

2021-2022 Revisions of the  
State Monitor's  
Academic and Fiscal Improvement Plans  
for the  
Hempstead Union Free School District

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State Monitor

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## INTRODUCTION

The Hempstead Union Free School District (HUFSD or “the District”) is located in the center of Nassau County. It is by several important metrics the poorest and neediest District in the county. In terms of need, the percent of students who are free and/or reduced-price lunch eligible is consistently above 70%. In terms of wealth, the District’s combined wealth ratio, an index that compares a district’s per pupil income and property wealth to the State averages, is .28. A District that had average per pupil income and property wealth equivalent to the State average would be 1.00. The average value for Nassau County districts is 1.441.

The District serves a little over 9,000 students, 2,750 of whom currently attend charter schools. Approximately 6,250 students are enrolled in one of the District’s seven elementary schools, in the Alverta B. Gray Schultz Middle School (“the Middle School”) or Hempstead High School (“the High School”). The District enrolls almost exclusively students of color. The student population consists approximately of 30% African American and 70% Latino students.

For the 2020-2021 school year two reports were developed by the monitor for the District. One focused on academic and the other on fiscal conditions in the District. Each was composed of a series of findings and recommendations. Both reports were accepted and approved by the Board of Education (“the Board”) and the Commissioner of Education. Recommendations were scheduled to be implemented during this and upcoming school years. The purpose of this update is to present to the Board and the Commissioner a brief overview of the first year of implementation and to provide a series of revised recommendations based on the experience of this first year.

## MAJOR FIRST YEAR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During this first year of implementation of the academic and fiscal improvement plans, there were several noteworthy changes that reflect the direction in which the District is heading. A more complete version of first year implementation accomplishments can be found in the District’s 2020-21 school year report on implementation of the academic and fiscal improvement plans:

- The Board appointed the Interim Superintendent to a permanent position and provided her with a three-year contract.
- The budget for the 2020-2021 school was balanced. In fact, revenues were underestimated, and the budget was underspent. At this time, the 2021-2022 budget appears out of balance because of the underestimation of Charter school tuitions. However, if the actions being taken by the business office continue, the budget will be balanced at the end of the fiscal year.

- All but one of the elementary and the middle school have been officially certified by the International Baccalaureate (IB) organization and are registered as IB schools.
- For the second year in a row, the four-year August graduation rate for Hempstead High School was at or above 78%.
- Despite all the threatened delays because of Covid19, the new Rhodes school opened on time. As a result, many of the portable classrooms in the District will be taken out of service.

### CONTINUING CHALLENGES

There continue to be a number of areas that present unique challenges to the District. While detailed information can again be found in the District's annual report, there are some challenges of particular note:

- Charter school costs continue as a major challenge for the District. Costs for charter school tuition for resident students rose from approximately \$49 million in 2020-2021 to an estimated \$58.8 million for the 2021-22 school year. This \$9.8 million change is a 20% increase, making it by far the largest area of increase in the District's budget. No other expense comes close to an increase of that magnitude or that rate of increase. In addition, because of pending increases in student enrollment in charter schools and the formula for charter school tuition, the District is facing significant future increases in charter school costs.
- Although the four-year graduation rate has improved significantly, approximately 20% of the students are not graduating. Continued improvement remains as a high priority for the District.
- The transportation limits remain unchanged for the 2020-21 school year. They remain at three miles for secondary students and two miles for elementary students. Any student who lives closer to his or her school than those distances is not eligible for transportation. Lowering those limits or finding another way to provide transportation for currently ineligible students remains a priority for the District, its legislative representatives, and many within the community.
- Having the Rhodes school come online this year was a significant accomplishment, but also highlights the need to modernize other buildings within the District. Aging facilities need updating and the remainder of the portables need to be put out of service.
- Attendance problems for teachers and students continue. Successful instruction is highly correlated to the connection of students with teachers. When students and/or teachers are routinely absent, the efficacy of the instructional program is seriously threatened.
- Although assessment data for the past two school years is scant, what is available from either the administration of the NWEA or the i-Ready tests, and now with the just released state test results, suggest that Hempstead students at the elementary and middle schools are not performing up to expectations, and unacceptable numbers are performing below grade level.

- The Superintendent used her Receivership authority to add fifteen minutes to the instructional periods for students at the high school and the middle school; however, this additional time will expire when receivership status is ended. This added time may appear minimal but is crucial for the scheduling of special services during block periods. The District and the teacher’s association will need to find a way to continue this provision in future collective bargaining agreements.

