, organized citizen participation, involved parents in daily classrooms, and organized committees to assist in various academy functions. These branches continued to contribute and balance each other on the Academy Policy Board throughout the school’s tenure, but its composition changed over time.

In 1971, B.U.I.L.D. pushed for a realignment that included more representatives from the community and fewer from the two educational organizations. The Academy Policy Board was redesigned to emphasize this, with twelve B.U.I.L.D. community members, three from the Board of Education, and three from Buffalo State College. In subsequent years, the board eliminated Buffalo State College, giving over more spots to B.U.I.L.D. Throughout this time, the chief officer of the academy had to report to the Academy Policy Board, much like the superintendent did to the Board of Education.

The Academy Policy Board enabled a community-controlled decision-making process for B.U.I.L.D. Academy, which was often defined as a community-controlled school. This approach was remarkably different from the Board of Education’s regulation of the Buffalo Public Schools, necessarily so, given B.U.I.L.D. Academy’s unique learning environment and curriculum. Enabling the application of alternative methods and administrative approaches, the Academy Policy Board was essential to B.U.I.L.D. Academy’s ability to thrive.

The Academy Policy Board was most influential from 1969 to 1977, in the first eight years of B.U.I.L.D. Academy’s existence. In 1977, changes were made to the board as the result of broader changes occurring in Buffalo’s educational system. At that time, B.U.I.L.D. Academy was subsumed into the Buffalo school system as an official magnet school. While the Academy Policy Board remained in place, “the move toward a more formal connection with the Buffalo Public Schools and the loss of identity to the community seemed to take some of the wind out of the sails of the policy board.” The board remained connected with B.U.I.L.D.

38 Siskar, 30.
39 Siskar, 33-34.
Academy, but it was merged into the broader structure of the Buffalo Public School system. In so doing, its influence was weakened, and citywide regulations began to impact B.U.I.L.D. Academy more by the 1980s.

In 1977, B.U.I.L.D. Academy moved to a new facility known as School 92 at 340 Fougeron Street and added the seventh and eighth grades. It was officially designated as a magnet school of the Buffalo Public School at that time. This more formal connection with the system led to changes in the administration, student population, curriculum, and learning environment. Despite changes and the demise of the B.U.I.L.D. organization in 1983, the school continues to function according to some of its original principles to this day.

After B.U.I.L.D. Academy

The building at 342 Clinton Street closed when B.U.I.L.D. Academy left in 1977, reopening that year as the Bennett Park Montessori Center (BPMC). BPMC is the only public Montessori Program in Western New York and one of the largest Montessori schools in the country. BPMC came about as a result of the desegregation of schools that was happening in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Arthur v Nyquist last suit was filed in 1972 by a number of African American parents, including George Arthur, against Ewald Nyquist, the Commissioner of Education, the Board of Education, the mayor and the Common Council of the City of Buffalo. The case took several years, but one of the results was the establishment of magnet schools. Magnet schools draw students from the entire school district, as opposed to neighborhood schools, which draw from the neighborhood the school is located within. Magnet schools tend to be more diverse, due to students coming from a variety of socioeconomic and racial backgrounds. Parents and teachers from St. Mary of Sorrow’s Montessori preschool program and others worked together to create a public Montessori program. Before BPMC, any parent who wanted their child to have a Montessori education had to pay for the teacher and the program. St Mary’s Montessori program differed from other Montessori programs in the region because it had an integrated preschool.40

In September 1977, BMPC opened, along with several other magnet schools around the same time. BPMC had received 560 applications for Black students, 320 from white students, and 42 from other races. It had a total of 922 applications for 261 spots, showing great demand. It opened on September 7th with 131 minority and 131 majority students. During the 1990 school year, the school expanded to 560 students. An addition constructed in 2009, designed by Steigliz Snyder Architects, expanded its capacity to 980 students. The addition received the 2010 Best Education Project in the Brick by Brick Awards by Business First41. The building continues to function as the Bennett Park Montessori school today.

The lifespan of B.U.I.L.D. stretched from 1966 to 1983, during which time it made innumerable accomplishments with substantial impact on Buffalo’s East Side Black residents. While the organization was

closed and “effectively dead” by 1983, its influence has continued to endure. B.U.I.L.D. Academy was one of the most impactful entities created by the organization, and B.U.I.L.D.’s ability to envision and sustain this kind of education is remarkable and was unprecedented for its time.

In the 1990s, success began to go downhill, when court supervision ended and Buffalo experienced severe fiscal problems. Reagan administration initiatives shifted the emphasis and funding away from desegregation and towards high stakes standardized testing. The magnet schools were scaled back, alienating middle-class families once again and facing segregation issues. Charter schools emerged in the 1990s as well, partially as an attempt to revive the success the magnet schools had in the 1980s. The terms for magnet and charter schools are often used interchangeably, but they do differ slightly in their funding, testing, and curriculum requirements. Both magnets and charters are affiliated with the Buffalo Public School system; charters are more financially independent and therefore have more flexibility in terms of curriculum. Today, Buffalo has several charter schools as well as magnet schools. B.U.I.L.D. Academy is still officially designated as a magnet school.

