



**New York State Education Department
89 Washington Ave, Albany, NY
Dr. Betty A. Rosa, Commissioner of Education**

**East Ramapo Central School District Annual Report
2019-20 School Year**

Denise M. Lowe, Ed. D., Monitor
Bruce Singer, Monitor
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Commissioner’s Charge to the Monitors

On March 5, 2020 New York State Education Department (NYSED or “the Department”) Interim Commissioner Shannon Tahoe appointed Mr. Bruce Singer as the Fiscal Monitor to join Dr. Denise Lowe as Monitors for the East Ramapo Central School District (ERCSD or “the District”). Mr. Singer replaced Mr. Charles Szuberla who served as Fiscal Monitor until July 8, 2019. The 2019-20 school year monitoring initiative built on the work conducted by Monitors since June 2014 and included working with the Board (“Board”) and District leadership to implement the Long-Term Strategic Academic Improvement and Fiscal Improvement Plans; improve fiscal and budgetary planning; and provide oversight as required by Chapter 89 of the Laws of 2016, as amended. This report focuses on the academic and fiscal condition of the District for the 2019-20 school year.

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Executive Summary

The following report provides an assessment by Dr. Denise Lowe and Mr. Bruce Singer, the Monitors assigned to the ERSCD by the Commissioner, of the District's implementation of its long-term strategic academic and fiscal plans during the 2019-20 school year, the challenges that the District will face during the 2020-21 school year, and recommendations for action by the District.

Academic Improvement Plan

Until school closures caused by the pandemic disrupted the provision of instruction, the ERSCD had been continuing to make incremental progress during the 2019-20 school year in implementing the District's long-term strategic academic plan.

A key issue for the District is increasing the four year high school graduation rate, which remains well below the State average. Strong gains at Spring Valley High School were offset by declines at East Ramapo High School, essentially leaving the District's four-year August graduation rate unchanged compared to the 2018-19 school year. A focus on subgroup growth remains essential.

An academic highlight of the school year was the accomplishment of the Chestnut Ridge Middle School, which had been a Priority school in 2015, in being certified as an International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme on June 25, 2020. In addition, six of the District's schools won Alliance for a Healthier Generation bronze awards and the status of one of America's Healthiest Schools. The District also continued to expand its Early College High School program that provides students with the opportunity and preparation to accelerate the completion of their high school studies while earning transferable college computer science credits at the same time. Students earning the State Seal of Biliteracy and participating in New York State School Music Association and Rockland County Music Association events also continued to increase.

Another key area of progress was the District's implementation of its professional development program, which is focused and driven by trends in District data. Once the District had to close schools, the professional development program pivoted to providing training to staff on using digital tools, such as Schoology (a virtual learning environment and social networking service management system) and Google Classroom, to provide instruction.

During the pandemic, remote learning plans were developed and implemented by each school, and the District coordinated with many county organizations to help families who needed social services.

The District's efforts to improve academic outcomes continues to be hampered by the divisions in the community that undermine the ability of the District to secure adequate resources to support the public school system. The lack of an agreement between the East Ramapo Teacher's Association leadership and the District for students to return to school for in-person instruction at any level also is proving to be a challenge to the District. In addition to this resource deficit, the District has made years-long decisions regarding the use and application of resources that has

resulted in a complete lack of social workers and other mechanisms to address adequately students' social-emotional needs.

The District, having lost a lawsuit filed by the Spring Valley chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) will now have to implement a new ward system to elect members to the school board.

The need for the Board to implement best governance practices remains an ongoing issue, which is highlighted by the responsibility that Board has to find a new superintendent who can bring the community together in support of providing all resident students with the education they need and deserve. This means selecting a superintendent who can successfully advocate for the voters to adopt the school budget so as to avoid the need for the District to operate under contingency.

The District's progress in recent years in implementing full-day kindergarten and a robust music and arts program will be hampered in the 2020-21 school year by the \$1 million reduction in the District's special legislative appropriation as well as the failure of voters to pass the District budget.

Another challenge for the District during the 2020-21 school year will be to provide tiered intervention to students who may receive all or part of their instruction remotely.

For the 2020-21 school year, the District must work diligently to raise high school graduation rates across subgroups, which remain far too low while also addressing the particular needs of students with disabilities and especially English language learners, who comprise a larger percentage of District enrollment than all but one other district in the State.

Long-Term Fiscal Improvement Plan

The ERSCD's effort to improve the long-term fiscal stability of the District stalled during the 2019-20 school year. While some improvements in fiscal practices and operations occurred, other long-standing issues remained unresolved, and new challenges to the long-term fiscal stability of the District emerged, particularly as conditions evolved in the District during the ongoing pandemic. The District enters the 2020-21 school year confronting severe financial challenges that must be addressed aggressively to avoid the District regressing towards financial instability.

Significant operational improvement occurred in the areas of pupil transportation and textbook inventory controls. The District created a comprehensive new transportation database that includes all legally required registration data for new applicants as well as reapplications of nonpublic school students. The District now obtains all documentation prior to providing transportation, which should result in cost savings to the District. The District also now verifies student addresses for both the purposes of providing transportation and textbooks. This process must continue. As a result, as of June 2020, the textbook inventory was comprehensive and up-to-date. This will enable the textbook loan office to ensure that textbook orders do not exceed the number of East Ramapo resident students, again generating cost savings for the District.

During the 2019-20 school year, a number of issues negatively impacted the long-term fiscal stability of the District. A major area of concern was the failure of the District to both adequately budget for COVID related expenditures and account for the need to set aside a significant majority of the funds that the District received under The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, in addition to lower projected expenditures, to provide equitable educational services to nonpublic school students. In addition, a number of prior year audit findings have remained unresolved, and the District has not adequately addressed the inappropriate use of confirming purchase orders, which has led to a lack of proper purchasing procedures that could result in increased District costs. Also important is that the defeat of the 2020-21 school year budget combined with fiscal management issues will have a negative impact on the District's future credit rating, thereby increasing borrowing costs and reducing resources available to support instruction. The failure of multiple annual budgets will lead directly over time to reductions in educational opportunities for students.

As the District enters the 2020-21 school year, it is critical that the District refrain from the practice of creating over expenditures in certain budget lines and overestimating State and Federal revenues that will be available to the District. An adjustment to the Contingent Budget from the proposed budget is essential to ensuring that overspending does not occur. To ensure the financial integrity of the District will require improvement in the District's ability to accurately project revenues and expenditures and align such in both short- and long-term planning. One key to improving accuracy must be better coordination of the Personnel Budget with the Expenditure Budget so that staffing expenditure lines are reconciled appropriately to actual levels of staffing.

We should expect the 2020-21 school year will be one that stresses the District's fiscal and operational structures and requires renewed commitment by all stakeholders to ensure that all students receive the instructional support they need to meet State standards.

2019-20 School Year: Academic Program Overview

The District’s elementary schools remained in Good Standing during the 2019-20 school year. Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the New York State testing program was suspended for the 2019-20 school year, with the accountability statuses of schools remaining unchanged for the 2020-21 school year.

The public health threat that the Novel Coronavirus, COVID-19, posed to the community and schools resulted in East Ramapo school closures on March 6, 2020 in response to three confirmed cases. Subsequent to the closure of schools on March 6, 2020, ERSCD schools remained closed for the rest of the school year. As the first district in Rockland County to close schools, these necessary steps were taken based on the many unanswered questions at that time; both as they related to the potential for the spread of COVID-19 within schools, as well as the logistical implications for schools. Throughout this time, the District consistently communicated with stakeholders and committed to keeping every student and staff member in ERSCD healthy and safe.

The District’s execution of a Flexible Home Learning Plan to ensure continuity of instruction was swift. Every level of the organization contributed to students receiving initially learning packets with grade level content. Subsequently, students with devices and internet connectivity, including 2,800 students who received devices from the District, were able to access a [Flexible Home Learning Guide for Families](#) and the [ERCSD Flexible Home Learning \(FHL\) page](#). The FHL page housed recommended learning schedules for parents to manage student time on tasks, teacher-generated asynchronous lessons by building that supported the learning targets based on New York State standards, and resources to support families and staff. During the shutdown, the lesson plans and instruction were monitored via Google Meet by school and central office administrations. While remote, staff engaged in virtual professional development and building-led professional learning community sessions to introduce digital tools and practices to support student remote learning.

Of particular note was the accomplishment of the Chestnut Ridge Middle School, which had been a Priority school in 2015, in being certified as an International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme on June 25, 2020.

District Overview

Table 1. Enrollment

| Subgroup | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Pre-K(Half Day) | 1691 | 1,691 | 1,694 |
| Pre-K (Full Day) | 99 | 100 | 100 |
| K-12 Public | 8,843 | 8,834 | 9,387 |
| K-12 Nonpublic | 26557 | 27,679 | 28,671 |

Table 2. K-12 Public School Enrollment by Ethnicity

| Subgroup | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 |
|------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Black or African American | 31.7% | 30.0% | 26.0% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 59.6% | 61.8% | 66.7% |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 3.9% | 3.6% | 3.1% |
| White | 3.9% | 3.7% | 3.4% |
| Multiracial | 0.8% | 0.8% | 0.7% |
| American Indian/ Alaskan Native | 0.1% | 0.1% | 0.1% |

Table 3. K-12 Public School Enrollment - Other Groups

| Subgroup | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 |
|----------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| English Language Learners | 37.4% | 36.9% | 41.2% |
| Students with Disabilities | 18.7% | 18.2% | 16.4% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 88.9% | 87.4% | 89.2% |

Table 4. Average Class Size

| Grade Level/Course | Maximum Class Size |
|--|--|
| Secondary Instrumental Music | 12 |
| Secondary Large Group (Music Ensemble) Instruction | 75 |
| Grades 7-12 | 25 |
| Grades 7-12 At Risk | 24 |
| Grades 7-12 Honors | 29 |
| Grades 7-12 AP | 30 |
| Grades 4-6 | 31 |
| Grades 1-3 | 28 |
| Kindergarten | 26 |
| Special Education | Depending on needs and variance, from 6:1:1 to 17:1 |

Table 5. Average Class Size by Grade Level Course

| Grade Level Course | Average Class Size Between 2020 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Grade 8 | |
| English 8 | 20 |
| Mathematics 8 | 21 |
| Science 8 | 21 |
| Social Studies 8 | 21 |
| Grade 10 | |
| English 10 | 21 |
| Mathematics 10 | 21 |
| Science 10 | 21 |
| Social Studies 10 | 21 |

Note: Average class size is the total registration in specific classes divided by the number of those classes with registration.

