A New Beginning:

A Report on the East Ramapo Central School District

January 24, 2017

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The Monitors collaborated with the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Business to review the requirements for the Academic Strategic Plan and Fiscal Improvement Plan.

In preparation for the much-needed capital projects, the Monitors conducted building walk-throughs of four buildings to review facility conditions.

In addition, the Monitors met with leadership of the Chestnut Ridge Middle School to review their planning to launch an International Baccalaureate (IB) Program. The school is currently a Priority School in the state's accountability system and has chosen the IB program as their school improvement strategy.

Further, the Monitors reviewed and approved the use of a $500,000 legislative grant secured by Assemblymember Ellen C. Jaffe. The funds will be used for upgrades to deteriorating structures as follows:

Spring Valley High School outdoor bleachers: $310,000;
Spring Valley High School gym bleacher upgrades: $50,000;
Chestnut Ridge Middle School bridge windows: $90,000; and
Related Design/Engineering/Legal/Other Costs: $50,000.

The Commissioner also visited East Ramapo Students at the Hudson Valley P-TECH High School. It should be noted that all of the East Ramapo students had passed the required five Regents exams before their junior year.

The Monitors also met with Jack Eisenbach, the owner of the architecture/engineering firm for East Ramapo's capital projects. The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Mr. Szuberla met with the editorial board of the Journal News to explain the purpose of the bond vote and answer questions about how it would be implemented if it passed, and attended a public meeting where information related to the proposed capital improvements was presented to the community.

The Monitors also oversaw voting at all polling places during the December 6, 2016 capital project bond vote, which was ultimately overwhelmingly passed by voters in the district.

What the Monitors Heard from the Community

Parents of Public School Students

Strong support for full-day kindergarten and restoration of the arts;
Strong desire for the District to provide all students with an opportunity to receive an excellent education;
Strong desire for the State Education Department to continue its enhanced monitoring role;
Importance of supplementary educational services to ensure students are prepared to take advantage of challenging and rigorous course work;
Desire to retain full-day kindergarten and the partial restoration of the elementary school arts programs funded with reauthorization of the $3 million in legislative grants;
Desire for details on how the School Improvement Grant for the Chestnut Ridge Middle School will be used;
Concern regarding the school guidance system and scheduling errors;
Availability of advanced coursework;
Concern about lead in the drinking water;
Concern about staffing vacancies;
Concern about strangers on school property while school is in session;
Concern regarding the adequacy and availability of programs for immigrant students and English Language Learners;
Strong desire for the superintendent to appoint a community advisory board;
Questions regarding special education referral rates;
Concern regarding the resources allocated toward Yiddish-speaking students;
Concerns regarding large class sizes;
Desire for the superintendent to publicly publish aggregate student performance data publicly;
Desire for a liaison for new students who do not speak English as a native language;
Concern about students not feeling welcome;
Concern regarding students whose families have difficulty proving residency in the District;
Teachers need diversity training;
Concern about segregation of classes;
Questions regarding the ability to use public funds for certain programs;
Concerns regarding the use of textbook aid;
Revitalization of the Education Foundation; and
Support for restoration of afterschool programs including programs for immigrant

“Opportunity Deferred” report. Both the fiscal improvement plan and the comprehensive expenditure plan for the additional $3 million in State funds were developed in compliance with Chapter 89 of the Laws of 2016 and in consultation with the State monitors.

Together, the three plans address the core areas that have been identified as needing improvement, either by state-appointed monitors or by the District and community itself through the root-cause analysis exercise that was conducted during the development of the strategic academic plan. The strategic academic plan provides measurable objectives and explicit strategies to address areas where improvements are needed in the District, including but not limited to:

Financial stability;
Academic opportunities and outcomes for all students;
Education of and accelerated rates of success for students with disabilities;
Education of and accelerated rates of success for English language learners; and
Compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

The District conducted a public hearing and received community input on the strategic academic and expenditure plan on September 7, 2016. All plans were also posted on the District’s website. After considering the public comments received, the board of education approved all three plans on September 13, 2016 and the plans were submitted to the Commissioner for review on September 20, 2016. The Commissioner approved the District’s plans on September 26, 2016. Full-day kindergarten for all students and arts programming started October 6, 2016.

