



How Did We Get Here?

AN HISTORICAL RESEARCH PROJECT FUNDED BY A GRANT FROM
THE ROBERT DAVID LION GARDINER FOUNDATION



Gardiner Fellows' First Look Findings

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Land Use

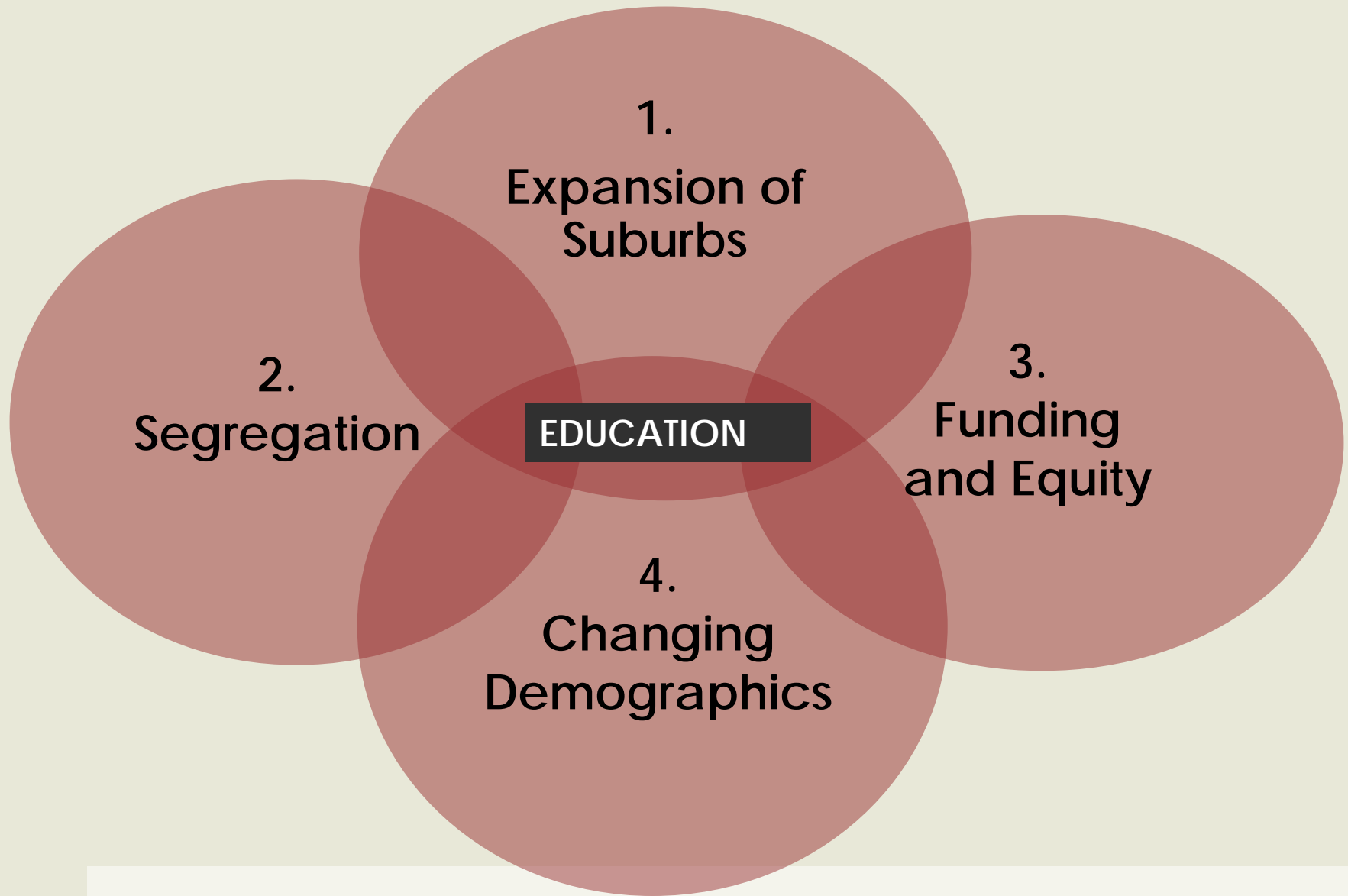
Robert Windorf
Nick Vasiliades

Education on Long Island: How Did We Get Here?

