Health Sciences Charter School

THE FALCON'S NEST

March 2025

A Taste of Black History at HSCS

Food, music, and tradition take center stage in HSCS's annual celebration.

This February, Health Sciences Charter School (HSCS) honored Black History Month with a powerful and inspiring celebration of culture, music, and community. The event, themed "Legacy in Motion: For the Culture—Celebrating African American Excellence in Music and the Arts", showcased an incredible lineup of performances, awards, and tributes to Black excellence.

The program opened with Ms. Santiago and the 5th Period Music Class performing the Black National Anthem, Lift Every Voice and Sing, setting the tone for an afternoon of reflection and appreciation. A stirring speech reminded the audience of the program's deeper meaning:

"We honor not only the legends of the past but also the visionaries of the present and the trailblazers of the future. So sit back, open your hearts, and join us as we pay tribute to a legacy in motion—one that is undeniably, unapologetically, and beautifully for the culture!" *(Continued on Page 3)*



IN THIS ISSUE

Black History Month Pg 1
New Website and App Pg 2
Take Down Tobacco Pg 2
CNA Program Pg 4
Poetry Contest Winner Pg 4
Operations Expansion Pg 5
Healthway Update Pg 5
New Board Member Pg 6
Howard Service Days Pg 7
tMHFA Certifications Pg 7
Senior Updates Pg 8
Athletics Pg 9
Registration Help Pg 11

Now Enrolling for Fall 2025-2026!

See our new Enrollment Page for details!

ENROLL NOW

Keep Us In Your Pocket! Download our new App Today to Stay Connected!

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

Stay in the Know: HSCS Unveils New Website and App

We have exciting news! Health Sciences Charter School is making it easier than ever for parents, students, and our community to stay informed and engaged. We're thrilled to introduce our brand-new website and mobile app—both designed with you in mind!

Our updated website, healthscienceschartersschool.org, has a fresh look and is easier to navigate. Whether you're looking for school calendars, announcements, academic resources, or important updates, everything is just a click away.

And that's not all! We've also launched the Health Sciences Charter School app, available on both iOS and Android. With this app, you can get real-time notifications, check schedules, track important deadlines, and stay on top of school events—all from your phone!

What's New?

✓ Quick Access – Find everything you need without the hassle.
✓ Instant Alerts – Get important updates sent straight to your phone.
✓ Mobile-Friendly – Stay connected anytime, anywhere!

HealthSciences CHARTER SCHOOL

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

Either Search for Health Sciences Charter School or Click the box above to get the new app!

We encourage all parents and students to check out the new website and download the app today. It's all about making communication easier and keeping our school community connected. Have questions or need help? Reach out to our main office—we're happy to assist!

Health Sciences Charter School Students and Buffalo's Golden Corner Convenience Store Owner, Take Down Tobacco!

On Monday, March 31, students from **Health Sciences Charter School**, participating in the **No Menthol Buffalo movement**, will host a press conference from **10:30 AM to 11:00 AM** in recognition of the **Take Down Tobacco National Day of Action**. This event will spotlight the harmful impact of flavored tobacco products on youth and highlight the ongoing efforts to combat Big Tobacco.

During the press conference, students will present Rocky Mohamed, owner of Buffalo's Golden Corner, a convenience store located on the east side of Buffalo, with a Responsible Business Owner Certificate for his commitment to not selling alcohol or tobacco in his store. This action supports the No Menthol Buffalo movement to protect the health of the community, particularly its youth. *(Continued on Page 3)*

Music, Poetry, and Performance

Throughout the event, students, staff, and special guests took the stage to showcase a variety of artistic talents including Shawn Parker, Daun Patton, Clarence Barber, Mr. Groomes, Ms. Soules, K-Pistol and Rod Bonner, Mr. Elston, Ms. Walls, and Amiyah Funderburk.

This year, HSCS also recognized individuals who have made a lasting impact:

- Ms. Soules received an award on behalf of the cast of "A Christmas Carol" celebrating HSCS's first ever play.
- Judge Davis and Officer Gerald Cathcart were honored with the Award for Excellence in Justice and Community Partnerships.
- Pastor Shai Fears, the first HSCS graduate to serve on the school's Board of Trustees, was presented with the Health Sciences Alumni Award.

Taste of the Health: A Culinary and Cultural Experience

The celebration extended beyond performances! The day before the program, HSCS hosted Taste of the Health, an event that brought the community together over food, dance, and tradition. Guests enjoyed a delicious meal rooted in African culture, followed by lively line dancing and hair braiding lessons that highlighted the beauty and vibrancy of Black heritage.
From soulful melodies to powerful poetry, from honoring history to celebrating the present, this year's Black History Month program at HSCS was a testament to the rich legacy and bright future of African American culture. The event left attendees inspired, united, and proud to be part of a community that embraces and uplifts Black excellence.





