

March 1, 2021

Dr. William H. Johnson  
SED Monitor  
185 Peninsula Blvd.  
Hempstead, NY 11550

Dr. Betty A. Rosa  
Commissioner NYS Education Department  
89 Washington Avenue  
Albany, New York 12234

Dear Commissioner Rosa:

In Accordance with Chapter 19 of the Laws of 2020, I am submitting for your review and comment, the Semi-annual Reports of the State Monitor for the Hempstead Public Schools.

The attached academic and financial reports cover the time period of July 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. They summarize the District's actions in response to the information and where needed and appropriate my response.

I know this is a draft and therefore look forward to discussing the reports with both you and NYSED staff.

Hempstead Public Schools  
Mid-Year Report

William H. Johnson EdD

New York State Monitor

March 1, 2021

Mid-Year Monitor's Academic & Fiscal Report for the  
Hempstead Public Schools

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The process used in developing this mid-year update is essentially the same as the process used in developing the original report presented to the Commissioner of Education in November of this school year. I have continued the review of data and documents related to the recommendations and have continued meeting with staff, legislators and community groups to follow the work being done to

## Overview of Operational Status of the School District

### Academic Plan

In general, the District administrative and leadership team have come to understand the role of the monitor and the need for change. At both the District and the building level there have been significant changes that reflect the fact that the district needed to embrace and respond to the many recommendations contained in the initial report. There is clearly an openness among the leadership team to embrace and respond to the many recommendations contained in the initial report. There is clearly an openness among the leadership team to embrace and respond to the many recommendations contained in the initial report.

While the spirit of change is encouraging, the work to be done is significant. The consistent use of standardized testing, the instruction of ELL's, the reconstructing of special education services to be more inclusive and the creative response to declining resources are among the many tasks that need to be addressed during this and subsequent school years.

## Fiscal

The overall work of the district in developing and implementing efficient and effective practices in the management of its budget and resources has been very encouraging. As in the area of academics the willingness to embrace the work of the monitor and then to work with the monitor on effectuating change in its business practices has opened the door to the changes needed to insure that the resources are directed appropriately for the overall improvement of student performance.

Governance as mentioned above is a problem. The business office is not fully staffed and consequently continues to rely on consulting firms to assist in a portion of its operation. The staffing of the business office is a concern of some Board members, but they also register concern over the use of consultants. Even though more slowly than desirable, the Board is changing. It recently approved the interim Superintendent's recommendation to fill, for the balance of this year, the position of Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. The Board has also, as mentioned above commenced the work of the audit committee.

The spending plan for this current school year is being carefully monitored by the Assistant Superintendent for Business and the District treasurer and routinely discuss with the monitor projections through the end of June. The Board is also kept abreast of expenditures and cash flow in reports monthly by the treasurer.

The staff of the business office and the monitor meet since early January to work on both the revenue and expenditures proposed for next year. The most problematic revenue and expenditure issue is the money being spent on Charter school tuition and the small amount of aid attached to that expense. Despite the problems the District is committed to developing a balanced budget for the voters to consider in May.

## Specific Findings and Recommendations

### Organization of the District Response

The District response to the recommendations of the monitors report is put together in a block format arranged in five columns. The heading for the columns from left to right are Recommendations, Status, District Action(s), evidence of Action and Other Information. Columns 1,3,4 and five need no additional information to be understood. Column 2, Status requires some explanation. One of four colors appear for each recommendation. Blue means that the implementation is completed. Green means that the district is on schedule to implement this recommendation. Yellow means that work has started but is behind schedule. Red means that the District has not begun to implement this recommendation. And finally, NA (not applicable) means that the recommendation was not expected to be in implementation status during this reporting period.







learning needs. IReady data

To ensure consistency of instruction during the pandemic teachers and students should be routinely taught how to effectively use each device and all the software used to support instruction.

**GREEN**

The District has taken on the leadership ensuring all teachers receive training on how to use the technology needed (both hardware and software) to support a virtual learning environment. Teachers are responsible for students use of devices; however, any parent experiencing issues with how to use and access platforms have been aided either by the Tech Depart, a building administrator, or the Tech Coach in each building.

The District since March of 2020 has had ongoing training with staff on how to utilize the various platforms, inclusive of Learning Management System. Teachers have received training on Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Schoology, Google Classroom.

