

Unequal Resources for Students in New York State Based On Race



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Introduction and Key Findings

In May 2022, ERASE Racism released a report called “[Unequal Resources for Long Island Students Based on Race](#),” which examines the extent to which Long Island’s school districts have different levels of educational resources based on a district’s racial composition. The report found major differences in the levels of educational resources on Long Island, based on a school district’s racial composition, and prompted a broader analysis covering the entire state. That statewide analysis is the focus of this current report.

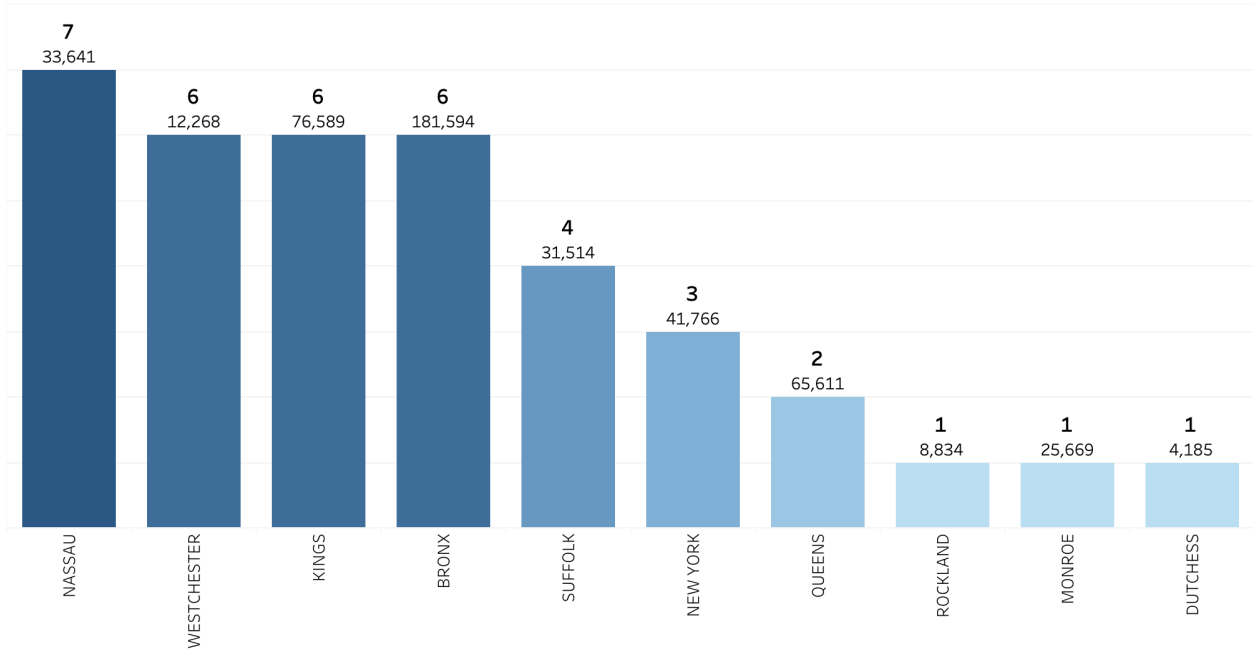
The results of the Long Island study were dramatic. For example, intensely segregated districts (90 to 100 percent non-White) have, on average, nearly \$10,000 less in annual revenue per student than districts that are predominantly White (70 percent or more). Intensely segregated districts also have significantly less AP course availability, substantially more students for every guidance counselor, social worker, and teacher, on average.

Given the significant resource disparities uncovered on Long Island, this report explores whether the same level of racial inequities exist throughout New York State. As was the case with the Long Island report, we chose to use New York State Education Department data from the 2018-2019 school year.¹ The dataset allows us to compare resources, such as staffing, in school districts before the COVID-19 pandemic, which offers more reliable counts than in 2019-2020 when schools temporarily transitioned to remote learning.

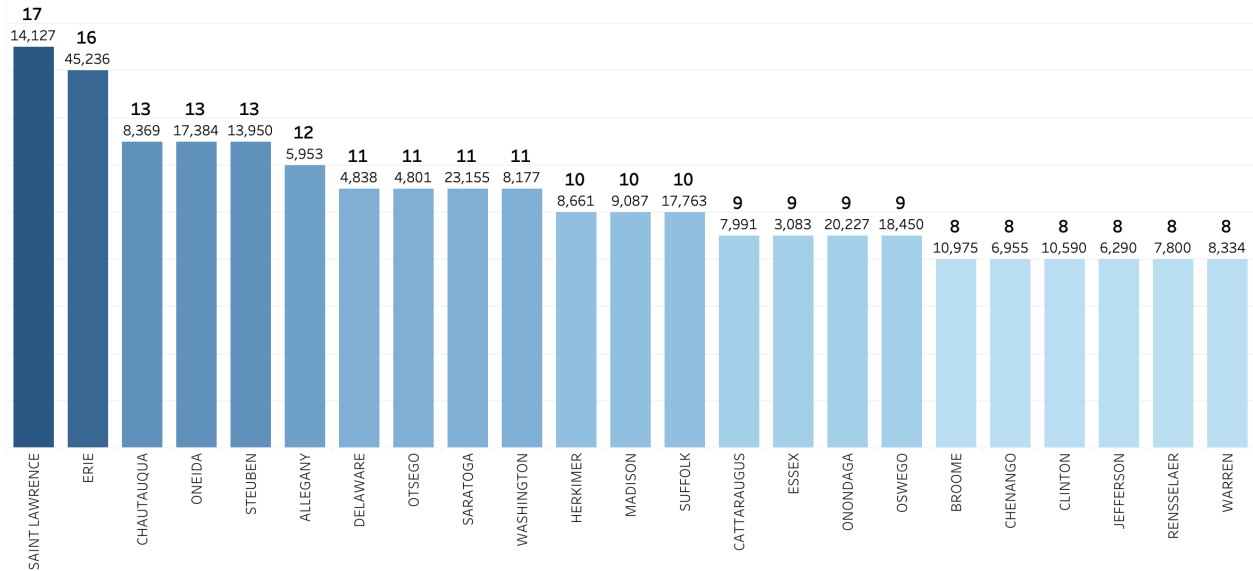
The resource disparity analysis in this report focuses on two categories that best capture the impact of racial segregation in New York—intensely segregated and predominantly White school districts. In both the Long Island report and this statewide report, “intensely segregated” is defined as districts where the student body is 90 to 100 percent non-White. The definition of “predominantly White” has changed slightly. In the Long Island report we defined predominantly White as “70 percent or more White students.” Since most of the school districts throughout New York State (495 out of 721 districts, or 69 percent of school districts) have a student body that is 70 percent or more White, we have increased the limit to 85 percent White to have a meaningful comparison with intensely segregated districts. Throughout the state, there are approximately the same number of students attending intensely segregated districts (481,671 students) as districts that are at least 85 percent White (430,516 students). However, it’s important to note that intensely segregated districts have much larger student populations, so there are only 37 intensely segregated districts throughout the state compared to 366 predominately White districts.