Left: Officer Gerald Cathcart receiving the Award for Excellence in Justice and Community Partnerships. Right: Pastor Shai Fears receiving the Health Sciences Alumni Award

HSCS Takes Down Tobacco

"It's important to protect the health of the community, especially our youth," said Rocky Mohamed.

"These products are designed to entice young people to try tobacco and make continued use easier, ultimately leading to nicotine addiction, which is why the Buffalo Common Council needs to end the sale of them in our city," said Stan Martin, Spokesperson for the No Menthol Buffalo movement.

The event will also attract attention to the Global Day of Activism on April 1st, a day dedicated to advocating for a tobacco-free generation. Communities worldwide unite to demand action against the tobacco industry and its dangerous marketing tactics targeting young people, particularly with menthol-flavored products and e-cigarettes.
Every year, students, teachers, parents, elected officials, health professionals, and advocates come together to Take Down Tobacco and push for a healthier future. Partner organizations include the Buffalo Center for Health Equity and Stan Martin Consulting, LLC, who are committed to supporting the movement for a tobacco-free generation.

Winner of the February Writing Contest Announced

Lauryn Eaton Wins with a Beautifully Heart Wrenching poem.

Health Sciences Charter School held a Writing Challenge in February challenging students to channel their passion and creativity into a poem. The winner of this challenge was **Lauryn Eaton** with her poem entitled "*I Miss You?*"

Emmanuel Lopez came in second place with a poem about Summer, and Angel Pedro, Shamira Hossain, and Gabby Shorr are also being honored as runners up.

Congratulations to all of our writers!

I Miss You?

by Lauryn Eaton

I miss you,
but I deserve better.

I miss you,
but I can't forget the pain
you caused me.

I miss you,
but I don't think you'll ever
love me enough to make this work.

I miss you,
but I can't keep waiting for
someone who isn't coming back.

I miss you,
and I probably will forever but
I can't hold on to you any longer.

I can't destroy myself for love.



CNA Program Update:

Preparing Students for Healthcare Careers

Our flagship **Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program** is off to a great start! With **20 students enrolled**, this one-semester course—taught by **Brentnie Adams**—is the first step in equipping students with real-world healthcare skills before they even graduate.

Our **state-of-the-art classroom** is fully stocked with **hospital beds, manikins, and hands-on learning materials**, giving students an authentic training experience. This program is a key part of our mission to help students launch their healthcare careers while continuing their education.

We're excited to see these future healthcare professionals in action! Stay tuned for more updates.

Attention Students and Parents:

As of **3/25/2025**, all students and visitors must pass through a **new metal detector** at the school entrance. **Students, please plan accordingly** to ensure you arrive to class on time.

Thank you!

OPERATIONS NEWS

Meet the New Faces of the HSCS Operations Team

Health Sciences Charter School is excited to welcome three talented professionals to our Operations Team! Their expertise and leadership will help strengthen our school and support its future growth.

Denise Terrell – Chief Operating Officer
Coming from Enterprise Charter School, Denise Terrell steps in as Chief Operating Officer, overseeing school operations, budgeting, and financial planning. She will also play a key role in our plans to expand to an elementary school.

Kiya Bell – Director of Human Resources
As Director of HR, Kiya Bell is dedicated to building a positive work culture, supporting staff, and ensuring HSCS remains a great place to work and learn.

Victoria Cruz-Verdejo – School Business Office Manager
Also joining us from Enterprise Charter School, Victoria Cruz-Verdejo will oversee student registration, making the enrollment process seamless for new families. Her experience will also support HSCS's continued growth.

We're thrilled to have Denise, Kiya, and Victoria on board and look forward to the impact they'll make. Welcome to the team!



D. Terrell - Chief Operating Officer



K. Bell - Director of Human Resources



V. Cruz-Verdejo - Business Office Manager

HEALTHWAY UPDATES

Exciting News Coming Soon: Introducing Healthway CTC, LLC!

We're thrilled to announce a new opportunity for our alumni and the families of our current students: **Healthway CTC, LLC**, an adult education program focused on providing accessible, high-quality healthcare training for our alumni and the families of our students. Whether you're looking to enter the healthcare field or advance in your career, Healthway offers industry-relevant certifications in roles such as Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), Phlebotomists, Medical Assistants, and more.

This exciting program will be offered at **1221 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14209**. Stay tuned for more details on how you can take the next step toward a rewarding healthcare career!