Strategic Academic Plan

The Monitors assisted the district in development of 8

5. Enrichment periods for grades 4, 5 and 6 in the orchestra, instrumental music, band, and chorus

STAR-Renaissance formative assessments aligned with the Ne

It should be noted that New York State law allows school districts to maintain up to 4% of the ensuing year's budget, exclusive of the amount assigned for the subsequent year's budget, as unassigned fund balance. For this District, that amount would be approximately $8.97 million. On June 30, 2016, the District had $4,150,436, or 1.84%, of its subsequent year's budget reflected in unassigned fund balance;

For cash flow purposes, the District borrowed $15 million in anticipation of the receipt of taxes to be levied for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016. This obligation, with interest, was satisfied on time during the fiscal year;

The District retired $2,165,000 of serial bonds issued in previous years for various capital projects and tax certiorari obligations. The District also retired $878,012 of energy performance contract debt; and

On the District-wide financial statements, the assets and deferred outflows oions.d letired $2,165,0

A second proposition on the ballot sought approval to borrow $1,127,920 through the Dormitory Authority of the State of New York program to replace windows and doors at Kakiat and Fleetwood elementary schools.

The District has also retained an accounting firm as the internal auditor to look at specific areas of risk each year. The June 2016 Internal Audit report identified the following recent improvements to the procedures and internal controls:

New directors have been appointed to oversee funded programs and transportation;
Checks received by senior account clerk are logged by payer; and
The District is now performing formal employee exit interviews in human resources.

In addition, the following improvements have been made in recent months:

Fuel reports are reviewed by employee/vehicle for excess usage;
New bus contracts charge the District per pupil (as opposed to per bus). Student headcounts are monitored by the Transportation Department to ensure accuracy;
Benefits Department is using *WinCap* to track billing for health insurance reimbursements;
The payroll clerk is comparing totals from time cards to the number of hours input to the payroll edit hours; and
The Purchasing Department is consolidating and cleaning up vendors in the *WinCap* system. The process is expected to be completed by mid-January 2017.

The report also identified recommended additional improvements that have not yet been implemented:

Work orders and field use scheduling are not consistently being entered into the software application for proper tracking. The newly hired (October 2016) Director of Facilities has reviewed the District's shortcomings in using the software application and has developed a correction plan. It should be noted that Building and Grounds reports to the Assistant Superintendent of Finance as of August 2016. It used to report to Human Resources;
The District should research the cost-benefit of the *WinCap* online time card software (*WinCap Web*). District staff has researched using the software and it is a cost saver. The District will have a proposal by February 28, 2017;
The District should examine reports to compare all time spent on different areas of maintenance to determine if the District is over or under staffed in any area. The District expects to have plan for implementing the software by July 2017;

The district must increase local revenues faster than the tax cap allows if the district is going to restore programs that were cut over the last nine years.

In the coming 2017-18 school year, the District faces several challenges:

> Repayment of $724,616 in non-salary expenditures that should not have been charged to the school lunch fund for the period July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2015;
> Payment of more than $500,000 to the Ramapo Central School District for services provided to students who are residents of East Ramapo; and
> A just announced $435,000 tax certiorari settlement.

The Monitors are working with the District to model expected changes in student demographics, tax base and restoration of critical academic programs. The restoration of programs, coupled with more systematic classification systems and criteria for special

4. Supplementary Education

   The Monitors are working with the Department's Office of Student Support Services to identify resources for providing supplementary educational services. The Monitors are also looking at the possibility of restoring programs that were eliminated.

5. Benchmarking

   Dr. Sipple is comparing East Ramapo to other comparable Districts to identify opportunities for identifying best practices and savings.

6. Transportation

   Office of Student Transportation and Dr. Sipple are looking at the efficiency of the current system and ways to reduce costs.

7. Nonpublic Textbooks

   Monitors have requested a list of purchase orders and textbook inventory from the District. Mr. Szuberla will review the material with appropriate Department staff to ensure only allowable textbooks are purchased and the District