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and the IB Committee are completing the application process. Within the next two weeks, the application will be ready for submission.

conduct walkthroughs to capture evidence of teachers' change in practice aligned with IB. Grade 8 students have been assigned their end of year required Community Project. All teachers have access to Atlas where they store their Units of Inquiry and Programs of Inquiry aligned to Next

		<b>GREEN</b>	school grades 6 – 8 were administered IReady in December/January. However, All students grades 6 – 8 will take the end of year IREADY assessment in June to analyze growth and determine summer school program.		
<p>Staff development needs to focus on student engagement and assessment. Teachers need to be able to generate and interpret student performance data that enables them to routinely modify and improve instruction online and in the classroom.</p>			<p>In the past, teachers were provided with student data from 3-8 assessments to analyze and plan for instruction. We are now using data from IReady assessments and math/science Regents tests to determine the academic needs of students. One area of concentration for professional development for staff has focused on data-driven standards-based instruction. Teachers are also working together and</p>		

			area of need. Students have also been invited to attend after school and Saturday AIS programs. Training for staff on how to effectively administer the IReady assessment, as well as how to use the results to drive instruction is now taking place. Data is being analyzed to determine learning loss and placement in extended day classes.		
A computing device should be in the hands of every student. Students and teachers need to be trained to effectively use all software designed to provide and support the instructional program.		<b>GREEN</b>	Although the District has purchased a device and internet access for all students in need, not all parents/guardians have signed out a device for their child. Students in the middle school receive a laptop that is fully loaded with the software needed for learning.	District purchased laptops for all middle school students. Devices were received by the District in late October, early November 2020. Parents were contacted to pick up sign out a device for their child. District has created a Hotline to assist parents with use of device and to request a device/internet access. Hotline has been placed on the District's website.	

<p>Although during this era of remote and hybrid learning it is difficult to accurately measure student attendance, attendance needs to be well above 90% on every day of the school year.</p>		<p><b>GREEN</b></p>	<p>The middle school's guidance and attendance departments meet weekly to review student attendance. The departments have been reaching out to parents of students who are not attending school on a regular bases. Teachers are also making parent contacts to discuss with them their child's attendance in school. Although efforts are being made in this area, it is a work in progress to hit the 90% target.</p>	<p>Principal conducts weekly meetings with key staff members in this area. Staff is tracking students' attendance to attempt to hit the 90% daily attendance. Community School partners are working with parents to offer attendance incentives.</p>	
<p>The sixth-grade problem needs to be resolved.</p>		<p><b>GREEN</b></p>	<p>Superintendent is making a recommendation to the Board of Education to remove all grade 6 students from the middle school and revert to a self-contained model starting in 2021-22. Sixth grade students will be educated in three elementary schools across the District with Front Street holding the majority of the students. Current 5<sup>th</sup> grade students from Barack Obama, Front, Jackson Annex and Jackson Main Schools will attend Front</p>	<p>A Resolution will be placed before the Board of Education at its Feb.'s regular Board meeting to change the identified schools' grade configuration as follows starting 2021-22 SY:  ABGS Middle School – grades 7-8, only.  Front Street – grades 5 and 6; D. Paterson School and Joseph A. McNeil Schools – grades 1 – 6.</p>	

			Street Elementary School for grade 6. David Paterson and Joseph McNeil Elementary Schools will maintain their 5 <sup>th</sup> grade in their building as grade 6 students in 2021-22.		
<b>Teaching and Learning: High School</b>					
The Regents graduation rate needs to continue incremental growth even though achieving in the mid-seventies is a laudable change.		<b>GREEN</b>	High School leadership team continue to monitor the Regents graduation rate. Although, the high school has demonstrated an increase in the number of students receiving Regents diplomas and Regents Diplomas with Distinction has slightly increase each year, the percentage of students meeting this goal has fallen short of the school's trget.	To assist the high school in increasing the number of students graduating in 4-years with a Regent diploma, we are implementing Regents classes in Math and Science at the middle school level. The schools have held articulation meetings to align curriculum and train teachers on how to successfully prepare students for Regents. Students at both the middle and high school are provided with AIS services to support their academic needs	

		GREEN		and increase their chances on passing the Regents classes.	
<p>Student schedules that reflect a commitment to education beyond high school need to include courses leading to a Regents with Advanced Designation.</p>			<p>The District has increased the number of students being able to matriculate to take Algebra II, by increasing the number of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students matriculating to the high school having passed Algebra I and a Science Regents (Earth Science/Living Environment).</p>	<p>More than 85% of the current 8<sup>th</sup> students are enrolled in Algebra I and a Regents Science. There is also a Cohort of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students enrolled in US History and Government. If successful, the majority of incoming 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, Cohort 2021 could enter high school with 2-3 high school credits and Regents exams, ensuring they ability to earn an advanced Regents Designation.</p>	



The District has also increased the number of AP courses offered to high school students. The District has not actively pursued implementing the IB Diploma Program at the high school level.