¹ Data can be found on NYSED’s website: <https://data.nysed.gov/downloads.php>

Counties with the largest number of intensely segregated districts, 2018-2019 school year
(also includes number of students)



Counties with the largest number of predominantly White districts, 2018-2019 school year
(also includes number of students)



The resource levels are analyzed, on average, between intensely segregated and predominantly white districts and major gaps are found. As was the case with our report on Long Island, students attending intensely segregated and predominantly White districts do not have access to the same level of resources.

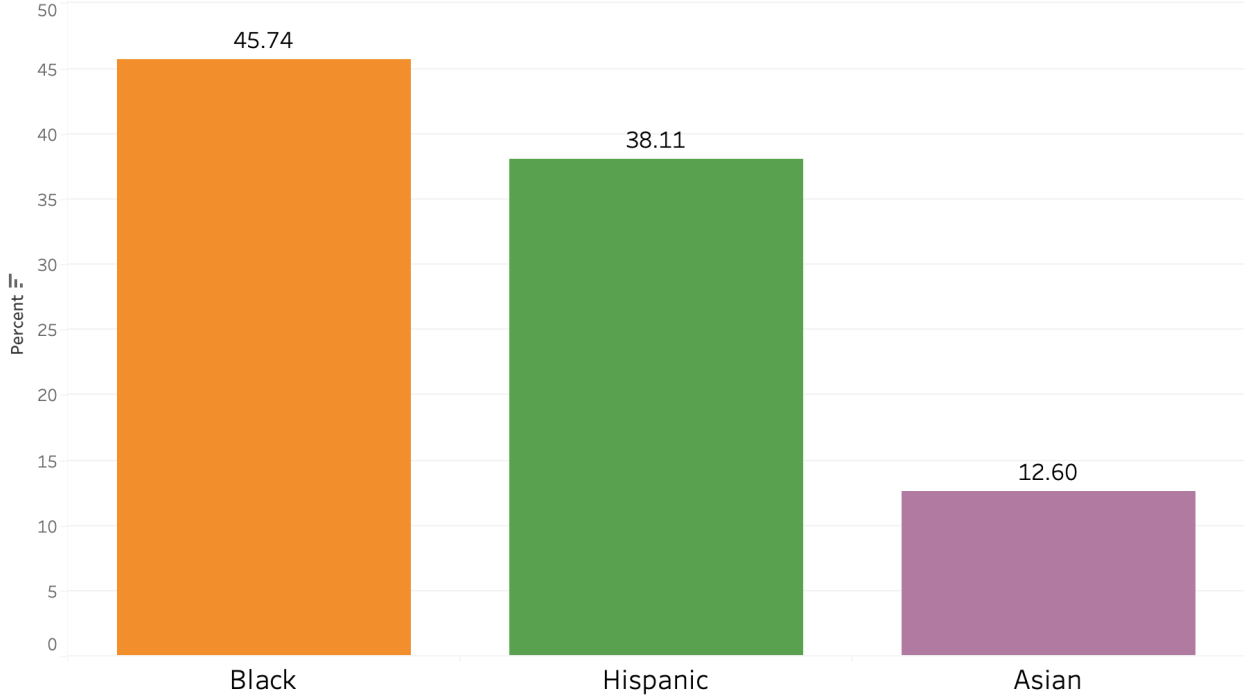
1. Predominantly White school districts offer over 4 times the number of AP courses in relation to the number of high school students compared to intensely segregated school districts. The median ratio of high school students to AP course offerings in intensely segregated districts is 320, compared to 75 in predominantly White districts.
2. Intensely segregated districts have, on average, twice the number of students for every guidance counselor as there are in predominantly White districts.
3. There are also major discrepancies in the fiscal stress scores and environmental stress scores of intensely segregated districts and predominantly White districts. These discrepancies have important implications for funding.

Notably, we found that, on average, throughout New York State, there are not significant differences between intensely segregated districts and predominantly White districts when we looked at the ratio of students to teachers and the ratio of students to social workers. This finding marks an important contrast between Long Island and the rest of New York State. In "Unequal Resources for Long Island Students Based on Race" we found that, on average, there is one social worker for every 1,113 students in intensely segregated districts and 862 students to every social worker in predominantly White districts. Additionally, we found that in intensely segregated districts, there was, on average, one teacher for every 13 students, compared to one teacher for every 11 students in predominantly White districts.

Demographic Overview and Segregation of Students in New York State

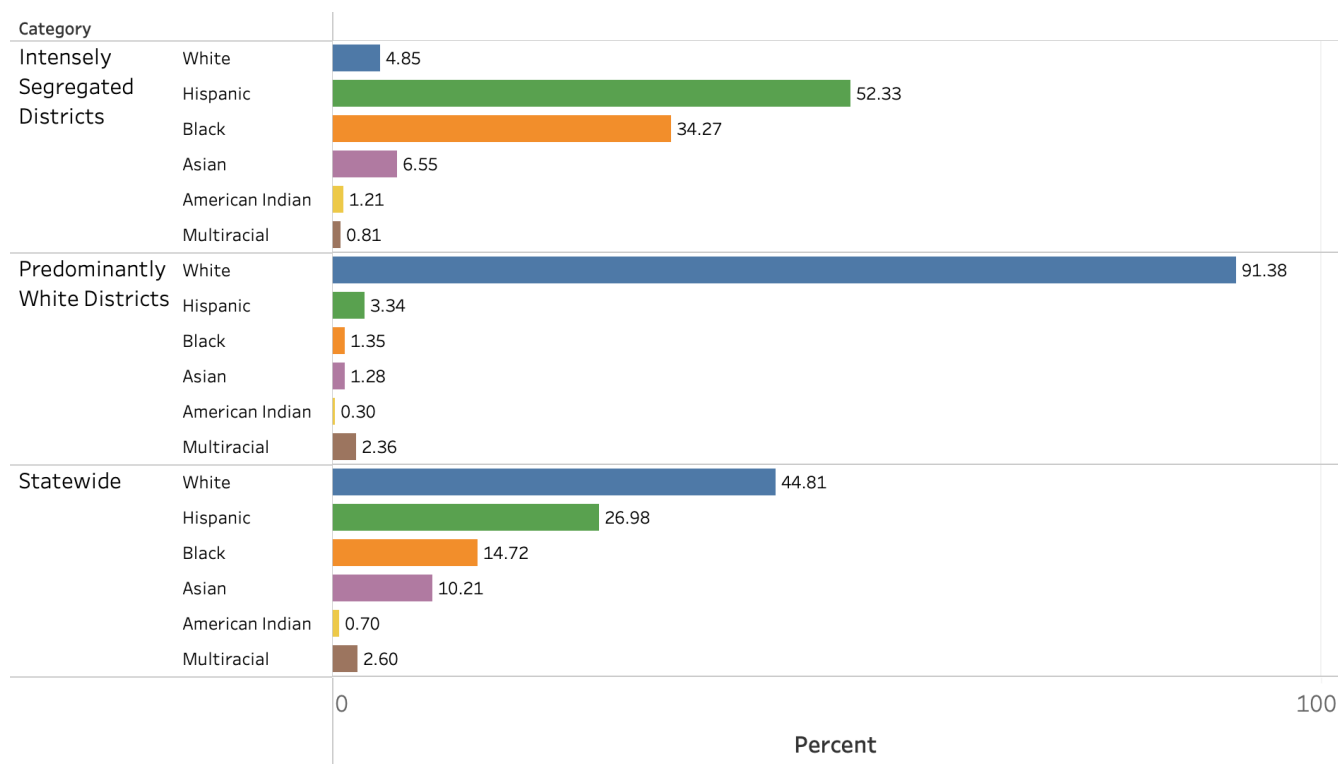
In the 2018-2019 school year, New York State's student population was 45 percent White, 27 percent Hispanic, 15 percent Black, and 10 percent Asian. Despite this diversity, New York's students continue to be confined to racially segregated learning environments. Of all the Black students in New York State, 165,052 out of 360,845, or 46 percent, are in intensely segregated districts. For Hispanic students it is 38 percent, and for Asian students 13 percent are in intensely segregated districts. Of all the White students in the state, 393,385 out of 1,098,641, or more than one-third, go to schools that are over 85 percent White.

