

School Limits

Probing the Boundaries of Public Education

Western New York has far fewer school districts today than it did a century ago, thanks to an intense 30-year wave of consolidation. For small districts, consolidation still offers the possibility of major efficiencies. A challenge for all districts, and the region, lies in knowing when to centralize, when to localize and when to cooperate. As the Digital Age changes education and the meaning of location, networked governance may be the wave of the future.

How have our school districts evolved?

SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN WESTERN NEW YORK

1920 **1,549**



A century ago, the delivery of public education in New York was an intensely local enterprise. In Western New York alone, over 1,500 individual school districts blanketed the region's eight counties. Averaging four square miles per district, their territories were linked to an essential physical requirement: a child's trek, by foot, bicycle or trolley, to the place of instruction.

The constraint of distance meant that most districts in the early 1900s were one-room rural schoolhouses—largely unaltered vestiges of the 1812 state law authorizing the establishment of “common schools” to provide public primary education. In many villages and hamlets, these common schools had long since merged, starting in the 1850s, into somewhat larger “union” districts to support the creation of high schools. Cities, with their fast-growing networks of elementary, middle and high schools, overseen by citywide districts, had the most centralized schools in the early 20th century.¹

1940 **1,060**



Today, the governance of public schools remains a profoundly local matter. Nonetheless, public education has evolved from one of our most localized and fragmented forms of governance into a far more centralized one, with many districts crossing municipal and even county boundaries. A number of forces prompted and enabled the pooling of students into larger districts during the 20th century, including greater expectations for the quality, comprehensiveness and duration of schooling in industrial societies; calls from state officials and academics for more efficient and professionalized management of schools; falling enrollment in rural communities as population shifted to urban areas;

and, not least, the emergence of school buses and good roads to transport students to centralized classrooms.

New York made several failed efforts to promote consolidation in the early 1900s, including an attempt in 1917 to centralize schools at the town-level. Only with the Cole-Rice Act of 1925, offering additional state aid for transportation and construction to centralizing districts, did the movement gain traction. Later that year, Friendship Central School, formed by the merger of nine districts, became the first central district in Western New York. As tax revenues ebbed in the 1930s, the pace of mergers quickened, leaving the region with 1,060 districts by 1940. More mergers during the 1940s, influenced partly by state recommendations, lowered the tally to 395 by 1952. By the end of the 1950s, a 30-year spree of school consolidation came to an end as the remaining common school districts were centralized or absorbed.² Concurrent with the organizational centralization came an expansion of the state's fiscal support to local schools, reflecting New York's proportionately high commitment to public education.

Relatively few mergers have happened in the past 50 years. Most have been mergers between existing central districts, including the last Western New York merger, in 2000, between Cattaraugus Central and Little Valley Central. The region currently has 98 school districts, averaging 66 square miles. Collectively, these districts enrolled almost 230,000 students in 426 school buildings in the 2007-08 school year, and employed over 27,000 people, including 19,228 teachers. Spending almost \$4.1 billion, public schooling has been, and continues to be, the most extensive and expensive service provided by local units of government.

1952 **395**



1962 **130**



SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN WESTERN NEW YORK TODAY

98



2007-08 School Year

\$ 4.1 Billion
Total Expenditures

27,166 Employees
19,228 Teachers

426
School Buildings

228,054
Enrolled Students

Why consolidate today?

While school district boundaries in Western New York have been largely static for the past few decades, the issue of consolidation is frequently debated. In recent years, several states have explored the issue, leading to proposals in Maine, Vermont and Pennsylvania to reduce the number of districts statewide by establishing minimum enrollment levels.

What can be gained by consolidation in 2009? Arguments in favor of centralization today, as in the past, tend to revolve around two perceived benefits: **cost savings through economies of scale** and **greater equity through expanded educational opportunities**.

Cost Efficiency

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

Mergers will save money by eliminating duplicative administrative and operational costs.

Small mergers save the most...

Pre- and post-merger spending patterns have rarely been analyzed to determine whether mergers actually save money. One of the few studies of this kind looked at recent mergers in New York and found that the smallest mergers—especially those between districts with under 1,000 students—offer the biggest savings potential.³

...but merging isn't free

Almost any merger will have costs, as well as savings. The costs can be significant if mergers require new facilities and more busing. Generous state aid can ease merger pangs in the short-term, but long-term maintenance and debt costs can add up. And if pay scales between districts are uneven, mergers often result in a 'leveling-up' to the higher scale, negating personnel costs—the biggest slice of any budget—as a source of savings.

Educational Equity

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

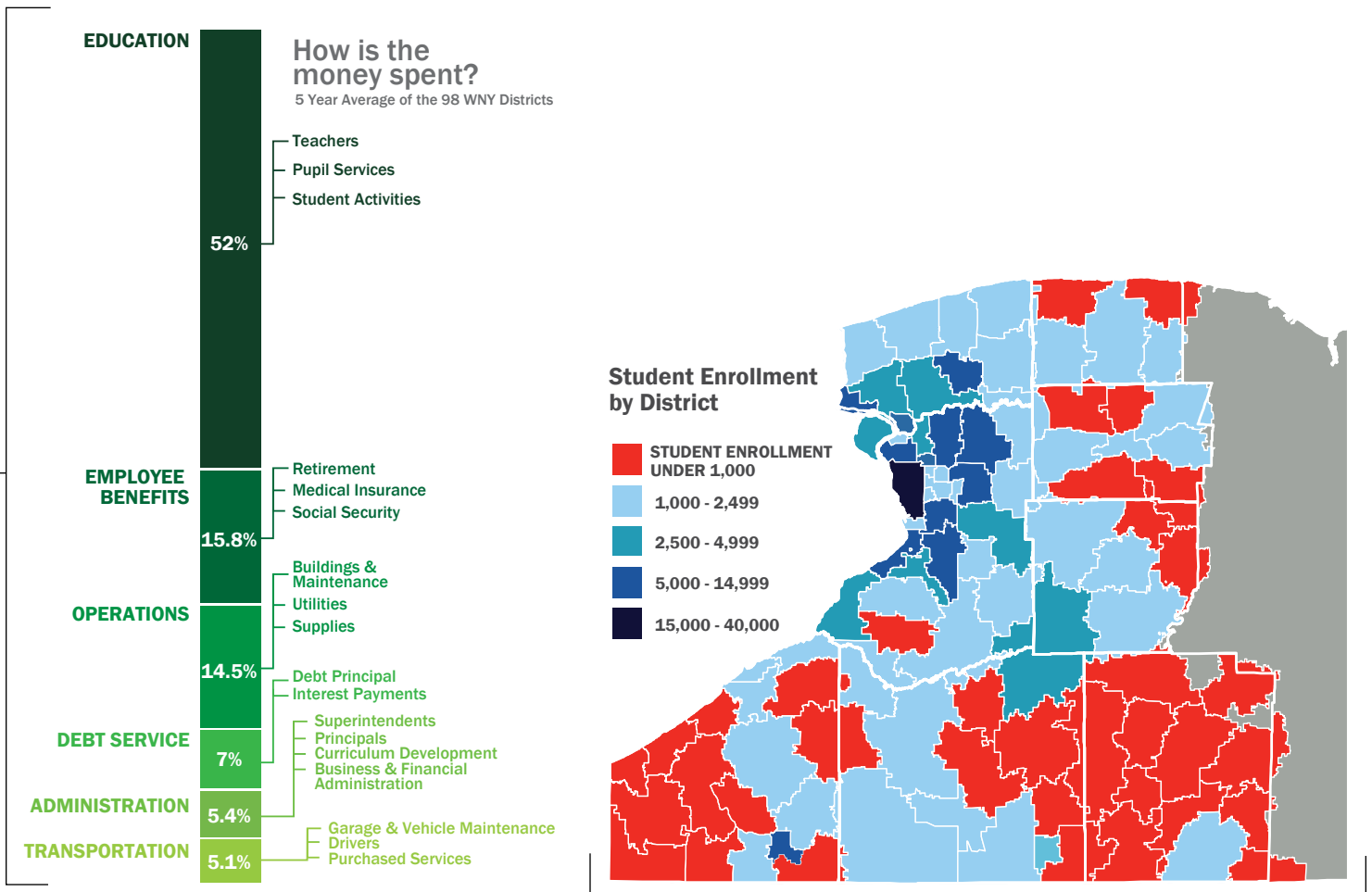
Consolidation can broaden opportunities for students in small or poor districts by reducing income-based disparities and expanding curricula.

