

E·R·A·S·E



Education

Equity

Initiative

RACISM



A Decade of Change: Growing School Segregation on Long Island

Overview

Long Island is heading in the wrong direction. At the same time our region is becoming more diverse, our schools are becoming more segregated.

Black students continue to attend school districts that are extremely segregated, with little exposure to white students, while Latino and Asian students are increasingly attending more racially segregated school districts.

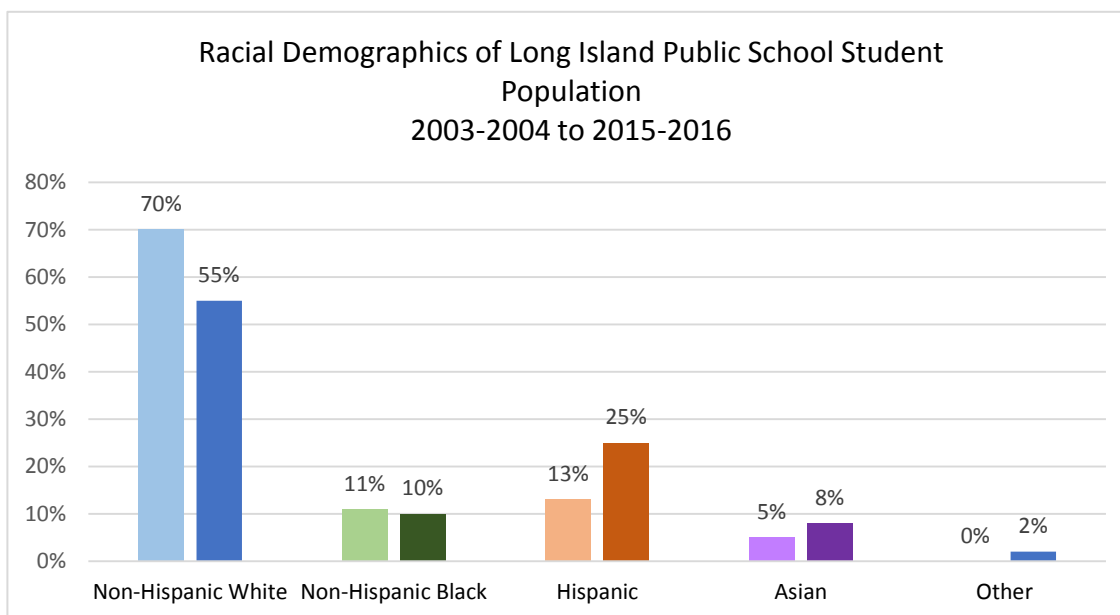
This is in complete contrast to the direction that we need to be heading as a multi-cultural region and nation.

Education equity can only be achieved through addressing housing discrimination and by creating education policies at the state and local level that promote racially integrated schools and classrooms.