Academic Accountability

Table 6. District and School Accountability Status

| NAME | 2018-19 Accountability Status | 2019-20 Accountability Status |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| EAST RAMAPO CSD (SPRING VALLEY) | <i>Target District</i> | <i>Target District</i> |
| FLEETWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | Good Standing | Good Standing |
| GRANDVIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | Good Standing | Good Standing |
| HEMPSTEAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | Good Standing | Good Standing |
| KAKIAT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | Good Standing | Good Standing |
| MARGETTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | Good Standing | Good Standing |
| EAST RAMAPO EARLY CHILD CTR AT KAKIAT | Good Standing | Good Standing |
| SUMMIT PARK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | Good Standing | Good Standing |
| CHESTNUT RIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL | Good Standing | Good Standing |
| SPRING VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL | <i>TSI School</i> | <i>TSI School</i> |
| POMONA MIDDLE SCHOOL | Good Standing | Good Standing |
| ELMWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | Good Standing | Good Standing |
| RAMAPO HIGH SCHOOL | <i>TSI School</i> | <i>TSI School</i> |
| LIME KILN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | Good Standing | Good Standing |
| ELDORADO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL | Good Standing | Good Standing |

Table 7. 3-8 English Language Arts Proficiency (not available for the 2019-20 school year report)

Table 8. 3-8 Math Proficiency (not available for the 2019-20 school year report)

Table 9: Four-Year High School Graduation Rates as of August

| Class of | # of Graduates | District % of Graduates | RHS # of Graduates | RHS % of Graduates | SVHS # of Graduates | SVHS % of Graduates |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| District | | | | | | |
| 2020 | 493 | 65% | 261 | 66% | 227 | 69% |
| 2019 | 478 | 65% | 281 | 75% | 192 | 62% |
| 2018 | 407 | 60% | 212 | 66% | 193 | 60% |
| 2017 | 364 | 59% | 199 | 65% | 164 | 58% |
| 2016 | 439 | 67% | 225 | 67% | 209 | 71% |
| 2015 | 445 | 66% | 236 | 68% | 205 | 69% |
| Hispanic or Latino | | | | | | |
| 2020 | 243 | 55% | 130 | 56% | 112 | 56% |
| 2019 | 187 | 53% | 105 | 61% | 81 | 49% |
| 2018 | 153 | 47% | 74 | 50% | 79 | 46% |
| 2017 | 116 | 40% | 69 | 48% | 47 | 33% |
| 2016 | 133 | 55% | 72 | 54% | 61 | 58% |
| 2015 | 125 | 57% | 58 | 53% | 67 | 62% |
| Black or African American | | | | | | |
| 2020 | 204 | 81% | 108 | 81% | 94 | 88% |
| 2019 | 237 | 81% | 140 | 86% | 93 | 77% |
| 2018 | 207 | 75% | 112 | 80% | 95 | 74% |
| 2017 | 202 | 77% | 99 | 78% | 103 | 82% |
| 2016 | 251 | 75% | 116 | 73% | 131 | 78% |
| 2015 | 251 | 70% | 132 | 71% | 117 | 71% |
| English Language Learners | | | | | | |
| 2020 | 67 | 26% | 34 | 25% | 33 | 29% |
| 2019 | 57 | 26% | 29 | 31% | 28 | 24% |
| 2018 | 35 | 17% | 12 | 14% | 23 | 20% |

| | | | | | | |
|------|----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|
| 2017 | 10 | 6% | 2 | 3% | 8 | 8% |
| 2016 | 9 | 8% | 2 | 4% | 7 | 13% |
| 2015 | 12 | 13% | 6 | 14% | 6 | 13% |

Student with Disabilities

| | | | | | | |
|------|----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|
| 2020 | 87 | 70% | 34 | 79% | 48 | 86% |
| 2019 | 67 | 58% | 38 | 84% | 24 | 77% |
| 2018 | 53 | 50% | 28 | 76% | 23 | 59% |
| 2017 | 42 | 45% | 24 | 77% | 17 | 52% |
| 2016 | 60 | 55% | 27 | 69% | 28 | 61% |
| 2015 | 33 | 32% | 16 | 48% | 13 | 37% |

Measures of Student Progress

The COVID-19 pandemic led to significant interruption in the delivery of educational services to students. As a result, the Board of Regents cancelled statewide assessments for the 2019-20 school year. Consequently, the goals below that were based on state assessment results were unable to be measured. The District goals remain the same, and the District is aware that professional practices and educational strategies must evolve to reflect the current learning landscape.

District Goals

Goal 1: Success in the Early Years

Every student will demonstrate social, emotional, and academic readiness to meet or exceed grade-level standards by the end of second grade.

Goal 2: Healthy, Safe, Supported, Engaged, and Challenged

Every student will be challenged, in a safe learning environment, to be a productive and engaged citizen capable of meeting high expectations.

Goal 3: Motivated, Confident, Empowered Critical Thinkers

Every student will demonstrate ownership of his/her education and be fully engaged in becoming critical, creative-thinking goal-setters.

Goal 4: Mastery of Academic Subjects and the Arts

Every student will meet or exceed standards in all subjects, including the arts, at the end of key transition grades.

Goal 5: High School Graduation and Readiness for College and Careers

Every student will graduate from high school prepared for college, career, and post-secondary experiences.

Long-Term Strategic Academic Plan

Teaching and Learning

The Office of Curriculum and Instruction monitors and administers curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development that are aligned to content specific New York State Learning Standards and promote school improvement and academic achievement. Serving 9,387 students, ERCSD has seen a 10% increase in student enrollment from 8,497 in the 2014-2015 school year, resulting in an increase in certified staff from 640 in 2015 to 828 in 2019.

In support of the efforts to bolster the achievement of students, ERCSD adopted an efficacious approach, recognizing that beliefs matter when fostering the health, well-being, and success of the educational community.

In adherence to the District's Strategic Academic Plan, New York State Learning Standards, and Federal mandates, the ERCSD maintains a continued commitment to educating the whole child and achieving equity in student outcomes - the core expectation of the ERCSD.

This commitment has resulted in all 12 elementary and middle schools achieving the status of schools in "Good Standing," while the two high schools have been identified for Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) for the performance of specific subgroups of students. The District provides focused intervention and oversight to these schools to help them meet student achievement goals.

During the 2019-20 school year, Districtwide initiatives continued to be prioritized in the areas of: full-day kindergarten; evidence-based leadership; explicit instruction; strategic planning/data-driven decision making; standards-based curriculum and material alignment; master scheduling; expanding core-area intervention support; increasing enrichment opportunities through expansion of the arts program in grades K-12; and using instructional technology to accelerate growth through a blended learning approach to differentiated instruction.

With the onset of COVID-19, the ERCSD provided opportunities for professional development that not only sought to meet the educational need of this unprecedented time but also reemphasized and supported the existing Districtwide initiative to blend research-based best practices with that of technology-infused experiences. This approach to teaching and learning is aligned with the goals of the Long-Term Strategic Academic Plan and intended to give students the opportunity to become proficient in their use of 21st Century skills. During this time, District staff have increased their understanding that a technology-infused design for learning sets the stage for true student engagement, as well as student-ownership of learning, while supporting a collaborative home-school learning process.

In the 2019–20 school year, the District continued to mainstream the technology-infused approach to teaching and learning, to support the goal of truly differentiating how the District met the needs of the students. This approach to education also involves maintaining relevant partnerships with over a dozen organizations that support the academic and social-emotional developmental health of students.

The ERCSD continued during remote instruction to focus on the development of a growth mindset intended to ensure that the educational experience of ERCSD students is deeply rooted in an efficacious approach to proficiency in all that the District does.

The profile for the 2019-20 school year is as follows:

Table 10: General Education Profile (K-8) FTE

| | |
|------------|-----|
| 2015 -2016 | 151 |
| 2016-2017 | 192 |
| 2017-2018 | 201 |
| 2018- 2019 | 207 |
| 2019 -2020 | 324 |

Secondary Education

The ERCSD has two high schools: Ramapo High School with 1,423 students and Spring Valley High School with 1,320 students.

Of the total high school student population of 2,743, 61% identify as Hispanic and 35% are English Language Learners (ELLs), with 82% of ELLs speaking Spanish as their home language. In order to enable ELL's to access the regular curriculum and instruction, ELLs were provided with differentiated scaffolding based upon the student's language acquisition levels and individual needs. To address the identification of the high schools as Targeted Support and Improvement Schools for the performance of the ELL subgroup, the District is committed to providing targeted support to the identified subgroups to achieve the goal of on-time graduation and college and career readiness for all students.

To reinforce providing personalized learning for the students, the structure of the master schedule is designed for students to explore multiple pathways towards graduation. The ERCSD further emphasizes a focus on supporting student success toward on-time graduation through the institutionalization of the Final Five: high school emphasis on student grade point average (GPA) and Regents exams; student attendance and behavior; SAT/ACT participation and performance; college preparedness; and community service.

Mastery of Academic Subjects and the Arts

The District has been able to utilize the special funds that the State has provided since 2015 to reevaluate, reinvent, and repurpose District resources to revive the Fine and Performing Arts program. Staffing increased from 14 teachers of the arts in the 2015-16 school year to 46 teachers in the 2019-20 school year. All students from kindergarten-12th grade have the opportunity to engage in music, drama, visual art, and theater.

Visual Art Instruction

In 2015, the District employed five visual art teachers, only at the secondary level. In the 2019-20 school year, the District offered¹ visual art to all elementary, middle, and high school students. Staffing in visual art increased from 5 to 18 teachers. Visual art shows are staged in the schools as well as in local public venues.

Music Instruction

During the 2019-20 school year, the District offered music instruction to all elementary, middle, and high school students. This led to an increase in music staffing from 9 in the 2015-16 school year to 27 teachers in the 2019-20 school year.

Table 11. Number of Full-Time Teachers of the Visual and Performing Arts

| Subject | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|---------|------|------|------|
| Art | 14 | 17.5 | 18 |
| Music | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| Theater | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Dance | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 43 | 43.5 | 46 |

New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA)

As the table below demonstrates, enrollment and participation in NYSSMA solo and ensemble festivals has increased significantly between the 2015-16 and 2019-20 school years. District participation in solo festivals increased from 35 students in the 2015-16 school year to 415 students who had been scheduled to participate in the 2019-20 school year. Several high school students participated in the NYSSMA major ensemble festivals. The number of students selected to participate in All-County festivals increased from 14 in the 2015-16 school year to 95 in the 2019-20 school year.

Table 12: Participation of Students in New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) and Rockland County Music Association (RCMA) Events

| School Year | NYSSMA Solo | NYSSMA Ensembles | RCMA |
|-------------|-------------|------------------|------|
|-------------|-------------|------------------|------|

¹ While all students were provided the opportunity to participate in visual art and music instruction, not all students actually received visual art and/or music instruction because of scheduling or other issues.

(All County)

| | | | |
|---------|------|-----|-----|
| 2014-15 | 35 | 0 | 14 |
| 2015-16 | 78 | 0 | 18 |
| 2016-17 | 120 | 0 | 47 |
| 2017-18 | 155 | 3 | 60 |
| 2018-19 | 320 | 5 | 90 |
| 2019-20 | 415* | 16* | 95* |

*Number of students selected to participate. Festivals Cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic.

East Ramapo Marching Band (“the Marching Band”)

The East Ramapo Marching Band has shown considerable growth in the areas of enrollment and performance. In 2015, students participated in their first championship performance in years and came in third place. Since November 2015, the Marching Band membership has grown from 23 to 95 members.

Since the 2017-2018 school year, the Marching Band has been an active participant in the New York State Field Band Conference and participated in the championships held in Syracuse, New York. The Marching Band continues to perform during football games, board meetings, parades, competitions, and special events.

Additionally, the Marching Band held two home competitions at Spring Valley High School and Ramapo High School. The events provide an opportunity for the Marching Band to enhance its performance. As a result, the Marching Band received several First-Place trophies for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 competition seasons.

Co-Curricular Activities

In alignment with the District’s mission, emphasis was placed on supporting and strengthening fall drama, spring musicals, and dance programs. There was a shift in the communication systems among directors, administrators, and teachers. Regular meetings about the arts were held consistently to receive ongoing input from all stakeholders. The 2019-20 school year marked the fourth season of the All-District Elementary School Show Choir and the third season of the Middle School Show Choir, which were conducted virtually in 2019-20. The Show Choirs are a result of the District’s collaboration with community performing arts program with the assistance of Grace Vander-Waal, a graduate of the

ERSCD. In 2015, musicals were performed only at the high schools. Currently, this opportunity has been expanded to include the District's three middle schools. The District has continued with the afterschool "Cultural Arts Program," which supports band, strings, and marching band ensembles.

Co-Curricular Activity (Schools)*

- a. Spring Musical (High Schools)
- b. Thespian Club (High Schools)
- c. Dance Club (High Schools)
- d. Fall Drama (High Schools)
- e. Jazz Ensemble (High Schools)
- f. Marching Band (District)
- g. Winter Percussion (District)
- h. Winter Color Guard (District)
- i. Musical Production (Chestnut Ridge/Kakiat/Pomona)
- j. Show Choir District (Middle Schools)
- k. Show Choir District (Elementary Schools)

*All activities were conducted virtually

COVID-19 Impact on Operations and Continuity of Instruction

COVID-19 changed how the District staff worked during the 2019-20 school year. For most employees, daily work continued remotely.

