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CONTINUING PROGRESS

A Report on the East Ramapo Central School District

December 2018

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(appointed November 2018)



Continuing Progress

A Report on the East Ramapo Central School District

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<i>Table 1.</i>	

On August 16, 2016, New York State Education Department Commissioner MaryEllen Elia appointed Charles Szuberla and reappointed Dr. John Sipple as monitors (Monitors) for the East Ramapo Central School District ()¹. The 2017-18 school year monitoring initiative built on the work conducted by State monitors since June 2014 and included working with the Board of Education (Board) and District leadership to implement Strategic Academic Improvement and Fiscal Improvement Plans; improve fiscal and budgetary planning; and provide oversight as required by Chapter 59 of the Laws of 2017.² In addition, the Monitors oversaw the District completion of Phase II of a \$58 million bond proposition to fund critical capital repairs and projects. This report focuses on the academic and fiscal condition of the District for the 2017-18 school year.

2017-18 District Accomplishments

1. All student subgroups showed improvement on the grades 3-8 English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics State assessments.
2. The New York State Comptroller upgraded the District's fiscal condition from moderate stress to undesignated.³
3. The Board of Education and teachers union agreed on a new contract that runs through June 2021.)()03 nan53 476.47 Tm0 ght/F7 12 Tf1 0 0 1 219400 0685.122E1012g/rFa'

11. The District expanded summer academic program offerings to include:
- Instrumental music summer camp for grades 4-8 (400 students);
 - Computer sciences summer academy for grades 2-8 (250 students);
 - Health sciences summer academy for grades 2-8 (250 students);
 - Extended school year program for grades K-8 (255 students); and
 - Student with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education for grades 9-10 (60 students).

Enrollment Overview

Table 1. Enrollment

Subgroup	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Pre-			

Table 4. District and School Accountability Status

NAME	2017-18 Accountability Status
EAST RAMAPO CSD (SPRING VALLEY)	Focus District
FLEETWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Good Standing
GRANDVIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Focus School
HEMPSTEAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Good Standing
KAKIAT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Good Standing
MARGETTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Focus School
EAST RAMAPO EARLY CHLD CTR AT KAKIAT	Good Standing
SUMMIT PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	Good Standing
CHESTNUT RIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL	

Table 6. 3-8 Math Proficiency

Subgroup	2016	2017	2018
General Education	21%	23%	26%
Black or African American	15%	17%	21%
Hispanic or Latino	13%	16%	18%
White	31%	36%	39%
English Language Learners	2%	5%	6%
Students with Disabilities	2%	3%	5%

High School Graduation Rate

Graduation rates, with the exception of Black students, have steadily declined since 2015.

College Courses

Thirteen percent of high school students in the District took college courses in 2017-18. The passing rate for Spring Valley High School students was 95.5% (149 out of 156 students). The passing rate for Ramapo High School students was 97% (198 out of 204 students). College courses taken by East Ramapo students in 2017-18 included:

- x English Composition I
- x English 101
- x College Speech
- x Media Communication
- x Spanish I
- x Algebra
- x Physics
- x Multicultural Dance
- x Public Affairs
- x Psychology

Restoration of Staffing Cuts

The District has restored a total of 185.5 positions since the d0f100091265h1(s1 0 0 91265h1JETQq

Table 9. Staffing Reductions and Restorations

	2008-09	2009-12 2012-13 2013-14 2014-15 2017-18 2018-19						Total Cuts	Restored as of 6/30/18	Net Change
		Cuts	Cuts	Cuts	Cuts	Cuts	Cuts			
Elementary Teachers		75						75	26	-49
Elementary Art/Music Teachers									21	21
Secondary Teachers		93.2		16				109.2	47.5	-61.7
Secondary Art/Music Teachers									22.5	22.5
Special Education Teachers					15			15	1	-14
One-on-One Aides		19		5				24		-24
Teaching Assistants		49					15	64	10	-54
Attendance Teachers		1						1	0.5	-0.5
Guidance Counselors									2	2



Notes for Staffing Cuts and Restorations Table:

1. Data is based on information supplied by the District and a review of official Board of Education minutes from September 2008 to June 2018.
2. Due to changes the administrative structure of the District, a direct comparison of staffing levels from year to year is difficult. For example, Department chairs in secondary education were replaced by Academic Standards Facilitators to focus on instruction and teacher development.
3. Public Pre-K-12 Student Enrollment:
 2009: 7,752 (94 pre-K students)
 2018: 9,855 (1,790 pre-K students)
4. A significant portion of the reductions in civil service positions is due to privatizing student transportation.
5. Improvements in the personnel office resulted in the District finding multiple candidates for each open position for the 2018-19 school year.