Growing Diversity

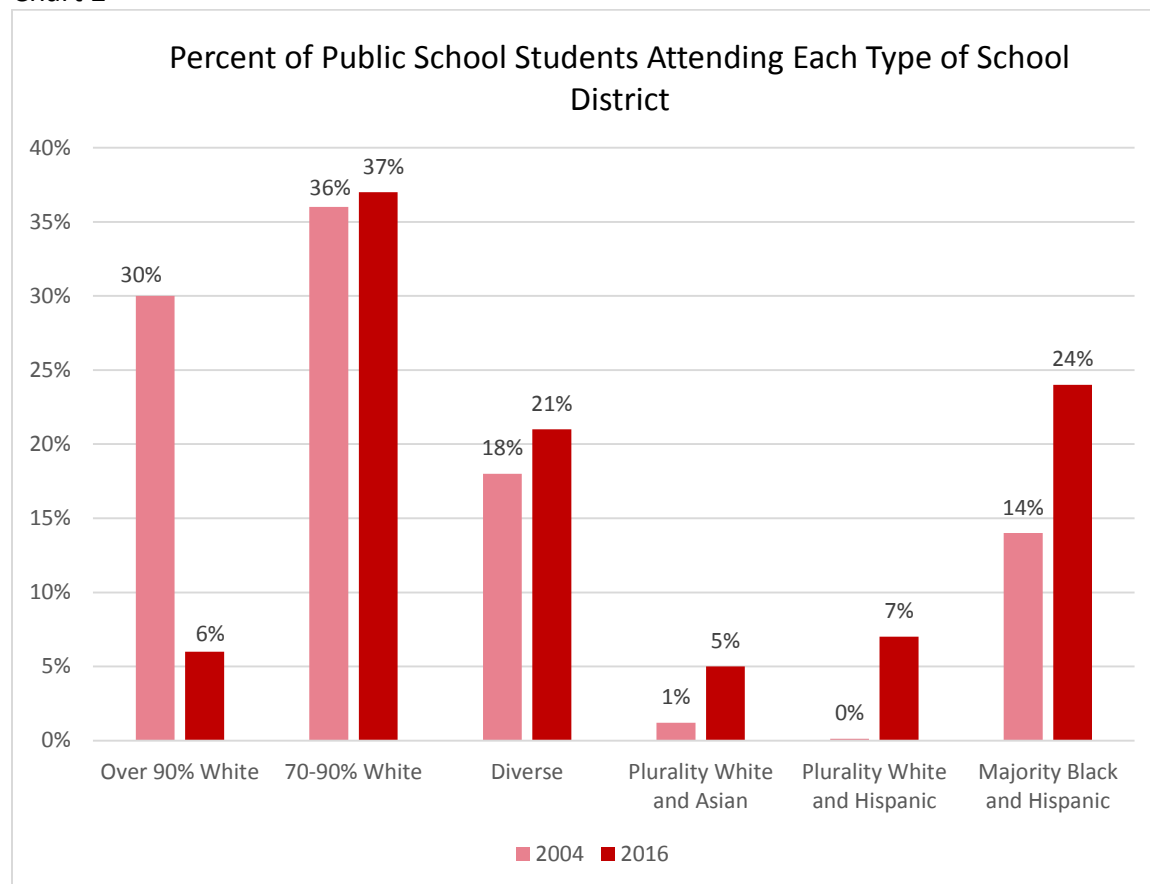
In a span of 12 years, the share of white students enrolled in public schools on Long Island declined by 15 percentage points, from 70% in 2003-2004 to 55% in 2015-2016. The overall share of black student enrollment remained stable. The Asian share increased by 3% points. And the Latino share increased by 12% points (Chart 1).

Chart 1



After analyzing the racial composition of all Long Island school districts in the school years 2003-2004 and 2015-2016, we were able to group the districts into six categories: (1) School districts in which the student population was over 90% white (2) School districts in which the student population was between 70-90% white (3) School districts that had a diverse mix of students; these districts tended to mirror the racial composition of the regional student population (4) School districts in which the plurality of the student demographic was white and Asian (5) School districts in which the plurality of the student demographic was white and Hispanic and (6) School districts in which the majority of the student population was black and Hispanic. For a more in-depth description of the categories see the “How we categorized school districts” section below.

Chart 2



Based on these categories, we find that in the span of 12 years the number of students attending more racially diverse schools has risen. 21% of Long Island students attended racially diverse school districts in 2015-2016, which is 3 percentage points higher than in 2003-2004 (Chart 2). We also see a sharp decline in the number of students attending school districts that are over 90% white. In 2003-2004, 30% of all Long Island students attended these racially homogeneous school districts; by 2015-2016 only 6% of students attended such districts (Chart 2).