For the 2020-21 school year, staffing could be strongly impacted by the return to in-person instruction. There could be increases in staff required due to social distancing, the need for additional mental health professionals to support student socio-emotional learning and health, additional custodial staff needed to clean and disinfect, and increases in nursing staff to monitor students.

Focused, Collaborative Professional Learning

District-wide professional initiatives during the 2019-20 school year included training in the following areas: evidence-based leadership; explicit instruction; strategic planning; data-driven decision making; standards-based curriculum and material alignment; expanding core-area intervention supports; and instructional technology to accelerate literacy growth through a blended learning approach to differentiated instruction.

Targeted support efforts have reduced the percentage of District schools in need of improvement from 57% in the 2015-16 school year to 14% in the 2018-2020 school year. The District will continue to identify priority needs and address those needs in the form of comprehensive planning, embedded with actionable decisions that encompass quality professional development. A process-oriented approach to the implementation of professional development activities is used to determine the selection of the learning focus and intervention. This approach is based on data and building and district walkthroughs.

Investments in professional development activities focus on structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher, leadership, and organizational practices and improvements in learning and operational outcomes. Metrics for use in assessing the quality of professional development activities were derived from New York State's Ten Standards for High Quality Professional Development, the federal definition of professional development contained in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and Learning Forward Professional Development Standards. The District sought to provide professional development that was:

- **Sustained.** Taking place over an extended period; longer than one day or a one-time workshop.
Metric: Activity enrollment is greater than one session.
- **Intensive.** Focused on a discrete concept, practice, or program.
Metric: Hours on a focused topic is greater than 14.
- **Collaborative.** Involving multiple educators and coaches or set of participants grappling with the same concept or practice and in which participants work together to achieve shared understanding.
Metric: Collaborative format.
- **Job-embedded.** A part of the ongoing, regular work of instruction related to teaching and learning taking place in real time in the teaching and learning environment.
Metric: Sponsored by the District.
- **Data-driven.** Based upon and responsive to real time information about the needs of participants and their students.
Metric: Selection is based on rationale that includes data on student need, relation to daily teaching activities, and/or student learning outcomes. Effectiveness measures student outcomes (common assessments) and/or teacher change (e.g., beliefs, attitudes, behavior, practice). Addresses priority needs outlined in the District Comprehensive improvement Plan (DCIP).
- **Classroom-focused.** Related to the practices taking place during the teaching process and relevant to instructional process.
Metric: The professional learning activity is explicitly connected to one or more of the professional practices framed by the Four Pillars described in the ERCS D Strategic Academic Plan.

The District is committed to strengthening the collective efficacy of the organization, which has led to a conscious shift away from stand-alone, short-term, and disjointed professional learning to a culture of continuous learning. Professional development opportunities are intended to be District-aligned, meaningful, ongoing, and reflective, as evidenced in the District's migration to an automated professional development management system.

District's Professional Development Plan

To address the current need for remote learning due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic, professional development opportunities modeled the use of distance learning platforms to drive continuous learning and instruction. Over 1,000 staff actively began their participation in bi-weekly sessions during the March 17, 2020 Superintendent's Conference Day and continued to

engage in these collaborative sessions during the shutdown that focused on District-approved distance learning tools and professional learning community.

2019- 20 School Year Initiatives to Implement Long-Term Strategic Academic Plan:

- District-wide Full-day Kindergarten (serves 741 students; aligned and articulated standards-based foundational curriculum provided)
- Growth Mindset (efficacious thinking and practice - Psychology of Performance)
- Evidence-based leadership (learning-walks; data walls and portfolios; quarterly status reporting)
- Explicit instruction “I do (teach), We do (practice), You do (apply)””; research-based focus on student ownership of learning/learning targets, student engagement, higher-order complex questioning, checking for understanding, differentiated instructional strategies and practice; and Webb’s Depth of Knowledge
- Strategic planning/data-driven decision making (District’s Strategic Academic Plan; School and District Comprehensive Education Improvement Plans; professional learning communities)
- Standards-based curriculum and material alignment (K-8 ELA & math; Algebra I, II; Geometry; Global and United States. History; K-12 core-area scope, sequence, and pacing calendars; common assessments; Renaissance Assessments K–12 ELA and math; and Rubicon Atlas)
- Expanding core-area intervention supports (embedded academic intervention supports; extended learning times; summer enrichment opportunities)
- Master Scheduling (grade level band alignment across buildings – K-3, 4-6, 7-8 and 9-12; high school rotating schedule)
- Blended learning instructional technology (curriculum educational software alignment; upgrades to infrastructure and materials Promethean Panels, Chromebooks, iPads, robotics)
- Final Five (high school emphasis on student GPA and Regents exams; student attendance and behavior; SAT/ACT participation and performance; college preparedness; and community service).

2019–20 School Year Partnerships/Opportunities: All programs listed in this section were conducted virtually.

Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR), a strength-based educational model created to help all incoming 9th graders manage the transition to high school, continued to be implemented.

The two fundamental pillars in BARR are: (1) creating positive, intentional relationships; and (2) using real-time student data in collaborative problem-solving settings to guide instructional action.

My Brother's Keeper (MBK) Program

MBK programs in the District are designed to increase the opportunities for all young scholars at ERCSD to reach their full potential. MBK incorporates these six goals into aspects of each program: 1) Ensuring equitable access to high quality schools and programs; 2) Expanding prevention, early warning, and intervention services; 3) Using differentiated approaches based on need and culture; 4) Responding to structural and institutional racism; 5) Making comprehensive and coordinated support services widely available; and 6) Engaging families and communities in a trusted and respectful way.

MBK Fellows

The District continued its involvement in the New York State MBK Community Network through the MBK Fellows program, a state-wide program designed to improve outcomes for boys and young men of color. In the Fellows program, one male student from each high school is inducted as a Fellow in the spring of their 11th grade year and given opportunities to gain authentic leadership experience(s) and develop service projects beneficial to the schools they attend and the communities in which they live during their 12th grade year. The ERCSD MBK Fellows serve as lead ambassadors for the MBK mentorship program.

Family and Community Engagement

Administrators, teachers, Family Resource Coordinators and parents from all 14 schools engaged in Parenting Partners turnkey training that provided the schools with resources and know-how to engage between 8 and 12 parents in an 8-session courses on effective practices for building family-school relationships and supporting children academically and socially. There were 300 families that participated virtually during the 2019-20 school year.

2019– 20 School Year Social-Emotional Developmental Health: Efficacy Institute Partnership

The District has continued its long-standing partnership with the Efficacy Institute, a not-for-profit foundation that assists districts to implement the idea that virtually all can achieve high standards in school if they have the right tools and supports.

This means the primary work of caring adults -- in school, home, and community institutions --is to *develop the intellectual capacity of every child.*

The strategy that the Institute assists districts to implement has three essential elements: establish a Mission; change the Mindset, and teach the Method -- a simple, powerful operating system based on data analysis -- to everyone. ERCSD has worked with the Institute to investigate the Psychology of Performance – the study of how and why people (adults and children) learn and grow; an underlying set of personality and character

traits that support growth; and resistance to change. Educators engage in meaningful opportunities for growth that impact their practices and decisions. Through this partnership, ERCSD seeks to develop and sustain a more efficacious learning environment dedicated to producing citizens prepared to participate in the society of their time constructively.

Nurturing Inclusive Community Environment “NICE” Program

The NICE program at Spring Valley High School, which serves 713 students, and the program at Ramapo High School, which serves 801 students, continued for a 3rd year. NICE is staffed by nine full-time trained individuals funded by the Wege Foundation. The District asserts that NICE has helped in reducing incidents of school violence and behavioral disruptions, as well as improving the academic and social outcomes of students. The District further asserts that NICE Program’s restorative circles have helped to build a community in high school classrooms and have even transformed how teachers connect with students.

Families in Need of Support (FINS)

During the 2019-20 school year, FINS provided intensive counseling and case management to middle and high school students and their families who were in some distress. The program aims to identify and address the causes of suffering and to support students in their schooling and relationships with their families. FINS provides twice-weekly individual counseling sessions for students at their schools from the point of intake through the end of the school year and works with the parents or caregivers of the students.

The FINS program serves about ten families at any one time at Spring Valley High School (SVHS). The school administration identifies students needing intensive counseling due to behavioral and other problems, usually as a result of trauma. The program is provided at no cost to the school or families as the Rockland County Youth Bureau fully funds it.

Spring Valley Health Clinic (“The Clinic”)

The Clinic works alongside FINS, much as the Clinic works alongside the General Counseling Program provided by VCS, Inc. (formerly the Volunteer Counseling Service of Rockland County, Inc.), since the Clinic can offer counseling and psychiatric services to students who need a higher level of care. FINS also can continue to provide counseling to students who are ineligible for the Clinic. Both programs operate at no cost to the school, the District, or the students.

The Clinic benefits the District by providing support to the student population that improves their capacity to meet their own educational goals by enhancing their emotional and behavioral health. FINS has demonstrated success in improving student attendance and grades and reducing the frequency of disciplinary incidents and absences (as reported by the school administration, parents, and as evidenced in school data), allowing students to focus on benefiting from the education the school offers.

The Clinic has the capacity to reach a much higher number of students with a broader range of interventions if additional funding were made available.

Adopt-A-Cop & D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education)

The ERCSD offers innovative opportunities for local law enforcement to serve as a support to all students in grades K–6. With a focus on social, emotional, and developmental health, officers educate students on community safety and awareness, as well as substance abuse prevention.

Family Resource Coordinators (FRCs)

FRCs work closely with the building principals to support the needs of families in the school. FRCs assist in providing food and clothing to families (if needed) and help principals organize parent training sessions. FRCs seek to identify students who may experience homelessness and work with building and District level administrators to ensure students and their families receive the support they need. As of the 2019-20 school year, there are 10 FRCs assigned to all 14 buildings who are available to serve any students with needs.

School Psychologists

School psychologists support the social/emotional and psychological needs of all students K-12. School psychologists have caseloads of students to whom the psychologists provide mandated Individualized Education Plan (IEP) related services. Psychologists are assigned to all of ERCSD's public schools and support any student as the need arises. Psychologists help in developing building-wide PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support) systems, class-wide behavior systems, and individual behavioral intervention supports. Psychologists conduct individual and small group counseling sessions as needed. Psychologists work alongside classroom teachers to engage students in appropriate role-playing interactions in social situations. Psychologists also are an integral part of Child Study Teams, supporting colleagues in determining the best supports and next steps for students who may be struggling. Additionally, there are school psychologists who support the mandated needs of students who attend nonpublic schools. As of the 2019-20 school year, there are 32 school psychologists who provide services to all students whose IEP's include counseling services.

Creating Healthy Schools and Communities Program

Supported by a grant from the Rockland County Department of Health, the Creating Healthy Schools and Communities program concluded its 5-year engagement with the ERCSD in the 2019-20 school year. The grant served to assist the District in developing and updating the Student Wellness Policy, implementing a comprehensive school physical activity program consisting of “brain breaks,” active recess, and parent and staff involvement. The initiative also helped the District promote foods and beverages that met Smart Snacks in School Standards. The schools have put practices in place that support learning readiness and child health by increasing access to healthier nutrition and physical activity. Eight ERCSD schools received

recognition from NYSED's Child Nutrition Program and the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services Child Nutrition Program.