**PROPOSED REVISIONS TO RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN ACADEMIC AND FISCAL IMPROVEMENT PLANS**

The District recently submitted its annual report that described its implementation during the 2020-21 school year of the academic and fiscal improvement plans. While some of the recommendations in the original academic and fiscal plans could be accomplished in a single year, many focused on incremental change or growth over time. This update to the original plans is designed to honor and recognize the work done during the first year but also add or amend recommendations based on progress and experience in year one.

**DISTRICT/GOVERNANCE**

| Recommendation 2020-2021  | Action   | Recommendation 2021-2022  |
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| It is important the Board work to focus on policy and procedures that enhance the operation of the district and enable it to utilize all its available resources to improve the overall performance of the district | Amend    | Within three months of receipt, the Board will act on policy changes recommended by NYSSBA and shall implement such policy in accordance with a schedule established by the Board. If a policy is developed by NYSSBA or the District’s general counsel at the request of the Board, the Board will act on the policy within three months of receipt and implement the policy in accordance with a schedule established by the Board.   |
| Finding a way to transport students should be a priority  |          | By the end of the 2021-22 school year, the District shall place on either a special referendum or a referendum at the annual budget vote a proposition to reduce from 3 miles and 2 miles to 1.5 miles the distance beyond which students may be transported.   |
| The Board should have an objective procedure for the hiring of staff. If the procedures are followed and the result is a recommendation from the Superintendent, the Board should approve the recommendation.       | Amend    | Beginning immediately, the Board of Education shall approve all personnel recommendations of the superintendent that have been submitted in accordance with Board policy, unless withholding of approval is based upon cause. (Cause shall be defined as withholding approval for reasons connected to the failure of the candidate to meet the qualifications of the position or reasons connected to the candidate’s moral character that would preclude them from working in a public school setting). |
| The district needs to make efforts to conclude negotiations   | Continue | Beginning immediately upon approval of the annual update to the improvement plan by the Commissioner,   |

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| with its teachers during the school year and begin the next school year with a settled contract.   |       | the Board and Administration shall make every reasonable effort (e.g., bargaining in good faith, providing timely responses to requests for information, avoiding canceling scheduled bargaining sessions without good cause, maintaining open lines of communication) to settle its outstanding teacher contract negotiations.   |
| The Board and administration commence a discussion about the short- and long-term facilities needs of the district prior to next year's budget and include in that discussion the use of the new school and the assignment of sixth grade students | Amend | By the end of the 2021-2022 school year. the District shall place before the public or establish a date for a referendum to secure funding for building repairs and improvements, which shall include funding to enable the removal of all portable classrooms used for instruction.  |
| The District conduct an in-depth study of enrollment prior to the discussion about long term capital plans   | Amend | Annually, by February 1, the District shall update the enrollment study done in 2019 by Western Suffolk BOCES and present it to the Board of Education with recommendations for actions to be taken based on the study.   |
| The audit committee will be formed and meet during this fiscal year  | Amend | The Board of Education audit committee shall meet at least 4 times during this fiscal year ending June 30, 2022.  |
|  | Add   | Board members shall inform the Superintendent as soon as possible of any complaints or concerns made directly to them that involve students or staff, could affect the operation of the District, or could result in litigation.  |
|  | Add   | No later than February 1, 2022, the Board and Superintendent shall cease placing on the Board agenda any "Hand Carries" that are not accompanied by a rationale as to why the item continues an emergency that must be addressed on an expedited timeline.  |
|  | Add   | Beginning immediately, Board members will at all times follow Board policy when visiting school buildings.  |
|  | Add   | Pursuant to Commissioner's Regulations 100.2(o)(1)(vi): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. By August 1 annually, the Board shall reach agreement with the Superintendent on the procedures to be used in the annual evaluation of the Superintendent.</li> <li>2. By August 31 annually, the Board shall approve the procedures for the evaluation of the Superintendent.</li> <li>3. By September 10 annually, the District shall post the procedures for the evaluation of the Superintendent to the District's website.</li> <li>4. By July 31 annually, the Board shall complete the annual evaluation of the Superintendent.</li> </ol> |