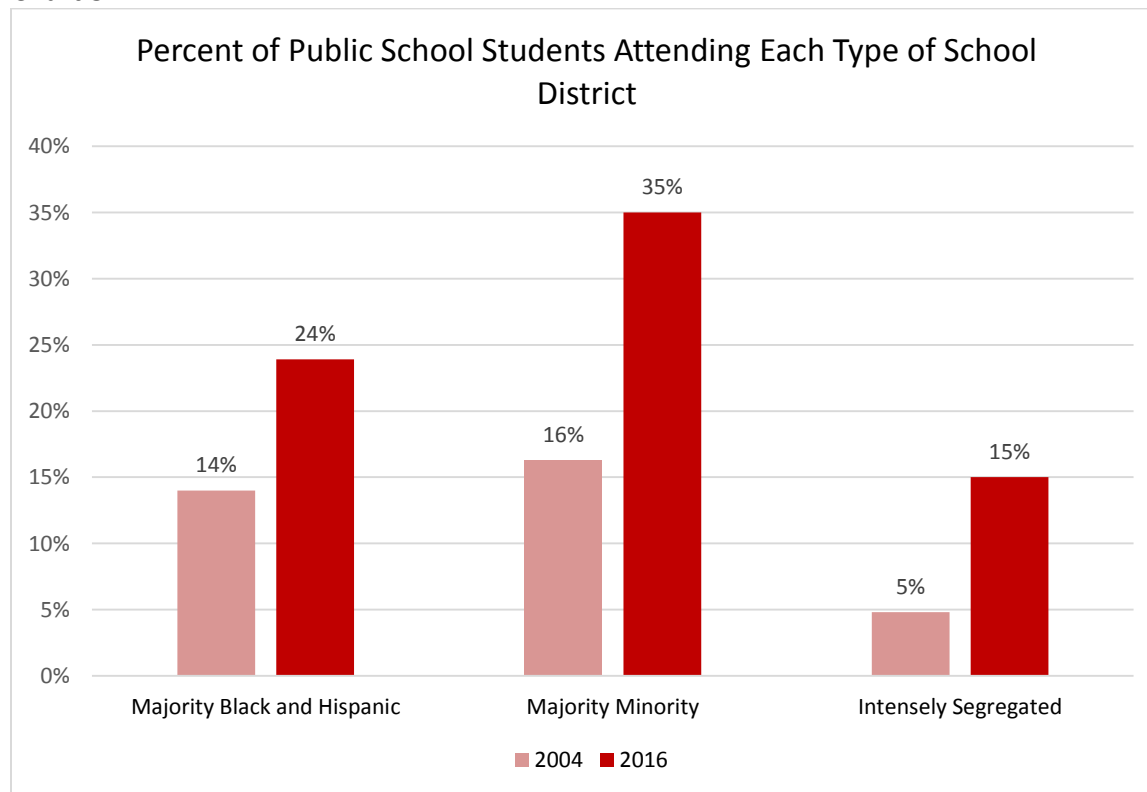
Growing School Segregation

Unfortunately, increasing diversity has also coincided with increasing school segregation. Over the same period of time, the number of intensely segregated school districts—less than 10% white—on Long Island has more than doubled, growing from 5 districts in 2004 to 11 districts in 2016. Even more shocking is the rapidly growing number of students attending these intensely segregated districts. In 2003-2004, 5% of Long Island students received their education in intensely segregated school districts. Over the past decade, that number has tripled. As of 2015-2016, 15% of all students on Long Island are attending intensely segregated school districts (Chart 3).

And the number of students attending majority-minority school districts—those that are 50-100% minority students—has also grown. In 2003-2004, 16% of Long Island students attended majority-minority school districts. Over the past 12 years, that number has more than doubled, growing to 35% (Chart 3). Now, 24% of students are in majority black and Hispanic school districts, which is an increase in 10 percentage points from 2004 (Chart 3).

This increase in school segregation disproportionately affects black and Hispanic students. Three out of every four black students and two out of every three Hispanic students attend a majority-minority school district.

Chart 3



Solutions

Research on the Benefit of Racially Integrated Schools¹

We know the solutions. Racially integrated learning environments.

Racially diverse learning environments have positive impacts on academic achievement for students of all races.²

Students who attend integrated schools perform better on math, science, language, and social studies tests; they take higher-level math and science courses; and they have higher educational aspirations than their otherwise comparable peers who attend racially isolated minority schools.³

When classrooms are structured around cooperative group learning—which helps to maximize the benefits of diversity—white students show improved academic achievement.⁴

Students of color achieve at higher levels in racially diverse schools than in segregated schools.⁵

Students who attend desegregated schools are less likely to drop out of high school.⁶

Attending racially diverse schools contributes to greater comfort with peers of diverse backgrounds and better understanding of their perspectives, as well as improvements in critical thinking, communication, and problem solving.⁷

Surveys of white high school students experiencing racially diverse classrooms shed light on how the students themselves view their settings. For example, more than three-fourths of white high school juniors in Jefferson County (Louisville), Kentucky reported that discussions in

¹ Research was compiled from The National Coalition on School Diversity's Research Briefs.

² Wells, A.S., Fox, L., & Cordova-Cobo, D. (2016). Research fact sheet: The educational benefits of diverse schools and classrooms for all students. Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

³ Frost, M.B. (2007). Texas Student's College Expectations: Does High School Racial Composition Matter? *Sociology of Education*, Vol. 80(January), 43-66.