Size matters for secondary programs...

When it issued merger recommendations 50 years ago, the State Education Department used an existing or proposed district's high school population as a key factor, setting 500 as the minimum enrollment needed to maintain a complete secondary program and optimize faculty specialization. The logic of "critical mass" still applies today, and research suggests that high schools with 600 to 900 students are better learning environments than are smaller or larger settings.⁴

...and equity isn't automatic

If a community or region has an uneven distribution of poverty—reflected by wide poverty gaps between schools—consolidation does not automatically alleviate the condition. Addressing the gap requires special action and can take a variety of forms. Fiscal redistribution can level resource inequities between schools, while student redistribution can lessen the concentration of poverty in poor neighborhood schools.



What if we kept consolidating?

During the merger rush between 1930 and 1960, and in later years, most mergers involved rural districts with small enrollments. The reason is simple: small districts—especially those under 1,000 students—gain the most from merging and suffer the most from not. In addition to struggling with shallow tax bases and small secondary enrollments, many small districts suffer diseconomies of scale that result in higher costs per pupil in several areas, including administration. While the administrative share of expenditures in WNY’s rural districts was only slightly above the regional average in the period from 2003-04 to 2007-08 (6.2% vs. 5.4%), the administrative cost per pupil in rural districts was 10% above average (\$986 vs. \$891).

In 2007-08, 36 school districts in Western New York had fewer than 1,000 students and would likely benefit the most from consolidation, in terms of both program and cost efficiencies. All but one district are located outside the metropolitan counties of Erie and Niagara. Although small districts represent over one-third of all school districts in the region, they account for only 10% of the region’s enrollment and 11% of total spending on public education.

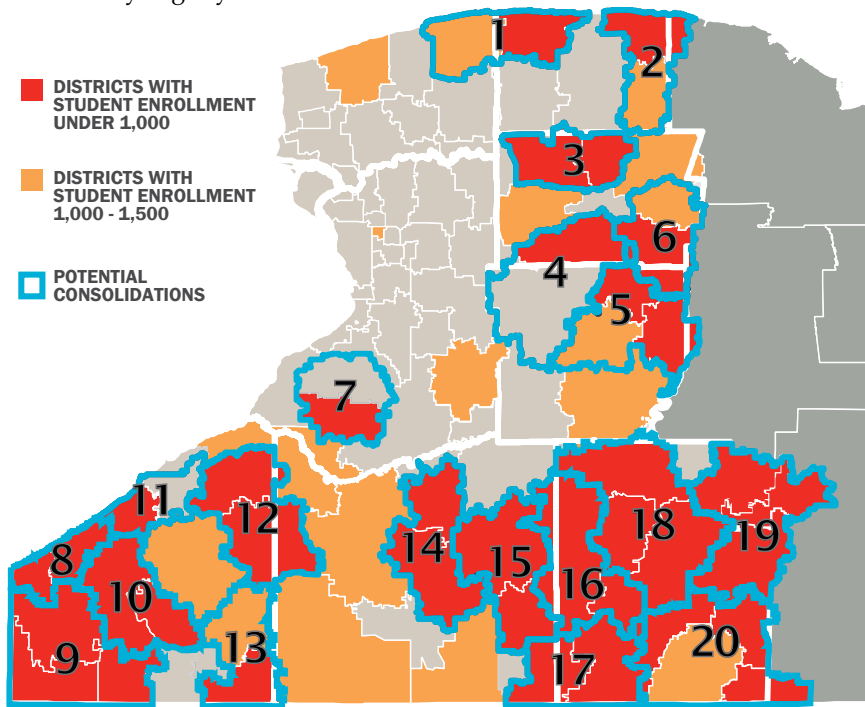
What if these 36 smallest districts merged with neighbors?

The map to the right outlines 20 hypothetical mergers that would accomplish the consolidation of all 36 districts into new units with enrollments over 1,000. In most cases, adjacent districts with individual enrollments under 1,000 are merged together. Where necessary, the mergers involve districts with over 1,000 students. Of historic interest, many of these mergers were suggested by the state in its 1958 reorganization master plan, but were never initiated by local school officials or voters. The merger of Fredonia and Brocton (#11) is the most likely to happen in the near term, a detailed feasibility study having been released in June 2009.

Overall, the number of districts in Western New York would fall from 98 to 73 under this hypothetical scenario, with the consolidation of 46 existing districts—including one located outside Western New York (Arkport Central) into 20 new districts. Twelve districts with between 1,000 and 1,500 students that are not merged in this scenario may be good candidates for consolidation in the future, especially if enrollments shrink.

How much money would this save?