Average Class Size

Table 10. Average Class Size by Grade Level*

*Average Class Size is the total roGS7 gs0 g/GS8 gs0 G[)]TJETQq0.09 /P #MCID 1-BDC q0.00000912 0 612 792

- 1) Long-term (2016-2020) strategic academic plan;
- 2) Long-term fiscal improvement plan; and
- 3) Expenditure plan outlining the use of the \$3 million in State funding, which the District used in the 2017-18 school year to implement full-day kindergarten and restore arts programs in the elementary schools.

The updated fiscal improvement plan and the comprehensive expenditure plan for the additional \$3 million in State funds for the 2017-2018 school year were developed in consultation with the State Monitors as required by Chapter 59 of the Laws of 2017. The 2017-18 educational investments funded with the \$3 million were aligned with recommendations 8 and 10 included in the M

:⁵ Recommendation 8 was to provide students with full-day kindergarten

Strategic Academic Plan

Strengthen student engagement and ownership of learning through a student portfolio system that includes setting academic and behavioral goals, personal monitoring of progress, and student-led conferences and expositions.

Require every high school graduate to complete a concrete post-secondary plan collaboratively with staff, peers, and parents/caregivers.

Pillar 2: Culture of Safety and Strong Relationships with Families & Community

Positive behaviors & student voice:

Implement and monitor all tiers of the Positive Behavior and Intervention System in every school and every classroom to create a safe culture for learning and work. Implement a student-to-adult or student-to-student mentoring program.

Conduct at least one student-led summit annually as a forum for open, mutually respectful communication among students, staff, and parents/caregivers.

Family education and collaboration:

Provide ongoing training to parents/caregivers regarding effective strategies for strengthening language and math skills of students in kindergarten through grade 2.

Engage parents/caregivers in ongoing training, collaboration, and communication to better understand and support student achievement.

Educate parents and caregivers about how to access school and community resources that support family health and wellness and behavioral and life success for students.

Internships and dual degree programs:

Develop community partnerships that provide opportunities for students to enroll in courses at local colleges and universities and to participate in internships and apprenticeships with local employers and community organizations.

Pillar 3: Results-Focused, Collaborative Professional Learning

- x High-Quality learning targets that are unpacked with students to create student ownership of learning.
- x Formative assessment practices, including common checks for understanding to be used daily in instruction.
- x Engagement practices that include protocols and other strategies that challenge student thinking.
- x Use of data to inform instruction, including strategies to scaffold and differentiate learning to meet the needs of all students.
- x Leadership development and sustainability of effective teachers and principals, including both external and internal on-site coaching.
- x Standards-aligned curriculum and instruction.
- x Special Education and ENL/Bilingual classroom implementation of standards-based curriculum and instruction.
- x Promoting a culture of social and emotional learning through efficacy and growth mindset.
- x Conferences, workshops, and resources designed to enhance student achievement and engagement in learning.
- x Workshops focused on the integration of core District goals and preparing students with 21st-century skills.
- x Expanded training for all aspects of the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA).
- x Enhanced resources and supports for Part 154 and 154-3 implementation.
- x Supporting ALL learners through instructional practice aligned with the standards and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

can receive instruction in the core area classes (science, math, and social studies) in Spanish. This method of language acquisition best meets the instructional needs the two reasons described below.

Students must pass five Regents exams or complete an approved four-plus-one graduation pathway to obtain a Regents Diploma. Regents exams are available in Spanish, except for the English language arts Regents Exam. Therefore, providing students with consistent instruction in their home language afford them the opportunity to be successful on the exams.

Within the last five years, there has been a marked increase in the enrollment of students between the ages of 17 and 20. Several research reports indicate that learning an academic language can take ta

- Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education for grades 9-10 (60 students)
- x Elementary Education
 - Arts instruction (3 teachers)
 - ENL and Bilingual instruction (5 teachers)
 - Academic standards facilitators
- x Middle School Education
 - Arts instruction (3 teachers)
 - Expanded ENL and Bilingual instruction (5 teachers)
 - Academic standards facilitators
- x High School Education
 - Effective Instruction (8 teachers)
 - Teacher collaboration model
 - Academic standards facilitators
 - ENL and Bilingual Instruction (4 teachers)
- x Special Education
 - Increases collaborative classes (24 classes in grades 3-12)
 - Increases clinical services including speech and language, occupational, and behavior specialists

The District continued conversion of Chestnut Ridge Middle School, a Priority School, to an International Baccalaureate (IB) School. The conversion is funded with a \$2,497,895 federal School Improvement Grant that was received in the prior school year. The grant provides funding for five years. The school is making satisfactory progress towards becoming an IB school.

Academic Changes for 2018-19

Curriculum

- x Elementary school instrumental enrollment has continued to grow from 0 in 2015 to upwards of 785 in 2018.
- x All elementary schools had concerts. Many schools had additional art shows.

