

## **Important Reasons to Vote “Yes” on School Budgets**

by Alan Singer

If you have seen pictures of long lines of people on voting day and exuberant voters, they probably were from a third world or former Eastern bloc country. They certainly were not Long Islanders waiting to cast ballots in a school budget election. Many voters in our country, and in this region, take the democratic process for granted. They treat voting, especially in local elections, as an inconvenience. Yet there are important reasons to vote on May 17, and especially important reasons to vote “Yes” on school budgets in every district.

When supporters of public education stay home, there is a dampening affect on the entire school budget process for years to come. In response to the large number of defeated budgets last year, many Long Island districts are asking for a smaller funding increase. The result is that teachers, such as those in East Meadow and Uniondale, work without contracts and grow disaffected. Many of the best teachers look to move. Needed repairs and capital improvements are postponed. Extracurricular programs suffer and students miss much that is most exciting about school.

When supporters of public education stay home, it magnifies the influence of disaffected voters with grievances against local government and people who are unhappy with conditions in a changing society. Yes, taxes are already high, local and national economies are shaky, property prices are outrageous and communities on Long Island are growing more and more diverse. But underfinancing our schools will not lower the price of gasoline, recreate the Long Island of the 1950s or change any of these trends. However it does threaten the future of our children and our school systems, which has always been one of the most desirable features of our towns and villages.

When supporters of public education stay home, negative issues define the vote. Sensational newspaper headlines and news reports can mislead voters about the magnitude of the problems in our schools. Yes, a few school districts are plagued by corruption and mismanagement. In Roslyn, school officials are awaiting trial. In Hempstead, the superintendent of schools seems to be a rotating position. But there are over 120 school districts on Long Island and the overwhelming majority have honest and competent administration. Unfortunately, when voters express displeasure with schools by staying home on election day, the least able and most corrupt feel insulated from scrutiny.

Whatever problems our local schools may have, public opinion polls show general parental satisfaction and enrollment is increasing. However, our public schools and children need us to stand up for them. They are being attacked on many fronts. The Bush Administration’s No Child Left Behind policy and the test-crazy federal Department of Education are using “Alice-in-Wonderland” like criteria to redefine what a good school is and what it means to be truly educated. Schools that hide their faults and manipulate statistics are praised, outstanding programs that do an excellent job of preparing youngsters for higher education and the world of work are somehow found wanting. Are Oceanside, Farmingdale and Harborfields High Schools really failing schools? Reason say no, but the NCLB Act says they are.

I am not an uncritical observer of public education on Long Island. Many problems must be solved, but most would require more money, not less. The racial, ethnic and economic segregation in Nassau and Suffolk County towns is reflected in our schools and should be unacceptable. In the Brentwood, Central Islip, and Wyandanch districts of Suffolk County, fewer than 20% of the student population is White. In Cold Spring Harbor, Smithtown, and West Islip, their student populations are over 95% White. Tax rates and funding disparities between communities are unconscionable. A family living in Franklin Square pays approximately \$5,550 in school tax on a house valued at \$350,000. A family living in a similar house in

Hempstead would pay approximately 40% more. Meanwhile, according to New York State annual reports, the most affluent local districts spend as much as forty percent per pupil more on instructional expenses for K-12 students in regular education classes. This money allows them to have smaller classes and provide additional academic support for students who are having difficulty. The consolidation of school districts could free up money for instruction that is now spent on administration.

My areas of specialization are United States history and the teaching of social studies. I would like students to develop a more critical perspective about events in the United States and particularly on Long Island. Too often the curriculum ignores disturbing aspects of our past so students have a distorted idea about how the world got to be the way it is. For example, few people are aware that there was slavery on Long Island in the 18th and 19th centuries and that our ports were involved in the illegal Trans-Atlantic Slave trade up until the American Civil War. Some of the reasons for racial segregation on Long Island today are the presence of the Ku Klux Klan here in the 1920s and 1930s, clauses that required housing segregation at newly constructed communities such as Levittown in the 1940s, the refusal of banks to issue mortgages to minority home buyers in the 1960s, and continuing discriminatory practices by real estate brokers. Given this history, it is not surprising that in towns like Farmingville, the children of recent immigrants often feel unwelcome.