Each merger is unique and requires critical decisions about facilities, labor force, transportation and a slew of other factors to determine the full cost implications. However, a recent study of pre- and post-merger costs at rural school districts in New York suggests that significant cost savings can be expected. The study estimates that merging two 900-student districts can result in annual per pupil costs that are 20% lower than costs in similar districts that do not merge. These savings rise to 31% when merging two 300-student districts, and fall to 14% when merging two 1,500-student districts.⁵ Using the 20% savings estimate, spending by the 20 hypothetical districts created in this analysis would be \$133 million less than the \$665 million spent by the pre-merged districts in 2007-08.



- 1** Lyndonville SD
Barker SD
- 2** Kendall SD
Holley SD
- 3** Oakfield-Alabama SD
Elba SD
- 4** Alexander SD
Attica SD
- 5** Warsaw SD
Perry SD
Wyoming SD
- 6** Pavilion SD
LeRoy SD
- 7** North Collins SD
Eden SD
- 8** Ripley SD
Westfield SD
- 9** Sherman SD
Clymer SD
Panama SD
- 10** Chautauqua Lake SD
Bemus Point SD

- 11** Brocton SD
Fredonia SD
- 12** Forestville SD
Pine Valley SD
- 13** Frewsburg SD
Falconer SD
- 14** West Valley SD
Ellicottville SD
- 15** Franklinville SD
Hinsdale SD
- 16** Cuba-Rushford SD
Friendship SD
- 17** Portville SD
Bolivar-Richburg SD
- 18** Fillmore SD
Belfast SD
Genesee Valley SD
- 19** Canaseraga SD
Arkport SD
Alfred-Almond SD
- 20** Scio SD
Andover SD
Whitesville SD
Wellsville SD

- NEXT UP?**
- Randolph SD
 - Cattaraugus-Little Valley SD
 - Letchworth SD
 - Holland SD
 - Silver Creek SD
 - Byron-Bergen SD
 - Pembroke SD
 - Cassadaga Valley SD
 - Allegany-Limestone SD
 - Gowanda SD
 - Cleveland Hill
 - Wilson SD

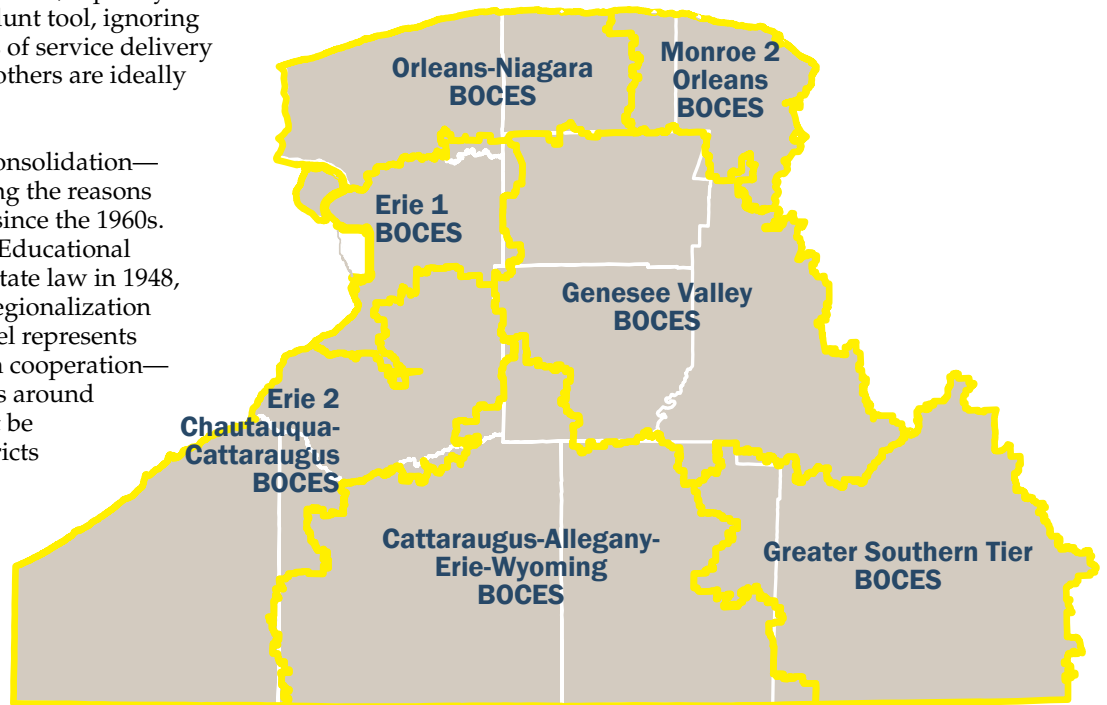
Can we **save** without consolidating?

For larger districts, consolidation as a cost-efficiency strategy has limitations. The larger the merger's partners, the higher the likelihood that merger-related expenses, including capital costs and associated debt, will erode potential operational savings and, in some cases, trigger size-related inefficiencies that afflict very large organizations. Consolidation, if poorly conceived, can also be an overly blunt tool, ignoring the reality that while some aspects of service delivery are well-suited for centralization, others are ideally localized.

The potential pitfalls of outright consolidation—functional and political—are among the reasons behind the slowdown in mergers since the 1960s. The rise of Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), authorized by state law in 1948, has also been critical. Instead of regionalization by consolidation, the BOCES model represents regionalization based primarily on cooperation—allowing districts to pool resources around programs and services that cannot be efficiently delivered by many districts on their own. BOCES in Western New York have, themselves, been reduced from 10 in the late 1960s to seven today.

While the public recognizes BOCES foremost as a provider of career and technical training for high school students, BOCES also provide other academic services plus a wide range of administrative services to districts, including labor relations, employee recruitment, library and media services, technology support, facilities planning and professional development. Currently, BOCES services are provided a la carte—member districts choose from a menu of services and pay for the ones they use. This makes each BOCES slightly different, offering a menu reflecting the service demands of its members.

Because administrative and managerial functions are among the more “centralizable” aspects of public education, utilizing BOCES as a platform for creating a central business and operations office is a model garnering considerable interest. Rather than offering individual administrative services to local districts, BOCES would become the administrative hub, overseeing human resources, transportation, accounting, insurance, food services, purchasing, information technology, and other feasible functions for all member districts. In addition to reducing staff redundancies, the administrative consolidation can also result in efficiencies through scale and expertise. A regional purchasing office, for example, can employ commodity specialists (utilities, textbooks, office supplies) and achieve volume discounts.



Centralized administration also provides many of the benefits of district consolidation without undermining local identity—traditionally a key barrier to public acceptance. A dozen districts can share the same fiscal officer while keeping their schools and football teams—acting very much like any countywide or big city school district with multiple schools. The Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES, based in Auburn, and its nine component school districts are currently looking into the feasibility of such a model. Locally, several regionalization efforts—including the Health Insurance Trust managed by Erie 1 BOCES, with 22 participating districts and \$27 million in cost avoidance over the past six years—point to the significant savings already being realized through centralized operations.