The percent of students in each racial category who attend an intensely segregated school district, 2018-2019 school year



Although New York State's overall population is diverse, 37 percent of all students either attend an intensely segregated school district or a predominantly White school district. When we look at the racial composition of intensely segregated districts in New York, we find that 52 percent of the students are Hispanic, 34 percent are Black, 7 percent are Asian, 5 percent are White, and 1 percent are American Indian, and 1 percent are multi-racial. Contrarily, the racial composition of predominantly White districts is 91 percent White, 3 percent Hispanic, 2 percent multi-racial, 1 percent Black, 1 percent Asian, and 0 percent American Indian.

Racial demographics of intensely segregated districts, predominantly white districts, and all districts in New York State, 2018-2019 school year



Unfortunately, disparities between the districts are not just marked by race, but by student need. Eighty-six percent of all intensely segregated districts in New York are also classified by the New York State Education Department as “high need,” which means that the community experiences a relatively high level of poverty and low level of wealth.² Only 36 percent of predominantly White districts are high need.³ Similarly, when we consider the percent of economically disadvantaged students⁴ as another measure of need, we learn that twice as many students in

² The need-to-resource capacity (N/RC) index is a measure created and tracked by NYSED. As explained from NYSED’s website, it is a measure of a district’s ability to “meet the needs of its students with local resources” and calculated by first finding the ratio of the estimated poverty percentage to the Combined Wealth Ratio. A district with both estimated poverty and Combined Wealth Ratio equal to the State average would have an N/RC index of 1.0. School districts are labeled as high-need if they rank in the 70th percentile or above, as average-need if they rank between the 20th (0.770) and 70th (1.1835) percentile on the index, and as low-need if they rank below the 20th percentile (0.770) on the index.

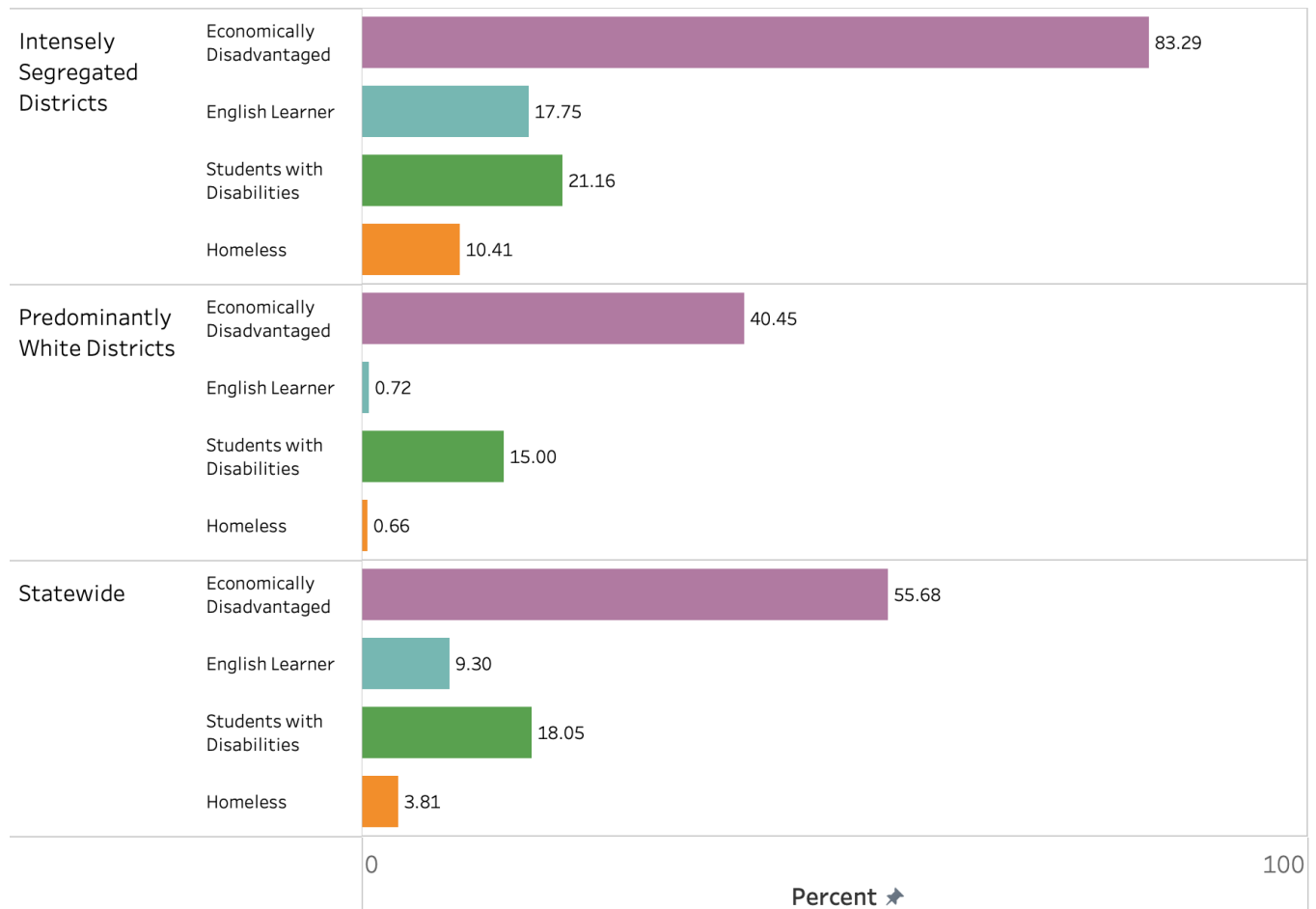
³ The counties with the most predominantly White districts that are also high need are: Saint Lawrence 13, Allegany 11, Steuben 10, Otsego 7, Herkimer 7, Delaware 7, and Chenango 7.