But whatever my criticism of our schools, I always remember that public education remains our best hope for an equitable future. Voting "Yes" on May 17 will probably not change the world or even Long Island very much. But it is an important statement of support for democracy, for our schools and our children. It is a vital beginning as we organize to defend public education as a preeminent American value.

School districts tread lightly

Schools call for spending less than this academic year, when voters rejected dozens of budgets

BY JOHN HILDEBRAND

STAFF WRITER

April 27, 2005

Long Island school districts are calling for \$585 million in spending hikes next year -- an increase of 7.28 percent -- less than this year's record 7.9 percent, but still enough to drive up taxes.

Double-digit increases in tax levies are forecast in more than a dozen districts, including Amityville, East Hampton, Hewlett-Woodmere, Patchogue-Medford, Port Washington and Uniondale.

Islandwide, school officials attributed the higher figures largely to costs of staff salaries, pensions, classroom construction and health insurance -- all of which are rising faster than inflation. Some officials also cite prospects for high enrollments next year, though new state figures showed a slight drop this year.

In many districts, school officials insist that such costs are largely beyond their control. Hauppauge administrators say, for example, that they will pay an extra \$500,000 next year, to be reimbursed later, for special-education services to support a state-financed residential facility recently opened in the community. The building serves infants and youngsters with multiple handicaps.

Additional funds will be used, they add, to comply with a state recommendation that reserves be set aside to meet future payments for teacher pensions.

Hauppauge proposes an \$80.4-million budget with a 10.4 percent spending increase over this year.

"We decided to take a very conservative approach," said Superintendent Peter Scordo, referring to the district's decision to fully fund its pension-payment reserves.

Still, the average rise in tax levies across the Island next year would be substantially lower than this year's -- 7.95 percent versus 9.5 percent. School officials hope this will help soothe taxpayers still smarting over this year's rate hikes.

Budget votes are scheduled May 17.

Joseph Dragone, deputy superintendent of Harborfields schools, gave much of the credit to Albany lawmakers, who approved a state school-aid package on schedule last month for the first time in 21 years. This allowed most districts to hold down local tax rates, in hopes of avoiding what Dragone terms "the debacle" of last year when voters rejected 46 Island budgets.

Harborfields proposes a \$57.2-million budget with an 8.94 percent spending increase, down from a 9.9 percent hike.

Harborfields was one of the budgets turned down last spring in the first round of voting on the Island, which had a much higher failure rate than upstate districts. Though the great majority of budgets passed on second votes and are now being used to cover operations this year, taxpayer resistance still runs high in many districts.

In Plainedge, for example, petitioners have placed on this year's ballot a proposition reducing the number of school board trustees from seven to five. Supporters say passage would exert pressure on future boards to curb spending, though opponents say the proposition simply reduces representation.

Many supporters still seethe over a 7.7-percent budget increase approved last spring, after a slightly larger proposal failed. Next year's \$59.9-million budget would raise spending 8.38 percent.

"We beat 'em on one vote, and then they come back and beat us on the next vote," said one petitioner, Nunzio Romano, a retired electrical engineer. "So what's the use, you know?"

Reports posted by 121 school districts in the bi-county region show that budgeted spending would rise 7.2 percent to \$8.6 billion. Tax levies -- the share of spending provided by local property taxes -- would go up 7.9 percent to \$6.2 billion.

The only three districts failing to post state-mandated reports are small elementary systems: Franklin Square in Nassau County, along with New Suffolk and Sagaponack in the East End.

Two other districts, Hempstead and Roosevelt, missed Monday's deadline and filed reports yesterday. State education officials said Hempstead's \$127.9-million budget was not considered official as of yesterday afternoon because the district's divided school board had not yet approved it.

Roosevelt's board did approve last Thursday a \$61.2-million budget with a 20.5 percent spending hike -- the biggest on the Island. But after reviewing the district's budget and tax figures yesterday, state education officials declared them inaccurate and ordered the district to make corrections.