Absent from the existing BOCES model of regional cooperation are the state's largest urban school districts—the “Big Five”—including Buffalo. In 2008, the state's Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness recommended that these districts be allowed into BOCES membership, enabling them to benefit from and contribute to cooperative arrangements, as other districts have for 60 years.

Does regionalization promote equalization?

Greater levels of regionalization in public education, whether by consolidation of districts or centralization of specific functions, do not necessarily address the reality of uneven income distribution and its impact on schools. Every region has rich neighborhoods, poor neighborhoods, and neighborhoods somewhere in between. When its students are drawn from a particular territory, a school will both reflect and reinforce the socioeconomic characteristics of that territory as well as broader regional sorting by class and race.

In North Carolina, as in many parts of the South, school districts are organized at the county level, covering areas roughly equivalent to a typical BOCES in New York. The state's two largest districts—Wake County and Charlotte-Mecklenburg—represent two distinct ways of trying to reduce the effect of regional income disparities on schools.⁶ In both districts, the central cities—Raleigh and Charlotte—contain pockets of extreme urban poverty, a fact often masked by municipal boundaries that far exceed those of most cities in the Northeast and Midwest.

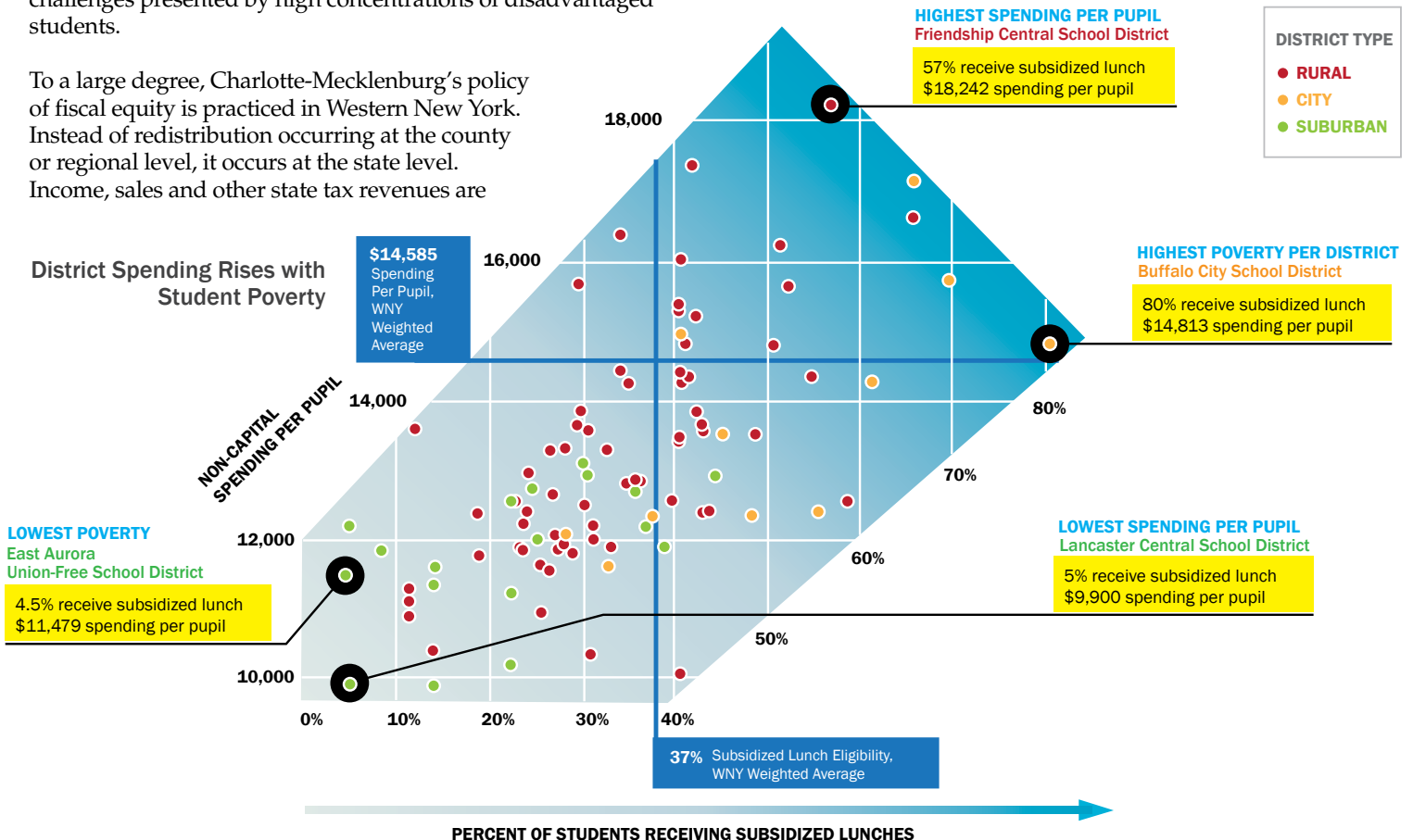
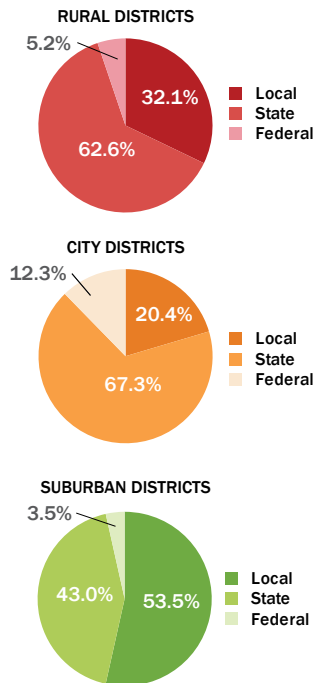
Since the end of court-ordered busing in 2001, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg district has largely returned to its previous practice of neighborhood schooling, resulting in wide poverty, racial and performance gaps between inner-city and suburban schools. In an attempt to soften these socioeconomic differences, the district has applied a policy of fiscal redistribution. High poverty schools in high-poverty neighborhoods receive more funding per pupil from the district than do other schools to mitigate the educational challenges presented by high concentrations of disadvantaged students.

To a large degree, Charlotte-Mecklenburg's policy of fiscal equity is practiced in Western New York. Instead of redistribution occurring at the county or regional level, it occurs at the state level. Income, sales and other state tax revenues are

distributed to school districts through a school aid formula that takes a district's poverty and local taxing capacity into account. As a result, poorer districts rely on state aid much more heavily than do wealthier districts, with state dollars comprising 67% of total revenue in Western New York's city school districts and 63% in its rural districts, but only 43% in suburban districts.