Attachments: Tables and Charts

Attachment A

Enhanced Course Offerings: 2016-17 School Year

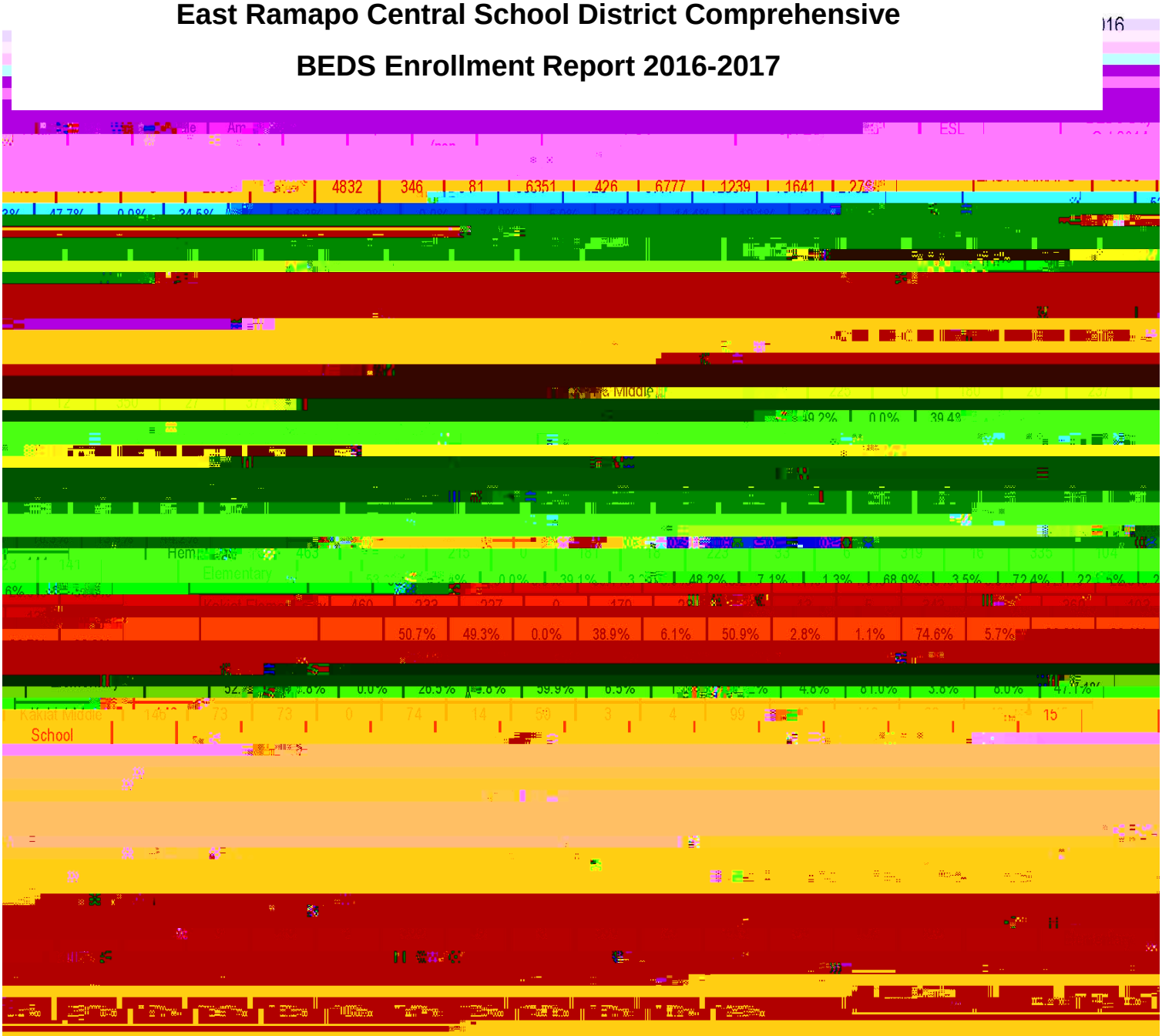
Course	Total Number of Sections	Ramapo High

Course	Total Number of Sections	Ramapo High School	Spring Valley High School
World Languages			
Honors	8	4	4
Advanced	9	4	5
Advanced Placement (AP)	2	2	0
Project Advance	0	0	0
College in High School	5	3	2
Total Number of Sections	127	66	61

For comparison in 2006 the District offered 16 different AP courses and was considered a national leader.