Roosevelt is the only district under state control, and both local and state officials appeared embarrassed by the mix-up. They blamed the confusion on several factors, including a family emergency that took Roosevelt's chief financial officer out of town.

Staff writer Mary Ellen Pereira contributed to this story.

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Apr 27, 2005	Members Login	New Users Register	Benefits of Membership			
Compare school budget increases						
District	Budget04-05	Budget 05-06	Enroll 04-05	Enroll 05-06	Budget Incr	
Amagansett Union Free School District	\$ 6,105,364	\$ 6,447,568	122	108	5.60%	
Amityville Union Free School District	\$ 58,071,948	\$ 62,962,821	2811	2881	8.42%	
Babylon Union Free School District	\$ 33,817,809	\$ 36,639,130	2014	2016	8.34%	
Baldwin Union Free School District	\$ 88,356,820	\$ 93,914,818	5469	5441	6.29%	
Bay Shore Union Free School	\$ 100,966,447	\$ 107,975,064	5810	5860	6.94%	
Bayport-Blue Point Union Free	\$ 44,484,885	\$ 47,688,000	2537	2577	7.20%	
Bellmore Union Free School District	\$ 22,996,121	\$ 24,553,626	1262	1261	6.77%	
Bellmore-Merrick Central High School	\$ 94,493,646	\$ 101,366,032	5881	6073	7.27%	
Bethpage Union Free School District	\$ 55,356,055	\$ 59,125,594	3085	3102	6.81%	
Brentwood Union Free School District	\$ 224,615,316	\$ 246,837,500	17358	17365	9.89%	
Bridgehampton Union Free School	\$ 9,312,456	\$ 9,822,386	168	168	5.48%	
Brookhaven-Comsewogue	\$ 58,550,759	\$ 62,150,622	4016	4027	6.15%	
Carle Place Union Free School District	\$ 33,565,722	\$ 36,425,734	1650	1650	8.52%	
Center Moriches Union Free School	\$ 26,822,000	\$ 28,267,000	1398	1421	5.39%	
Central Islip Union Free School	\$ 122,170,179	\$ 131,826,423	6375	6525	7.90%	