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|   |       | The above process shall be adapted appropriately and used to evaluate the District Clerk and Board Treasurer.  |
| The District will need to regularly push out information that describes the many changes it has made to improve the operation and the instruction within the District | Amend | By the December regular Board meeting the public relations firm contracted by the District shall submit a plan to the Superintendent and Board on how the District will use the website and a variety of electronic platforms to provide the community with accurate and up-to-date information that helps the community better understand what the District provides to its children. Upon approval of the plan by the superintendent, the District shall implement the plan in accordance with the timeline contained in the plan. |
|   | Add   | The District will develop a plan and verify by the end of this school year and by the end of each succeeding school year the residency of students claiming to live within the boundaries of the Hempstead School District and attend the public schools or are tuition students at private, parochial or charter schools.   |

Academic/Instructional Recommendations

| 2020-2021 Recommendations   | Action | 2021-2022 Recommendations  |
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|   | Add    | District administrative staff shall provide to the Superintendent by February 1, 2022 a plan of action to have 90% of elementary and middle school students sit for the state language arts and math exams. The plan shall be implemented upon approval of the Superintendent. |
|   | Add    | By the end of this school year, all elementary and middle school teachers shall be trained how to interpret NWEA and i-Ready test data and shall use the data to inform instruction in the classroom as reflected in teacher observations.                                     |
| The District continue its commitment to having each school become an IB school by the end of next year. | Amend  | By June 2022, all elementary schools and the middle school shall be registered IB schools.   |
|   | Add    | By January 15, 2022, District shall develop a plan and commence activities to have the average daily attendance for all schools in the District be 90% or  |

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|   |                           | better for the second semester of the 2021-2022 school year.  |
|   | Add                       | By March 1,2022, a review of the efficacy of the districtwide language arts/reading program for all elementary grades along with a recommendation for maintaining, modifying, or replacing the program shall be presented to the Board. By no later than April 7, the Board shall make a decision on what funds shall be included in the 2022-23 budget for maintaining, modifying, or replacing the program.   |
|   | Add                       | By March 1,2022, a review of the efficacy of the districtwide math program for all elementary grades and middle school through grade 7 along with a recommendation for maintaining, modifying, or replacing the program shall be presented to the Board. By no later than April 7,2022, the Board shall make a decision on what funds shall be included in the 2022-23 budget for maintaining, modifying, or replacing the program.   |
|   |                           | Baseline data, including growth, for all elementary and middle school students shall be collected during the 2021-2022 school year using the NWEA and i-Ready testing programs for uploading to the Nassau BOCES Data Warehouse and use in future years to examine growth over time.  |
| Although there is a curriculum for each grade level and general agreement across the District on the use of programs connected to that curriculum and the standards at each elementary grade level, the use of data to inform instruction in the classroom needs to be more effectively utilized. | Amend and add specificity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By January 15,2022 the District shall develop or select a platform for aggregation of all student data to include but not be limited to attendance, participation and performance on all assessments, discipline, services provided, and student demographics for the purpose of developing summary reports at the school and District level.</li> <li>• By February 1,2022, all staff who shall be involved in implementing the platform shall be trained to carry out their responsibilities.</li> <li>• By February 1,2022, all users of the platform shall be trained.</li> <li>• By March 1,2022, the platform will be fully operational and in use.</li> </ul> |
|   | Add                       | Algebra and either Earth Science or Living Environment will be the courses of study for all 8 <sup>th</sup> grade students in the 2022-2023 school year.  |
|   | Add                       | Beginning with the 2022-23 school year, each middle school student who meets the criteria specified in Commissioner’s Regulations 100.4(d)(3) shall be  |

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|   |       | enrolled in at least two high school level courses by the end of grade 8. Beginning with the 2023-24 school year qualified middle school students shall be enrolled in three high school level courses.  |
| The regent's graduation rate needs to continue incremental growth even though achieving in the mid-seventies is a laudable change.  | Amend | Annually, by the last Board meeting in June each year, the superintendent or his/her designee shall present to the Board the action plan that the District shall take the following school year to raise the 4-year graduation rate by August of the following school year by 2 percent over the current school year. Upon approval of the plan by the Board, the District shall implement the activities in the plan in accordance with the timelines specified in the plan.  |
| The High School should continue to prepare all students for lifelong learning by establishing goals and measures of progress in terms of the percent of students earning a Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation and the percentage of students enrolling and being tested in Advanced Placement classes.<br><br>Student schedules that reflect a commitment to education beyond high school need to include courses leading to a Regents with Advanced Designation | Amend | By June 1, 2022, the District shall provide to the Board the action steps that the District shall take to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase the percentage of students who graduate with a Regents Diploma with advanced designation to 40% by June 2024.</li> <li>• increase the percentage of students participating in AP courses by 10% compared to participation in the 2020-21 school year.</li> <li>• ensure that 90% of those who start the Smart Scholars Program complete it.</li> <li>• Increase by 50% compared to the 2020-21 year, the number of graduates from the 2019 high school graduation cohort involved in a sport or extracurricular activity.</li> </ul> <p>Upon approval of the Board of the plan, the District shall implement the activities in the plan in accordance with the timelines specified in the plan.</p> |
| The spectrum of services in special education needs to be reexamined to ensure that students are in the least restrictive environment<br><br>Where appropriate place fewer students in more restrictive environments.   | Amend | Integrated coteaching models will be implemented in all buildings for the opening of school in September, 2022   |
| Carefully examine the efficacy of the bilingual program to determine reasons for the continued low performance of the ELL students on all state measures of ELA and math.   | Amend | By the end of this school year, the District shall present to the Board an analysis of the academic performance of ELL students on the NWEA and the i-Ready, disaggregated by the different service models in the District   |



