

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

- 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
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 requirements of the job.)

with its teachers during the school year and begin the next school year with a settled contract.





		<p>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.</p>
<p>The regent's graduation rate needs to continue incremental growth even though achieving in the mid-seventies is a laudable change.</p>	<p>Amend</p>	<p>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 implemen</p>





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agreements with these attorneys to serve as labor and general counsel, so as to significantly reduce the cost of representation.

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## 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 schoolsde . 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 modifde ications to the State Monitorplans and recommendations.

The infusion of State and Federal monies gave the District opportunities to begin building or rebuilding essential instructional programs that were not possible during the three prior fiscal years.

maintaining, or repairing old and deteriorating buildings is a critical but expensive undertaking.

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resolution of problems associated with the ever-increasing costs of charter school students. Whatever the financial challenges