⁴ Slavin, R. (2001). Cooperative Learning and Intergroup Relations. In Banks, J. and McGee, C. (Eds). *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

⁵ Hallinan, M. (1998). Diversity effects on student outcomes: social science evidence. *Ohio State Law Journal*, 59, 733-754. Linn, R., & Welner, K. (2007). Race-conscious policies for assigning students to schools: Social science research and the Supreme Court cases. Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Education. Mickelson, R. A. (2008). Twenty-first century social science research on school racial diversity and educational outcomes. *Ohio State Law Journal*, 69, 1173-1228. Mickelson, R. A., & Nkomo, M. (2012). Integrated schooling, life course outcomes, and social cohesion in multiethnic democratic societies. *Review of Research in Education*, 36, 197-238.

⁶ Balfanz, R., & Legters, N. E. (2004). Locating the dropout crisis: Which high schools produce the nation's dropouts? In G. Orfield (Ed.), *Dropouts in America: Confronting the graduation crisis* (pp. 57-84). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

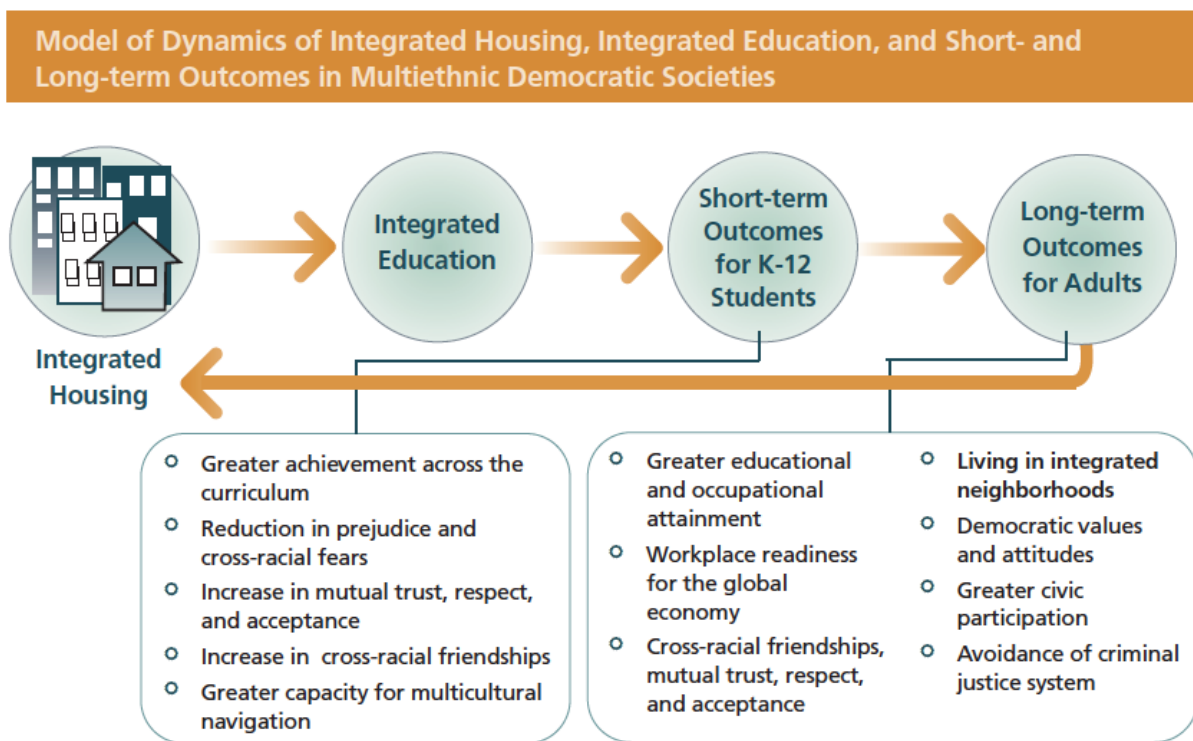
⁷ Kurlaender, M., & Yun, J. (2005). Fifty years after Brown: New evidence of the impact of school racial composition on student outcomes. *International Journal of Educational Policy, Research and Practice*, 6(1), 51-78. Kurlaender, M., & Yun, J. T. (2007). Measuring school racial composition and student outcomes in a multiracial society. *American Journal of Education*, 113(2), 213-242

diverse classrooms had at least some impact on their “understanding of different points of view.”⁸ Nearly two-thirds of white students in the district said they felt “very prepared” for a diverse workplace, with another one-third saying they felt at least “somewhat” prepared.⁹

When individuals have early and sustained experiences in desegregated schools, they are more likely to live and work in desegregated environments later in life.¹⁰

Diverse schools better prepare individuals to succeed in the diverse and global work environment.¹¹

Students who attend racially diverse schools have high levels of civic engagement and feel prepared to participate in democratic processes with diverse groups of people.¹²



(The National System of School Diversity, Research Brief Number 7, Sept 2011)

⁸ Orfield, G. & Frankenberg, E. (2011). Experiencing integration in Louisville: How parents and students see the gains and challenges. Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Civil Rights Project

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Braddock, J. H., II, & Gonzalez, A. D. C. (2010). Social isolation and social cohesion: The effects of k-12 neighborhood and school segregation on intergroup orientations. Teachers College Record, 112(6), 1631-1653.