The theme for the 2019-20 school year was "sustainability." As such, all District schools enrolled in the Healthy Schools Program and completed its assessment. The following six schools won Alliance for a Healthier Generation bronze awards and the status of one of America's Healthiest Schools, 2020: Chestnut Ridge Middle School; Kakiat STEAM Academy; Lime Kiln Elementary School; Ramapo High School; Spring Valley High School; and Summit Park Elementary School.

Smart Scholars, Early College High School

The 2018-19 school year saw the inauguration of the District's Smart Scholars Early College High School Program. This partnership with Rockland Community College creates Early College High Schools that provide students with the opportunity and preparation to accelerate the completion of their high school studies while earning transferable college computer science credits at the same time.

During the 2019-20 school year, 94 students received additional academic support from the school/college partnership to ensure they are at grade level and ready to participate in rigorous high school and collegiate courses. In the 2020-21 school year, the District will introduce a second partnership that will provide an additional 200 Smart Scholars opportunities to earn credits in Environmental Science.

Summer Academies

Each summer, using the approach of "learning by design," teachers engage students in Grades K-9 in project-based learning environments. This method supports students in the acquisition of more in-depth content knowledge and technology fluency. The academies operate on the premise that project-based learning and technology-based learning environments are transformative, in that the focus is learner-centered and asks students to find meaning in their learning experiences.

All activities are designed to be culturally relevant and provide a bridge to a student's culture and language through the actual content of words, ideas, and meaningful real-world connections. Students acquire 21st-century skills - such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and inquiry - to promote student questioning; research; and the construction of a new idea, interpretation, or product.

During summer 2020, the District embarked on a virtual experience for 288 students that brought robotics, animation, and game design into the home of participating students facilitated by Culture Play, a vendor that provides support to the District's Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) program. Through videoconferencing and an engaging Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA) aligned curriculum, students in grades one through seven utilized the Engineering Design Process to complete projects that used computer science skills to solve real-world problems.

One of the core goals of the Culture Play curriculum is the teaching and reinforcement of Computational Thinking. Computational Thinking is an organized method of problem-solving that involves breaking a task down into smaller, more approachable components. This sort of problem-solving is an essential part of any field in science, technology, engineering, and math, (STEM), but it is also a way of thinking which, once learned, can be applied to virtually any task.

Graduation Pathways

The District is mindful of the different Pathways that students can use to meet graduation requirements. For this reason, the District aligns course offerings to multiple Pathways through the use of student interest inventories (Naviance). The Pathways include Biliteracy (LOTE), Career and Technical Education (CTE), Career Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS), Humanities, and STEM.

Special Education and Student Supports

The Office of Special Student Services provides support and special education services to over 2,000 students who are being educated in more than 30 school sites within public and nonpublic schools throughout the District, in addition to students who are determined by the Committee on Special Education (CSE) to need out-of-district placements. ERCSD is committed to providing special education programming for District students “in-district” rather than “outsourcing” their educational needs to other agencies.

Due to that commitment, the District maintains a variety of in-district programming for some of ERCSD’s students with the greatest needs. The District has a large program for students on the autism spectrum. Similarly, the District has dedicated classes for students who are medically involved and with multiple disabilities. With a commitment to meeting student needs in the least restrictive environment, the District offers a full range of special education programs, including mandated related services, to support students as they access general education curriculum and grade-level standards within the general education program.

The Office of Student Support Services works in conjunction with all ERCSD departments in educating the “whole child” by offering support for classified and unclassified students in areas such as counseling and behavior therapy. Bilingual support for classified students is also provided, as needed, in the least restrictive manner possible.

Since the 2014-15 school year, the District’s special education classification rate has decreased by 3.9%. In the 2014-15 school year the District’s total in-district special education classification rate was 19.5%. In the 2019-20 school year, the total in-district classification rate was 15.6%. Additionally, there has been a decrease in the overall number of students placed in self-contained settings. Similarly, the referral rate to the CSE has decreased, as schools have focused on establishing tiers of supports for all students. Collaboration with clinical services professionals and special education teachers enhance these multi-tiered systems of support.

Since 2015, the District has created 17 new K-8 integrated co-teaching (ICT) classes. The expansion of ICT classes will continue, as well as implementation of the consultant teacher model programs in all K-8 buildings to provide special education instructional support within the

general education classroom. Similarly, the District increased ICT class offerings at the high school level to include English, math, and science.

The District aligned all K-12 curriculum for special education programs with the general education core curriculum in both English language arts and mathematics. A standards-based curriculum for all alternately assessed (ungraded) students in grades K-12 was also established. Bilingual special education, speech, and psychological support for identified, classified ELLs within the general education setting also continued.

Board-certified behavior analysts (BCBAs) were hired to support teachers and students to enhance active engagement within the classroom and among peers, inclusive of improved social and emotional development through established curriculum and social groups.

Overall, the percentage of students with disabilities scoring proficient on State assessments in ELA more than tripled from 2% in 2015 to 7% in 2019 and more than doubled from 2% to 5% in mathematics. Correspondingly, there was a 36% and 40% increase from 2015 to 2020 in the 4-year graduation rate as of August of students with disabilities respectively at Ramapo High School and Spring Valley High School.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of Special Student Services continued to maintain its standard of service to students with disabilities and their families, in accordance with each student's IEP. Using multiple virtual platforms, tele-therapy was provided to students for there to be a continuation of the support and services outlined in students' IEPs, along with the monitoring of their progress toward achieving their goals.

In keeping with the District's commitment to educating students in the least restrictive environment, collaboration continued between general education teachers and special education teachers to support the needs of students with IEPs. Students with IEPs had access to all Flexible Home Learning experiences, with support provided based on students' IEPs.

In addition, related service providers (i.e., speech therapists, psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists) developed instructional plans to meet the needs of each student on their caseload and worked remotely with these students.

Extended School Year (ESY) 2020

In order to address the needs of classified students who require 12-month instruction, the District yearly establishes an Extended School Year (ESY) program that continues specialized instruction and therapies for students, as determined by their IEPs, for six weeks in July and August. This year the program operated from July 8 - August 19.

Although many districts chose to remain virtual in their instruction, as a result of the Governor's Executive Order in early June 2020, which allowed in-person instruction for students with disabilities who were eligible for ESY programs, the District chose to operate the ESY program in-person. Students in grades K-12 whose IEPs identified that they require 12-month instruction participated in-person in the ESY program. A total of 25

classes, staffed with teachers, teaching assistants, and teacher aides, along with all required therapists and behavior specials, were operated. 225 students participated in the 2020 ESY program. Of the 225 students, 34 participated virtually and 39 came solely for related services.

Designation of Disproportionality

The District has been identified for significant disproportionality in the identification of certain racial and ethnic groups (i.e., White students) as needing special education and related services by placement/Least Restrictive Environment.

In the 2019-20 school year, the District had a public-school population totaling 9,397 students. Of those, 323 students were identified as White; this represents 3.4% of the public-school population.

In contrast, the District has a large population of students being educated in nonpublic schools. The total number of students being educated in nonpublic schools is approximately 27,000 students, and the vast majority of those students are identified as White. Of the approximate 27,000 nonpublic school students, 523 are parentally placed students in nonpublic schools who receive special education/related services from the District. However, students who are brought to the District's CSE for potential classification come from both those attending the District's public schools and also from the total population of nonpublic school students. Among the nonpublic school students, parents generally desire to maintain their children in schools that align with the parents' cultural and religious beliefs. The students who are brought to the Committee on Special Education for possible classification and placement are often those with severe needs that cannot be met within a nonpublic school. While the District's public schools have a wide range of special education placements, in many cases the needs of the students exceed what can be provided by the public schools. Therefore, the White students served by the District disproportionately have severe disabilities that often require special class support and even out-of-district placements.

Of the 323 White public school students, approximately a third (117) are classified students with IEPs, with 95 students in self-contained classroom settings. If, after supporting students within this environment the District finds that students are unsuccessful or require more support, students will be recommended for additional services or out-of-district placements, such as BOCES programs.

Based on the data provided to the District by NYSED along with internal data, the District has noted a **consistent decrease** in the total number of White students being placed in self-contained settings outside of the District (See Tables 13 and 14 below). In order to see this decrease continue, the District will increase focused support to nonpublic schools within the District, along with professional development for all CSE Chairpersons pertaining to appropriate placements for students. District school psychologists and CSE Chairpersons will have assigned time within nonpublic schools to support appropriate identification and placement of students with disabilities in particular settings. The support of District personnel within nonpublic schools

will also increase opportunities for students to be served in the nonpublic schools and the least restrictive environment, as mindsets shift regarding programs and services that can be provided prior to students having to be placed in a self-contained setting. As the needs of students brought to the CSE from nonpublic schools tend to be high, it is possible that the shift will not occur readily; however, the hope is that increased partnerships will raise the comfort level of families and schools to have students supported in the least restrictive environment (such as special classes that have been established within the public schools that support students' home language). Psychologists and chairpersons will provide clinical support as well as professional development regarding appropriate placement of classified students and interventions that can be provided at the school level. Child Study Team meetings and annual reviews are conducted onsite in nonpublic schools as requested. Additionally, transportation is provided for students in the nonpublic schools to receive services in the public schools as needed. Psychologists will coordinate these supports.

The psychologists and CSE chairpersons will receive monthly professional development from District administrators and outside providers regarding the appropriate placement of classified students, with an emphasis on placement within the least restrictive environment. District administrators also will continue to participate in disproportionality workshops provided through NYSED and the Lower Hudson Regional Partnership Center (RPC).

Additionally, as a number of White students who attend nonpublic schools are also classified as bilingual English-Yiddish students, the District continued to expand its offering of in-district self-contained bilingual special education classes for those students in need of such a program. This will limit the need to place such students in out-of-district placements. Between 2016 and 2020, the District has seen the following decrease in the placement of White bilingual Yiddish students in out-of-district bilingual self-contained classes, as the District has increased its offering of such programs:

Table 13: Placement of White Bilingual Yiddish Students in Out-of-District Bilingual Self-Contained Classes

| Year | Students |
|---------|----------|
| 2016-17 | 44 |
| 2017-18 | 40 |
| 2018-19 | 34 |
| 2019-20 | 28 |

Table 14: Overall Trend of White Classified Students Placed in Out-of-District Settings

| Year | Students |
|---------|----------|
| 2016-17 | 102 |
| 2017-18 | 91 |

| | |
|---------|----|
| 2018-19 | 84 |
| 2019-20 | 72 |

English Language Learners

The District has the second highest percentage of English Language Learners (ELLs) among New York State school districts. Approximately 41% of ERCSD students are identified as ELLs. These students come with rich experiences, immense potential, and great strengths.

Table 15. English Language Learner Enrollment Trends

| Language Acquisition Program | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | 2019-20 |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Bilingual | 831 | 1,075 | 1,346 |
| English as a New Language | 2,531 | 2,458 | 2,519 |
| Total | 3,443 | 3,533 | 3,865 |

The District has undertaken a comprehensive, transparent, and inclusive effort in recent years to create a systematic approach to providing instruction that is challenging and supports students' academic and linguistic achievement. As a result, in August 2019, the NYSED's Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages officially stated that the District accomplished the required steps to no longer be subject to a Corrective Action Plan. NYSED made this determination based on a Corrective Action Plan closure site visit to schools involved in the underlying violations (Spring Valley High School, Ramapo High School, and Elmwood Elementary School) and also a commitment by the District to implement NYSED's ELL/MLL Program Quality Review process in the 2019-20 school year.

The District's Seal of Biliteracy

The Seal of Biliteracy Handbook contains specific timelines that keep advisors and Seal of Biliteracy candidates on track to meet the criteria to earn a Seal of Biliteracy. During the 2019-20 school year, while the District was engaged in remote learning, advisors were able to use Google Classroom and other methods of communication to review their candidates' progress and help them stay on track to complete the requirements to earn the Seal of Biliteracy. Students uploaded their projects and research papers to Google Classroom prior to scheduling their presentations. The Seal of Biliteracy candidates participated in a Google Classroom to present their work. Although the process was different in the 2019-20 school year, there were 27 high school seniors who earned the Seal. This is an increase of nine students compared to the previous school year.