Due to state aid and, to a lesser degree, federal aid, Western New York districts with high levels of poverty do not spend less per pupil than do wealthier districts—they tend to spend significantly more, as revealed by the strong positive relationship between current expenditures per pupil (not including capital spending) and the proportion of students receiving free or reduced lunches. Clarence and Lancaster, both outer-ring suburbs of Buffalo, have the lowest per pupil spending in the region, at around \$10,000, and very low levels of student poverty. At the other end of the spending scale, seven districts spend more than \$16,000 per pupil, including Dunkirk City Schools and six rural districts with under 1,000 students.

DISTRICT REVENUE SOURCES



Subsidized Lunch Eligibility, by District

0% - 20% 20% - 40% 40% - 60% 60% and up of students

By most measurements, leveling the fiscal playing field between schools with high and low concentrations of poverty often fails to bridge gaps in academic performance. Even with a boost in fiscal resources, high poverty schools have many other challenges to overcome, including higher rates of student, teacher and administrative turnover, relatively low levels of parental engagement, and a higher potential for disciplinary problems and other disruptions.

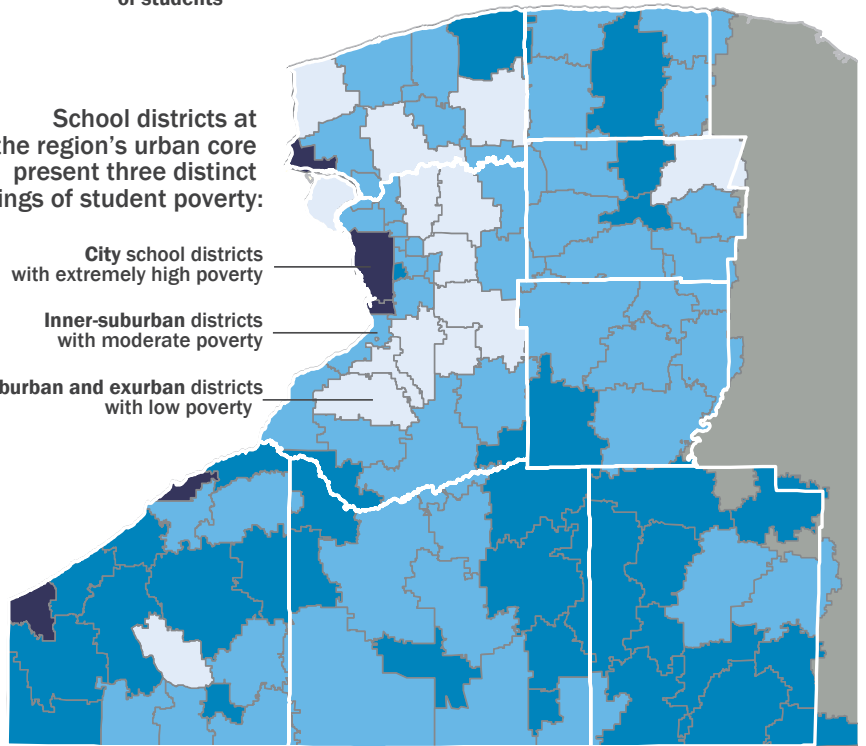
Wake County's effort to diminish regional disparities centers on the redistribution of students rather than money. Through the 1990s, Wake County, like Charlotte-Mecklenburg, used busing to implement a race-based integration plan. In 1999, the district switched from race-based student assignment to a more legally defensible income-based strategy that uses busing to achieve a 40% cap on subsidized lunch eligibility at each of its schools. While poverty rates are far from equalized, the plan greatly minimizes the incidence of poverty concentration within individual schools.

School districts at the region's urban core present three distinct rings of student poverty:

City school districts with extremely high poverty

Inner-suburban districts with moderate poverty

Outer-suburban and exurban districts with low poverty



Would this work in Western New York? Income-based redistribution of students, of course, depends heavily on the proximity of low and high poverty areas. In this region, where 35% of students attended schools with subsidized lunch eligibility rates of 40% or higher in 2007-08, achieving a Wake County-style poverty cap would be a far different proposition in urban areas than in rural areas.

In the urban counties of Erie and Niagara, a crescent-shaped zone of low poverty districts, stretching from Eden to Lewiston, surrounds the urban and inner-ring suburban districts. In these counties, one-third of all high poverty schools are within a mere 2.5 miles of a school with subsidized lunch eligibility rates below 25%. When the radius is expanded to five miles, proximity rises to 80%.

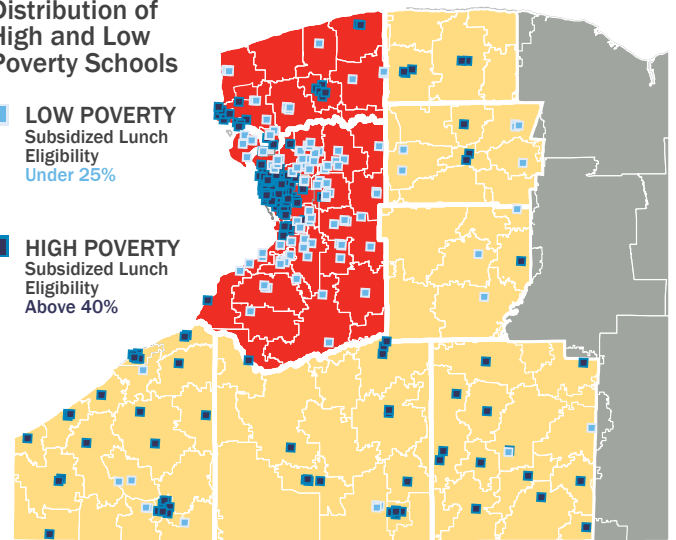
In the six rural counties, where greater distances separate schools and relatively few have low poverty rates, only 52% of high poverty schools are within 10 miles of low poverty schools. In rural areas, the presence of large centralized school districts already has the effect, to a large extent, of student redistribution. Poverty variations within these districts are smoothed over by the centralization of all students at the same school.

Which equalization strategy—redistributing money or moving students to deconcentrate poverty—produces the best educational outcomes, compared to doing nothing? We do not know. In North Carolina, both Wake County and Charlotte-Mecklenburg remain committed to their policy choices, but dissension is vocal in both districts, as are calls for greater localization.

