

Working Together for Long Island Schools

Long Island public education is an \$8 billion enterprise shaping the future of near a half million students annually in 127 school districts in Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Facts culled in a close review* of the most recent comparable data on achievement, finances and demographics provide a basis for understanding the current reality in our schools:

- Our students consistently outperform peers statewide on English Language Arts, Science, Math and Social Studies assessments, and Regents Exams
- Long Island students are more likely to graduate with Regents Diplomas
- Nassau and Suffolk together ranked third highest of the 56 non-NYC counties in percentage of students going on to college
- Long Island has a low drop-out rate – at or below 2% since 1995

But ...these averages hide serious gaps in student experiences at Long Island's nine most-wealthy districts and nine least-wealthy districts

- The very low drop-out rate of 0.6% in the nine most-wealthy districts masks an extremely high rate of 6.7% in the nine least-wealthy districts which serve many more children – 47,000 more in 2003/04
- Our least wealthy districts have the state's highest percentage of students with Limited English Proficiency – 12% against 5% island wide
- Just 46.9% of students in the least-wealthy districts earn Regents Diplomas; far below the 67% state median and 83.4% in our wealthiest districts
- While over 93% of students from the wealthiest districts go on to college; only 77.2% from the least-wealthy districts say they make such plans

Higher costs of goods and services strain school budgets and local taxpayers:

- The purchasing power of \$1,000 in New York's lowest cost region, is equal to \$883 in the region at the median and only \$668 on Long Island ...
- Yet, when regionally adjusted our average per pupil expense of \$10.017 ends up 6.6% below the state median of \$10,727

Priorities for state funding reform:

Provide property tax relief to Long Islanders

Increase direct state aid for public education

Adjust aid based on demographic, achievement and wealth data, and regional cost differences

Guarantee minimum state share for every district

Introduce multi-year aid to enhance planning

Consolidate and simplify aid formulas

***Source: Long Island Association *Innovate* Long Island Subcommittee Report on K-12 Cost and Outcomes, Updated January 2007**

- Long Island's enrollment has grown nearly 2% annually for the past ten years while enrollment in the rest of the state has remained essentially unchanged...
- Yet, per pupil expenses in the counties at the median rose 3.2% on average annually during that time while ours have grown just 2% annually
- Contrary to popular belief, Long Island teacher salaries are near to statewide averages and are comparable to pay in a wide-range of non-education occupations

The state supplies an insufficient share of revenues to our schools:

- Long Islanders use 20% more of their gross household income to pay residential school property taxes than New Yorkers in general
- The state share of our expenses is low – on average the state supplies 24.4% of non-STAR revenues versus 41.5% in the rest of the state excluding NYC and LI ...
- ...and 39 Long Island school districts received less than 10% of their revenue from state aid; 55 got less than 30% of their revenue from the state
- Long Island schools educate 16.7% of NY's pupils but get 12.7% of state education aid
- Long Island accounts for 30% of annual taxable sales and 36% of state income tax paid by non-NYC residents but gets among the lowest share of state revenues for schools

State tax “relief” programs do not help lower property taxes:

- Long Islanders got \$641 million in STAR subsidies in 2003/04; an amount equal to 11% average reductions in local tax levies if instead paid as direct school aid

District wealth:

- Long Island has several very wealthy school districts but many wealthy districts are small while there are many “poor” large districts
- More than half of Suffolk County students attend school in districts of below average wealth; true for 66.8% of students in the Eastern Suffolk BOCES area
- About 10% of Nassau County students are in districts of below average wealth

Working Together For Reform

Long Island education and business leaders are working together in unprecedented collaboration sharing cost-saving strategies and coordinating advocacy efforts. Local school boards, school officials, parent and community organizations are working with the Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association, the Suffolk County School Superintendents Association, the Nassau County Council of School Superintendents and the Long Island Association to demand genuine, lasting reform of New York's public education funding system.

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