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| Increase the time ELL students spend in regular class settings.   |       | The District shall use the results of the efficacy study of District ELL models to modify and change ELL student placements, as appropriate, for the 2022-2023 school year.  |
| More SEL programs need to be brought into the District at every level of schooling and models of evaluation connected to student behavior need to accompany implementation.   | Amend | By July 30, annually, the Superintendent shall receive a report on participation rates in SEL programs by grade and school as of June 30.  |
| Although in the short term the current organizational configuration is working to bring about specific changes in the instructional program the District needs to determine the degree to which the District would benefit from the putting in place a more traditional organizational structure. | Amend | By January 1, 2022, the Superintendent shall submit to the Board an amended table of organization that shows how main functions of the District operations and instructional programs and services are assigned under the newly organized central office.  |
| Ensure that all instructional staff are appropriately evaluated and the recommendations for improvement included in the evaluations be monitored for implementation.  | Amend | Beginning immediately, all teacher evaluations shall be submitted with required observations to the Personnel Office by the contractual deadline.  |
|   |       | By May 1, 2022 and by May 1 of each successive year, tenure recommendations with appropriate backup information for the current school year and those through the first semester of the next year will be made available for review by the Board.  |
| Schools should conduct virtual online PTA meetings to which parents are invited.  | Amend | During the 2021-22 school year, Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings shall continue for each school to be held virtually. Every effort shall be made to record attendance at each meeting. By the end of the school year, each school shall submit to the Superintendent a summary of attendance at each PTA meeting held during the school year. |
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| Monitor carefully the participation of students in all grant programs and study the connection to success on Regents and AP coursework.   | Amend | By August 15, 2022 attendance and academic performance for the 2021-22 school year of all participants in supplemental programs supported by Federal and State grants (including ARP and ESSER II) will be maintained and shared with the Superintendent.  |

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|   | Add     | The District shall develop for inclusion in the 2022-2023 budget a plan for providing substitutes for all classes and instructional programs, which shall include but not be limited to the hiring of permanent substitutes. |
|   | Add     | By August 15,2022, summary report of teacher and other professional personnel attendance at professional development activities during the current school year will be prepared and provided to the Superintendent           |
| Provide Staff development opportunities to bilingual class teachers on the effective use of all reading and math tools used in regular class.   | Removed |  |
| The District carefully review the data for sixth grade students, some of whom are in the elementary schools and some of whom are in the middle school to determine if there are differences in the performance of students related to the grade configuration of the school the student attends. The District should then use the data to consider an appropriate configuration of the sixth grade. | Removed |  |

FINANCIAL PLAN

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|   | Add   | The District shall take such actions as are necessary to ensure that the District does not overspend the 2021-2022 budget.   |
|   | Add   | Assuming accurate approved operating expense (AOE) data is available, the District shall use the state formula for developing its annual charter school tuition estimate for inclusion in the 2022-2023 budget.  |
|   | Add   | The District shall develop and include in the 2022-2023 budget the first of a multiyear replacement plan for all its electronic equipment, to include but not be limited to laptops, desktops, classroom smartboards, Wi-Fi nodes, servers, telephones, and any device that operates on its current Wi-Fi network. |
|   | Add   | The District shall include in the 2022-2023 budget a plan for inventorying, repairing, maintaining and where appropriate insuring all District owned electronic devices.   |
|   | Add   | The District shall include in the 2022-2023 budget a plan to house the students and programs displaced by the closing of Front Street School.  |
| The District shall include in the 2021-2022 school budget a plan to fully staff the business office.  | Amend | All positions in the Business Office will be filled by the end of this fiscal year.  |
|   |       | A Smart Bond plan to fully use the remaining funds will be submitted to the state for approval prior to the end of this fiscal year.   |
|   | Add   | ARP and ESSER II funds will be used in accordance with the plan approved by the State Education Department, and the budgets shall not be over expended.  |
| The district will work with the legislature and the executive to secure additional aid to compensate for the cost of charter students                                 | Amend | By January 15, 2022, the District shall share with the legislators representing the District a proposal to reduce the fiscal impact of charter school tuition.   |
| During the school year the board will select who have the knowledge and experience necessary to provide a full range of services and will seek to enter into retainer | Amend | By April 1, 2022, the District shall issue an RFP for all legal services with the goal of selecting a legal firm or firms for appointment at the July,2022 reorganization meeting.   |