Research Questions

1. How does development of Long Island's history relate to the current state of education?
2. What were the key turning points and institutions, and who were the influential actors in education that influenced Long Island's history?
3. What are some successes and challenges of Long Island's historical and contemporary story pertaining to education?
4. What are some of the challenges to achieving equity, access, and opportunity, given Long Island's past?

“America’s First Suburb” Overlapping Themes



Preliminary Finding

EDUCATION

The “Haves” and the “Have-Nots”

Long Island is home to some of the nation's highest-achieving school districts, yet due to historical patterns of structural racism that facilitated suburban expansion, it is also among the most segregated and unequal regions in the country.

The “Haves”

Superintendent B

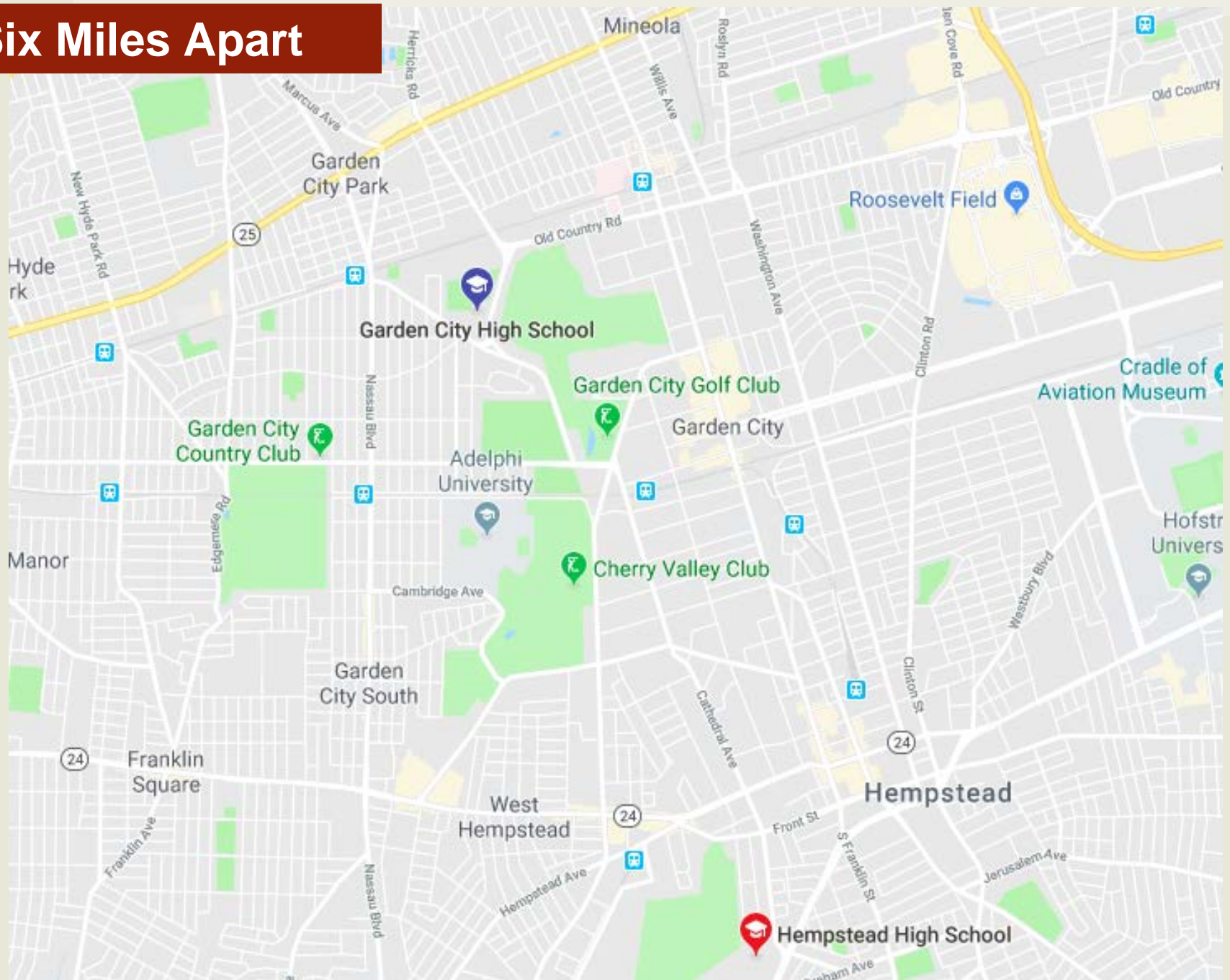
“If you look at Long Island as though it were a separate state...we’re 1, 2, 3, ...over and over again. ... so even with our pockets of concern as a system, we’re great...Long Islanders... have decided that they want a really high level of service for their kids, they have really high expectations for the outcomes for their kids and they really have invested deeply.”