Project Advance Program. We have also implemented the



				students to District. With the opening of Rhodes, the SPED Office should be able to return up to 30 students to District without comprising their required services.	
Where appropriate place fewer students in more restrictive environments.		GREEN	We currently have integrated co-teaching classes grades k-12. In our elementary schools we have two buildings that currently have ICT grades 1-6. We are also monitoring in district students who are currently in a self-contained program to see if any of them would be appropriate in a less restrictive placement such as resource room, inclusion, or related services only.	For the 2021-2022 school year the district will be expanding the ICT program to a third elementary school grades K-5 (Rhodes).	
Lower the proportion of student of color in special education.		GREEN	We are in the process of working with Regional Partnership and Family and Community Engagement centers to roll-out PDs to support teachers on ways to use data to informed instruction and address students' academic, instructional, and behavioral	Monies have been allocated in the IDEA grants for 2020-21 that will allow the District to take a proactive measure in this area. The District will invest and train staff in the LIONS GATES program. Program is	

			needs to reduce referrals to special education which in turn reduces the number of students being classified.	geared to assess and address students' social emotional behavior. It develops students' character, it has a parent component, and helps teachers to become more culturally aware to meet the needs of the diverse learner.	
<b>Teaching and Learning: ENL/BIL</b>					
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		<b>YELLOW</b>	Although building principals have analyzed student data on all assessments, the District has not begun the work to investigate the root cause of this subgroup's consistent low performance on state exams.	The District will compose a committee to examine the past 5 years of ELL growth on state assessments (3-8 testing, Regents, and NYSESLATs) to determine trends and patterns of errors. The District will use this information to restructure its current programs to ensure more student success and close the academic gap between ELL and other subgroups.	

Increase the time ELL students spend in regular class settings.		GREEN	All ELL students are placed in a general education setting unless they have opted for a bilingual setting.	The District will examine its ELL programs to ensure equity and access for all students.	
Provide staff development opportunities to bilingual class teachers on the effective use of all reading and math tools used in regular classes.		BLUE	All teachers historically within the Hempstead School District receive the same training in the utilization of reading and math tools.	The District will continue its practice to expose all staff to the same professional development to ensure all teachers are trained on best practices.	
<b>Organizational Structure</b>					
All members of the central office, including the Interim Superintendent, be given contracts that clearly state their terms and conditions of employment.		RED			

<p>Curriculum or the Assistant Superintendent for Business. In Hempstead, the Assistant Superintendent for Technology reports directly to the superintendent. In most districts the size of Hempstead, there is a Director of the Arts and a Director of Physical Education. These positions do not exist in Hempstead. Similarly, in most districts the size of Hempstead, the coordination of security, custodians and maintenance is overseen by the Business Office.</p>					
<p>The District needs a superintendent who is permanent. A search should be concluded by the end of this school year.</p>		<p>RED</p>			
	<b>Accountability</b>				
<p>Work with the receiver to ensure that the benchmarks contained in the District Comprehensive Achievement Plan are met.</p>		<p>GREEN</p>	<p>The District will recommend a District Comprehensive Team to review and analyze the goals identified in the DCIP. The team will make recommendation to the Receiver/Superintendent in this area.</p>	<p>The committee members will be recommended on the March's docket.</p>	
<p>Ensure all instructional staff are appropriately evaluated and the recommendations for improvement</p>		<p>GREEN</p>	<p>All staff is evaluated based on terms and conditions as indicated in their CBO.</p>	<p>All administrators participated in a review of the required</p>	