⁴ The New York State Education Department defines economically disadvantaged students as “Economically disadvantaged students are those who participate in, or whose family participates in, economic assistance programs, such as the free or reduced-price lunch programs, Social Security Insurance (SSI), Food Stamps, Foster Care, Refugee Assistance (cash or medical assistance), Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Safety Net Assistance (SNA), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), or Family Assistance: Temporary

intensely segregated districts are economically disadvantaged compared to predominantly White districts—83 percent to 40 percent, respectively.

There is also a large difference in the percentage of students who are classified as an English language learner (18 percent in intensely segregated and 1 percent in predominantly White districts), students with disabilities (21 percent in intensely segregated and 15 percent in predominantly White districts) and homeless students (10 percent in intensely segregated and 1 percent in predominantly White districts). Studies have shown that students from high-need demographics require additional funding and resources to help them attain the support they need to succeed in school.⁵

Need-based demographics of intensely segregated districts, predominantly White districts, and all districts in New York State, 2018-2019 school year



Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). If one student in a family is identified as low income, all students from that household (economic unit) may be identified as low income.”

⁵ Kaplan, L. S., & Owings, W. A. (2013). The unaddressed costs of changing student demographics. *Journal of Education Finance*, 15-46.

These glaring needs-based disparities means that it is not sufficient to ensure that intensely segregated districts have the same resources as predominantly White districts; they require *far more* resources to provide for their students who have the odds stacked against them. Unfortunately, as we will see in the next section, intensely segregated districts often have *far less* resources.

Disparities in Resources

This section explores disparities throughout New York State in access to resources between districts that are intensely segregated and predominantly White.

School Funding

In this sub-section, we analyze data provided by the New York State Comptroller to explore how school districts fared regarding their fiscal stress score and environmental stress score.⁶ Fiscal stress scores act as an index of indicators that captures the financial challenges of a school district; thus higher scores indicate more financial challenges and lower scores indicate fewer challenges.⁷ In our report that focused on Long Island, we also included comparisons of per pupil revenue from the local, state, and federal levels. We have omitted that analysis from this report since different costs of living throughout New York State make it difficult to use per pupil revenue as a measure of disparity. The fiscal stress score provides a more reliable way of comparing school funding since it is a composite measure that considers a variety of indicators, such as a district's fund balance (or the accumulated surplus or deficit since operations began), low liquidity (i.e., lack of enough cash on hand to cover operating costs), overreliance on short-term cash flow debt, and an operating deficit in one or more of the last three years. Finally, environmental stress scores act as an index of indicators that captures the variety of challenges that a district can face, such as a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students, a high teacher turnover rate, a decrease in property values, a low budget vote approval rate, a high percentage of English

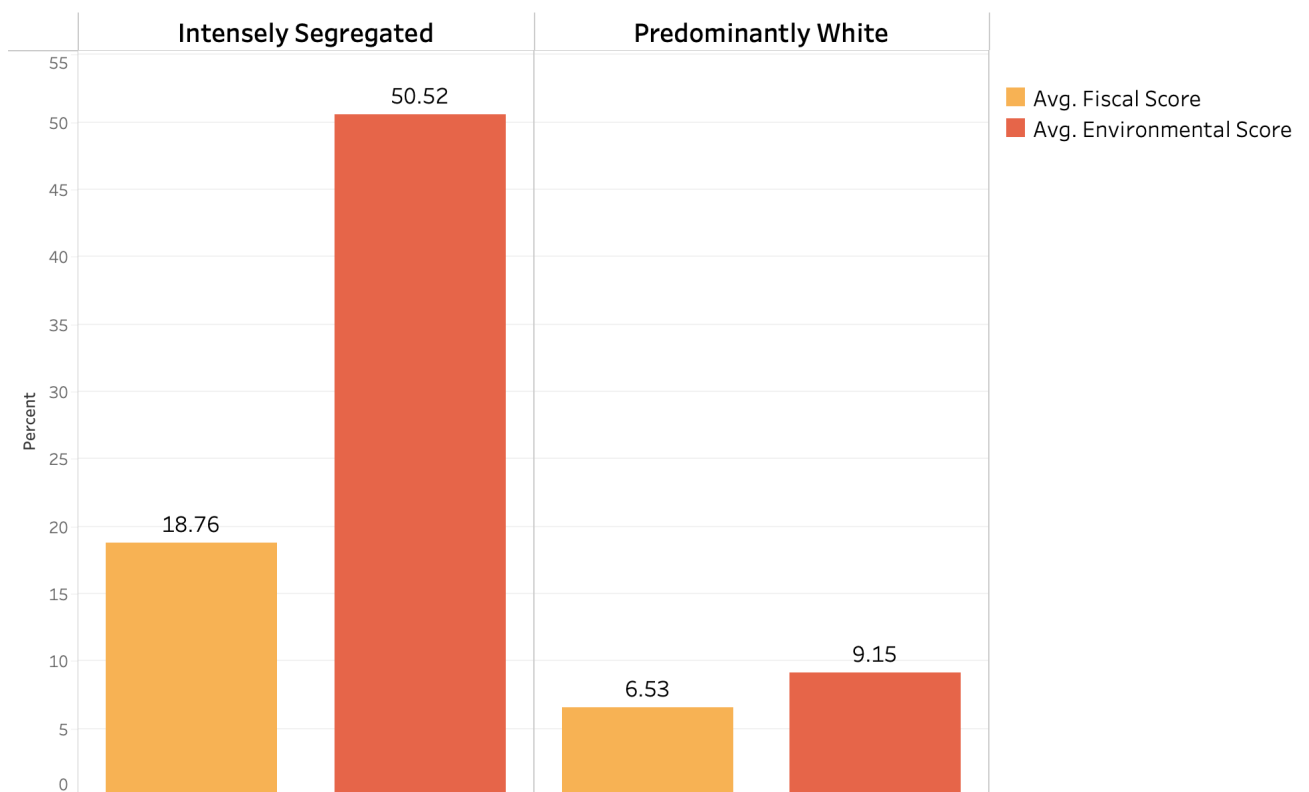
⁶ The Comptroller data omits New York City districts due to its unique financial structure.

⁷ Fiscal stress scores range from 0 (lowest scored districts) to 83.3 (highest scored district). Districts with scores 24.9 and below are classified as no designation. Districts with scores between 25 and 44.9 are classified as susceptible fiscal stress. Districts with scores between 45 and 64.9 are classified as moderate fiscal stress. Finally, districts with scores between 65 and 100 are classified as significant fiscal stress. Utilized indicators include fund balance (or the accumulated surplus or deficit since operations began), low liquidity (i.e., lack of enough cash on hand to cover operating costs), overreliance on short-term cash flow debt, and an operating deficit in one or more of the last three years. Source: "Stress Monitoring System Manual" from Office of the New York State Comptroller. Link: <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/files/local-government/fiscal-monitoring/pdf/system-manual.pdf>

language learners, and large class sizes. Higher scores indicate more challenges and lower scores indicate fewer challenges.⁸

Comparing the Comptroller’s fiscal stress scores for school districts throughout New York State, we found that, on average, intensely segregated school districts have a score that is nearly three times as high as predominantly White school districts (18.8 compared to 6.5, respectively). When comparing the average environmental score, the disparity is even greater. Intensely segregated districts have scores that are five and a half times as high as predominantly White school districts (50.5 compared to 9.2, respectively).