Distribution of High and Low Poverty Schools

LOW POVERTY
Subsidized Lunch Eligibility
Under 25%

HIGH POVERTY
Subsidized Lunch Eligibility
Above 40%

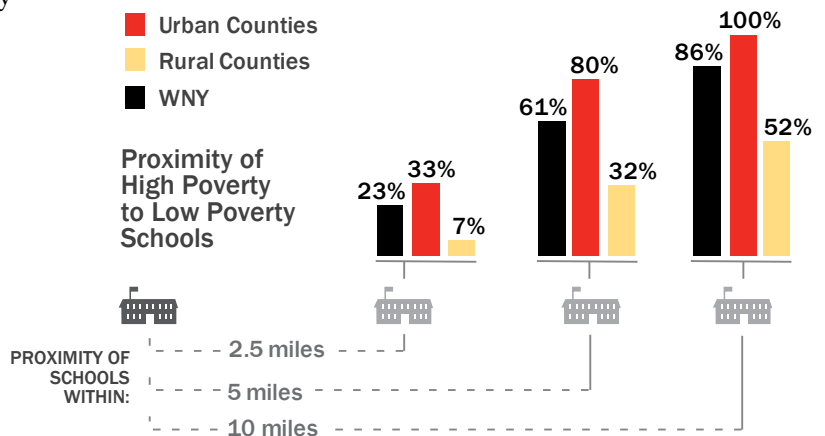


Urban Counties

Rural Counties

WNY

Proximity of High Poverty to Low Poverty Schools



How are students crossing boundaries today?

A physical redistribution of students on the scale necessary to overcome Western New York's geographic poverty disparities—especially in the immediate Buffalo area—raises questions of logistical practicality well before the inherent political tensions are broached. If a full-scale student assignment scheme is not a feasible approach for achieving educational equity, and if simple fiscal redistribution is insufficient, what can be done?

Once again, the BOCES model provides some ideas that, if greatly expanded upon, can lead to productive forms of regionalization. The creation of regional distance learning networks is one of the more widespread practices aimed at expanding educational opportunities by bridging the geographic and cultural distances between schools, providing greater access to the region's best teachers and drawing the critical mass of students necessary to make many courses feasible.

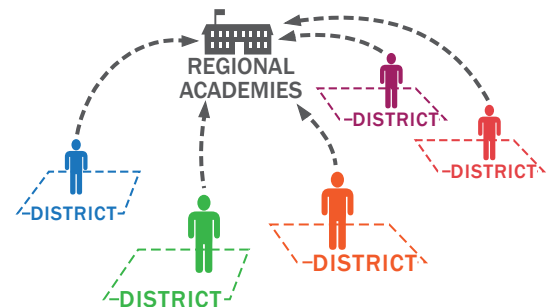
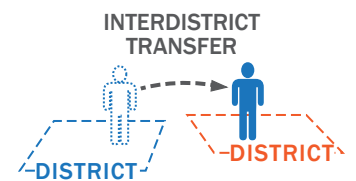
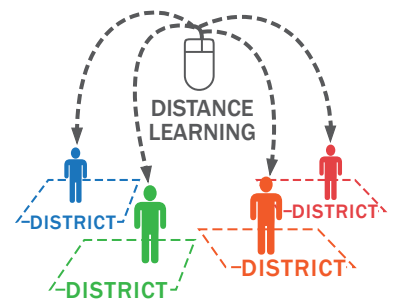
A second model is the inter-district transfer. Since 1965, minority students living in the City of Rochester have had the opportunity to transfer to participating suburban school districts. Today, seven suburban districts participate in the program overseen by Monroe #1 BOCES, and 400 to 500 students participate annually.⁷

A third concept, not yet practiced widely in New York, is the regional academy or magnet school. In Buffalo, magnet schools were established as part of an effort to desegregate schools, with the goal of creating unique

programs that would draw students from throughout the city. While desegregation is no longer their explicit purpose, magnet schools remain some of the city's best schools. Wake County and Charlotte-Mecklenburg have also maintained magnet school programs from the era of desegregation to provide specialized marquee programs to a regional student body.

In New York, the best recent example of a regional magnet school is the Tech Valley High School near Albany.⁸ A collaboration between two BOCES and dozens of school districts, the high school attracts students from a wide geographic area to a program emphasizing math and applied science. In addition to the academic value of expanding and complementing the curricula of participating districts, regional academies in Western New York could have significant economic value when paired with labor force development priorities, as well as the social value of bringing together students from multiple communities.

If combined, these three models could do much to overcome the large academic gaps that occur over relatively small distances around Buffalo, while reducing the influence that schools have on investment and disinvestment in particular locations.



Tech Valley High School

After years of downsizing at General Electric, IBM and other big firms, the Hudson Valley has been reemerging recently as a center of high-tech innovation, with Rensselaer Polytechnic and SUNY Albany's College of Nanoscale Science & Engineering as wellsprings of new technology and skilled labor.

Tech Valley High School was established in 2007 to boost this transformation by engaging young people in high-tech fields and broadening the region's workforce development efforts. Its curriculum is focused on math, science and technology, with an emphasis on project-based learning.

As a joint venture of the Capital Region BOCES and the Questar III BOCES, Tech Valley is open and free to students in each of the 46 school districts served by those BOCES. At the end of its second year in operation, the school had 77 students from 39 school districts in its freshman and sophomore classes, with a class level being added each year until the full four-year program is in place.

In addition to the partnerships between BOCES and school districts, the school is also building a long list of regional partnerships with businesses, universities, and government agencies to provide students with a full range of experiences and opportunities. Symbolic of these efforts, the school will be moving in August 2009 into new space at the University at Albany's East Campus.

Will **location** matter?

Whereas school buses enabled centralization, the technologies of the digital age enable almost boundless networking. By the middle of this century, the idea of physically transporting students to a big centralized school may seem as hopelessly outdated as the dusty one-room schoolhouse seems today. And the one-room schoolhouse could well become the emblem of modern education—highly localized units where children plug into global learning resources, taking virtual, multi-media modules in biology, history, language and civics taught by teachers from around the world.

If technology steers education in a direction where each student has a nearly limitless set of choices that no longer depend on the physical presence of teachers, how would this be governed? Would local school districts still be necessary? Will education continue to be funded, in part, by local property taxes? Will there be school boards? In any conversation about reform of school governance, anticipating the future is just as important as reacting to contemporary conditions.