Beginning in the 2018-19 school year, the District was able to provide students with the NYSED approved LOTE+1 Pathway exam. Four-year graduation rates for ELLs have increased 20% in the last two years.

Table 16: Graduation Rate: English Language Learners (ELLs)

| Year | Percent | Percent change |
|---------------|---------|-----------------------|
| Class of 2017 | 6% | -2 percentage points |
| Class of 2018 | 17% | +11 percentage points |
| Class of 2019 | 26% | +9 percentage points |
| Class of 2020 | 26% | 0 percentage points |

Central Registration

For the 2019-20 school year, online registration was made available in three different languages: English, Spanish, and Haitian. This provided an additional option for families who needed to register but were unavailable during regular office hours. This option went into effect two months before the District transitioned to remote learning due to COVID-19. Registration staff were able to accept online registration applications while working remotely due to the pandemic. Staff then contacted parents by calling or emailing them to request that they upload required documents to demonstrate student proof of age, parental relationship, and proof of residency. Although the Central Registration Office is now open for in-person registrations, parents continue to complete the registration process online to take advantage of its accessibility both during and outside of regular school hours and the ability to socially distance while completing the process.

Human Capital

The Office of Personnel supports the District’s more than 1,400 employees, both certified and Civil Service, who work in 14 school buildings, the administration building, and dozens of other locations. The Office collaborates and fosters relationships with all employees as part of a unified community educating the whole child. The Office of Personnel focuses on relationships and handles contract negotiations, grievances, contract management, and employee discipline for 14 units collective bargaining units in the District.

Table 17: Teachers and Administrators Hired

| School Year | Number of Teachers and Administrators |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2016-2017 | 67 |
| 2017-2018 | 87 |

| | |
|---------|----|
| 2018-19 | 93 |
| 2019-20 | 66 |

Note: For 2020, the District will not be adding new positions in the 2020-21 budget.

Certified Position Cuts

From the 2008-2009 school year through the 2012-2013 school year, there were 157 positions cut from the budget. Since the 2015-2016 school year, there have been only 15 certified positions cut, which occurred in the 2017-2018 school year and were all teaching assistants. All the teaching assistants were brought back within one year. Certified jobs cut before the 2015-2016 school year have been restored, and new jobs have been added.

Table 18: Number of Employees

| School Year | Employees |
|-------------|-----------|
| 2014-15 | 1,217 |
| 2015-16 | 1,269 |
| 2016-17 | 1,310 |
| 2017-18 | 1,373 |
| 2018-19 | 1,400 |
| 2019-20 | 1,448 |

Number of Teachers:

2014-2015: 640

2019-20: 828

The difference from the 2014-2015 school year to Present: 188 additional teachers hired

Preferred Eligibility Lists:

2015-16 school year: 81 teachers, teaching assistants and administrators on the lists

2019-20 school year: 0 teachers, teaching assistants and administrators on the lists

Other Highlights

The Office of Human Resources handled negotiations and contract settlements for all 14 bargaining units; resolved bargaining unit grievances; developed policies, procedures, and online systems; improved communications with employees and bargaining units; and increased the substitute teacher pool by 25%.

Funded Programs²

The Office of Funded Programs (OFP) oversees federal funds allocated to public schools, equitable services to nonpublic schools and seeks out discretionary or competitive grants from such sources as state and federal governments and foundations.

During the 2019-20 school year, the Office of Funded Programs made NYSED-approved modifications to the public-school portion of District grants to make funds available for the purchase of Chromebooks for students to use for remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. Funds were made available in March and April. Additional funds earmarked for professional contracted services were made available in June.

Title IA – Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged

Title IA funds for the District overall are generated based on the number of “income eligible” students in the District – public and nonpublic students combined. The District’s Title IA allocation is divided into funds for public schools and funds for equitable services to participating nonpublic schools based on the percentage of students in each group. These funds are used to supplement and enhance the schoolwide learning environment in the public schools. Approximately 98% of the Title I funds for public schools support salaries of staff, such as reading teachers, school librarians, Academic Standards Facilitators, and FRCs. A total of 27,471 East Ramapo-resident students met the household income criteria to generate Title I funds. Low income students in public schools totaled 7,920 (29%); low income students from the nonpublic schools totaled 19,551 (71%).

Title IIA – Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers, Principals, or other School Leaders.

Title IIA funds for the District overall are generated based on the District’s share of the census population ages 5 through 17 (20% of funds) and based on the District’s share of census poverty population ages 5 through 17 (80% of funds). The District’s Title IIA allocation is divided into funds for public schools and funds for equitable services to participating nonpublic schools based on the percentage of students in each group. These funds are used to supplement and support staff development in both public and nonpublic schools. About 66% of the public school Title II

²Calculations in this section are based on counts from the District’s school information management system, eSchool, to account for changes in enrollment later in the school year that are not reflected in BEDs data reported in October.

allocation was devoted to staff salaries for professional development Districtwide. Most of the remaining funds were earmarked for professional development contracted services. In the 2019-20 school year, there were 9,428 public school students (25% of the total) and 27,962 nonpublic school students (75% of the total) in the ERCSD.

Title III ELL and Title III Immigrant

Title III ELL funds for the District overall are generated based on the number of students who are identified as English language learners. These funds are divided into public and nonpublic student groups. Title III Immigrant funds are generated by the number of ELLs meeting immigrant criteria in both public and nonpublic schools.

In the 2019-20 school year, there were 15,497 students identified as English language learners (ELLs); 3,551 (23%) were in the public schools, 11,946 (77%) were students in nonpublic schools. Approximately 84% of the public-school funds were used to support staff salaries in the areas of ELL coaching and professional development, counseling of ELL students, and stipends for teachers to provide additional support to ELLs.

Title IV – Student Support and Academic Enrichment

Title IV funds for the District overall are generated based on the District’s relative share of the total statewide allocation of Title I, Part A funds in the previous school year. These funds are used to support the effort of schools to provide a well-rounded education, foster safe and healthy environments for students, and promote effective uses of instructional technology. The District’s Title IV allocation is divided into funds for public schools and funds for equitable services to participating nonpublic schools based on the percentage of students in each group. In the 2019-20 school year, there were 9,428 public school students (25% of the total) and 27,962 nonpublic school students (75% of the total) in the ERCSD. Approximately 76% of the public school allocation was devoted to salaries for staff, specifically Academic Standards Facilitators to support the efforts of schools to meet their Title IV support and enrichment mission.

Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK)

The District’s UPK program serves almost 1,800 children at over 50 sites throughout the District. UPK funds are generated based on a state funding formula and allocated to sites per capita for each UPK student.

The Office of Funded Programs also oversees the writing and administration of discretionary and competitive grants and other funded programs. Some of these grants are listed in the table below:

Table 19. 2019 – 2020 Grants

| Funding Source | Student Population | Expenditure (Sept. 2019-June 2020) |
|----------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|
|----------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|

| | | |
|--|--------------|--------------------|
| Title I - Public Schools | 7,920 | \$6,364,164 |
| Title I - Nonpublic Schools | 19,551 | \$8,668,007 |
| Title IIA - Public Schools | 9,428 | \$919,525 |
| Title IIA - Nonpublic Schools | 27,962 | \$676,863 |
| Title III (ELL) - Public Schools | 3,551 | \$606,609 |
| Title III (ELL) - Nonpublic Schools | 11,946 | \$1,289,236 |
| Title III (Immigrant) - Public Schools | 1,645 | \$112,781 |
| Title III (Immigrant) - Nonpublic Schools | 226 | \$0 |
| Title IV - Public Schools | 9,428 | \$477,434 |
| Title IV - Nonpublic Schools | 27,962 | \$432,713 |
| School Improvement (SIGA) - Public | N/A | \$150,000 |
| School Improvement (SIG-7) (IB) - Public | N/A | \$341,996 |
| Universal Pre-K - Public Schools bound | 362 | \$1,097,148 |
| Universal Pre-K - Nonpublic Schools bound | 1,425 | \$4,318,885 |
| MBK Challenge – Public | N/A | \$29,925 |
| MBK FACE – Public | N/A | \$91,187 |
| Empire State After School (Elem) - Public | 850 | \$436,693 |
| Early College High School – Public | 100 | \$13,210 |
| Extended Learning Time – Public | N/A | \$1,043,039 |

To help the nonpublic schools make professional development program decisions that are most efficient, cost-effective, and results-oriented, the Office of Funded Programs has provided training and technical assistance to all nonpublic schools on developing their Professional Development Plan. Using the Danielson model to structure their plans, the schools have designed professional learning experiences that are more focused and sustainable. Similarly, the Office of Funded Programs worked closely with the District’s nonpublic school partner, Community Education Center, in assisting schools in developing their Title IV plans. These plans required the nonpublic schools to set clear goals for their programs, describe the program design, and identify the assessment measures that would gauge the level of success of the program.

The District was the recipient of a second Smart Scholars/Early College High School grant from NYSED. The 2019-20 school year served as a planning year for the second grant, continuing into the 2020-21 school year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Smart Scholars grant will allow up to 200 students the opportunity to earn between 24 and 42 college credits toward an Associates degree in Exercise and Sports Medicine.

In the 2019-20 school year, the District engaged in a NYSED Coordinated Monitoring Review. This review examined the procedures the District follows in implementing and complying with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) program requirements - namely, Titles I, IIA, III, and IV. NYSED issued a series of findings, recommendations, and required actions to the District in fall 2020, to which the District responded with updates and modifications to procedures as required or suggested by NYSED. For example, in this review, NYSED noted that the District needed to update its policies on homeless students, and parent/family engagement, and internal controls. NYSED also issued several corrective actions related to the provision of equitable services provided to participating private schools. The District updated these policies, which were approved by the ERCSD Board in fall 2020. The District also provided NYSED with documentation of expenses and fiscal procedures that demonstrated adherence to federal fiscal regulations. The District has noted suggestions and recommendations made by NYSED in areas such as maintaining documentation of meetings between the District and nonpublic schools and the District's nonpublic school partner. At the time of this report, the District was still engaged with NYSED to resolve outstanding corrective and required actions detailed in the monitoring report.

The Office of Funded Programs continued to work with Parenting Partners to help the schools and Family Resource Coordinators structure parent education coherently throughout the District. Administrators, teachers, FRCs, and parents from all 14 schools engaged in Parenting Partners turnkey training that provided the schools with resources and know-how to engage between eight and 12 parents in an 8-session course on effective practices for building family-school relationships and supporting children academically and socially.

Culture of Safety, School Climate and Social/Emotional Learning

Since its creation, the position of Coordinator of Safety and Security/School Resource Officer serves to unify security staff as one department. At its heart, the Security Department seeks to create a culture of safety for students and staff and strong relationships with families and the community, as well as serve as mentors to the students.

Department Operations

With standards in place, the Security Department complies with the following: All members are trained to the updated standards aligned to the 1992 New York State Security Guard Act and receive annual professional development on updated laws and qualifications in compliance with the Act and in-service training. All members interact and respond to an established chain of command, making the Department more efficient and cost-effective at large-scale events, such as graduations and emergencies.

All new security aides and substitute security aides receive one-on-one instruction with security staff and attend training courses. All members have been trained in courtroom testimony and report writing.

Security Staffing 2019/20

37 full-time security aides are assigned to nine schools. Most recent hires are retired law enforcement, including New York Police Department and New York State Police, as well as former bus drivers who had previously worked for the District. The last three hired security aides, who are retired law enforcement officers, do not draw benefits or a pension from the District, resulting in savings to the District.

Mobilization Plan

A mobilization plan with five levels was developed to quickly move security to any building in ERCS D. This is to bring security and/or additional security to any building in the District for emergencies or other necessities.