Cold Spring Harbor Central School	\$ 40,043,308	\$ 43,681,070	2140	2162	9.08%
Commack Union Free School District	\$ 116,447,597	\$ 125,658,754	7566	7728	7.91%
Connetquot Central School District	\$ 124,310,537	\$ 133,336,839	7156	7237	7.26%
Copiague Union Free School District	\$ 73,212,426	\$ 78,272,612	4856	4967	6.91%
Deer Park Union Free School District	\$ 75,609,000	\$ 79,381,750	4526	4593	4.99%
East Hampton Union Free School	\$ 41,027,280	\$ 46,310,638	1984	2003	12.88%
East Islip Union Free School District	\$ 76,806,899	\$ 83,911,398	5399	5453	9.25%
East Meadow Union Free School	\$ 134,153,000	\$ 140,859,500	8080	7849	5.00%
East Moriches Union Free School	\$ 18,211,432	\$ 18,565,265	1052	1068	1.94%
East Quogue Union Free School	\$ 15,430,583	\$ 16,818,361	462	470	8.99%
East Rockaway Union Free School	\$ 24,411,425	\$ 26,533,786	1259	1267	8.69%
East Williston Union Free School	\$ 39,728,294	\$ 41,632,835	1833	1877	4.79%
Eastport-South Manor Central High	\$ 59,744,997	\$ 63,477,045	3615	3764	6.00%
Elmont Union Free School District	\$ 54,974,766	\$ 58,023,082	4418	4304	5.54%
Elwood Union Free School District	\$ 38,516,897	\$ 41,208,194	2606	2682	6.99%
Farmingdale Union Free School	\$ 114,625,481	\$ 122,028,214	6413	6598	6.46%
Fire Island Union Free School District	\$ 4,403,265	\$ 4,521,567	79	78	2.69%
Fishers Island Union Free School	\$ 2,547,232	\$ 2,807,119	58	62	10.20%
Floral Park-Bellerose Union Free	\$ 20,905,210	\$ 22,084,492	1682	1679	5.64%
Franklin Square Union Free School District	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Freeport Union Free School District	\$ 112,772,779	\$ 120,936,024	7182	7182	7.24%
Garden City Union Free School District	\$ 76,061,612	\$ 81,011,068	4277	4368	6.51%
Glen Cove City School District	\$ 54,301,365	\$ 57,997,299	3031	3025	6.81%
Great Neck Union Free School District	\$ 143,312,500	\$ 152,032,200	6031	6090	6.00%
Greenport Union Free School District	\$ 11,557,652	\$ 12,103,832	670	680	4.73%
Half Hollow Hills Central School	\$ 156,022,792	\$ 168,798,789	9974	10388	8.19%
Hampton Bays Union Free School	\$ 26,973,464	\$ 30,693,809	1829	1864	13.79%
Harborfields Central School District	\$ 52,580,008	\$ 57,278,305	3672	3734	8.94%
Hauppauge Union Free School District	\$ 72,813,397	\$ 80,423,385	4164	4223	10.45%
Hempstead Union Free School District	\$ 120,145,354	\$ 127,906,177	7040	7207	6.46%
Herricks Union Free School District	\$ 72,323,963	\$ 77,156,584	4077	4198	6.68%
Hewlett-Woodmere Union Free	\$ 74,699,658	\$ 81,846,729	3134	3133	9.57%
Hicksville Union Free School District	\$ 84,648,982	\$ 91,396,481	5234	5224	7.97%
Huntington Union Free School District	\$ 83,892,192	\$ 89,995,367	4100	4200	7.28%
Island Park Union Free School District	\$ 24,758,472	\$ 26,370,425	800	800	6.51%
Island Trees Union Free School District	\$ 44,030,410	\$ 46,490,359	2840	2845	5.59%
Islip Union Free School District	\$ 51,620,585	\$ 55,220,030	3636	3636	6.97%
Jericho Union Free School District	\$ 77,557,541	\$ 83,334,146	3235	3236	7.45%
Kings Park Central School District	\$ 56,600,930	\$ 60,948,192	4122	4217	7.68%
Lawrence Union Free School District	\$ 85,417,887	\$ 89,293,354	3545	3471	4.54%
Levittown Union Free School District	\$ 145,082,285	\$ 151,579,434	7993	7946	4.48%
Lindenhurst Union Free School District	\$ 105,709,345	\$ 114,420,006	7461	7555	8.24%
Locust Valley Central School District	\$ 54,195,726	\$ 57,679,648	2303	2319	6.43%
Long Beach City School District	\$ 91,958,692	\$ 97,681,755	4375	4380	6.22%
Longwood Central School District	\$ 163,988,442	\$ 172,153,023	10021	10072	4.98%
Lynbrook Union Free School District	\$ 54,431,191	\$ 57,446,076	3154	3143	5.54%
Malverne Union Free School District	\$ 35,235,908	\$ 37,034,113	1850	1650	5.10%
Manhasset Union Free School District	\$ 65,123,497	\$ 67,998,692	2813	2925	4.41%
Massapequa Union Free School District	\$ 128,884,991	\$ 137,889,439	8353	8550	6.99%
Mattituck-Cutchogue Union Free	\$ 26,758,845	\$ 28,876,707	1596	1610	7.91%
Merrick Union Free School District	\$ 29,397,279	\$ 32,479,397	1949	1945	10.48%