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

HSCS Alumni Shai Fears Makes History as First Graduate on Health Sciences Charter School's Board of Trustees

Health Sciences Charter School is celebrating a historic moment—**for the first time ever, one of our own graduates has joined our Board of Trustees**! We are thrilled to welcome **Pastor Shai Fears** to this leadership role, where he will continue giving back to **HSCS and the Buffalo community.**



Member of the Board of Trustees: Shai Fears

Pastor Shai has always been a natural leader. As a student, he founded and led the **Bible Club**, which became the school's largest student organization. He had a passion for inspiring others from a young age, delivering his first sermon at just 12 years old.

After graduating from HSCS, Pastor Shai continued his leadership journey at **Canisius College**, earning a **degree in Human Services** while serving in student government and as **President of the Canisius Fellowship Alliance**. In 2017, he launched the **Releasing Your Faith Conference**, drawing a record attendance of over 200 people.

Pastor Shai has spent years speaking at churches, conferences, and community events across Western New York. Now, he's coming full circle—returning to HSCS, not just as an alum, but as **a trusted leader helping shape the school's future.**

We are incredibly proud to welcome Pastor Shai Fears to the HSCS Board of Trustees and can't wait to see the impact he'll make. Congratulations and welcome home, Pastor Shai!

UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS

The Board of Trustees meets on the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 a.m., unless otherwise noted. The meetings are accessible to the public, including individuals with disabilities. If you would like to attend a board meeting, please contact the school at 716-888-4080 ext. 100 at least one week prior to the meeting.



2024-25 Board Meeting Dates:

7/11/24 at 7:00am
8/8/24 at 7:00am
9/12/24 at 7:00am
10/10/24 at 7:00am
11/14/24 at 7:00am
12/12/24 at 7:00am
1/9/25 at 7:00am
2/13/25 at 7:00am
3/13/25 at 7:00am
4/10/25 at 7:00am
5/8/25 at 7:00am
6/12/25 at 7:00am

WORK BASED LEARNING

Howard University Students Mentor HSCS Juniors and Seniors



This past month, Health Sciences Charter School had the incredible opportunity to welcome students from **Howard University**, who shared their wisdom, experiences, and advice with our juniors and seniors.

Throughout their visit, the Howard students talked about **choosing the right college, adjusting to campus life, and making the leap from high school to college**. They didn't just talk the talk—they also jumped right into our classrooms, assisting teachers and supporting students in a variety of subjects.

On their final day, they **led hands-on workshops** covering professionalism, interview skills, and résumé building—giving our seniors practical tools to help them succeed in their next chapter. We're so grateful for their time, energy, and guidance, and we hope to see them back at HSCS again soon!

HSCS Students Take the Lead in Mental Health Awareness

At HSCS, supporting one another is just as important as academics. That's why we're so proud of our students who recently earned their **Teen Mental Health First Aid (tMHFA) certification**, equipping them with the skills to recognize and respond to mental health challenges among their peers.

Through this training, they learned how to **identify signs of mental health struggles, open up conversations, and connect friends with trusted adults for help**. They also explored the impact of bullying, school violence, and substance use on mental well-being—gaining valuable tools to foster a more supportive school environment.

By stepping up in this way, these students are making HSCS a stronger, more compassionate community. **Congratulations to our newly certified mental health advocates!**

SERVICE LEARNING

All scholars at Health Sciences Charter School are required to complete 100 service learning hours as a requirement for graduation. Scholars should be completing 25 hours of service per school year in order to be on track for graduation.

RETURNING STUDENTS

Important Links

- Click HERE to Get The Application for **NEW** Students
- Click HERE for the Intent-to-Return form for **CURRENT** Students

SENIORS

Important Dates for Seniors:

October 28, 2024	**Senior Picture Day**
November 15th	**1st Payment Due/Senior hoodie payment due ($55)**
December 11th	**Senior Picture Retake Day**
January 10th	**2nd Payment Due ($35)**
February 7th	**3rd Payment Due ($35)**
March 14th	**4th Payment Due ($45)**
May 14th	**Senior Awards Night* guest tickets are sold separately)** --If you do not attend this event, you will not be allowed to go to Prom
May 16th	**Prom* (ticket cost would be $65 and it is not included in the senior dues) Optional**
June 2nd	**Service hours deadline: 100 community service hours due for seniors to participate in graduation. THIS IS A REQUIREMENT FOR GRADUATION. (See Mrs. Pettway)**



Attention Seniors! Please see below for updates to make sure you are walking across that graduation stage in June!