As the B.U.I.L.D. organization faded away and then closed in 1983, the academy became indistinguishable from other magnet schools. It continued to succeed, however, in its newer forms. In 1985, Mrs. Johnnie Mayo, the chief officer for many years, left B.U.I.L.D. Academy and later became the district’s assistant superintendent for elementary schools. In 1997, the school’s standardized test score ranked well above average among city schools (if success is to be measured by such statistics). Even today, the legacy of B.U.I.L.D. Academy continues to resonate in the history of the Buffalo school district and in the experiences gained by the students themselves. Its history and significance “lasted beyond the students’ time within the walls of a school Building.”

B.U.I.L.D. pioneered a new type of education in Buffalo to better serve its Black students and East Side residents. B.U.I.L.D.’s work at the academy “laid the groundwork for the NAACP’s successful litigation on portable classrooms that led to school integration. It also left in its wake a model for Buffalo’s nationally renowned magnet school system with its experimental B.U.I.L.D. academy.” B.U.I.L.D. Academy demonstrated that a decentralized school system could be successful. Those who subsequently designed the desegregation plan in the late 1970s and early 1980s were, as Siskar has suggested, “either unable or unwilling to accept a radically different model.” Regardless, the ambition of B.U.I.L.D. Academy created a ripple effect in Buffalo’s educational system and community development. Mrs. Mayo described teaching fourth grade in the first year of B.U.I.L.D. Academy, before being promoted to chief officer: "We were young, and we were idealistic. We felt we really were going to change the world.” Indeed, in many ways, it did. B.U.I.L.D.

42 Corrallo, 289.
45 Griffin, 50.
46 Dillaway, 151.
47 Siskar, 34.
Academy left a lasting impact on its students, its community, and the history of the civil rights and Black Power movements in Buffalo for generations to come.
9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)


Bingham, Robert W. *Cradle of the Queen City: A History of Buffalo to the Incorporation of the City*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Buffalo Historical Society, 1931.


*Buffalo Civil Rights Era: Theresa J. White Papers*. Monroe Fordham Regional History Center, Buffalo State, State University of New York.


Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32)  
Name of Property  


“Sanitary Fountain.” *Buffalo Commercial*, April 5, 1900, 12.


State Education Department. *Buffalo Public Schools in the Mid-Twentieth Century*. Buffalo, NY: University of the State of New York, 1951.


Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32)       Erie County, NY
Name of Property                   County and State

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Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary corresponds to the parcel at 32 Cedar Street. This is the same parcel PS 32 occupied since the 1850s and that the current building was constructed on in 1913.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title        Annie Schentag, Ph.D. and Kerry Traynor, M.S., M.Arch
[Edited by Kathy Howe, Kathleen LaFrank, and Jennifer Walkowski, NYSHPO]
organization      Kta preservation specialists
street & number   422 Parker Avenue
city or town       Buffalo
e-mail             aschentag@kta-preservation.com

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

- Maps: A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
  
  A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- Continuation Sheets

- Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1925
Note the 1913 building had been constructed. The Annex building to the north was demolished in the 1930s. The 2009 west addition had not yet been built.
Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32)  
Erie County, NY  

Photographs:  
Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: PS 32 (Bennett Park Montessori)  
City or Vicinity: Buffalo  
County: Erie  
State: NY  
Photographer: kta preservation specialists  
Date Photographed: March 16, 2022

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0001  
Looking north at primary elevation of original PS 32 building.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0002  
Looking northwest at west elevation of original PS 32 building.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0003  
Looking southwest at rear elevation of original PS 32 building, with brick enclosed auditorium. West wing addition also visible.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0004  
Looking northeast at entire building. Original PS 32 to the east and addition to the west.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0005  
Looking north at primary elevation of west addition.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0006  
Detail of connection between original PS 32 building to the east and addition to the west.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0007  
Detail of primary entrance of PS 32 from inside, facing south.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0008  
Detail of stairwell leading to primary entrance landing in original PS 32 building.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0009  
Looking from second floor balcony at stage in auditorium.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0010  
Looking from stage on first floor towards second floor balcony in auditorium.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0011  
Detail of pool with tiled walls.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0012  
Detail of cafetería.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0013  
Detail of original wood window surrounds in stairwell of PS 32 building.
Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32)  
Name of Property: Erie County, NY  

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0014  
Looking into typical primary corridor of original PS 32 building.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0015  
Looking south towards primary stairwell from corridor of third floor in original PS 32 building.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0016  
Looking into library with original 2-over-2 double hung wood sash windows in original PS 32 building.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0017  
Looking into typical classroom with original 2-over-2 double hung wood sash windows in original PS 32 building.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0018  
Detail of original wood window surrounds and entablature, rising above dropped ceiling height.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0019  
Looking at former west elevation of original PS 32 building inside west addition connection point.

NY_Erie County_PS 32 (B.U.I.L.D. Academy)_0020  
Looking at west elevation of original PS 32 building from inside west addition.
Buffalo Public School #32 (PS 32)
Erie County, NY

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.