Where does this **leave us?**

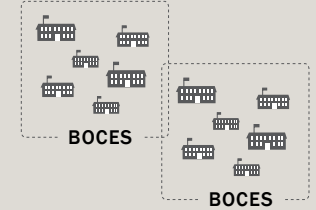
This investigation yields insights that both affirm and challenge conventional wisdom about public education arrangements in New York State. Key among these are:

- **Schools are a high priority for New York State—and New Yorkers.** This value is expressed by relatively high allocations of resources to schools—often by direct public approval. New York consistently ranks in the top three states for per pupil spending.
- **Administrative costs comprise a relatively small fraction of total school spending.** Contrary to popular belief, administrative costs represent only 5.4 percent, on average, of total district spending. As a result, potential administrative savings from mergers, which eliminate superintendents and related positions, are limited.
- **That said, mergers of small districts into larger units may pay off financially and educationally.** Because districts with small enrollments typically have higher administrative costs per pupil, sacrifice economies of scale and struggle to provide a full range of educational offerings, they stand to gain the most from mergers.
- **Regionalization policies can promote equity, but uncertainty abounds over their implementation and impact.** Targeting aid to disadvantaged districts or busing students to dilute poverty can clearly narrow fiscal and socio-economic disparities. There is little consensus, however, over the links between equalization strategies and educational outcomes, and income-based redistribution of students remains politically charged.
- **In New York State, BOCES and other innovative regional approaches to education demonstrate current and future benefits to educational cooperation and centralization.** BOCES offer a tested model for economic and educational payoffs through region-scale service delivery. Expanding this model holds the potential for significant advances in educational efficiency, quality and access.

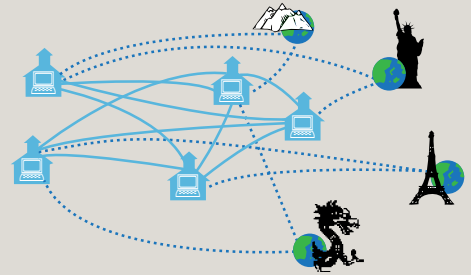
PAST:
Scattered, Decentralized
& Isolated Districts



PRESENT:
Centralized Districts in
Cooperative Arrangements



FUTURE?:
Integrated
Regional &
Global Learning
Networks



These themes and findings imply three **NEXT STEPS** for citizens, educational leaders and elected officials in Western New York and across the state.

1. In the phrase of educational leaders, **“UNLEASH BOCES.”** The promise of BOCES as a mechanism for educational excellence and cost savings is constrained by narrow thinking and outdated provisions in state law and policy. Prominent recent reports by state commissions and task forces (see “For More Information”) identify state reforms to empower BOCES to do more with fewer constraints. Reforms include enabling BOCES to offer services to New York’s “Big Five” school districts, as well as municipal governments, charter schools, colleges and libraries.
2. At the local level, **DELIBERATE AND PURSUE SCHOOL DISTRICT RESTRUCTURING OPTIONS.** One impediment to greater understanding and action in school district restructuring is the absence of a region-scale process for parents, educators, school board members, and other interested parties to investigate and pursue new approaches to educational service delivery. As called for by the state Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness, committees convened by each BOCES would “put everything on the table,” from consolidations, shared services and regional high schools to regional approaches to health insurance, compensation and transportation.
3. More broadly, communities and education leaders should **EMBRACE NETWORKED GOVERNANCE.** Significant shifts in technology and information are reshaping how we communicate and interact. By diminishing the importance of physical proximity to achieve “connection,” these shifts promote decentralized, integrated networks. Embracing networked governance in education, through distance learning, increased use of instructional and operational technology and expansion of State Regional Information Centers, introduces new possibilities for achieving efficiencies and equalizing opportunity.

School Districts in Western New York

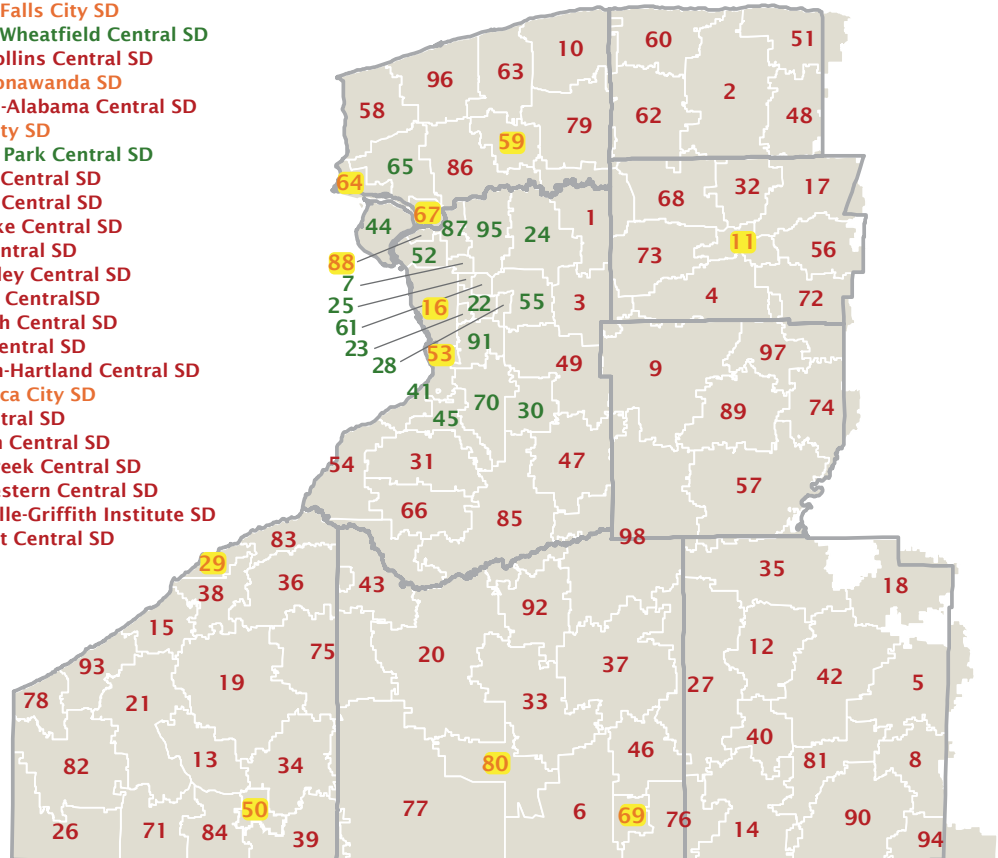
- 1 Akron Central SD
- 2 Albion Central SD
- 3 Alden Central SD
- 4 Alexander Central SD
- 5 Alfred-Almond Central SD
- 6 Allegany-Limestone Central SD
- 7 Amherst Central SD
- 8 Andover Central SD
- 9 Attica Central SD
- 10 Barker Central SD
- 11 Batavia City SD
- 12 Belfast Central SD
- 13 Bemus Point Central SD
- 14 Bolivar-Richburg Central SD
- 15 Brocton Central SD
- 16 Buffalo City SD
- 17 Byron-Bergen Central SD
- 18 Canaseraga SD
- 19 Cassadaga Valley Central SD
- 20 Cattaraugus-Little Valley Central SD
- 21 Chautauqua Lake Central SD
- 22 Cheektowaga Central SD
- 23 Cheektowaga-Sloan Union Free SD
- 24 Clarence Central SD
- 25 Cleveland Hill Union Free SD
- 26 Clymer Central SD
- 27 Cuba - Rushford Central SD
- 28 Depew Union Free SD
- 29 Dunkirk City SD
- 30 East Aurora Union Free SD
- 31 Eden Central SD
- 32 Elba Central SD
- 33 Ellicottville Central SD
- 34 Falconer Central SD
- 35 Fillmore Central SD
- 36 Forestville Central SD
- 37 Franklinville Central SD
- 38 Fredonia Central SD
- 39 Frewsburg Central SD
- 40 Friendship Central SD
- 41 Frontier Central SD
- 42 Genesee Valley Central SD
- 43 Gowanda Central SD
- 44 Grand Island Central SD
- 45 Hamburg Central SD
- 46 Hinsdale Central SD
- 47 Holland Central SD
- 48 Holley Central SD
- 49 Iroquois Central SD