- Graduation will be **June 26th at Noon!!!** Make sure to let your family and friends know so they can come and support you!
- If you do not complete your service hours **you will NOT be allowed to walk at graduation!** Please email Mrs. Pettway for an update on your service hours and if you need opportunities to earn them!
- Make sure you are working hard towards passing your exams - **if you need help, please speak with your teachers regarding after school exam prep!**
- If you need help applying for college, please speak to either Mrs. Marrazzo or one of the counselors in the Guidance Suite.
- Keep an eye out for the Senior Survey!

HSCS Boys Varsity Basketball: A Season of Hard Work and Triumph



The Health Sciences Charter School Boys Varsity Basketball team gave us a season to be proud of, finishing with an impressive **18-7 record**. Their grit, determination, and teamwork earned them the title of **Buffalo Public Schools Yale Cup Champions** and **Section VI Class AA Champions**, proving that hard work pays off. They battled all the way to the **New York State West Regional Finals**, finishing as runners-up after a fierce fight. Along the way, several players stood out and earned well-deserved recognition:

- **1st Team All-League:** Nahsaan Young (Junior), Zayvion Hawkins (Junior)
- **2nd Team All-League:** Mychael Whitt (Sophomore), Staz Chiddick (Senior)
- **Honorable Mention:** Joel Ball (Junior)

From fast breaks to clutch shots, these athletes gave it their all every time they stepped on the court. Congratulations to our student-athletes and coaches on a fantastic season—we are so proud of you!

HSCS Girls Varsity Basketball Team Makes HSCS History

The **Health Sciences Charter School Girls Varsity Basketball** team made school history this season, becoming the **first-ever HSCS girls team to reach the Section VI Finals!** With an impressive **15-5 record**, they were crowned **Buffalo Public Schools Canisius Cup Co-Champions** and battled their way to the **Section VI Class B1 Championship game**, finishing as runners-up after a hard-fought contest.

Several players earned well-deserved recognition for their outstanding performances:

- **Player of the Year & 1st Team All-League:** Noora Alkaldi (Senior)
- **2nd Team All-League:** Tajanique Brooks (Junior)
- **3rd Team All-League:** Ashlyn Ball (Senior), K'Lynn Calder (Sophomore)
- **Honorable Mention:** Hope Laker (Senior)

This season was a testament to the team's **hard work, dedication**, and **resilience**. Their success has set a new standard for HSCS girls basketball, and we couldn't be prouder. Congratulations to our athletes and coaches on an unforgettable year!





ATHLETICS

HSCS Indoor Track Athletes Shine with Personal Bests and Strong Performances

The Health Sciences Charter School Indoor Track team wrapped up a competitive season with impressive showings at the **Section VI Championships**, along with multiple athletes achieving personal records throughout the year.

At the Section VI Championships, senior **Ny'aja Hunt** placed 21st in the 55m dash (7.91), while junior **Chris Jones** had a standout performance, finishing 9th in the 55m (6.79) and 5th in the 300m (37.33). Sophomore **Marlon Barnaby** also delivered a strong race, placing 11th in the 55m (6.84).

Several other HSCS athletes achieved new personal bests, including:

- **Daniella Bolende** – 300m (46.02), 55m hurdles (10.15)
- **Abdulahi Bukurow** – 600m (1:42.10)
- **Kendall Dudley** – Shot Put (33'-11)
- **Santana Hoskins** – 600m (1:42.95), 1000m (3:35.75)
- **Keshaun Joiner** – 300m (39.77), 55m (7.05)
- **Jomir Littlejohn** – 55m hurdles (9.64)
- **Johnasia Robbins** – 55m hurdles (11.30), Long Jump (12'-8.5)
- **Cailee Washington** – 300m (40.66), 600m (1:33.61)

Congratulations to the entire Indoor Track team for their hard work and accomplishments!

HSCS Wrestlers make their Mark on the Mat

This season, senior wrestlers **Micaela Estevao** and **Knionna Leeper** showed incredible determination and skill on the mat. **Micaela** battled through multiple injuries and came just one match shy of earning All-Section honors—all while maintaining one of the highest GPAs in her class. **Knionna** had a dominant season, finishing with an impressive **31-7** record and placing **3rd in the section**. Her hard work has earned her a spot on the **Division II D'Youville University women's wrestling team**, where she will continue her athletic and academic journey.

Congratulations ladies on a fantastic season!

WINTER ALL STAR STUDENT

Winter All-Star Noora Alkaldi Makes HSCS History



Health Sciences Charter School is proud to recognize **Noora Alkaldi** as our **Winter All-Star Student**! A standout senior on the girls' basketball team, Noora helped lead her squad through a **historic season**, earning **Player of the Year and 1st Team All-League honors**. She also made school history as the **first girls' basketball player to score over 1,000 career points**.

A multi-sport athlete and dedicated member of the school community, Noora's **talent, leadership, and work ethic** shine both on and off the court. With her drive and determination, there's no doubt she has a bright future ahead. Congratulations, Noora!