¹¹ Brief of Fortune-100 and Other Leading American businesses as Amici Curiae Supporting Respondents, Fisher v. University of Texas, 579 U.S. ____ (2016).

¹² Kurlaender, M., & Yun, J. T. (2007). Measuring school racial composition and student outcomes in a multiracial society. American Journal of Education, 113(2), 213-242.

The problem

The Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision struck down de jure school segregation in 1954. However, eliminating racially segregated schools has been very challenging, even with court orders to do so.

There has been little incentive for voluntary integration efforts to combat de facto segregation. White parents have undermined integration by pulling their children out of integrated schools and using private or parochial schools. Or they have sold their homes and moved out of districts experiencing a rising student population of African American or Hispanic students.

Because education is not a right under the United States Constitution, federal courts have typically been deferential to local government actors, with *Brown* a notable exception.¹³ For its part, the New York State Constitution outlaws discrimination but does not protect against segregation. The bar to “prove” discrimination is very high, making it seemingly impossible to identify and hold accountable a party responsible for racial segregation across districts.

A long history of housing discrimination drives school segregation on Long Island. The overlap of residential segregation patterns with school district lines is no coincidence.

ERASE Racism and other nonprofits have documented instances of housing discrimination and won court ordered changes to management policies and activities for rental properties. Our successful advocacy efforts have expanded fair housing protections; no longer can someone be rejected for housing based solely on a particular legal source of income which the owner or management company does not prefer. More needs to be done to address so-called “colorblind” county and town-level policies that in fact entrench residential segregation.

However, region-wide changes to housing patterns takes time. Meanwhile, there is much that can be done to influence school segregation directly.

What can ERASE Racism and its partners do to achieve racially integrative learning environments?

ERASE Racism created the **Education Equity Initiative** to:

- Foster dialogue among a broad cross-section of civic leaders, educators, parents, and students about the benefits of racial integration in schools, and
- Promote policies and practices to create racially and ethnically diverse learning environments

¹³ Subsequent cases such as *Milliken v. Bradley* (1971) stated that local governments were not obligated to actively desegregate their schools so long as district lines were not drawn with racist intent.

The goal of the Education Equity Initiative: All Long Island students will have access to rigorous courses of study in high performing, racially integrated schools and classrooms.

Successful school desegregation requires buy-in from school leaders, parents, teachers, and students. That is why ERASE Racism documents and proclaims the profound benefits of diverse learning environments for all students. At the same time, we engage school leaders, parents, teachers, and students.

As noted above, legal strategies can be challenging. Even when a court decree stands behind integration measures, some of these efforts have not continued past court oversight – thereby resulting in resegregation.

ERASE Racism is incorporating the lessons learned from school integration efforts around the country, past and present. Our strategy includes the following broad elements:

I. Engagement of key constituencies includes:

- Education campaigns, trainings, and resources targeting parents (e.g.: our [2017 Infographic](#)) and education officials (e.g. our [EMERGE Education Equity Newsletter](#)). These efforts not only enlighten parents and educators about how integration benefits all students, but they also empower them to raise their voice for integration in their spheres of influence and recruit their peers as advocates.
- [Student Voices Campaign](#), which brings together diverse groups of students from across districts to explore the barriers to integration; cultivates leadership, empathy, and critical thinking; and equips participants to act as ambassadors for integration in their schools and communities.¹⁴
- Engagement of other key constituencies, i.e. superintendents, teachers, administrators, education reform coalitions (e.g. LICEE)¹⁵, and other community leaders and stakeholders.

II. Professional Development for Educators includes:

- ERASE Racism’s lauded professional development series, which equips teachers to incorporate culturally responsive curricula into their lessons, work effectively with diverse populations, and respond to incidents fraught with cultural misunderstanding. The series also shows them how they can leverage the benefits of integrated classrooms and bring culturally inclusive perspectives to classrooms that are not integrated.