- Level 1 - 1 Security Aide from each building to location
- Level 2 - 2 Security Aides from each building to location
- Level 3 - 3 Security Aides from each building to location
- Level 4 - 4 Security Aides from each building to location, and one Senior Security Aides to location
- Level 5 - 5 Security Aides from each building to location and two Senior Security Aides to location

A mobilization will result in security in elementary buildings without security or doubling the amount of security in a secondary building. Mobilizations have been called twice and have been successful, at no additional cost to the District.

Security Equipment

During the last two school years, the following additional security equipment has been purchased or scheduled for purchase:

May 2020: Cameras are installed in six buildings and placed in public areas of the schools and on the perimeter of each building. Cameras will be upgraded, and new cameras installed using Smart School Bond funds. Installation was begun in May 2020, with every school scheduled to have interior and exterior cameras in all public areas.

2019: Additional radios were purchased and distributed, incorporating digital technology and making the radios more useful. New uniforms were designed and are being issued to present a more professional image.

2018: Purchased an additional 36 radios.

Hardware Upgrades:

- Increased and upgraded cameras in all schools, specifically the elementary schools, to put them on par with the secondary buildings.
- All building entries were made more secure with better cameras and buzzers, locks, and access controls.
- Buzzers/panic alarms were installed on all exterior doors with cameras.

Long-Term Strategic Academic Plan

In May 2020, the District, as required by law, developed the draft of a new Strategic Academic Plan for the 2020-21 to 2024-25 school years. There were over 100 stakeholder groups. The plan is the umbrella for instructional programs and articulates the District's guiding philosophy based on the Four Pillars.

Monitors' Observations Regarding Governance and Leadership

During the 2019-20 school year, the Board and its leadership were the subject of several critical news reports. A lawsuit by the Spring Valley chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) that was filed three years previously went to trial in February 2020. The lawsuit noted the nine-member Board pursued policies contrary to the interests of the 10,000 public school students, nearly all of whom are Black and Hispanic. During this time, the trial was reported every day in the local papers. The Monitors were recused from the case and did not participate in any executive session discussions in reference to the case. The case resulted in a \$9 million judgement against the District. There was an opportunity for the Board to settle the case, but the Board decided to go to trial.

The trial proceeded and the judge ruled in favor of the NAACP. Consequently, the District had to create a ward system to replace the at-large system. This new system will create three wards in which most resident students attend the public school system. The majority of board members voted to appeal the ruling, which will incur additional legal costs. There will be an election on February 2, 2021 in which all nine board members' seats will be filled. Terms for each board seat will be established by a lottery.

Dr. Deborah Wortham resigned from the District in June 2020. She had been superintendent for five years. She created systems and structures that did not exist when she started and successfully oversaw a transformational turnaround. The Board immediately began to search for an Interim Superintendent. Dr. Ray Giamartino was appointed on August 31, 2020. The monitors were directly involved from the start and provided input and feedback on the final selection of the Interim Superintendent.

The Board uses an email group where all Board members, including the Monitors, are on the email chain and share and discuss information on items on the Board agenda. This email chain could be considered a meeting subject to the Open Meetings Law, as it is a convening of a quorum of the Board where public business is being discussed. Therefore, as this could be interpreted as an improperly convened meeting, this practice needs to be addressed.

The Board attorney has been involved in numerous situations in which a Board counsel would not normally be involved or needed. This practice has added to already high legal costs. The Board should only utilize counsel when necessary as a cost saving measure.

Long-Term Fiscal Improvement Plan

Budget Development

Pursuant to Chapter 89 of the Laws of 2016, Mr. Bruce Singer was appointed as Fiscal Monitor to the East Ramapo School District effective March 5, 2020. The prior Fiscal Monitor, Mr. Charles Szuberla, oversaw the District's development and implementation of the 2019-20 school year budget. The current Fiscal Monitor was not involved with the 2019-20 school year budget development, which was completed prior to the date of his appointment. The Fiscal Monitor's responsibilities are to provide oversight of the District's finances and operations. The Board in consultation with the Monitors is required to annually submit the District's proposed budget to the Commissioner no later than 45 days before the date scheduled for the District's budget vote. The Commissioner reviews the budget to ensure that it, to the greatest extent possible, expands educational programming for students. The Commissioner also reviews the proposed budget to ensure that it is balanced within the context of revenue and expenditure estimates and mandated programs. The Commissioner presents his or her findings to the Board, which must adjust the proposed budget consistent with any recommendations made by the Commissioner.

External Audits

As school districts operate on a continuous fiscal cycle, July 1 thru June 30 annually, the year-end audit is a summary of the past year financial highlights, plus management critiques to improve financial accountability. The year-end audit also confirms total revenues and total expenditures and includes the year end fund balance. The highlights of the June 30, 2019 External Audit are as follows:

External Audit- June 30, 2019 - Comments and Highlights

1. The June 30, 2019 year-end unassigned fund balance was \$8,486,745, equal to 3.52% of the 2019-2020 school year budget, which is below the 4% unassigned fund balance maximum limit.
2. The Moody's rating for the District was upgraded from "Baa2 Outlook Negative" to "Baa2 Outlook Stable." The defeat of the 2020-21 school year budget will have a negative impact on the District's future credit rating.
3. All accounting data is moved, secured, and accessible in cloud space.
4. The District implemented an Employee Self-Service module that allows all employees online access to their payroll, W-2, and other personal data.
5. State Aid revenue (\$82,600,423) accounts for 33.3% of the total budget (\$247,753,226).

6. The largest source of revenue is real property local taxes (\$157,286,500), which represents 63.5% of the total budget. Please see the attached “East Ramapo Revenue Estimate - 2020-21 Budget.”

Claims Audit

During the 2019-20 school year, confirming purchase orders are noted in each month’s claims report, which were presented to the Board at its monthly meetings. Confirming purchase orders mean that purchase orders were written after a purchase, not before, as should be standard operating procedure.

Confirming purchase orders are appropriate only for use in emergency circumstances that typically happen a few times in a year (e.g., emergency maintenance repairs for buildings and grounds). All other purchases must follow standard operating procedures.

The Fiscal Monitor has impressed upon the District the need to eliminate confirming purchase orders. School staff must be held accountable if this practice continues. Staff who continue to ignore District policies should be held responsible for the purchase using their own funds. The District has committed to follow proper purchasing procedures.

Audits by Office of the State Comptroller’s Office (OSC)

During the 2019-20 school year, OSC completed and issued audits regarding transportation and textbooks.

Textbook Audit (issued August,2020)

Key OSC Findings

The District did not have adequate systems in place to verify that textbooks purchased for and loaned to nonpublic school students were provided only to eligible students. Three hundred nonpublic school students were provided with textbooks, even though the District’s records did not support the students’ eligibility to receive the textbooks. The District did not have systems in place to account for the textbooks purchased for and loaned to nonpublic school students and cannot account for all textbooks purchased and loaned to those students.

OSC Recommendations

District officials should ensure that only eligible students are provided textbooks. District officials should conduct a Districtwide annual inventory, including textbooks on loan to nonpublic school students, and ensure that nonpublic school administrators return unneeded and damaged textbooks to the District.

District Response to OSC Finding and Recommendations

The District maintains a nonpublic textbook inventory that is comprehensive and up-to-date. The District verifies the addresses of nonpublic school students who reside within the geographical boundaries of the District for both the purposes of transportation and textbooks. The Textbook Loan Office will continue to ensure that the number of textbooks ordered by each nonpublic school does not exceed the number of ERCSD resident students by grade at the school.

Actions to be taken by July 2020: The database from which the Textbook Loan Office determines student textbooks eligibility was updated for accuracy starting in July 2019. District staff from the Textbook Loan Office will monitor the inventory and confirm the condition of the books. The District will require each nonpublic school to conduct a physical inventory of textbooks and submit the results of the inventory each September. The District will conduct an annual reconciliation.

As of June 30, 2020, The District had yet to implement fully the corrective actions needed to comply with the NYS Comptroller's findings.

Transportation Audit (issued November 2019)

Key OSC Findings

District officials did not have documentation to support that the District was paying for transportation only for students who lived in the District. Documentation for 300 students was requested. Documentation for 93 students was missing. Deficiencies, such as no proof of address for 54 of the 193 new student applications and no proof of birthdate for 15 students, were found. The District paid 15 schools to use Yeshiva Private Contractors on a per-student basis to transport 717 students for \$495,499. As additional students enroll transportation expenditures will increase.

Key OSC Recommendation

The District should obtain documentation to prove eligibility before providing transportation to nonpublic students and use the actual number of students instead of estimates to make payments.

District Response to OSC Findings and Recommendations

The District has worked intensively to create a comprehensive new database that includes all legally required registration data for new applicants as well as reapplications of nonpublic school students. This database was in full use during the 2019-20 school year. The District now obtains all documentation prior to transporting both public and nonpublic school students.

Many new students enroll after the BEDS date of the first Wednesday in October. The cost of transporting these students increased expenses beyond the amount budgeted based on BEDS Day enrollment. The District's new database, as described above, will assist to keep track of all new applications and reapplications for transportation by public and nonpublic students.

Transportation Consultant

The District engaged the services of Mr. Gus Kakavas, a transportation consultant, to find operational and procedural enhancements to allow for the most efficient transportation system.

After many meetings with public school and nonpublic school administrators, public and nonpublic transportation officials, and union officials, the District revised the bell times. The new tiered bell schedule allowed the transportation consultant to create a uniform route run availability time of forty-five minutes, allowing most bus runs to meet the target of 90% of seats being filled. The envisioned savings was nearly \$4 million. However, due to a large enrollment increase of over 2,500 students during September and October 2019, which the District had underestimated, the projected savings were not achieved. The additional students caused a \$6 million annualized budget increase. However, the closing of schools in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 reduced transportation annual expenditures by \$6 million. The lower annual expense for the 2019-20 school year will reduce the transportation aid that the District will receive during the 2020-21 school year as reimbursement for 2019-20 aidable transportation expenses.

Internal Risk Assessment Audit Report for the Year Ending June 30,2020

The accounting firm Tobin & Company completed the Risk Assessment for the period ending June 30, 2020. The audit found the following improvements in District practices:

- Registration forms for transportation are now available on the District Website.
- Purchase orders now detail bid and contract numbers.
- The District implemented Positive Pay for all accounts, to ensure District and bank records agree before a check is cashed.
- Controls were added to limit Automated Clearing House (ACH) debits to payroll and property taxes.
- Payroll portal access for employees was implemented using Employee Self-Service module.

The Fiscal Monitor has discussed with District staff the following issues that appeared as findings in both the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school year internal audits. The District needs to follow thru with correcting these deficiencies:

- SchoolDude, a daily operations software management system, is not used to monitor facilities rental and billing.
- Swipe card readers for doors not installed.
- No formal process of communication between the Office of Human Resources and Office of Information Technology.
- The District has not moved forward with implementing the WINCAP Financial and Human Resource Management System (“WINCAP online”).
- Fuel reports have not been reviewed for excess usage.
- New York State Health Insurance Information Plan (NYSHIP) invoices are being reconciled quarterly rather than monthly.
- The Benefits Department is not using WINCAP to track billing.

- Department heads and office managers have not been trained on proper purchase order procedures.

District Response to Internal Audit

- SchoolDude for rental and billing is scheduled to be implemented by August 1, 2021. The cost to implement this needs to be budgeted.
- Business Office staff will conduct monthly meetings with Extra Class Treasurers to ensure full understanding of rules and regulations regarding funds used for extracurricular activities such as field trips and afterschool programs.
- Card access door readers are currently being installed at entrance doors
- Food services cloud-based software to be installed during upcoming winter break
- Funding to implement Timecard software will be included in the 2021-22 school year budget
- Transportation swipe cards to be included in the 2021-2022 school year budget.