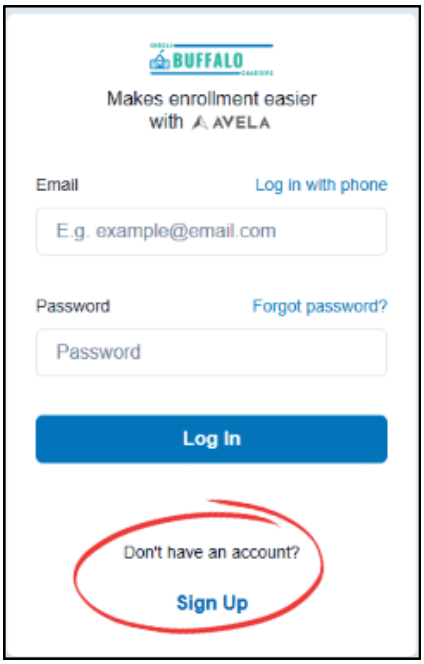
APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

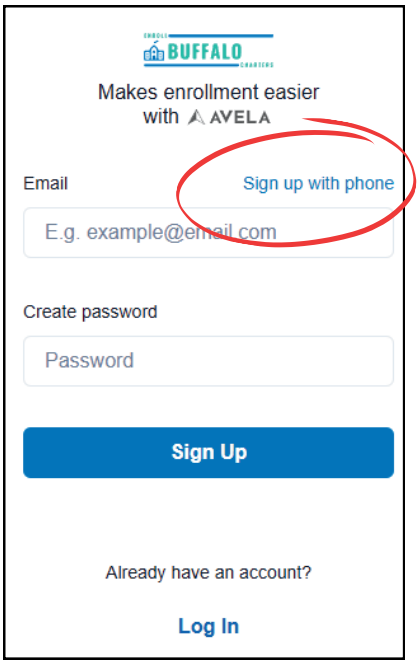
Applications for Grades 9-12 for the 2025-26 School Year are now OPEN!!! Follow these easy steps to apply to have your child join #BigHealth

Step 1 - Go to the Application Page: Click on the image to go to our enrollment page. You can also find this link on Facebook and our Website.

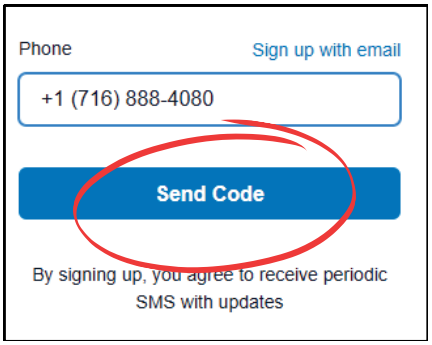


Step 2 - Register an account if needed: If this is your first time here, click on "Don't Have an Account. Then sign up with your phone.





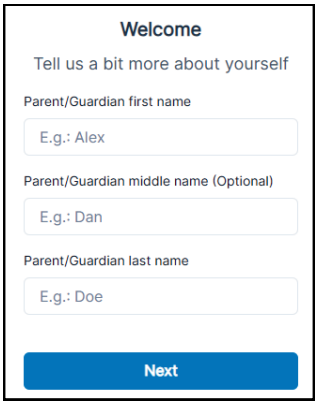
Put your cell phone number in for Phone, and hit Send Code

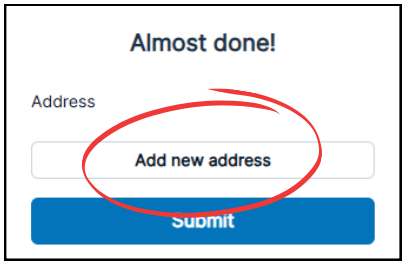


You should get a text message with a code. Put it in the next box and hit Submit

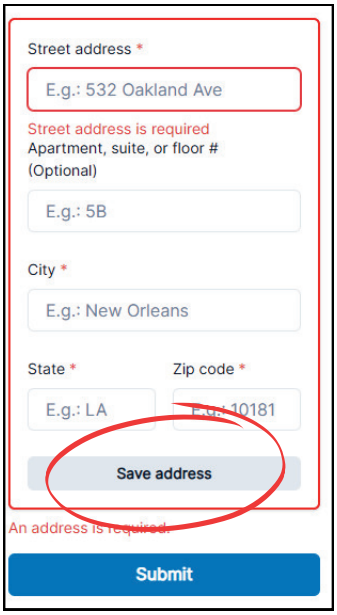
APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

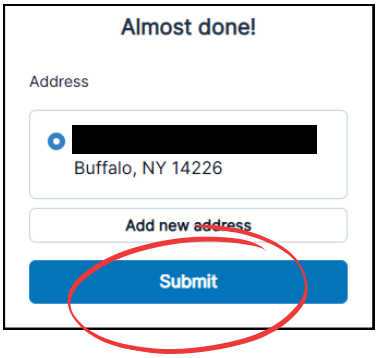
Step 3 - Fill out your Profile: Follow the instructions and continue to set up your profile.