Middle Country Central School District	\$ 154,540,276	\$ 165,278,170	11301	11371	6.95%
Miller Place Union Free School District	\$ 45,783,264	\$ 49,588,475	3159	3301	8.31%
Mineola Union Free School District	\$ 64,970,912	\$ 68,855,901	2825	2826	5.98%
Montauk Union Free School District	\$ 11,306,861	\$ 11,931,969	365	357	5.53%
Mount Sinai Union Free School District	\$ 39,520,817	\$ 42,604,215	2437	2527	7.80%
New Hyde Park-Garden City Park Union	\$ 23,758,624	\$ 26,255,657	1700	1750	10.51%
New Suffolk Common School District	NA	NA	NA	NA	
North Babylon Union Free School	\$ 84,193,845	\$ 89,435,304	5220	5281	6.00%
North Bellmore Union Free School	\$ 34,022,490	\$ 36,316,277	2463	2358	6.74%
North Merrick Union Free School	\$ 19,678,028	\$ 21,242,431	1324	1328	7.95%
North Shore Central School District	\$ 64,778,131	\$ 68,659,946	2809	2831	5.99%
Northport-East Northport Union	\$ 110,396,177	\$ 120,937,138	6475	6578	9.55%
Oceanside Union Free School District	\$ 99,060,745	\$ 105,489,787	6290	6340	6.49%
Oyster Bay-East Norwich Central	\$ 38,824,095	\$ 41,340,224	1556	1573	6.48%
Oysterponds Union Free School	\$ 4,394,540	\$ 4,804,107	201	212	9.32%
Patchogue-Medford Union Free School	\$ 123,313,803	\$ 133,982,431	9027	9246	8.65%
Plainedge Union Free School District	\$ 55,313,898	\$ 59,949,303	3616	3645	8.38%
Plainview-Old Bethpage Central School	\$ 98,651,190	\$ 104,446,548	5012	5050	5.87%
Port Jefferson Union Free School District	\$ 29,833,866	\$ 31,391,811	1267	1269	5.22%
Port Washington Union Free School District	\$ 99,833,944	\$ 108,813,333	4899	4987	8.99%
Quogue Union Free School District	\$ 5,846,625	\$ 5,780,639	195	211	-1.13%
Remsenburg-Speonk Union Free	\$ 7,902,394	\$ 8,923,591	347	355	12.92%
Riverhead Central School District	\$ 83,095,006	\$ 87,646,337	4818	4958	5.48%
Rockville Centre Union Free School	\$ 71,318,553	\$ 76,261,053	3621	3640	6.93%
Rocky Point Union Free School	\$ 49,989,902	\$ 53,662,240	3617	3638	7.35%
Roosevelt Union Free School District	\$ 50,797,670	\$ 61,232,013	3227	3300	20.54%
Roslyn Union Free School District	\$ 78,028,454	\$ 80,474,982	3373	3457	3.00%
Sachem Central School District	\$ 242,798,915	\$ 264,903,577	15548	15655	9.10%
Sag Harbor Union Free School District	\$ 23,847,231	\$ 25,492,901	942	942	6.90%
Sagaponack Common School District	NA	NA	NA	NA	
Sayville Union Free School District	\$ 61,196,149	\$ 64,392,748	3550	3592	5.22%
Seaford Union Free School District	\$ 42,211,493	\$ 45,117,550	2739	2797	6.88%
Sewanhaka Central High School District	\$ 118,403,756	\$ 126,501,634	8630	8631	6.84%
Shelter Island Union Free School District	\$ 7,636,261	\$ 7,861,500	270	247	2.95%
Shoreham-Wading River Central School	\$ 42,374,292	\$ 45,090,485	2711	2739	6.41%
Smithtown Central School District	\$ 163,072,547	\$ 177,039,831	10508	10752	8.57%
South Country Central School District	\$ 78,790,581	\$ 83,459,045	4750	4796	5.93%
South Huntington Union Free	\$ 101,832,621	\$ 110,287,638	6138	6194	8.30%
Southampton Union Free School Distri	\$ 42,750,858	\$ 45,078,118	1769	1770	5.44%
Southold Union Free School District	\$ 18,537,664	\$ 19,956,594	1010	1038	7.65%
Springs Union Free School District	\$ 14,627,263	\$ 16,733,403	884	897	14.40%
Syosset Central School District	\$ 137,932,011	\$ 145,772,431	6677	6789	6.00%
Three Village Central School District	\$ 126,830,443	\$ 139,313,384	8004	8096	9.84%
Tuckahoe Common School District	\$ 10,830,323	\$ 11,715,297	512	520	8.17%
Uniondale Union Free School District	\$ 122,974,000	\$ 131,410,827	6376	6559	6.86%
Valley Stream 13 Union Free School	\$ 31,338,372	\$ 34,262,020	2178	2159	9.33%
Valley Stream 24 Union Free School	\$ 20,606,873	\$ 22,124,221	1099	1110	7.36%
Valley Stream 30 Union Free School	\$ 22,587,219	\$ 24,518,377	1620	1620	8.55%
Valley Stream Central High School	\$ 75,986,105	\$ 81,897,854	4556	4528	7.78%
Wainscott Common School District	\$ 1,968,896	\$ 2,009,597	11	11	2.07%
Wantagh Union Free School District	\$ 51,006,666	\$ 54,378,485	3682	3734	6.61%