<p>included in the evaluations be monitored for implementation.</p>			<p>Based on COVID19 changes to the school day, the District is still in negotiations with the teachers to modify their APPR plan.</p>	<p>observation/evaluation of staff. Administrators also participated in an annual re-calibration professional development session to enhance their ability to capture evidence of teachers' practice aligned to standards, and assigned proper ratings.</p>	
	<p><b>Human Capital</b></p>				
<p>When teachers are hired, it is advisable that an assistant superintendent or the superintendent be involved. This will help to ensure consistency in the characteristics of the professional teaching staff.</p>		<p><b>GREEN</b></p>	<p>The Associate Superintendent for Human Resources is responsible for interviewing all recommended candidates prior to presenting to the BOE for approval.</p>	<p>HR is in the process of revamping the District hiring process inclusive of onboarding and separation.</p>	
<p>The District needs to conclude negotiations with its teachers during this school year.</p>		<p><b>GREEN</b></p>	<p>The District has been actively negotiating with the teachers' unit a new contract. Both sides have presented their asks. Teachers desired salary increase is beyond the District's financial capacity. District and Unit do not agree on terms and conditions.</p>	<p>The District's next negotiation meeting is scheduled for March 2, 2021.</p>	

	Parent and Community Engagement
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			specific students as identified by the classroom teacher with the purpose of character building and avoiding students developing other social issues that may require more intense therapy. The District also uses its Social Workers and School Psychologists to work with classroom teachers to address SEL.	on the BOCES SEL Committee.	
Restorative programs need to be considered to help reduce the number of incidents, thus resulting in fewer suspension hearings. A thorough analysis of the circumstances connected to the reportable incidents should be conducted. Incidents themselves may be avoided by systemic or program changes.		RED			
	<b>Operations</b>				
Even though the District dedicates two full-time staff members to the problems associated with attendance at the secondary level and one to the elementary school, additional measures need to be considered to reduce these numbers. For example, a review		RED			

should be conducted to determine the extent to which community groups can assist families in getting their children to school.

Should the District be successful in implementing Recommendation 1 in this section, the District should put before the voters a proposition for providing transportation to eligible riders.

<p>Some portion of the remaining Smart Bond money be used to increase the number of cameras and update the technology.</p>		<p><b>GREEN</b></p>	<p>The District has already installed new cameras in most school sites using both Smart bond monies and general funds. The rest of the updates needed across the District will be written in to Phase II of the Smart Bond funding.</p>	<p>The District has conducted a needs assessment to determine how many cameras are needed in each school and where to place them. The purchase will be included in the Smart Bond Phase II.</p>	
<p>The security staff levels needs a careful review to ensure that the District and especially the middle and high school are appropriately staffed.</p>		<p><b>YELLOW</b></p>	<p>Due to lack of funds and staff cuts, the District does not have adequate staffing to ensure the secondary level schools have sufficient security staff. This will be exacerbated by the District's budget for 2021-22. If the district does not receive adequate revenue to balance its expenses, we will not be able to ensure the safety of students in our secondary schools.</p>	<p>The District's PEL chart evidence the number of security aides that have been laid off over the past two years. We are down to less than half of the force we employed in the 2018-2019 school year.</p>	
<p>Security staff needs to be trained annually on the newest information related to the management of the school environment and their potential role in avoiding reportable incidents and participating in restorative practices.</p>		<p><b>RED</b></p>			

It is recommended that the District look carefully at incorporating the suggestions for

**Green** = The district is on schedule to implement this recommendation.

**Yellow** = Implementation begun but behind schedule: The district has begun to implement the recommendation, but implementation is behind schedule.

**Red** = Implementation not yet begun: The district has not yet begun to implement this recommendation.

Not Applicable: The recommendation was not expected to be in implantation status during the period of the report.

Recommendation	Status <sup>1</sup>	District Action(s)	Evidence of Action	Other Information
<b>Governance and Leadership</b>				
1. The District shall work with the Legislature and Executive to secure additional aid to compensate for the cost of charter students, to secure additional Foundation Aid, and a home rule bill for reducing the limits for transportation eligibility.	<b>GREEN</b>	The Superintendent and Monitor have been meeting with the local legislatures bi-weekly to discuss the financial needs of the District. The legislatures are working with the Senate of the Education Committee to discuss the District financial assistance around Charter School cost, correction of the foundation aid, and changing the transportation limits.		

3. A plan will be included in the 2021-22 school budget for having a Board Of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), the New York State School Boards Association, or another qualified entity review and revise for consideration by the Board all policies related to the operation of the Business Office.



			settle the HSCSA contract by the end of March. The district is not certain as to when the teachers' contract will be settled.	
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6. Financial reports will continue to be sent monthly for the Board's review and acceptance.