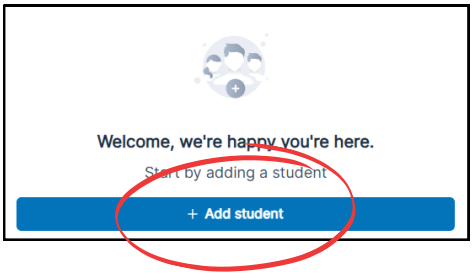
Choose Add New Address. Once you enter your home address in, click Save Address.



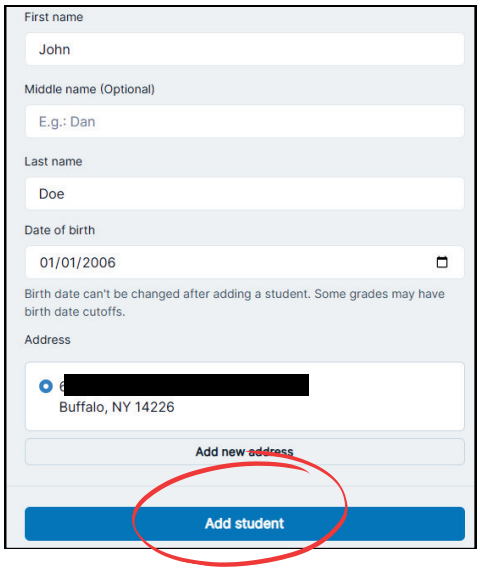


Select the Address you just put in and hit Submit.

Step 4 - Add your child as a student: Click Add Student and follow the instructions.

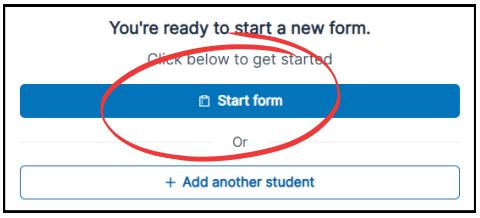


Click Add New Student.



Fill out the form and hit Add Student. Make sure the name and Date of Birth are accurate. If you need to add a new address if you need to.

Once you're all set, click Add Student to continue.

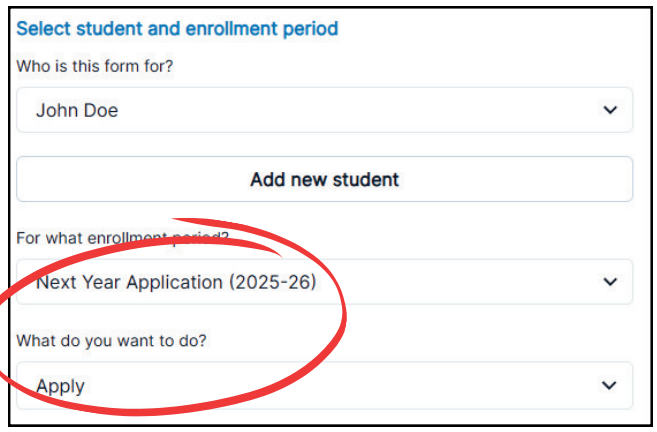


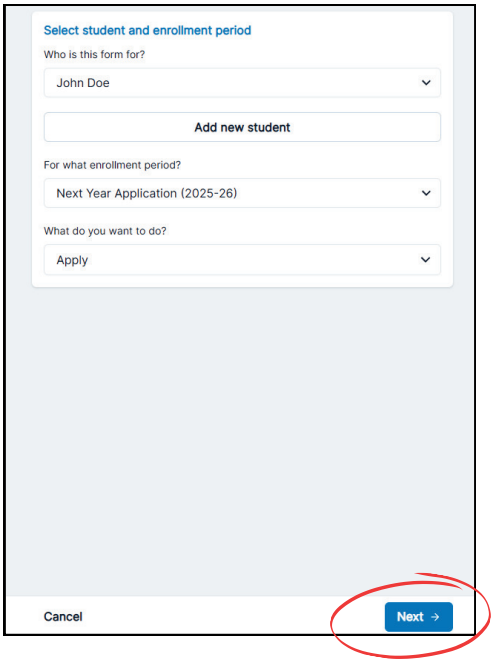
If you want to add more students to your account, click + Add another student.