Attachment B

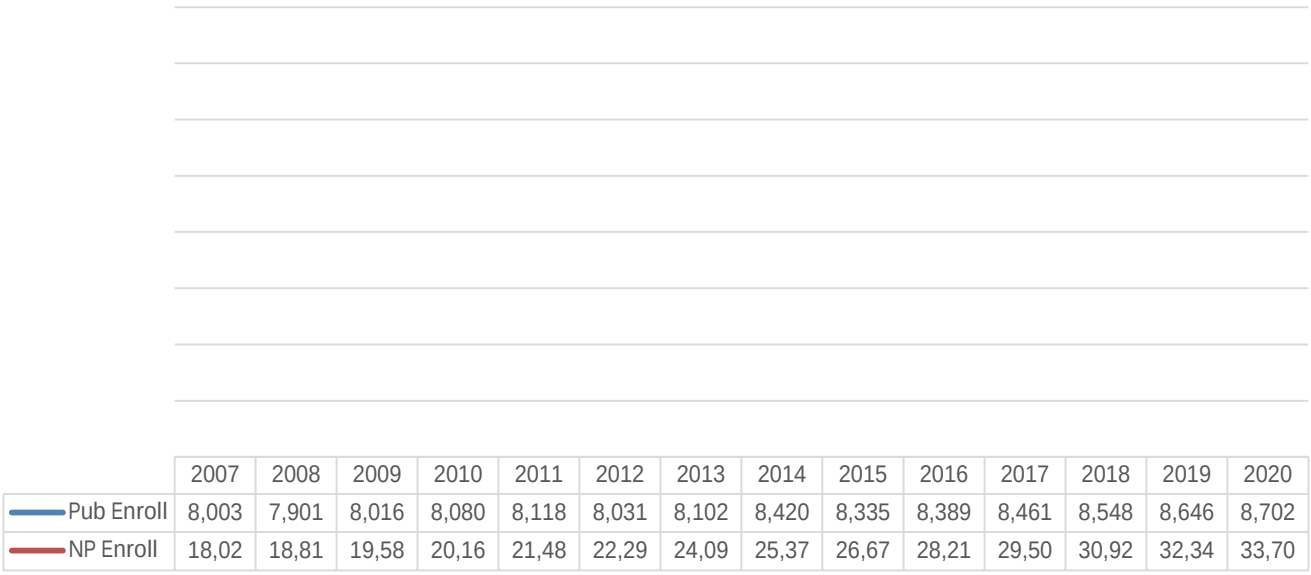
East Ramapo Central School District Comprehensive BEDS Enrollment Report 2016-2017