Average fiscal score and average environmental score for intensely segregated and predominantly White school districts, 2018-2019 school year

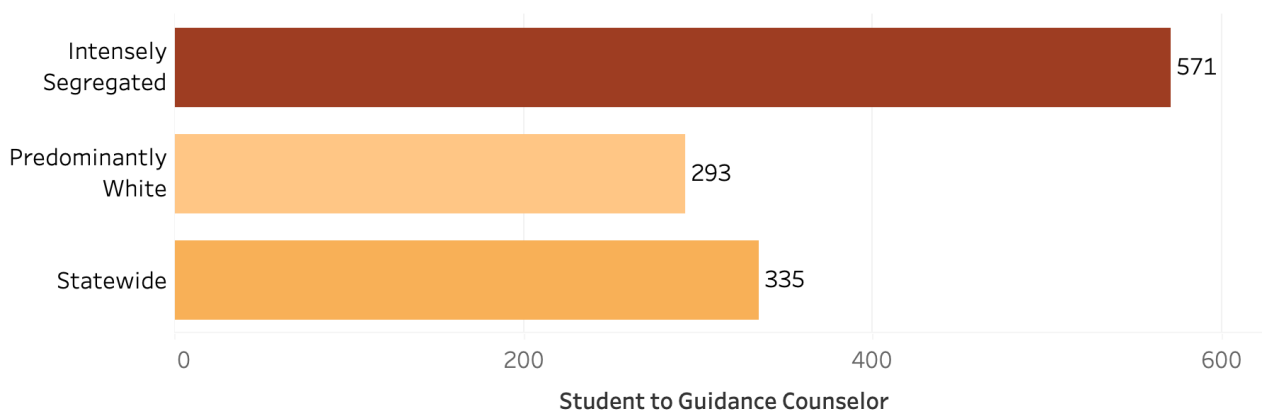


⁸ Districts with environmental stress scores 29.9 and below are classified as no designation. Those with scores between 30 and 44.9 are classified as susceptible environmental stress. Those with scores between 45 and 59.9 are classified as moderate environmental stress. Finally, those with scores between 60 and 100 are classified as significant environmental stress. The utilized indicators include a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students, high teacher turnover rate, a decrease in property value, a low budget vote approval rate, high percentage of English language learners, and large class sizes. Source: “Stress Monitoring System Manual” from Office of the New York State Comptroller. Link: <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/files/local-government/fiscal-monitoring/pdf/system-manual.pdf>

Average Number of Students for Every Guidance Counselor, Social Worker, and Teacher

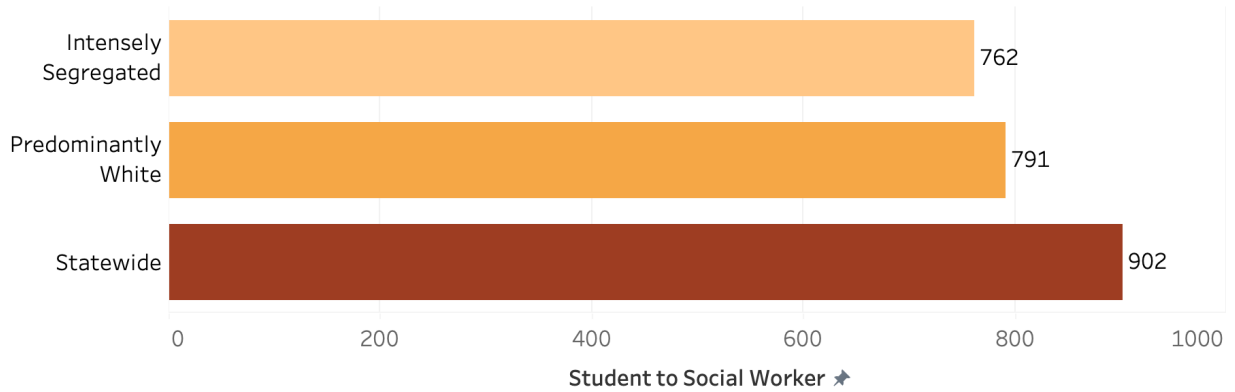
Statewide there are, on average, 335 students to every guidance counselor. For predominantly White districts each guidance counselor has less students (293) and thus can provide more attention to each student. In intensely segregated districts, guidance counselors are stretched among a much larger number of students (571), making it more challenging to provide the attention needed for these students to succeed, especially given that, as reported above, students in these districts have relatively higher needs.

Average number of students for every guidance counselor in intensely segregated districts, predominantly White districts, and all districts in New York State, 2018-2019 school year

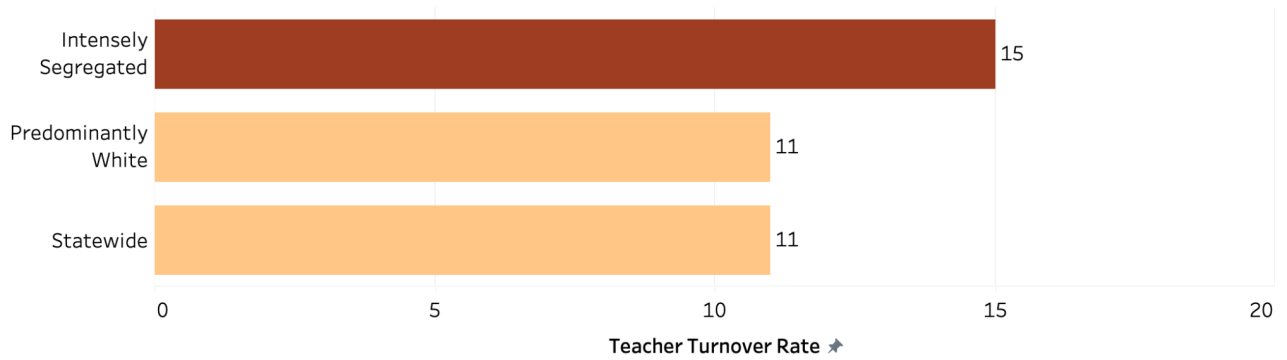


Intensely segregated and predominantly White districts, on average, have a similar number of students for every social worker—762 to 791, respectively. Similarly, on average, there is a relatively even student to teacher ratio between these districts—12 in intensely segregated districts, compared to 11 in predominantly White districts. However, as previously mentioned, this should not be cause for celebration since intensely segregated districts have students with much higher needs, requiring more staff members who can provide support. For example, 10 percent of students in intensely segregated school districts are homeless, while only 1 percent of students face this massive obstacle in predominantly White districts.