The “Haves”

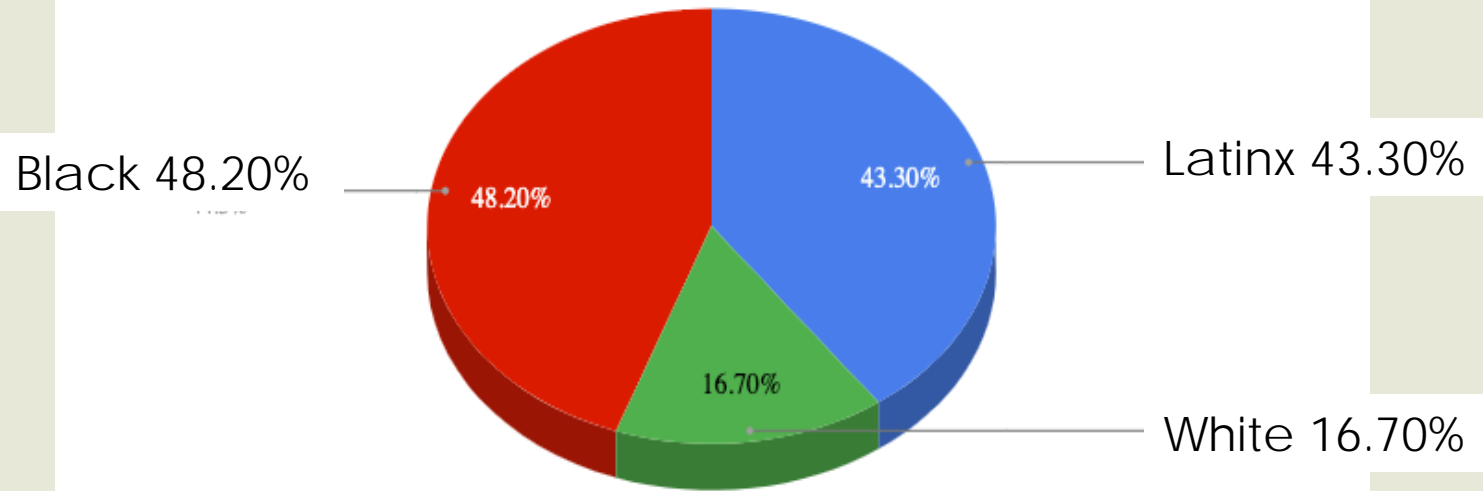
- 1 in every 5 Long Island schools was awarded a Gold or Silver medal.
- If Long Island was a state, it would be #1 in high school completion rates (90%).
- If Long Island was a state, it would finish 3rd in Siemen’s Science competition semifinalists.
- If Long Island was a state, it would be ranked #1 in the percentage of high schools ranked “America’s Best” by *Newsweek*.