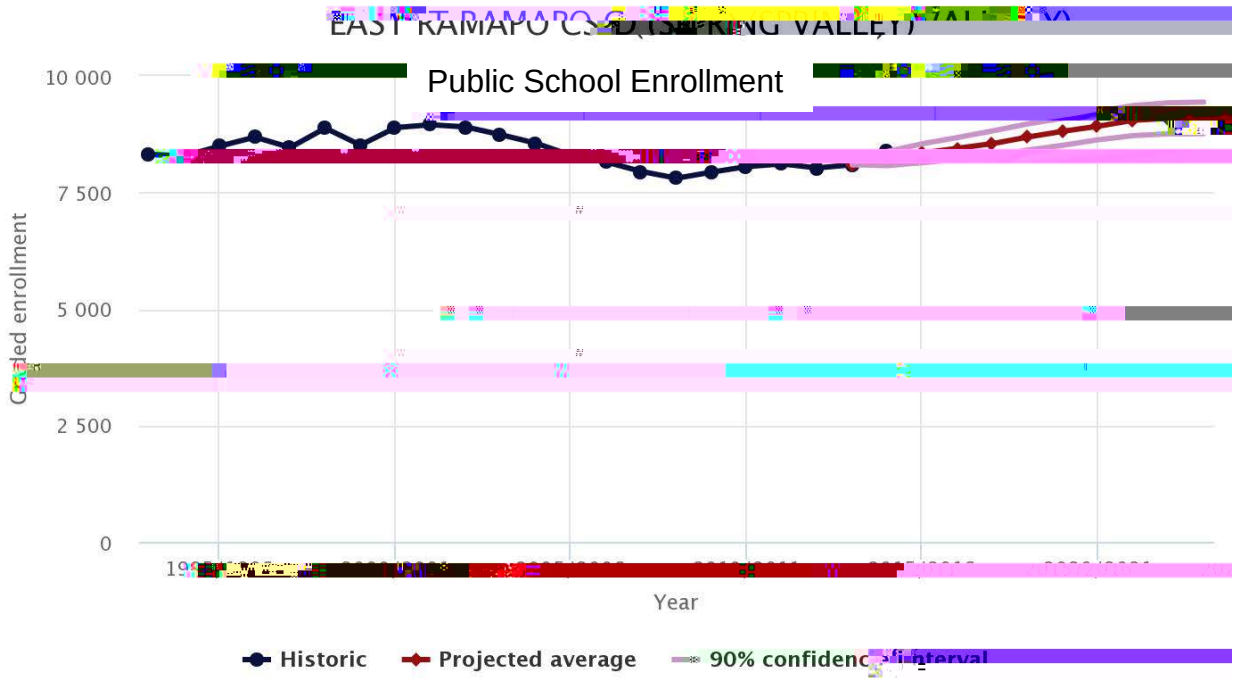
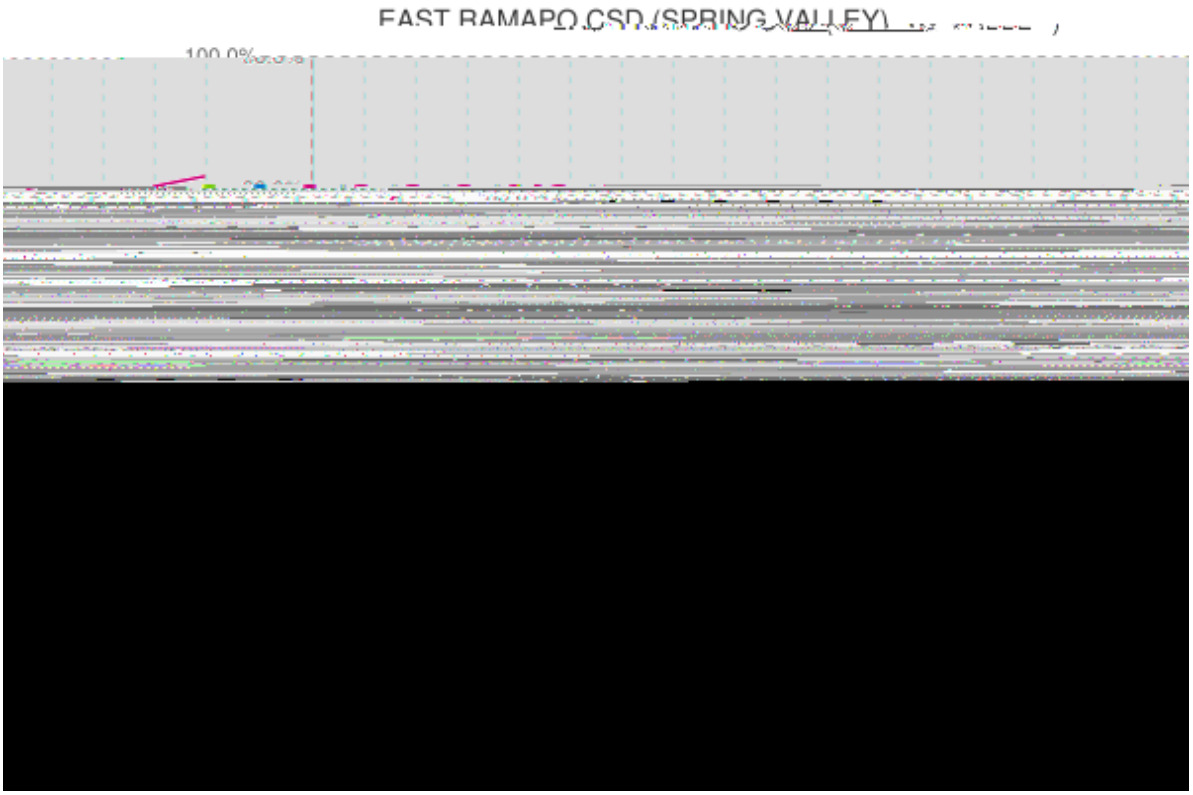
Attachment C

Trend Data

1. Public and Nonpublic Enrollment
2.



	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Pub Enroll	8,003	7,901	8,016	8,080	8,118	8,031	8,102	8,420	8,335	8,389	8,461	8,548	8,646	8,702
NP Enroll	18,02	18,81	19,58	20,16	21,48	22,29	24,09	25,37	26,67	28,21	29,50	30,92	32,34	33,70


Public School Enrollment
10 000
7 500
5 000
2 500
0
Graded enrollment
Year
Historic
Projected average
90% confidenc