West Babylon Union Free School	\$ 70,926,857	\$ 77,652,343	4898	4927	9.48%
West Hempstead Union Free School	\$ 42,856,186	\$ 45,467,052	2350	2410	6.09%
West Islip Union Free School District	\$ 81,242,439	\$ 87,216,515	5888	5964	7.00%
Westbury Union Free School District	\$ 71,184,386	\$ 77,993,745	4037	4321	9.57%
Westhampton Beach Union Free	\$ 33,458,944	\$ 36,109,275	1711	1764	7.92%
William Floyd Union Free School	\$ 154,611,917	\$ 164,816,910	10497	10497	6.60%
Wyandanch Union Free School	\$ 41,950,415	\$ 43,381,745	2071	2053	3.41%
Nassau Totals	\$3,681,968,984	\$3,947,926,828	215,726	217,983	7.22%
Suffolk Totals	\$4,361,209,709	\$4,680,917,840	260,635	263,650	7.33%
Long Island Totals		\$8,043,178,693	\$8,628,844,668	476,361	481,633
	7.28%				

### Confusion rules at Hempstead meeting

School board ousts president, OKs \$128.2M budget bid despite giving state officials lower figure  
 BY KARLA SCHUSTER  
 STAFF WRITER

April 27, 2005

The Hempstead School Board last night ousted its president and approved a \$128.2-million proposed budget for next year -- only hours after the district submitted a lower budget figure to state education officials.

In a confusing meeting that saw the board slip in and out of executive session, the panel adopted a 2005-06 budget proposal by a 3-0 vote, with one member absent and one member not voting. The board took the vote with no public discussion and before any members of the public realized the meeting had been reopened.

Immediately after the budget vote, the board hastily returned to executive session.

"It's thoroughly disgusting. It's unbelievable behavior in view of the educational problems in this district," said Sharleen Reshard, who co-chairs Hempstead Parents/Community United.

Earlier yesterday, the district submitted a \$127.9-million proposed budget to the state Education Department, a day late. State law required all school districts to report their 2005-06 proposed budget figure by 5 p.m. Monday. The school board never voted on the lower budget figure submitted to the state, and Superintendent Susan Johnson could not explain why that figure had been reported.

"I'm not familiar with that number," Johnson said, adding that she hoped to make copies of the \$128.2-million budget proposal available to the public "soon."

President Youssef Soufiane, who was removed from his leadership post last night for the second time in a week, called the board's actions against him vindictive. "They want me to shut up and I just won't do it."

The board leveled 11 charges against Soufiane, from refusing to let the district use his facsimile signature on payroll checks, to accusing Johnson of lying.

Last week, the board removed Soufiane as president but was later told by its attorney that the vote was illegal unless the board presented specific written charges against him.

The board is asking state Education Commissioner Richard Mills to convene a hearing on the charges, to which Soufiane has 15 days to respond.

Board member Terry Grant, who was installed as president, said Soufiane's ouster is "a giant step in the right direction" for a district with a long history of academic, financial and political problems.

Earlier this month the state Education Department released a scathing report about the district's operations.

After the board meeting, Johnson convened a community forum on the state report and the district's response. At one point the meeting was interrupted by an angry exchange among members of the audience.