- 50 Jamestown City SD
- 51 Kendall Central SD
- 52 Ken-Ton Union Free SD
- 53 Lackawanna City SD
- 54 Lake Shore Central SD
- 55 Lancaster Central SD
- 56 Le Roy Central SD
- 57 Letchworth Central SD
- 58 Lewiston-Porter Central SD
- 59 Lockport City SD
- 60 Lyndonville Central SD
- 61 Maryvale Union Free SD
- 62 Medina Central SD
- 63 Newfane Central SD
- 64 Niagara Falls City SD
- 65 Niagara-Wheatfield Central SD
- 66 North Collins Central SD
- 67 North Tonawanda SD
- 68 Oakfield-Alabama Central SD
- 69 Olean City SD
- 70 Orchard Park Central SD
- 71 Panama Central SD
- 72 Pavilion Central SD
- 73 Pembroke Central SD
- 74 Perry Central SD
- 75 Pine Valley Central SD
- 76 Portville Central SD
- 77 Randolph Central SD
- 78 Ripley Central SD
- 79 Royalton-Hartland Central SD
- 80 Salamanca City SD
- 81 Scio Central SD
- 82 Sherman Central SD
- 83 Silver Creek Central SD
- 84 Southwestern Central SD
- 85 Springville-Griffith Institute SD
- 86 Starpoint Central SD

- 87 Sweet Home Central SD
- 88 Tonawanda City SD
- 89 Warsaw Central SD
- 90 Wellsville Central SD
- 91 West Seneca Central SD
- 92 West Valley Central SD
- 93 Westfield Academy and Central SD
- 94 Whitesville Central SD
- 95 Williamsville Central SD
- 96 Wilson Central SD
- 97 Wyoming Central SD
- 98 Yorkshire-Pioneer Central SD

DISTRICT TYPE

- RURAL
- CITY
- SUBURBAN



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Data Sources and Notes

Pages 2 and 3

Historical district totals are based on UBRI analysis of the 1958 *Master Plan for School District Reorganization in New York State* from the State Department of Education (1920 and 1940 figures), and the 1952 and 1962 U.S. Census of Governments. The present total does not include the Hopevale and Randolph Academy districts, which are special districts without traditional district boundaries.

Contemporary school district statistics (enrollment, employees, buildings, total expenditures) are based on UBRI aggregation of data from the New York State Department of Education's School Report Cards for 2007-08. The expenditure breakdown represents five-year averages (2003-04 to 2007-08) for the 98 WNY districts, based on district-level fiscal data from the State Office of the Comptroller. Functional spending categories are those of the Comptroller's Office, with minor adjustments by UBRI, including the transfer of principals and curriculum development from "education" to "administration."

Pages 6 and 7

Spending per pupil represents total non-capital expenditures in 2007-08 divided by pre-K through 12 enrollment. Expenditure data are drawn from the State Comptroller's Office, with enrollment data from the State Department of Education's School Report Cards.

Subsidized lunch percentages are the proportion of students in each district receiving a free or reduced-cost lunch in 2007-08, as reported by the State Department of Education.

Data on the derivation of revenue from federal, state and local sources come from the National Center for Education Statistics' Common Core of Data for 2005-06.

The assignment of districts into city, suburban and rural categories was done by UBRI for the purposes of this report and does not represent an official state or federal classification. The school districts based in the region's eleven cities are classified "city," and districts in the most developed communities surrounding Buffalo and Niagara Falls are classified "suburban." All other districts are "rural."

Note: Fiscal data for districts include tuition payments to charter schools as educational expenditures incurred by the student's home district. Otherwise, charter schools are absent from the data and analysis.

Footnotes

¹ Folts, James D. 1996. "History of the University of the State of New York and the State Education Department, 1784-1996." Available at <http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/edocs/education/sedhist.htm#note>.

² Ibid and New York State Department of Education, *Master Plan for School District Reorganization in New York State*, Revised (1958).

³ Duncombe, William and John Yinger. 2007. "Does School District Consolidation Cut Costs?" *Education Finance and Policy*. Vol. 2, No. 4: 341-375.

⁴ Lee, Valerie E. and Julia B. Smith. 1997. "High School Size: Which Works Best and for Whom?" *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. Vol. 19, No. 3: 205-227.

⁵ Duncombe and Yinger, 2007.

⁶ Hui, T. Keung. 2009. "Whose Schools Work Better?" *The News & Observer*. Raleigh: February 8.

⁷ Monroe #1 BOCES, Urban Suburban Transfer Web site, at <http://www.monroe.edu/AAE.cfm?subpage=74>.

⁸ Tech Valley High School Web site, at <http://www.techvalleyhigh.org/>.

For More Information

National Center for Educational Statistics, online at <http://nces.ed.gov/>

New York State Education Department, Information and Reporting Services, online at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/irts/reportcard/>

New York State Office of the Comptroller, Local Government a School Financial Data, online at <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/datanstat/>

Recent reports by New York State commissions and task forces offer relevant analysis and recommendations on educational reform. These are:

"21st Century Local Government," Report of the New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness, April 2008, online at <http://www.nyslocalgov.org/>

"New York State Commission on Property Tax Relief, Final Report to Governor David A. Paterson," December 2008, online at <http://www.cptr.state.ny.us/>

"Boards of Cooperative Educational Services Intergovernmental Reform and Efficiency Program of 2009," online at <http://www.boces.org>

"Report of the Task Force on Maximizing School District Resources," October 2008, New York State School Boards Association, online at <http://www.nyssba.org>

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