It should be noted that as June 2020 the installation of card access door readers and food services cloud-based software had not yet been completed.

Management

In the 2019-20 school year, East Ramapo issued \$32,281,850 of bonds, which was the final borrowing of the \$58 million in approved bonding. Unfortunately, only one bank submitted a bid. Due to the bond's high interest rate (4.93% versus about 3% for neighboring districts), the District needed to extend the term of the bond, from a 15-year term to a 30-year term, which will increase the amount of interest that the District will have to pay during the life of the bond by about \$15 million. The Fiscal Monitor had reviewed the original debt proposal presented to the community in 2016, which included the 15-year debt service term. Upon review of the Official statement, the Monitor noticed the change to the 30-year debt term. The Fiscal Monitor immediately brought this issue to the District administration. The Fiscal Monitor also contacted Mr. Martin Geiger, Bond Counsel, to ensure that the District had the legal authority to extend the years of debt service. It was determined that the bond language presented to the voters allowed for the change. After repeated requests from the Fiscal Monitor, the District informed the Board of the change in debt service at the July 2020 Board meeting.

Revenue Outlook

Two major revenue issues face the ERCSD. First is the 20% withholding of State aid for the 2020-21 school year, which equals approximately \$1.1 million. Second is the requirement that \$15.8 million in CARES Act funding that the ERCSD receives be used for the provision of equitable services to nonpublic schools. The combination of these actions could potentially have a severe negative impact on District programs. As of June 30, 2020, the District's financial records reflect as revenue the 20% deferred payment of approximately \$1.1 million. If New

York State does not issue the State Aid/BOCES payments, then East Ramapo will need to reduce expenditures to balance the budget.

Long-Term Planning

Long-Term Planning must be focused on securing voter approval of the annual budget. This is a major undertaking, as public school students are a minority of the District’s resident students. There were 28,671 resident students enrolled in nonpublic schools and 9,387 public schools students enrolled in the ERSCD as of BEDS day 2019. There are well documented tensions in the community regarding the levels of support for the public schools that voters have been willing to approve.

Attached to this report are the following five-year projection scenarios:³

Scenario 1: Voters approve an annual budget at the increase allowable based on changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). (This is the maximum amount that the tax levy can be increased without the approval of a supermajority of voters.) Assuming that the CPI increases annually by 1.6% for the next five years, then a 1.6% annual tax increase results in a projected Unassigned Fund Balance of \$2,036,679 at the end of the 2024-25 school year.

Scenario 2: Voters approve an annual budget at less than the projected allowable CPI increase of 1.6%. A 1% annual tax increase results in a projected Unassigned Fund Balance of **-\$11,448,976** at the end of the 2024-25 school year.

Scenario 3: Voters defeat all annual budgets for the next five years. A 0 % tax increase annually for the next five years results in a projected Unassigned Fund Balance of **-\$27,053,263** at the end of the 2024-25 school year.

| East Ramapo Five Year Projected Fund Balances | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Fiscal Year/ Model | 1.6% Annual Tax Levy Increase | 1% Annual Tax Levy Increase | 0% Tax Levy Increase |
| 2021 | \$5,999,269 | \$5,999,269 | \$5,999,269 |
| 2022 | \$4,326,593 | \$2,781,691 | \$1,236,788 |
| 2023 | \$3,543,766 | -\$979,707 | -\$5,629,863 |
| 2024 | \$2,859,067 | -5,636,208 | -\$14,967,572 |
| 2025 | \$2,036,679 | -\$11,448,976 | -\$27,053,263 |

The above are projections; however, they clearly indicate the need for voter approval of the annual budget. Instructional programs need sufficient funds to meet student needs. The

³ See the attachment “Five Year Fiscal Projections” for more detailed information on how these fund balances were calculated.

instructional impact of contingency budgets needs to be clearly articulated to the Board and the community.

The District should also engage a consultant to help make accurate long-term enrollment projections. Changes in public and nonpublic school enrollment have the potential to significantly impact the District's long-term financial outlook. Nonpublic school enrollment increases cause an increase in transportation costs. The Fiscal Monitor has informed the District that resources may need to be shifted from the budget items that support public school instruction to fund legally mandated transportation expenditures that result from increases in nonpublic school enrollment.

Indebtedness

As the new architect firm, CS Architects, was approved in July 2020, the Fiscal Monitor recommends that a Capital Construction committee be formed that includes: the architect, Board members, community members, Superintendent of Schools, Director of Facilities, Assistant Superintendent of Finance, NYSED Monitors, and fiscal consultants. The conditions of buildings and grounds must be continually analyzed. When appropriate, funds should be added to the annual budget, or in the alternative, a proposal for a capital projects bond issue should be presented for voter approval. A new proposed bond issue must coincide with expiring debt service so as not to overburden District taxpayers.

Facilities

NYSED has granted ERCSD an extension to modify the kitchen hoods for the past two years. An NYSED review determined that the kitchen hoods are not properly vented and need to be modified. The cost of renovation is approximately \$1 million. As the District did not budget for this capital expense, NYSED allowed the project to be funded as part of the 2021-2022 school year budget. There were two extensions granted, one from the previous year. As there are existing monies in the Capital Fund, the Fiscal Monitor concurred with District officials that the Board approve the transfer of monies into the Kitchen Hood project. This transfer occurred, which will allow the project to begin and the situation to be rectified in the 2021-22 school year.

2021-2022 Budget Development and Contingency Budget

The Monitors continue to face challenges in getting the District to provide timely responses to information requests. This is also an issue in terms of District transparency. Both of these have been problems since the beginning of the assignment of Monitors to the District.

There continue to be issues in terms of how the District encumbers funds and makes budget projections, which effect the ability of the District to prepare accurate budgets.

The 2020-21 school year budget initially contained a tax levy increase of 2%. Ultimately, the tax levy increase presented to the community was 1.3%, which was defeated by the voters. The 2020-21 school year contingent budget needed to be reduced by \$2 million. The two recommendations by the Superintendent that were adopted by the Board were as follows:

- Reduce the transportation code by \$1 million. A placeholder of \$1 million had been included in the budget to protect the District against unanticipated large enrollment increases during September and October 2020. During the previous school year, over 2,500 students enrolled after September 2019. This placeholder was removed.
- Increase Assigned Fund Balance by \$1 million to reduce the tax levy. This has the possibility of increasing financial instability in the future.

Upon receipt of the 2020-21 budget document in March 2020, the Fiscal Monitor submitted 18 budget questions/concerns.

There appears to be many unencumbered budget lines. Budget lines must be encumbered to ensure adequate controls are in place. The Fiscal Monitor had requested a Year End Fund Balance projection; this was never received. It is impossible to complete a year end fund balance projection without knowing the status of the projected budget expenditures.

Use of State Funds (\$3 million)

During the 2019-20 school year, the District continued to support two major academic programs with the \$3 million grant: full-day kindergarten and arts education.

In accordance with Chapter 89 of the Laws of 2016, the District in the 2016-17 school year fully implemented the goal of providing full-day kindergarten for all students. The District created 28 full-day kindergarten classes. The District also hired seven monolingual kindergarten teachers, four bilingual teachers, eight music teachers, and nine art teachers. The balance of the funds went to personnel benefits, classroom materials, and instructional technology.

The ERCSD continues to use the \$2 million⁴ from a Legislative Appropriation in accordance with its approved expenditure plan to support full-day kindergarten and music and art teachers. The District has expanded these programs beyond the State grant. The additional staff is paid through the District general fund. (See the attachment - \$3,000,000 Supplemental Funding Instructional Program for Kindergarten and the Arts - 2019-20 school year.)

Contracts Entered into by District

Two contracts, one for summer camps and one for disinfecting of the summer camps, warrant particular attention.

Governor Cuomo issued directives in June 2020 that all public school summer programs be suspended due to COVID-19. All sleep away camps were also suspended. However, daily summer camps were allowed to operate, since they fill a childcare purpose for parents. There was no prohibition against these camps using public school space if health guidelines were followed. As the District was operating on a contingency budget because voters failed to approve

⁴ For the 2020-21 school year, the appropriation has been reduced from \$3 million to \$2 million.

the proposed 2020-21 school year budget, any summer camps utilizing ERCSD facilities should have been operated at no cost to the District.

Several private camps submitted applications to use public school facilities. Contracts were developed for the camps. The contracts were modified during a Board meeting to include that the summer camps had to follow all Rockland County Department of Health guidelines, including those pertaining to the cleaning of buildings. At the time of the meeting, neither the Assistant Superintendent of Finance nor the Building/Grounds Director could definitively estimate the cost of cleaning. The Monitors strongly opposed the Board approval of use of the buildings without fully knowing the costs the District would incur. A letter of strong opposition was read aloud by the Fiscal Monitor to the Board at the June meeting. The summer camp contracts were modified during the June meeting by the District counsel to ensure compliance with all Rockland County Department of Health regulations. The majority of the Board members dismissed the Monitors' objections and approved the summer camp contracts.

A cleaning company was used to clean the buildings. However, this company was not properly vetted through a bidding process. The summer camps could have opted to use a cleaning company that BOCES had approved, but this was not done. The financing model was not sufficient to make clear that the payments from the organizations operating the summer camps fully covered the costs to the district and that there was not any subsidy.

The Monitors recommend that the necessary steps be taken to ensure next year that summer camp contracts are vetted by the Purchase Office and/or a BOCES and issued only to cleaning companies that are licensed and adhere to the regulations of the Rockland County Department of Health. This process should begin no later than Spring 2021.

External Audit - June 30, 2020 - Comments/ Highlights

At the beginning of the 2019-20 school year, the Fiscal Monitor had reviewed the External Audit for the period ending June 30, 2019. The Fiscal Monitor concludes the fiscal component of the 2019-20 school year report by reviewing the External Audit for the period ending June 30, 2020. The year-end report reflects total expenditures, total revenue, and year end fund balance for the 2019-20 school year. During weekly conversations with District leadership, the Monitors worked with the District to address the noted deficiencies as soon as possible, although not all had been cured by the end of the 2019-20 school year.

The results of the audit of the June 30, 2020 financial statements found no material weaknesses in the District's internal controls. There were several issues that were identified as needing improvement:

1. Capital Assets: The construction in progress during the 2019-20 school year was not being tracked to determine the amount that should be transferred to buildings and grounds budget codes as improvements and depreciated. There were input errors on the information reported to the appraisal company. A capital project schedule should be maintained during the year, which indicates actual expenditures, not purchase order

amounts. A secondary review of capital assets should be performed to ensure that the appraisal company is receiving accurate information. This is an issue that has been identified in prior years and has not been resolved.

2. Capital Projects Fund: There was a deficit of \$95,782 as of June 30, 2020. The deficit arose as a result of expenditures exceeding available funds on the project. After June 30, 2020, \$95,782 in expenses was transferred to the General Fund, which cured this issue.
3. Cash Management: There were \$95,786 of payroll checks that were greater than one-year-old. These payroll checks should be written off to a liability account, then tracked by year. The District policy is to write off outstanding payroll checks after six years. This issue pertaining to old payroll checks has been rectified.
4. Collateral: The District should be monitoring third party collateral monthly for each bank. The review should be appended to the monthly Treasurer's report.
5. Cash Receipts Log: The cash receipts log remittances should be reconciled to the District accounting records. An independent individual should compare the cash receipts log to the posted cash receipts. This is a work in progress, which needs verification during the upcoming school year.
6. Unassigned Fund Balance: The Unassigned Fund Balance was 5.53%. New York State Real Property Tax Law limits the amount to 4% of the subsequent year's General Fund Budget. Because of school closings due to COVID from March to June 2020, there were no transportation expenditures during this period. This led to a higher than anticipated fund balance as of June 30, 2020. As 2020-21 Transportation Aid will be reduced, the excess funds will be used to stabilize the tax levy.
7. Extra classroom Activity Fund: There was missing supporting documentation for selected receipts. Missing signatures and missing treasurer's receipts have been an on-going issue, as proper accounting procedures have not been followed. The Monitors have suggested that the District contract with the Internal Claims auditor to provide similar claims audit services for the Extra Classroom Account Fund. Internal controls need to be strengthened regarding the Extra Classroom Accounts.