Fiscal Improvement Plan

Building on the Work of the 2016-17 School Year

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District created 28 full-day kindergarten classes, a dramatic increase from the four full-day classes offered in 2015-16

- x Phase II accounts for an estimated \$24 million that was started in early Spring of 2018 and will be completed in December. Major capital work was completed or is being done in 11 school buildings, including eight roofs, six boilers, three ventilation systems, phase II of K-8 model school conversion work at Kakiat STEAM Middle School, and a new library at Chestnut Ridge Middle School.
- x Phase III, accounting for an estimated \$19 million, will start in Spring of 2019. Phase III includes roofing, boilers, windows, and paving at the remaining buildings.

Improved Fiscal Condition

In 2017-18 fiscal year, the District fiscal stress designation⁸ by the Office of State design significantly stressed if the fiscal stress score falls between 65-100%. Given that in 2014- improvement. icant fiscal

The primary reasons for the District several years of balanced budgets. Based on the preliminary 2018-19 fiscal year audit numbers, which indicate an assigned and unassigned fund balance total of 3.6% of the approved 2018-

project funding, this matter proceeded to mediation. There is now a Board-approved agreement between the District and Johnson Controls to pay \$1 million over a five-year period starting in fiscal year 2017-18. In July 2018, the District made its second payment of \$200,000 towards this settlement.

- x In 2011-2012, the District charged the school lunch fund for \$724,616 for capital expenditures that did not receive prior approval by New York State Education Department. The District entered in a Board-approved agreement to reimburse the school lunch fund for the above amount during a seven-year period starting from 2017-18.

x

The proposed budget accounted for 15 retiring teachers. Accounting for the savings from three teaching assistants added \$148,462 to the savings. The total savings from 14 additional retiring teachers in addition to the 15 anticipated retirements saved an additional \$252,000. The savings also included the retirement of the Assistant Director of Transportation, who was replaced by a staff member with a lower salary. The difference between the salaries resulted in a savings of \$31,600. No teachers were laid off.

Additional cuts and attrition included:

- x The Director of Secondary Education, a position that was included in the originally proposed budget, will assume supplemental and school improvement responsibilities that allow for the position to be 80% funded by alternative funding streams, coming to \$151,222 to be saved in the general fund.
- x The Director of Elementary Education will also devote a greater percentage of time on remedial pedagogy and programs (up to 80%), resulting in a general fund savings of \$57,203.
- x The clerical staff will be reduced by two staff members, representing a savings of \$231,352.

Implemented Monitor Recommendations

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- x Convening an advisory group to review existing polling site locations and recommend changes to address access and overcrowding. As a result, the Board approved two new polling sites.
- x Convening a budget advisory committee,
- x Creating a newsletter and videos,
- x Pre-approved non-public textbooks, and
- x Improved translation tools on the new District website.

Concerns

More than 93% of school districts have passed their budgets on the first or second vote in the last five years. East Ramapo is an outlier with three contingency budgets in the last five years. Looking ahead, it remains critical the community comes together to build support for school budgets, especially those that adhere to the tax cap.

The estimate for simply maintaining support for existing academic programs and increasing bus ridership is more than \$20 million over the next five years. Failure to pass

current standards. However, the District cannot sustain another contingency budget. It is unclear what level of tax levy the community would support. Budgeting is not a one-year-at-a-time activity. The Monitors are committed to working with the entire community to forge a long-range plan for success.

Recommendations

1. The Board of Education and the Superintendent should reach out to the community to explain how strong public schools can benefit everyone in the community.
2. The District should prepare charts showing the following annual trends over the last five years:
 - x General fund revenues and expenditures;
 - x Fund balance and operating surplus/deficit;
 - x Local tax levy and State Aid; and
 - x Budgeted versus actual State Aid.
3. Create a community workgroup to establish a five-year budget plan to adequately support students and outline the federal, State, and local revenues needed to support the plan. The workgroup should solicit input from the community on student achievement goals, graduation rates, equity, non-public transportation, and tax tolerance.
4. The District should develop a primer for the public on how funds are allocated for non-public students and post the primer on the District web site.
5. Seek a change to the pre-K State Aid formula to include a count of non-public and public students. Pre-K programs in East Ramapo serve all students in the District, including a significant number of students who will attend non-public K-12 schools.
6. The District should request an audit of the transportation program by the New York State Comptroller to establish a baseline for performance improvements and cost efficiencies.
7. adopting a m efficacy approach.
It is critical that the District is successful in changing attitudes to reflect the expectation that all students can be successful.
8. The District should digitize the ordering, lending, and inventory of pre-approved textbooks to non-public schools to ensure schools receive their textbooks in a timely fashion.