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| agreements with these attorneys to serve as labor and general counsel, so as to significantly reduce the cost of representation.   |         |   |
|  | Add     | The District shall identify a treasurer and District Clerk pro tem and appoint them at the annual reorganization meeting  |
|  | Add     | The District shall develop a proposed budget for the 2022-2023 school year in accordance with the budget calendar adopted by the Board.   |
|  | Add     | All 2020-2021 recommendations from the External auditor will be implemented fully during the 2021-2022 school year.   |
|  | Amend   | 100% of Medicaid reimbursement for which the District is eligible during the 2021-2022 school year, shall be applied for timely.  |
| Until the District can fully fund a position or positions in the district to process STAC forms and Medicaid reimbursement the district should continue to retain the services of its current consultant | Amend   | 100% of STAC forms shall be submitted on time.  |
|  | Add     | All service providers shall be monitored to ensure that their services are provided on time and in the manner described in their contracts. As permitted by the terms of the contract, the District shall modify or terminate contracts of vendors who do not perform satisfactorily. |
|  | Add     | By September 15 of each fiscal year, settlement amounts from outstanding litigation shall be submitted to the Business Office and the external auditors by District attorneys   |
| Financial reports will continue to be sent monthly for the Board's review and acceptance.  | Removed |   |
|  |         | The Human Resource department and the Business (payroll) department will collaborate with one another and coordinate operations so as to increase the accuracy in staff pay to 100% by June,2022.   |

## STATE MONITOR 'S HEARING

The State Monitor conducted a hearing on Tuesday November 16,2021. The focus of the Hearing was on the Monitor's Revised Plan for the 2021-22 school year that had been publicly discussed at a November 4<sup>th</sup> Board of Education and then placed on the District website the following day in draft form. The Moderator for the hearing was Dr. Roxanne French, Assistant Superintendent for Nassau BOCES. In attendance were four members of the Board of Education. This was a virtual meeting that was live streamed to the community. Attendees could either submit questions or concerns in writing in advance or at the hearing or call the Monitor directly on his phone during the hearing.

There was only one member of the community who called in on the Monitors phone. She indicated that she would send in her questions but then did not. The discussion was primarily among Board members who had concerns about the approval of recommended professional staff and transportation. No changes to the Plan were needed following the discussion.

Two nights later, November 18<sup>th</sup>, the Board was scheduled to vote on acceptance of the plan. A member of the Board suggested that an item be included that focused on confirming that children attending schools in the District and charter, private, and parochial schools for whom the District paid tuition or provided services, be confirmed as residents of the District. A recommendation to that effect was written and added to the Plan. The amended version of the plan was then accepted by the Board of Education.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this Plan is to provide a series of recommendations that have been added to or amend those that were made for year one of the State Monitor's tenure in the Hempstead Public schools. They are based primarily on experience during this unprecedented instructional and fiscal year. The monitorship will be, as it was this year, a continuously evolving work in progress. The overarching goal is ever improving academic and fiscal performance. The means for achieving that goal will change and will be reflected each year in modifications to the State Monitor's plans and recommendations.

The infusion of State and Federal monies gave the District opportunities to begin building or rebuilding essential instructional and support programs that were not possible during the three prior fiscal years. Challenges remain. Updating, renovating, or repairing old and deteriorating buildings is a critical but expensive undertaking. Providing aided transportation to students is also a challenge as is the

resolution of problems associated with the ever-increasing costs of charter school students. Whatever the financial challenges the goal will continue to be developing and implementing effective instructional programs for all students. This is not achievable all at once but if the recommendations agreed upon with the Board of Education come to fruition another step in the achievement of excellence for its children will also be achieved.