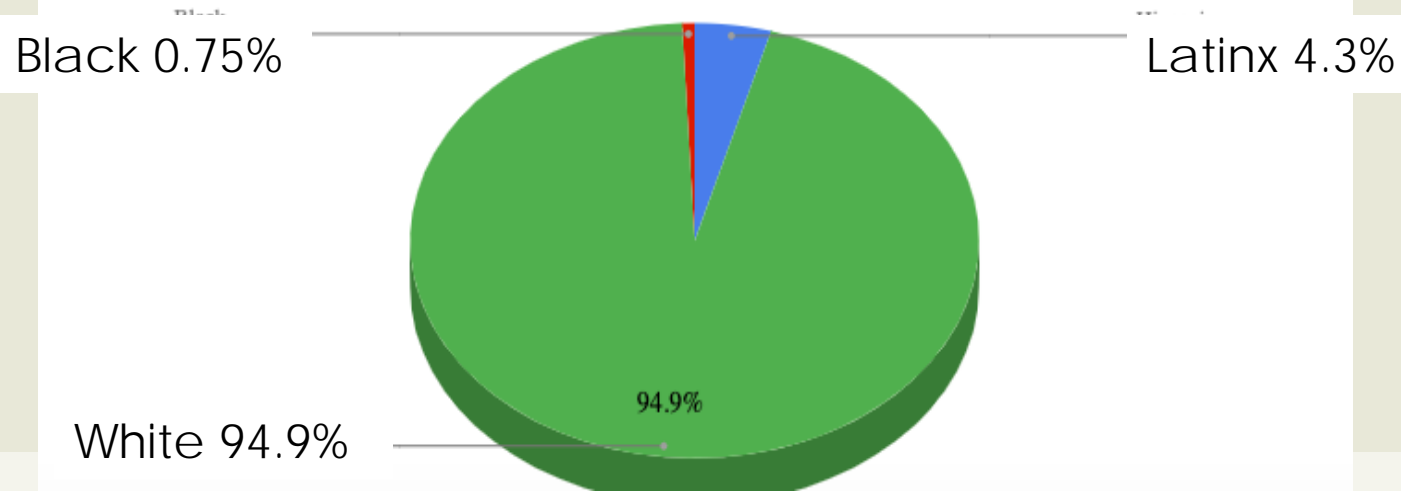
Six Miles Apart



Hempstead: Latinx, White, Black Population 2015 Total Population - 55,105



Garden City: Latinx, White, Black Population 2015 Total Population - 22,575



Comparison of Two Nassau County Adjacent School Districts

Garden City:

Pop: 22,699

Median Household Income: \$161,163

Foreign Born Population: 7.1%

H.S. Graduation Rate (4 yr.): 98%

SAT Scores (2017):

Math: 603 / Reading: 605

NYS Regents Exam Scores:

Well Above Expectations

A.P. Exams Pass Rate: 76%

Hempstead:

Pop: 55,698

Median Household Income: \$58,476

Foreign Born Population: 41.0%

H.S. Graduation Rate (4 yr.): 44%

SAT Scores (2017):

Math: 462 / Reading: 440

NYS Regents Exam Scores:

Well Below Expectations

A.P. Exams Pass Rate: 36%

The “Have-Nots”

- Long Island is home to 9 of the 11 school districts in New York State with the highest concentration of African American and Hispanic students. All 9 of these districts are high poverty districts.
- The funding gap between school districts with the greatest and least poverty is \$6,876 per pupil.
- Student outcomes in Long Island’s least-wealthy school districts are significantly below student outcomes within the Island’s wealthiest school districts.

“HOME RULE”

Superintendent B

“You find that the **concentrations of persons of color match almost perfectly the school district boundaries. Some of that is choice. Well, you look at Roosevelt. It’s a middle class African American community with less than 30% living in poverty. It’s really a middle class African American community...** So if you were a middle-class family, and you were African American, you’d say where’s a place where I can go and find a middle class African American community, that would be a **choice...** If you were to do anything to change let’s say Roosevelt...what are the things that you could do with this not well functioning district? So, you could break it up and send the kids to multiple different districts, but that would be basically saying that **this is a community that can’t govern itself**, or these are kids that can’t be educated in concentrations. **There would be some really troubling sub-messages from doing something like that that you’d have to think about.**”

Findings & Themes

THEME 1: EXPANSION OF THE SUBURBS: *Stamped From the Beginning*



Findings & Themes

THEME 1: EXPANSION OF THE SUBURBS

Levittown: The Forgotten History

“This **whole** history has been forgotten. It used to be well-known. There was nothing hidden about it. The federal government pursued two important policies in the mid-20th century that segregated metropolitan areas.”

1. Levittown: the FHA, **guaranteed bank loans** for construction and development to Levittown on condition that no homes be sold to African Americans and that every home have a clause in its deed prohibiting resale to African Americans.
2. FHA **subsidized the development** on a condition that they be only sold to White families and that the homes in those suburbs had deeds that prohibited resale to African Americans. These two policies worked together to segregate metropolitan areas in ways that they otherwise would never have been segregated (Rothstein, 2019).

THEME 2: SEGREGATION

- <https://youtu.be/E7DVtWCBa30?t=84>

Elaine Gross:

“Segregation levels in public schools are heading in the wrong direction. Between 2004 and 2016 the number of intensely segregated school districts (90-100% non-White) more than **doubled**, and students attending these segregated schools more than tripled.”