Average number of students for every social worker in intensely segregated districts, predominantly White districts, and all districts in New York State, 2018-2019 school year



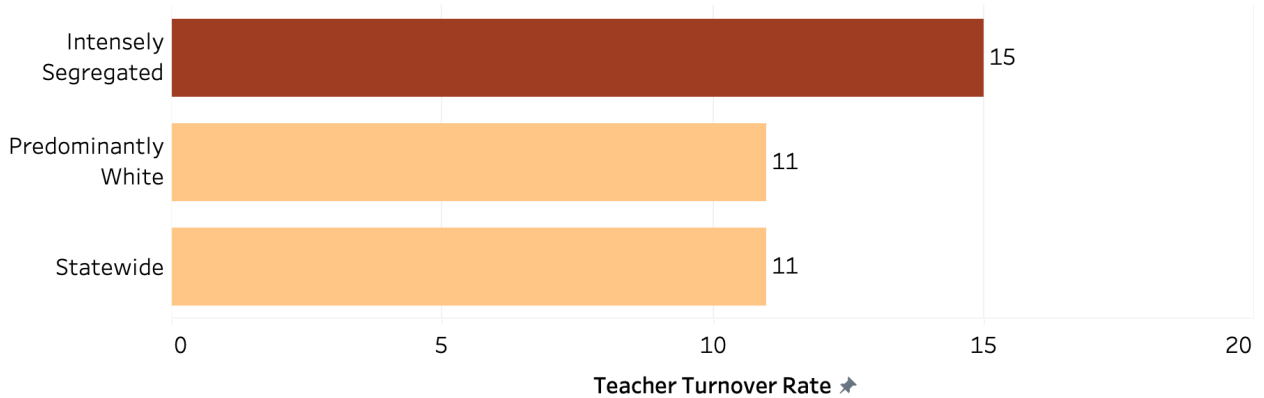
Rate of teacher turnover in intensely segregated districts, predominantly White districts, and all districts in New York State, 2018-2019 school year



Rate of Teacher Turnover

For the 2018-2019 school year, the average rate of teacher turnover is 11 percent for all of New York State. The rate is also 11 percent for predominantly White school districts; however, for intensely segregated districts the rate is higher, at 15 percent.

Average percent of teacher turnover in intensely segregated districts, predominantly White districts, and all districts in New York State, 2018-2019 school year

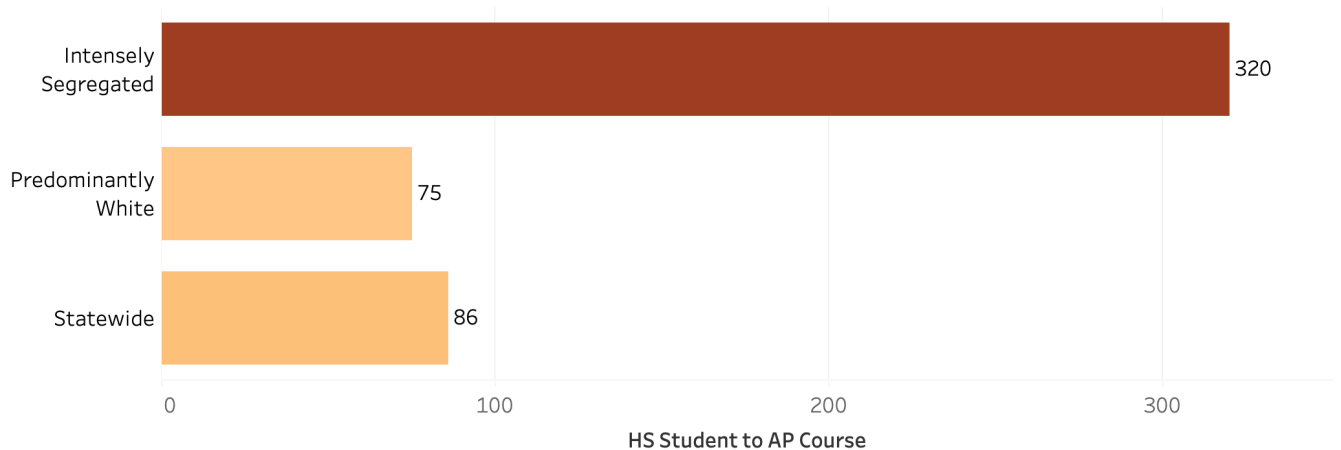


AP Course Availability

In addition to examining the presence of school personnel, we considered availability of AP courses as an important resource for academic achievement. To do so, we calculated the number of high school students for every AP course offered by a district and examined whether disparities exist between districts. The higher a district’s high school student-to-AP course ratio, the more difficult it is for high school students to access these advanced classes.

Unfortunately, we found that intensely segregated districts have a median of 320 as their student-to-AP course ratio, meaning there is an AP course for every 320 high school students in these districts. This number is more than four times the median ratio for predominantly White school districts where there is an AP course for every 75 high school students.

Median ratio of high school students to AP course offerings for intensely segregated districts, predominantly White districts, and all districts in New York State, 2018-2019 school year



Policy Recommendations

In June 2021, the U.S. Department of Education published a list of policy priorities, including the need to address racial inequality in schools. Specifically, Proposed Priority 2, titled “Promoting Equity in Student Access to Educational Resources, Opportunities, and Welcoming Environments,” highlights the fact that “inadequate access to and the inequitable distribution of resources negatively affect underserved students’ educational experience in a number of ways, which may include fewer opportunities for educational enrichment, high-quality early learning, well-rounded coursework, and high-quality college and career pathways.”⁹ Other priorities aim to increase diversity in the teaching workforce, strengthen professional developments that decrease bias, and improve cross-agency collaboration. ERASE Racism applauds this list of policy priorities as it steers us in the right direction—a future wherein the ability of our students to succeed is not determined by the color of their skin, where their families live, or where they are assigned for school.

Educational policies should seek what researcher Jim Hilbert called “the removal of structures of segregation”: “Actual integration requires going beyond demographics, to include reforming the classroom and curriculum, and diversifying the teaching ranks. It breaks through school district boundaries to forge metropolitan-wide solutions. It requires changes beyond education, connecting housing and education policy.”¹⁰

1. *Equitable funding across school districts*

As our analysis on school districts’ fiscal scores highlighted, funding across the state of New York is currently not equitable. The New York State Education Department and the New York State Legislature can ensure that funding per student is equitable, especially after accounting for their different need levels. In particular, it is important to remember that students from marginalized backgrounds (such as students of color, immigrant and English Language Learner students, and economically disadvantaged students) will need more resources than those from more privileged backgrounds (such as those from high-income families) to succeed as they face more structural barriers. Morally and pragmatically, we cannot treat a student who does not have reliable access to computers, the internet, tutors, or other types of academic support or enrichment programs at school or home, and one who does – or a student who does not experience racial discrimination in everyday life and someone who does – as comparable when it comes to determining the amount of funding they will need. It is imperative that state and federal governments equalize the uneven playing field. Funding formulas will need to change and perhaps the entire structure of how education is funded should be assessed for equity and overhauled.