Hempstead High School sophomore Angela Cater, 16, urged those attending to put their differences aside. "Instead of everybody arguing about the problems," she said, "can we please talk about the solutions?"

Staff writer Joseph Mallia contributed to this story.

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Correction Appended  
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Some schools , even well-regarded ones, got bad news on the state's report card of academic standards

BYLINE: BY JOHN HILDEBRAND AND STACEY ALTHERR. STAFF WRITERS

BODY:

While student achievement generally is rising on Long Island and statewide, a surprising number of well-regarded local schools appear on the state's latest list of those failing to meet some academic standards. High schools in the high-performing districts of Harborfields, Hewlett-Woodmere, Roslyn and Three Village are among those on the list released yesterday by the State Education Department. Those schools have not been cited previously, though most of the 66 local schools posted are repeaters from years past. "It's really unfair - it doesn't show the overall success of our school," said William F. Connors Jr., president of the Three Village school board. The district's Ward Melville High School has gained national recognition in the past for the number of prize-winning student science researchers it produces each year. Yesterday, the school was cited as falling short of standards on Regents exams in English and math. Local officials said a small number of Asian-American students had not taken the tests, thus lowering the participation rate for that group below the 95 percent required by federal rules.

The listings are required by the federal "No Child Left Behind" law, which says schools must boost test performance each year, not only for enrollments as a whole, but also for eight specific groups of students,

including whites, blacks, Hispanics, Asians and those enrolled in special education. One intent of the law - a hallmark of President George W. Bush's administration - is to ensure schools meet the needs of minority students overlooked in the past.

As a result, schools can score generally high and still fall short of government standards if one or more groups don't meet their academic targets. For example, scores on an eighth-grade math test at Southside Middle School in Rockville Centre tend to look low, but only because the school accelerates its students so they take that test in seventh grade.

Some school administrators do concede that such rules serve a purpose. Essentially, the system is a joint venture in which the federal government sets general guidelines for testing, while each state decides how rigorous its own tests will be.

"Look, I understand why the state is imposing this," said Raymond McCloat, the Harborfields superintendent. "They want to make sure that kids aren't manipulated into not taking the test." Harborfields High School missed its target in Regents math. Participation rates there also were below 95 percent - for students in general, not just one subgroup - and local officials said this stemmed from confusion over which teens were entitled to waivers from testing.

Under the federal law, all students will be expected to attain academic proficiency by 2014. The law allows states to define "proficiency;" an example in New York would be a 65 or higher on a state Regents exam. Many educators nationwide consider this an unrealistic goal that will result in more and more schools being labeled underachieving.

Several weeks ago, a bipartisan report from the National Conference of State Legislatures declared that "the federal government's role has become excessively intrusive in the day-to-day operations of public education."

Bush administration aides say they're working with states to improve the system, but are determined not to reverse academic gains made so far.

State officials sounded a similar theme in Albany yesterday, as they released scores and other data for 126 districts on the Island and more than 700 statewide. Scores are from state tests administered during the 2003-04 school year.

"This school report card shows more students are achieving higher standards and graduating, but New York still faces many challenges," said State Education Commissioner Richard Mills.

As examples, he cited new statewide figures showing that only 45.4 percent of black students and 42 percent of Hispanics graduated on schedule with the Class of 2004, compared to 68.8 percent of Asians and 81 percent of whites.

Still, achievement generally was up from past years both statewide and on the Island. One area of improvement was in percentages of teens earning Regents diplomas, signifying completion of coursework at a college-prep level.

In Nassau County, for example, the percentage of teens earning such diplomas rose to 75 percent last spring. That was up from 71 percent the previous year and 42 percent in 1989, a year used by the state as a baseline. In Suffolk, the corresponding percentage rose to 69 percent last spring, from 65 percent the previous year and 40 percent in 1989.

One school where numbers of Regent diplomas recipients are on the rise is Walter G. O'Connell Copiague High School. The principal there, Michael Hodgkiss, said he encourages students to aim for scores of 85 or better. "I don't like walking through the halls hearing people say, 'Hey, I got a 65,'" he said. "I tell them, that's kind of like going home and telling your family, 'Hey, I just got a minimum wage job.'"