And for those Majority
“Minority” districts that are
Intensely Segregated,
the number of students
attending has nearly **tripled**.

LONG ISLAND STUDENTS ATTENDING
INTENSELY SEGREGATED DISTRICTS
(90-100% non-white)

2004 - 5% 22,084 students



2016 - 15% 65,215 students



Today there are more than
twice as many Intensely
Segregated districts as
there were 12 years ago.

NUMBER OF LONG ISLAND
SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT ARE
INTENSELY SEGREGATED DISTRICTS
(90-100% non-white)

2004
5 districts
22,084
students



2016
11 districts
65,215
students



Racial Composition in Long Island Schools

2010

White Black Hispanic Asian Native American
or Multi-Racial

All Long Island Schools:



High Poverty Schools (10%):



Middle Poverty Schools (80%):



Low Poverty Schools (10%):



0%

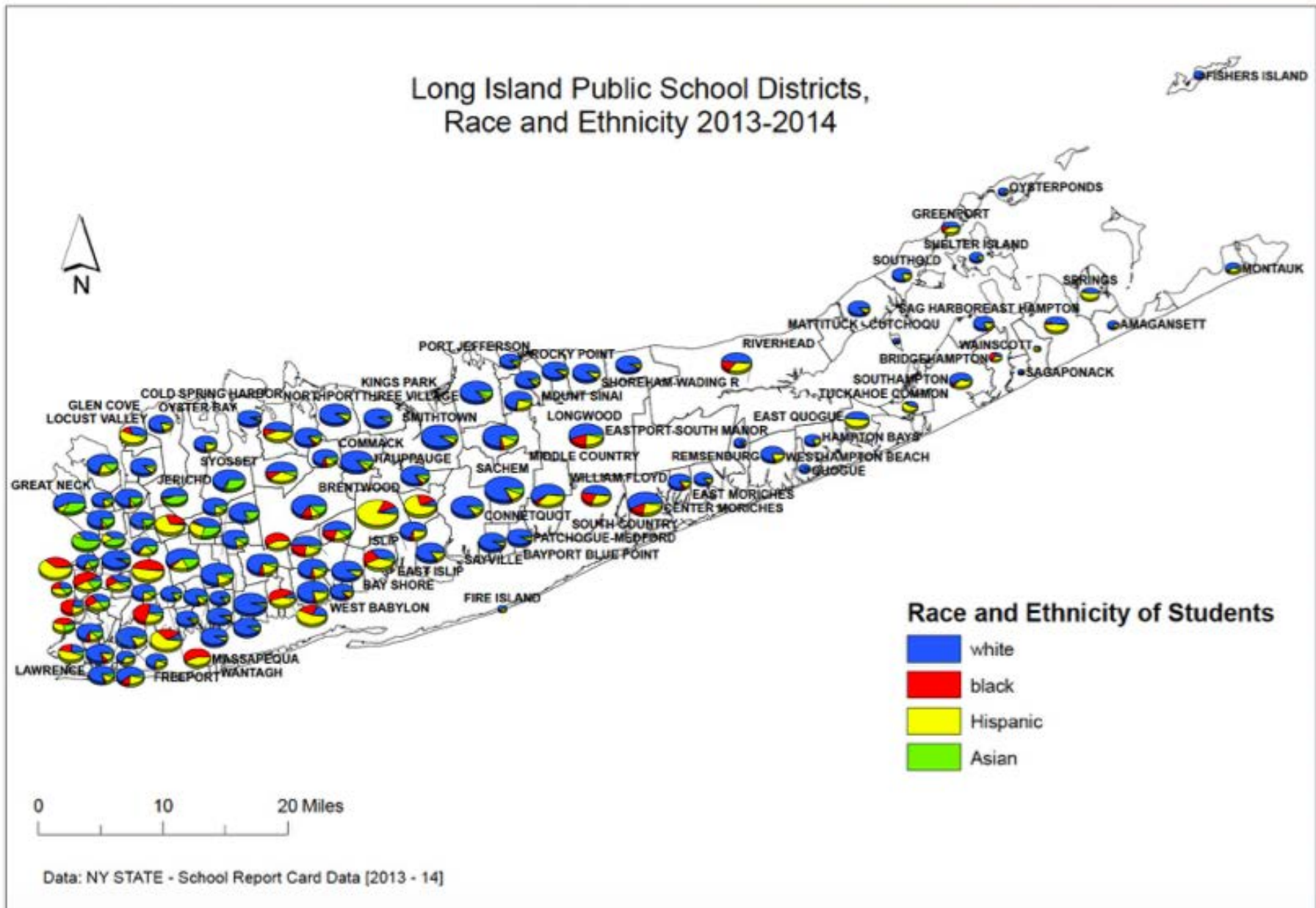
25%

50%

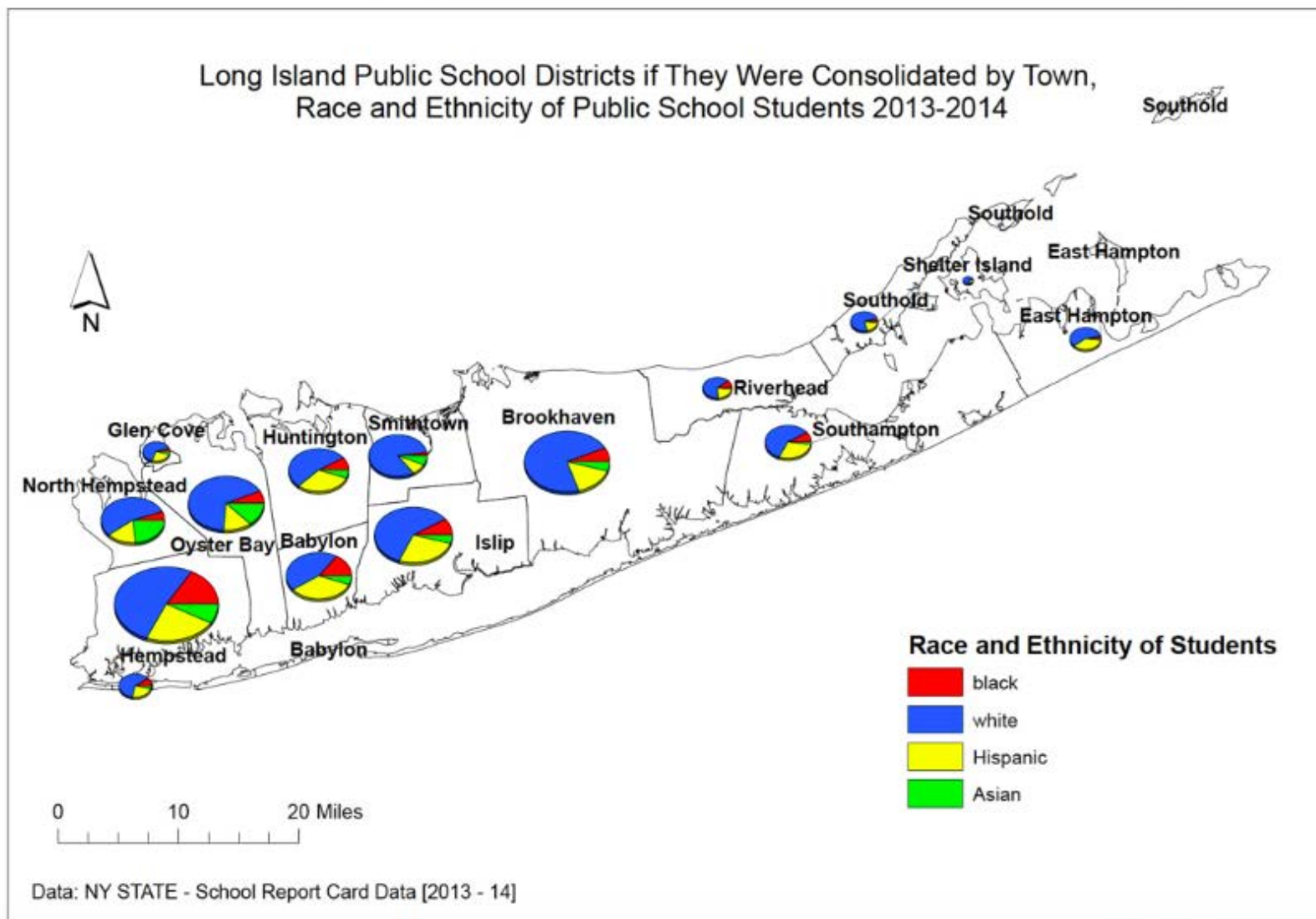
75%

100%

Race and Ethnicity of Public School Students 2013-2014



Public School Districts if They Were Consolidated by Town, Race and Ethnicity of Public School Students 2013-14