2. *Equitable sharing of educational resources across school districts*

⁹ “Proposed Priorities and Definitions – Secretary’s Supplemental Priorities and Definitions for Discretionary Grants Programs.” Link:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/06/30/2021-14003/proposed-priorities-and-definitions-secretarys-supplemental-priorities-and-definitions-for> (Accessed March 31, 2022).

¹⁰ Hilbert, Jim. 2017. “School Desegregation 2.0: What Is Required to Finally Integrate America’s Public Schools.” *SSRN Electronic Journal*. doi: [10.2139/ssrn.3031618](https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3031618).

With the rise of new technological tools and virtual spaces, cross-district collaboration can also be seen as an avenue where educational resources can be made available across district lines. In particular, a program of shared resources can help students from high-need districts access a variety of advanced courses and educational support systems not available in their home district. A student could enroll in an AP or IB course in a different district or have access to a college fair or other resources of particular interest. Barriers to the full-scale realization of such programs certainly exist (e.g., staff members needing to follow the different policies of individual districts, addressing union contract concerns, and differences in school culture), but a pilot opportunity could illuminate the potential as well as any arising issues that should be addressed. The New York State Education Department and regional BOCES could be instigators of such a pilot opportunity and perhaps provide incentives to encourage districts to participate.

3. *Racially Integrated Learning Environments*

Even if funding and resources were equitable across school districts, the districts would remain segregated if the neighborhoods are segregated. Especially in the state's suburbs, consolidation of school districts could alleviate this issue by encouraging districts to pull from wider geographical areas.

On Long Island, for example, consolidation of currently small school districts into larger ones that are within town boundaries would allow for resources, especially funding from property taxes, to be distributed more evenly between neighborhoods populated primarily by Black and Hispanic students and neighborhoods of primarily White and Asian students. The fact that Long Island's two counties have a total of 125 school districts underscores both the problem and the opportunity.

At this moment, public appetite for school consolidation is low. However, starting with early childhood education programs, public funding could be targeted for cross-district programs. A phased implementation could provide more funding to the racially integrated learning environments. Over time, funding could be phased out for programs that are not racially integrated. Simultaneously, special efforts could ensure that these programs are highly successful, so parents flock to them because of their recognized success. Facilities, curricula, teaching staffs, and services that embrace evidence-based excellence and accommodate working parents would further enhance the appeal of these programs.

This would not be easy, but careful placement of facilities between different neighborhoods would ease the transition, especially if transportation is not a barrier. The "Princeton Plan" puts all same-age children together in the same school rather than separated into different schools.¹¹ This mitigates the potential for segregated schools within the same school district based on segregated neighborhoods and enhances racially integrated learning environments at each grade level.

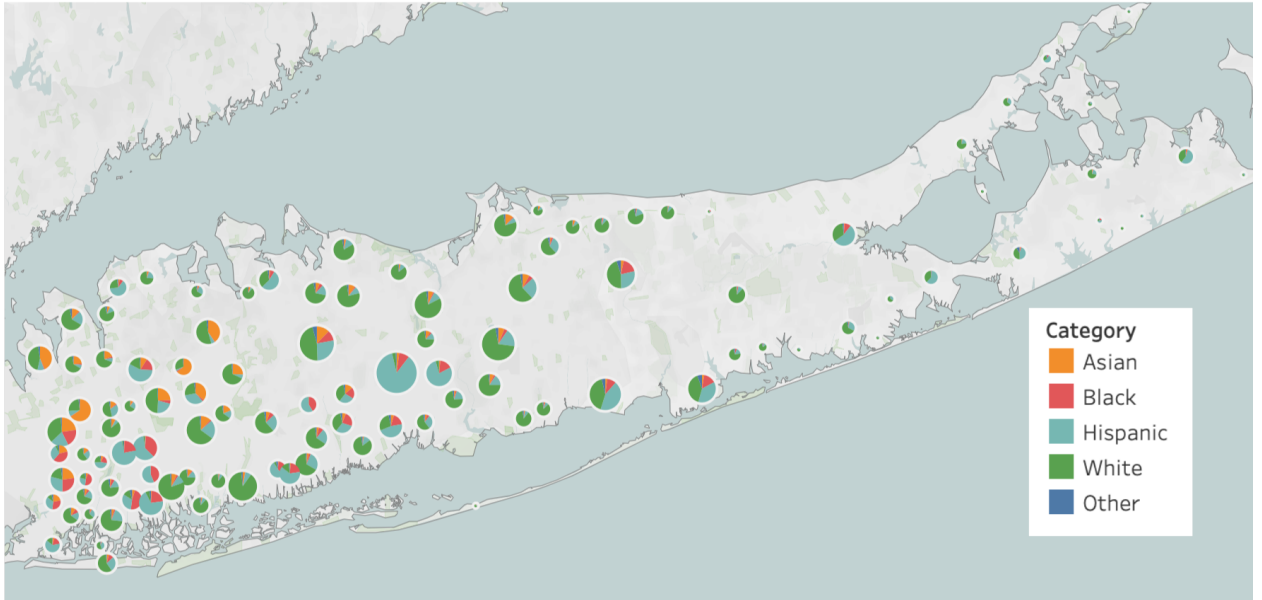
There would be issues to address. But if this were a town-wide strategy that is reinforced with a variety of town-wide programs and events in various neighborhoods throughout the town and at cross-road locales, over time the residents would appreciate the benefits of diversity. Issues concerning school board representation would need to be considered and

¹¹ Bouldin, Arthur L., and Robert E. Lucas. 1971. "The Princeton Plan: Beyond the Statistics; Princeton's Investment in Children Provides New Opportunities for All."