¹⁴ Going forward, we are planning “train the trainer” student workshops. These will prepare students to become ambassadors for integration in their schools and communities. In the long term, we envision a student led coalition that spans across Long Island.

¹⁵ The Long Island Consortium for Excellence and Equity is a collaborative network of regional school districts in Nassau County that have committed to learn and work together to support the school and life success of ALL their students.

III. **Promoting local and state policies and practices that encourage integrative learning environments** includes:

- Exhaustive research and documentation of public school segregation on Long Island and its causes and effects. (Example: ERASE Racism's 2015 report [Heading in the Wrong Direction: Growing School Segregation on Long Island.](#))
- Pointing out and discouraging hiring policies that effectively bar teachers of color (e.g. candidate pools that only include existing teachers, teaching assistants, and subs.)
- Pointing out and discouraging practices that exacerbate segregation within districts and schools (e.g. restrictive AP course access, concentrations of English Language Learners.)
- Leading, joining, and interfacing with advocacy campaigns and coalitions at the state and local levels
- Formal and informal policy recommendations at the state and local levels. (Example: ERASE Racism recently contributed to document drafted on behalf of the New York State Board of Regents to promote diversity in schools.)

IV. **District and school based exploration of strategic programs and experimentation** includes:

- Facilitating dialogue, alliances, and cooperation between districts. This might take the form of joint classes or extra-curricular activities, pursuit of federal and state grant opportunities, and policy advocacy.
- ERASE Racism's Education Equity Working Group (EEWG) provides an ideal vehicle for this. The EEWG consists of 100 area superintendents, principals, assistant principals, school teachers, school board leaders, parents, academics, philanthropists, representatives from nonprofit and advocacy organizations, and union and civic leaders. In addition to facilitating alliances, they act as advocates for integration among their networks.

Although we recognize the challenges ahead, we are encouraged that outreach and dialogue with school officials is progressing, staff development programs are taking place, impediments to local integrative efforts are being identified, and strategies to address these issues are being sought. Students across diverse districts have engaged in productive dialogues and expressed interest in promoting integration in their schools and communities. And funders, community leaders, and members of the general public have recognized the need to promote integration, diversity, and inclusion, especially in response to the current socio-economic climate. We at ERASE Racism look forward to an expanding Education Equity Initiative that will improve the quality and results of public education for all Long Island students.

How We Categorized School Districts

Over 90% white: more than 90% non-Hispanic white

70-90% white: 70-90% non-Hispanic white

Plurality white and Asian: at least 30% white and 20% Asian

Diverse: 30%-69% white and at least 30% Asian, Hispanic, black, and other combined

Plurality white and Hispanic: at least 30% white and 20% Hispanic

Majority black and Hispanic: over 50% black and Hispanic students

Additional Categories

Intensely segregated: less than 10% of the students are white

Majority-minority schools: 50-100% minority students (Minority represents black, Latino, Asian, American Indian, and Multi-racial)

The categories were created based on finding the most representative racial demographics by school district in the school years 2003-2004 and 2015-2016. For example, in 2003-2004, 29 school districts had a student population that was over 90% white. Therefore, we created a category “Over 90% White” to represent this significant portion of the regional student population.

We also used several categories that are both representative of racial demographics on Long Island *and* have been used by other scholars who study school segregation. For example, the “intensely segregated” and “majority-minority” categories have been used by Dr. Gary Orfield in his work to track the resegregation of public schools throughout the United States.

Additionally, there are two general ways that researchers have defined racially diverse schools. One way is based on having a sizeable representation of three or more racial groups. Another way is having a racial demographic that mirrors the racial demographic of the region. Since Long Island continues to be majority white, school districts that have a sizable representation of 3 or more racial groups are actually more likely to be majority-minority and in the process of becoming intensely segregated. Therefore, we decided to define the “diverse” category based on districts that more closely mirror the racial demographic of the region.

Note: All 125 school districts on Long Island were included in the total enrollment numbers, and percentages for the overall yearly racial demographics were included in this study. Only one district—Little Flower UFSD—was removed from the more detailed analysis. This is because Little Flower is the only residential Special Act public school district on Long Island. As such, access to Little Flower is not based on where the students reside; Little Flower accepts students from multiple locations based on need.

About ERASE Racism: ERASE Racism is a regional organization that leads public policy advocacy campaigns and related programmatic initiatives, community organizing, and legal action to promote racial equity in areas such as housing, public school education and community development. It engages in a variety of research, education and consulting activities to identify and address institutional and structural racism, especially on Long Island.

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