'Accountability' list [CORRECTION: A chart in yesterday's edition that named schools falling short of state academic standards was incorrectly labeled the state's "Accountability" list. The list, usually released annually, includes schools if they fail to meet academic targets for two or more consecutive years. If the schools continue to fail to meet targets, they face possible sanctions, including loss of federal aid.

Yesterday's chart listed schools that had failed to meet academic targets for only the 2003-04 year. The schools remain in good academic standing with the state. pg. A08 NS 03/11/05]

The following is the state's "accountability" list of Long Island schools. Making this list means the schools fell below standards in one of seven state standardized tests: high school math or English Regents; fourth-grade math or English; eighth-grade math or English; eighth-grade science. Schools also may fall on the list if certain groups - for example, Hispanic students and those in special education - fail to meet their academic targets for the year. This is a requirement under the federal "No Child Left Behind" law.

Amityville  
Amityville High School  
Brentwood  
Brentwood High School; East Middle School; South Middle School; West Middle School  
Comsewogue  
Comsewogue High School  
Center Moriches  
Center Moriches High School  
Central Islip  
Central Islip Senior High School; Ralph Reed School  
Connetquot  
Ronkonkoma Junior High School  
Copiague  
Copiague Middle School;  
Walter G. O'Connell  
Copiague High School  
East Hampton  
East Hampton High School  
Eastport-South Manor  
Eastport-South Manor  
Central High School  
Farmingdale  
Farmingdale Sr. High School  
Freeport  
Freeport High School;  
John W. Dodd Middle School  
Glen Cove  
Glen Cove High School  
Harborfields  
Harborfields High School  
Hauppauge  
Hauppauge High School  
Hempstead  
Alverta B. Gary Schultz  
Middle School;  
Hempstead High School  
Hewlett-Woodmere  
George W. Hewlett  
High School  
Hicksville  
Hicksville High School  
Huntington  
Huntington High School  
Island Trees  
Island Trees High School

Kings Park  
R.J.O. Intermediate School  
Lawrence  
Lawrence Sr. High School  
Lindenhurst  
Lindenhurst Middle School;  
Lindenhurst Sr. High School  
Long Beach  
Long Beach Middle School;  
Long Beach Sr. High School  
Longwood  
Longwood High School  
Middle Country  
New Lane Memorial  
Elementary School;  
Newfield High School  
Mineola  
Mineola Middle School  
North Babylon  
North Babylon High School  
Oceanside  
Oceanside Senior High School  
Oyster Bay-East Norwich  
Oyster Bay High School  
Patchogue-Medford  
Patchogue-Medford High School; Saxton Middle School  
Riverhead  
Riverhead Middle School;  
Riverhead Sr. High School  
Rockville Centre  
South Side Middle School  
Rocky Point  
Joseph A. Edgar  
Intermediate School  
Roosevelt  
Roosevelt Middle-Senior High School  
Roslyn  
Roslyn High School  
Sachem  
Sachem High School North  
Sag Harbor  
Pierson High School  
Sewanhaka  
Elmont Memorial Junior-Senior High School;  
Floral Park Memorial High School; New Hyde Park Memorial Junior-Senior High School; Sewanhaka  
High School  
South Country  
Bellport Middle School;  
Bellport Senior High School;  
Frank P. Long Intermediate School  
South Huntington

Henry L. Stimson Middle School;  
Walt Whitman High School  
Southold  
Southold Junior-Senior  
High School  
Three Village  
Ward Melville Sr.  
High School  
Valley Stream  
Valley Stream Central  
High School  
Westbury  
Westbury Senior  
High School  
William Floyd  
William Floyd High School  
Wyndanch  
Milton L. Olive Middle School; Wyndanch Memorial High School

CORRECTION-DATE: March 11, 2005

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GRAPHIC: Newsday Photos / Jim Peppler - 1) Standardized test forms, left, are the norm for students in 2) 8th-grade Regents math class at South Side Middle School in Rockville Centre.

LOAD-DATE: March 11, 2005