Monitors' Concerns

1. There is need for greater outreach to parents of nonpublic school students and to the community to secure their support for the resources that are needed by the District to provide the necessary services to all resident students. Continued failure to secure voter approval for Distinct budgets will exacerbate the challenges faced by the District. In the past four years, the District has lost a cumulative total of \$5 million dollars of needed funds due to defeated budgets. There must be a concerted effort by all parties to lessen tension.
2. There is need for improved Superintendent and Board communications. The summer camp contracts were added to the June Board agenda minutes prior to the agenda being made public. This should not happen again. Camp contracts and cleaning services need to be properly vetted prior to Board approval. As the summer day camps' use of the public school buildings are an annual request, standards procedures for Board actions should be followed. Due to potential COVID restrictions, all parties must understand that safety must be a prime concern. There have been an excessive number of "walk in" items placed each month on the Board agendas during the school year.

3. The District website needs to be redesigned and updated regularly to support the goal of providing timely, transparent information to the public.
4. The cost to the District of legal fees must be examined. Legal fees reduce the funding available for instructional programs and, therefore, the District should strive to ensure that they are not excessive.
5. The District's inability to provide timely financial data to the NYSED Monitors remains a significant concern. Ensuring that the District website is updated regularly with current financial data would help to address this issue.
6. Beginning January of each year, then updated monthly, the Superintendent should submit a Projected Year End Fund Balance report to the Board and community. This will show greater transparency of District finances.

Monitors' Recommendations

1. The District should continue to provide more training to students and staff on the use of the Chromebooks and other digital tools when schools or classes need to switch to remote learning because of COVID-19 closures.
2. The District should use Star test data to develop an intervention plan to address gaps in learning caused by the disruption in instruction caused by COVID-19 and create additional supports for students to address their academic needs.
3. The District must respond in writing to all audits and findings. There are many audit findings that were not addressed during the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years. The focus of the audits is to strengthen and improve Business Office operations. Ignoring the audit comments only compounds the need for improvement. The audit comments must be cured to eliminate the deficiencies. As the audits can be found on the District Website, so should be the District's responses.
4. Roles and responsibilities within the Operations Department need to be clearly defined. The Assistant Superintendent for Finance does not oversee several functions that would appear to be his responsibility based on the organization chart. This needs to be addressed.
5. The District and Board should provide more transparency in all areas of school governance by posting materials presented at monthly Board meetings (e.g., PowerPoints) on the District website in ways that make them easily accessible to the public.
6. There were many changes during the school year to improve transportation accountability and realize cost savings. Verification of birthdates, home residence, and transportation requests annually by April 1 for nonpublic school students must be ongoing. As a substantial majority of students receiving transportation services attend nonpublic schools, it is of utmost importance to maintain proper oversight.
7. The District needs to correct the errors outlined in NYSED's Coordinated Monitoring Visit Report.
8. The District needs to implement the corrective actions resulting from the OSC audit of the provision of textbooks for nonpublic school students.
9. During the 2019-20 school year, there were a number of meetings at which items were added to the agenda on the day of a Board meeting. This practice is not consistent with the Board's commitment to greater transparency. It is recommended that the Monitors,

Board leadership, and the Superintendent meet each month to establish the meeting agenda prior to the Board agenda being sent to the Board and the public.

10. The weekly meetings with the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Finance were developed to enhance communications on all aspects of the District operations, including the instructional program. (See the attached East Ramapo Organizational Chart.) In the future, the Monitors would like to formalize the process by which the Superintendent invites additional staff to join meetings, when a topic on the agenda is relevant to them.
11. The District needs to hire social workers to provide support to the students. There was one added in the 2019-20 school year budget who resigned before the school year began. The 2020-21 school year budget did not contain any funds to hire social workers.

Next Steps for the State Monitors

1. Assist the Superintendent to address the above noted deficiencies. Once selected, the permanent Superintendent must be involved with and informed by the Financial and Operational Departments. The permanent Superintendent must have working knowledge of the financial areas that need to be addressed.
2. Ensure that the District fulfills its obligation to invite the Monitors to participate in all public and executive sessions of the Board. It has come to the Monitors' attention that Board meetings have been held without inviting the Monitors. In addition, the Monitors must receive all information that the Board receives; currently, the Monitors do not get all communications.
3. Continue to report academic, fiscal, and operational issues that arise to NYSED so that the Department can work with the District to address them.
4. Continue to highlight for State leaders the importance to East Ramapo of the \$3 million State appropriation. This money is vital to maintaining full-day kindergarten and arts and music programs in the District.
5. Continue weekly meetings with the Superintendent and other Cabinet members to gain deeper understanding of their Departments' needs and to provide technical support to District leadership.

Conclusion

All districts, including the ERSCD, faced extraordinary challenges during the 2019-20 school year. While the District was able to make some improvements in academics and operations during the school year, and the increase in the Spring Valley High School four year graduation rate was heartening, the District continues to struggle with long-standing issues. Graduation rates remain well below State averages, and the gains at Spring Valley High School were offset by declines at East Ramapo High School.

There continue to be opportunities for improvement in Board governance. In addition, lack of voter support for school budgets along with continuing weaknesses in certain fiscal and operational systems creates the potential for long-term fiscal instability unless aggressively addressed.

Beyond the ongoing challenges of the pandemic and the long-standing challenges identified in this and previous Monitors' reports, the District also must now move forward to implement a new system for selecting board members and appoint a new superintendent to lead the District forward.

The Monitors commit to continuing to work with the District to successfully implement the District's long-term strategic academic and fiscal improvement plans so that every ERSCD student may graduate from high school well prepared to become active, productive members of society.

Attachments

- East Ramapo Central School District Organizational Chart
- East Ramapo Central School District - 2020-21 Budget Revenue Estimates
- \$ 3,000,000 Supplemental Funding
- Five Year Fiscal Projections
 - Allowable CPI 1.6% tax increase for five years
 - Less than allowable CPI 1% tax increase for five years
 - 0 % tax increase for five years

Attachment I

East Ramapo Central School District Organizational Chart

East Ramapo Central School District - 2020-21 Budget Revenue Estimates

| Revenues | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 Estimates |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Real Property Taxes | 154,490,227 | \$157,286,500 |
| PILOT | 272,674 | 270,853 |
| State Aid | 79,553,915 | 82,600,423 |
| Day School Tuition | 1,376,476 | 1,420,000 |
| Health Services | 416,208 | 475,000 |
| Interest | 175,000 | 160,000 |
| Use of Facilities | 440,000 | 470,000 |
| Rentals | 115,000 | 283,213 |
| Insurance Reimbursement | 15,000 | 15,000 |
| Workers Comp Reimbursement | 82,500 | 151,019 |
| Refund Prior Year BOCES | 725,000 | 828,000 |
| Interfund Transfer from Debt Service | 53,222 | 53,218 |
| Medicaid | 875,000 | 925,000 |
| Tuition Aid | 1,700,000 | 1,920,000 |
| Other Miscellaneous | 895,000 | 895,000 |
| | | |
| Fund Balance | | |
| Total Revenues | \$241,185,222.00 | \$247,753,226 |
| \$3 Million Grant | 3,000,000.00 | 3,000,000.00 |
| TOTAL | 244,185,222.00 | 250,753,216.00 |

\$3,000,000.00 Supplemental Funding

Instructional Program for Kindergarten and the Arts
2019-2020

1) Full Day Kindergarten

| Item | Cost | Budget Narrative |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| 7 Monolingual Teachers | \$512,208 | To have all Full Day K classes |
| 4 Bilingual Teachers | \$293,652 | To have all Full Day K classes |
| Employee Benefits | \$279,429 | Includes health/pension contribution/Social Security |
| Classroom Materials | \$74,711 | Instructional Materials |
| Instructional Technology | \$40,000 | Hardware |
| TOTAL Full Day K Budget | \$1,200,000 | |

2) The Arts/Music Program to Support the Arts at Elementary Education

| Item | Cost |
|--|--------------------|
| 8 Music Teachers | \$542,823 |
| 9 Art Teachers | \$737,127 |
| Benefits | \$454,301 |
| Classroom supplies/instructional materials | \$65,749 |
| TOTAL The Arts Program Budget | \$1,800,000 |

Total Budget: \$3,000,000

Five Year Fiscal Projections

Fiscal Year Ended June 30

| | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Expenditures | | | | | |
| Professional Salaries controlled trend at 1% after 2022 | \$93,188,278 | \$93,413,161 | \$95,229,913 | \$96,182,213 | \$97,144,035 |
| Classified Salaries controlled trend at 1% | \$14,587,975 | \$14,733,855 | \$14,881,193 | \$15,030,005 | \$15,180,305 |
| BOCES at 1% | \$18,856,173 | \$19,044,735 | \$19,235,182 | \$19,427,534 | \$19,621,809 |
| Debt Service | \$5,343,448 | \$5,339,038 | \$5,304,238 | \$4,864,962 | \$4,593,237 |
| Special Ed and Other Tuition/1.5% per year | \$7,909,550 | \$8,028,193 | \$8,148,616 | \$8,270,845 | \$8,394,908 |
| Transportation Contracts/ at 5% per year | \$36,741,078 | \$38,578,132 | \$40,507,038 | \$42,532,390 | \$44,659,010 |
| Health/ at 3.5% per year | \$28,316,255 | \$29,307,324 | \$30,333,080 | \$31,394,738 | \$32,493,554 |
| All other Benefits at 2% per year | \$25,250,551 | \$25,755,562 | \$26,270,673 | \$26,796,087 | \$27,332,008 |
| Legal Expenses | \$2,560,000 | \$2,000,000 | \$2,000,000 | \$2,000,000 | \$2,000,000 |
| All other Expenses/1% per year | \$16,991,545 | \$17,161,460 | \$17,333,075 | \$17,506,406 | \$17,681,470 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | \$249,744,853 | \$253,361,460 | \$259,243,010 | \$264,005,180 | \$269,100,336 |
| REVENUES | | | | | |
| All State Aid/ at 2.5% per year | \$82,600,423 | \$84,665,434 | \$86,782,069 | \$88,951,621 | \$91,175,412 |
| Real property taxes/ 1.9% for two years year than at 1.6% per year | \$154,490,227 | \$157,580,032 | \$160,574,052 | \$163,143,237 | \$165,753,529 |
| Supplemental Funding | \$3,000,000 | \$3,000,000 | \$3,000,000 | \$3,000,000 | \$3,000,000 |
| Fund Balance Appropriation | \$1,787,900 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| All other revenue at 1.5% trend | \$7,866,303 | \$7,984,298 | \$8,104,062 | \$8,225,623 | \$8,349,007 |

Attachment IV

| | | | | | |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| TOTAL REVENUES | \$249,744,853 | \$253,229,763 | \$258,460,184 | \$263,320,481 | \$268,277,948 |
| | | | | | |
| Excess/(Deficiency) | \$0 | -\$131,697 | -\$782,826 | -\$684,669 | -\$822,389 |
| | | | | | |
| Fund Balance Beginning of Year | \$6,698,845 | \$5,158,290 | \$5,026,593 | \$4,243,766 | \$3,559,067 |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Net Transfers | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Assigned Fund Balance and Nonspendable | \$699,576 | \$700,000 | \$700,000 | \$700,000 | \$700,000 |
| | | | | | |
| Unassigned Fund Balance | \$5,999,269 | \$4,326,593 | \$3,543,766 | \$2,859,067 | \$2,036,679 |