Otherwise hit Start form to continue registration.

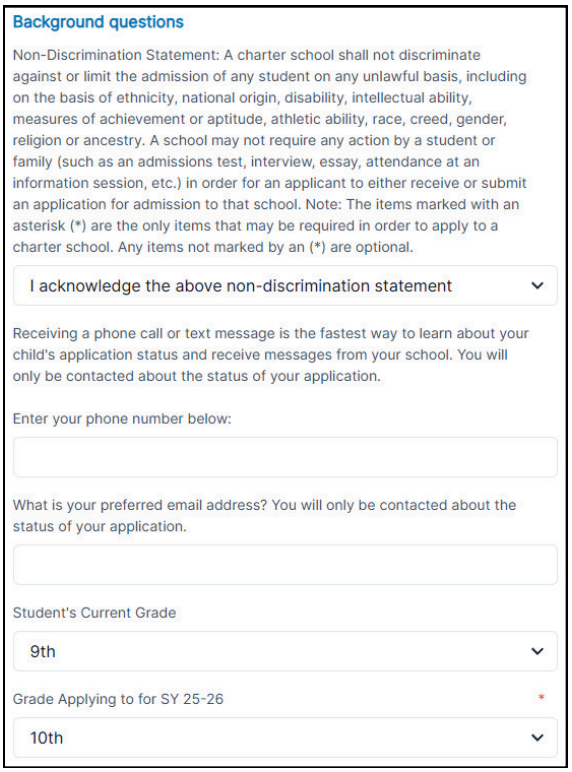
APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

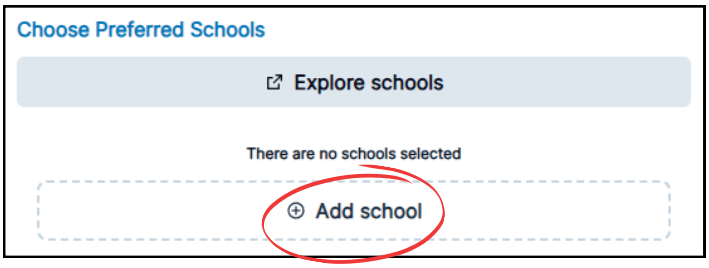
Step 5 - Start a new Application Form: Select the student you are filling out the application for. Make sure you select “Next Year Application (2025-26)” and “Apply”. Then hit Next.

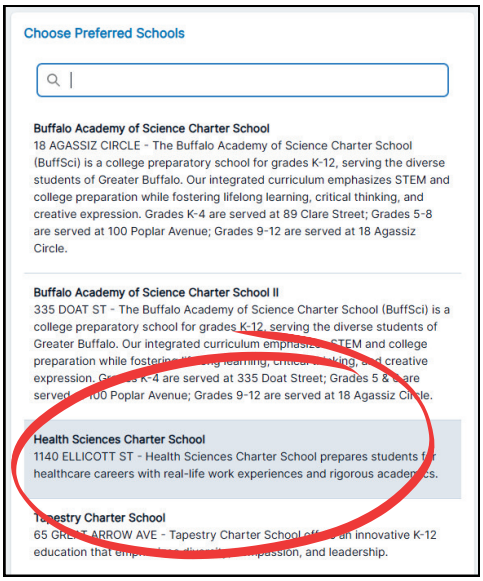




Step 6 - Answer the background questions and choose the schools you want to apply to: Follow the instructions for Background Questions, then hit Next. Click Add School.