<p>10. Until a new Superintendent begins his or her tenure, positions as currently defined should remain intact since they are connected to positive changes underway within the District. In July 2021, when a permanent Superintendent is scheduled to begin, one of the Superintendent's first assignments should be the possible reorganization and reassignment of responsibilities in the Central office.</p>	<p><b>GREEN</b></p>	<p>The BOE has not made any adjustments with the current makeup of A/O. The BOE recently approved the Superintendent's recommendation to hire an acting assistant superintendent for curriculum and office.</p>	<p>No changes have been made to the current structure for central administration.</p>	
<p>11. By January 15, 2021, when the new legislative session begins, the District will have developed a strategic plan for sharing the cost of charter school students with the State.</p>	<p><b>GREEN</b></p>	<p>Same response as recommendation number 17. Response can be found in the Academic Plan as well.</p>		
<p><b>Budget Development</b></p>				

<p>12. By January 15, 2021, when the new legislative session begins, the District will have developed a strategic plan for sharing the cost of charter school students with the State.</p>	<p>GREEN</p>	<p>Same response as recommendation number 17. Response can be found in the Academic Plan as well.</p>		
<p>13. The District will develop a balanced budget within the time frame outlined in the adopted budget timeline.</p>	<p>GREEN</p>	<p>The district has met with all</p>		



<p>19. The District will need to hold vendors accountable for goods and services provided.</p>	<p>NA</p>	<p>The District will create a strategic plan to address this recommendation in the near future.</p>		
<p>20. The District will need to produce a study of its predicted enrollment for the next five years.</p>	<p>BLUE</p>	<p>The District solicited Western Suffolk BOCES to complete the enrollment study.</p>	<p>Enrollment study was completed June 2020. Study has been shared with the Monitor.</p>	
<p>21. 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.</p>	<p>RED</p>	<p>The District has hired the GOTHAM Group to serve as the public relation firm for the District.</p>	<p>The BOE approved a resolution for the Superintendent of Schools to work with the PR firm to put out positive information about the district utilizing Social Media. District will be put out a newsletter in the near future to highlight all efforts the District has made to improve its</p>	

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## Comments on Action Plans

### Academic Action Plan

The district response within teaching and learning at all the buildings, in special education and in ELL instruction shows the depth and breadth of the work underway to bring about the changes that will hopefully improve performance across the board for all students.

The use of iReady for measuring the performance in reading and math for students in grades 1 through 8 will provide the structure needed to provide data driven decision making at the classroom, building and district levels. However, the District is not where it needs to be although it has taken many steps to insure its timely administration and use. The logistics needed for administration and the training of administrative and instructional staff to interpret and adjust programs and instruction is underway but not there yet. The interim Superintendent has taken a strong leadership role in making this happen and because of that leadership many of the problems witnessed this year should be corrected or remedied by next year.

There are a number of references made to the placement of a computing device in the hands of every student in the district. That did not happen by accident. From the very week in which I was working in the district it became evident that the upcoming school year was at best going to involve a hybrid model of instruction. At the time only about 2500 devices were available for student use. The District needed at least another 4000 units. So began the first two months work of the monitor and the interim Superintendent. Finding the money, finding a device that was reasonably priced and available for shipment in early Fall, developing plans for installation of software, inventorying each device and finally distributing them to students would not have happened without the leadership of the interim Superintendent and the cooperation and work of the Business and Technology

departments. It was the first example of how effective the administrative team





to accomplish the recommended changes to date. By June the District should be on its way to regularly inform the public using a variety of media.

A final note on the recommendation to secure legal representation that is more cost effective. The Board has appointed both general and labor counsel through the end of this fiscal year. However, the Board has agreed to put out in the spring a request for proposals for legal representation, conduct interviews of interested firms and select a firm for appointment at its reorganization meeting in July.

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anticipated revenue and will need to be changed to come into line with revenues when they become better known later this month.

As part of the budget review process we are looking at contracted services. A list of all the vendors who have professional contracts with the school district has been generated by the business office and will become an integral part of the review of expenditures for next year. In addition to their expense the efficacy of the service they provide needs to be examined before committing to a continuation of the service.

While I appreciate and applaud the effort, the collaboration and willingness to change, there is still much on the horizon that needs to be done before we can declare that success has been achieved. I am confident that with the spirit and the will I have witnessed to date that success is within reach.