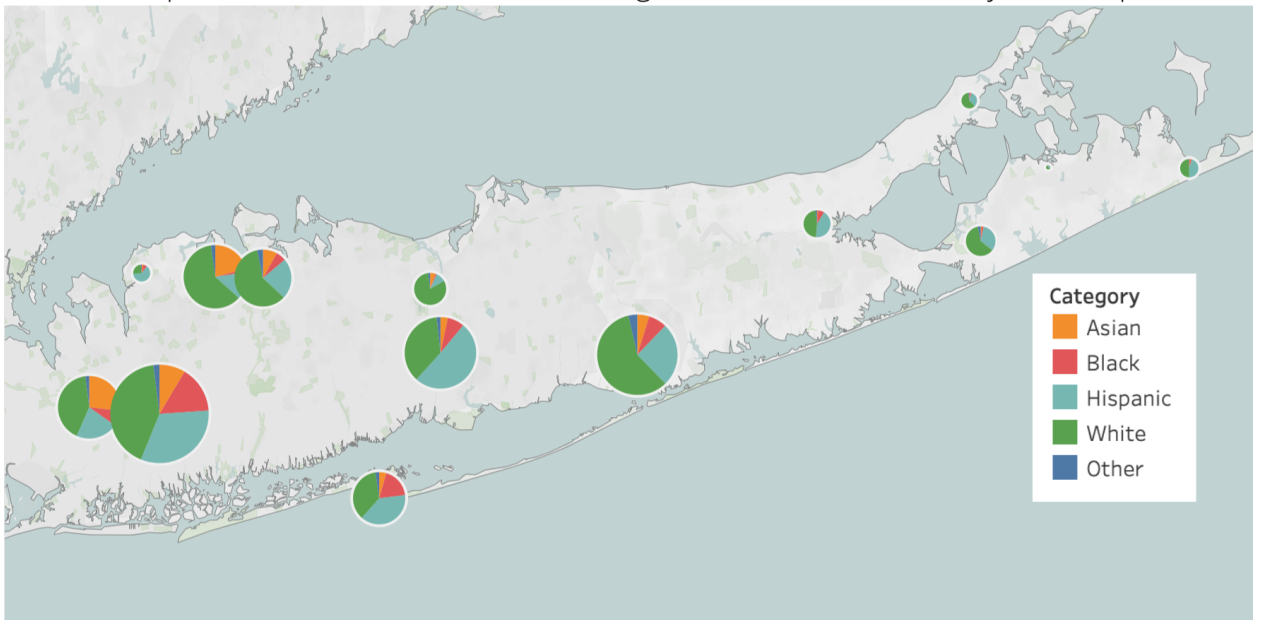
addressed to ensure that the voices of communities of color are not drowned out through such consolidation.

The New York State Education Department would need to strategically assess how this might work. We offer the maps of Long Island below for discussion purposes and encourage NYSED to create similar maps for the rest of the state to demonstrate how school consolidation could lead to more racial diversity.

Racial composition of school districts on Long Island, 2020



Racial composition of school districts on Long Island, if consolidated by township, 2020



4. Expanding Inclusive Housing

Undoing exclusionary zoning and advancing zoning options that expand inclusive housing for New York State residents are two important policy directions that would improve racial diversity in our schools by allowing for racial diversity in our neighborhoods. However, these efforts face a unique uphill battle because of New York State’s “home rule,”¹² which transfers to localities control of land use, public services, and community benefits, which, in the context of structural racism and White supremacy, gives White people the power to exclude – and thus to create and perpetuate residential segregation. It also has often prevented the implementation of state-level solutions. For example, while advocates successfully pushed for inclusionary zoning in California with Senate Bill 9 (which allows for duplexes to be built on land zoned as single-family), the same battle likely looks very different in New York.¹³ However, such a goal is still necessary as funding incentives from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development alone are not enough, since neighborhoods with the most exclusionary zoning ordinances are also often those with the most resources and thus the least need for federal help.

The lack of affordable housing is a statewide crisis, and yet, especially in the state’s suburbs, local zoning that prevents the construction of multi-family housing serves as a practical impediment to developers’ efforts to build the needed housing.

In New York State, “The Statute of Local Governments reserves certain powers to the State Legislature, even where the exercise of these powers could or would diminish or impair a local power. These include the power...to adopt laws relating to matters of overriding state or regional concern.”¹⁴ Other states have devised ways for the state to exercise these powers via appeals processes, such as Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Illinois.¹⁵ California, Oregon, Washington, and Utah require that local governments develop plans for growth and update them periodically detailing how the jurisdiction will provide housing for all income levels.¹⁶ Resulting from civil rights litigation in New Jersey, “In 1975, the New Jersey Supreme Court held that the zoning power—a state power only delegated to local governments—could not be used to exclude, and that every municipality must provide its “fair share” of opportunities for low and moderate-income people to find housing.”¹⁷ The Great State of New York should not continue to do nothing to address the affordable housing crisis while so many other states are making progress, some significant progress.

¹² Local Government Home Rule Power. New York State website. Link: https://video.dos.ny.gov/lq/handbook/html/local_government_home_rule_power.html (Accessed March 31, 2022).

¹³ California Legislative Information and Bill Information. Link: https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB9 (Accessed March 31, 2022).

¹⁴ New York State Local Government Handbook 7th Edition. “Local Government Home Rule Power” Link: https://video.dos.ny.gov/lq/handbook/html/local_government_home_rule_power.html (Accessed on May 16, 2022)

¹⁵ Kazis, Noah. 2020. “Ending Exclusionary Zoning in New York City’s Suburbs” Report for the Furman Center. Page 21-25. Link: https://furmancenter.org/files/Ending_Exclusionary_Zoning_in_New_York_Citys_Suburbs.pdf (Accessed on May 16, 2022)

¹⁶ Kazis, Noah. 2020. “Ending Exclusionary Zoning in New York City’s Suburbs” Report for the Furman Center. Page 21-25. Link: https://furmancenter.org/files/Ending_Exclusionary_Zoning_in_New_York_Citys_Suburbs.pdf (Accessed on May 16, 2022)

¹⁷ 174 S. Burlington Cty. NAACP v. Mount Laurel Twp. (“Mount Laurel I”), 336 A.2d 713, 724 (N.J. 1975).

Conclusion

The unequal distribution of White and non-White—particularly Black and Hispanic—students across New York State has significant consequences for access to resources. To address this inequality, state education officials and legislators should make sure that high-need, intensely segregated school districts get the funding and support they deserve.

While the fight for education equity has been a long and multifaceted battle that has not made as much progress as might have been expected, New Yorkers can work to make sure that our children experience a more just future by supporting the recommendations articulated in this report and getting involved in policy discussions at the local, state, and federal levels.

About ERASE Racism

ERASE Racism is a regional civil rights organization that leads public policy advocacy campaigns and related initiatives to promote racial equity in areas such as housing, public school education, and community development. We engage in a variety of research, education, and consulting activities to address institutional and structural racism. Long Island, New York was the site of ERASE Racism's initial work and continues to be its geographic home and key focus area. Racism's work is expanding to encompass statewide activities and related national work.

ERASE Racism achieves its objectives through utilizing research, educating the public, policy advocacy, legal actions, and civic engagement of Long Island leaders, community organizations, and community residents of various ages and backgrounds.

We also form partnerships with Long Island-focused, regional, and national organizations and create or join coalitions to help make the goal of racial equity a priority throughout the country.

Methodology

All data used in this report were collected from the New York State Education Department. Data cleaning were conducted in Microsoft Excel, with missing data being given an “NA” value. Descriptive data analyses and visualizations were conducted in Tableau.

The classification of school districts was as follows: 1) Intensely segregated districts had at least 90 percent of their enrollment being non-White students; 2) Predominantly White districts had at least 85 percent of their enrollment being White students.

Acknowledgement

This report was researched by and primarily written by Olivia Ildefonso, PhD, who is a research consultant for ERASE Racism. The project was overseen by Elaine Gross, MSW, ERASE Racism's President.

Recommended Citation

ERASE Racism. 2022 "Unequal Resources for Students in New York State Based on Race"

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