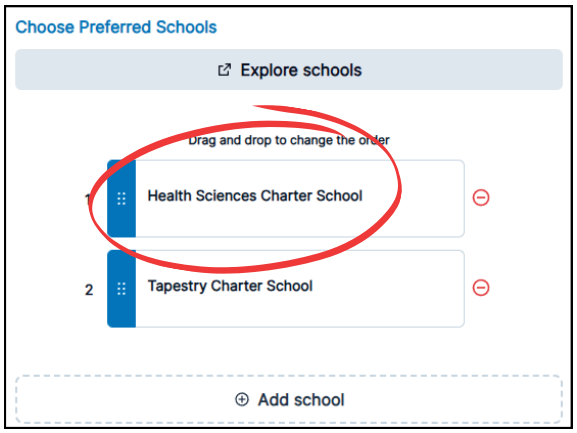


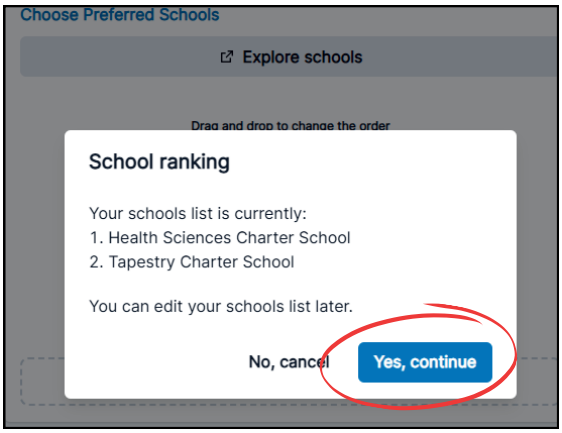




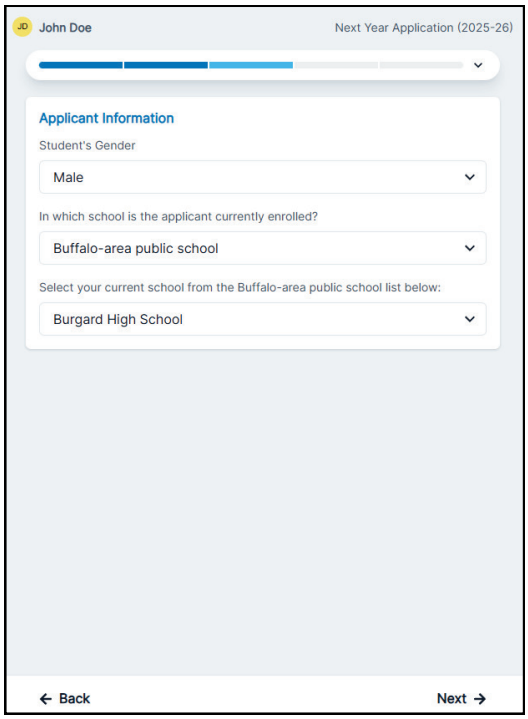
APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

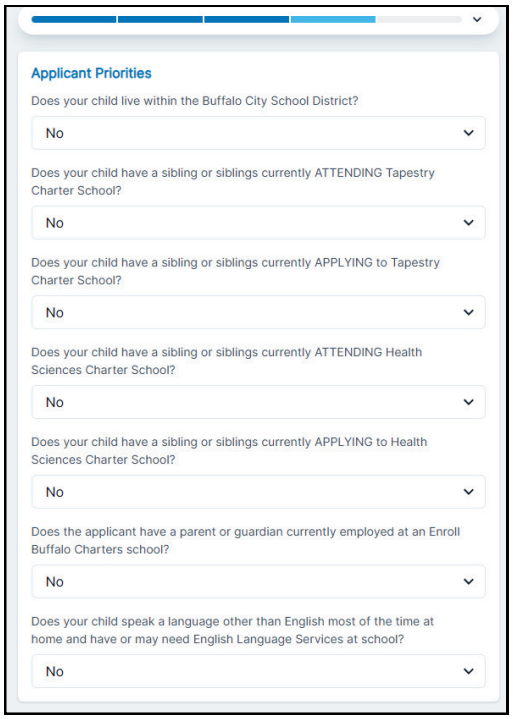
Step 7 - Put your schools in order of preference: Make sure the school you want is at the top! Triple Check to make sure Health Sciences Charter School is on top, and hit Yes, Continue.

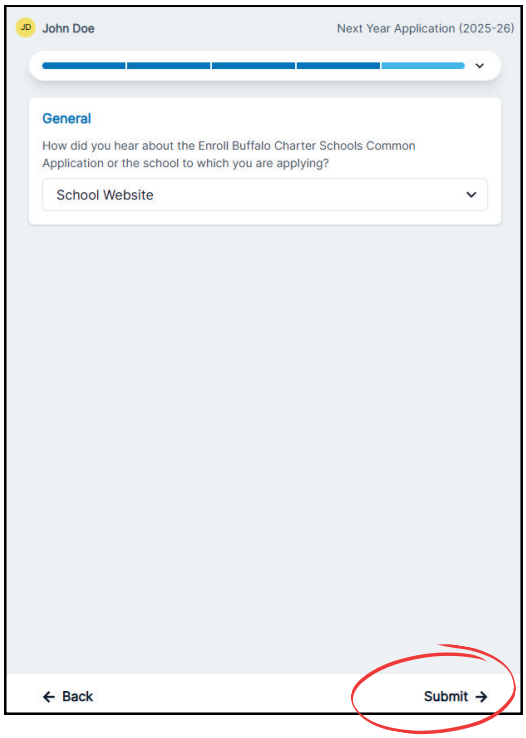




Step 8 - Finish your Application: Keep filling out the forms, then hit Submit.







Congratulations on applying to become our next Health Sciences Falcon. The lottery is in April, so you will hear more about the enrollment process then!