THEME 2: SEGREGATION

The Legacy of School Desegregation on Long Island





Photo Credit: Newsday / Walter del Toro





L.I.'s Searing Issue: Racial Imbalance in the Schools

Commack Scuttles an Exchange

By DAVID A. ANDELMAN

COMMACK, L. I.—For the last four years, Emanuel Glisner, the principal of the Vanderbilt Elementary School in the Half Hollow Hills School District, has watched some of his white pupils play and learn alongside black pupils from the Wyandanch School District.

"Sometimes I think if we just left these kids alone, all these questions of busing and integration and everything else would work themselves out," he said. "Sometimes I think we adults just get too much involved."

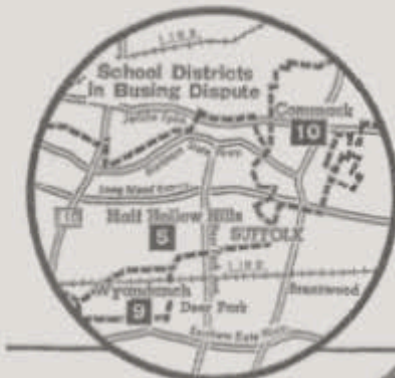
For the last four years, a program of cultural exchanges between the districts has operated without incident and, the children from Half Hollow Hills agree, with very pleasant results.

But in nearby Commack a plan for the same voluntary "intercultural exchanges" between the district and the predominantly black Wyandanch School District was shouted down by residents at a school board meeting last month and withdrawn by its sponsor, the Board of Cooperative Educational Services, a regional umbrella agency of school districts.

It was clear from the comments of the more than 700 white adults attending the meeting that they viewed the exchanges as a forerunner to school busing to achieve racial balance or as a precursor of the absorption of the black Wyandanch School District 9 into the white Commack District 10.

"These contentions were denied by the exchange sponsors, who contended that the program was designed to overcome the kind of racial fears that they felt were at work during the meeting."

Why did something fail in one white district after having succeeded in an adjacent white district? Both districts



have much in common and both are close to the black district.

One possible reason is that it was begun in Half Hollow Hills District 5 quietly and without fanfare. The teachers in several of the schools, with the informal agreement of the school board, went ahead and began the one-day-a-month exchanges.

Over all, in the last four years, more than 200 pupils from Half Hollow Hills in the elementary grades and nearly an equal number of high school students have participated in some sort of exchange program along with nearly 1,000 Wyandanch youngsters.

In Commack, on the other hand, the intent to begin such exchanges was made known in what the School Superintendent, Dr. William Kochmower, now says was a "totally ineptly drawn memorandum" by four Commack principals to the parents. The letter was said to have triggered racial anxieties.

"I worked all my life so I could move my kids out of Brooklyn where all the schools have these Negroes and crime and so forth, and now that I get out here to Commack, they want to put them back in those same kinds of

Few issues have been as volatile on Long Island as the problem of racial imbalance in schools. Indeed, 10 years ago, Malverne was the first school district in the state ordered to achieve racial balance. And today bitter controversy swirls over an attempt to promote racial exchange between Wyandanch and Commack.

What is happening now in Malverne? Why should racial exchange falter in Commack while it is succeeding in nearby Half Hollow Hills?



Malverne's Bitter Legacy

By DAVID C. BERLINER

MALVERNE, L. I.—The busing issue may be boiling over in the nation's courts, in Congress, and along the Presidential campaign trail, but to the residents of this area, the controversy is nothing new.

Ten cancer-filled years ago, the patchwork Union Free School District 12, which takes in 6,000 families' portions of Malverne, Lynbrook and Lakeview, was divided on the broader issue: racial balance in the school system.

The district was the first in the state to be ordered to achieve balance. Busing was a natural offshoot.

Today, much of what took place in the years that followed seems remote, even insignificant, to many of those who were principals in the drama. Some, such as then-State Commissioner of Education James Allen, have died. Others have moved away. And still others discuss the past grateful for the benefit of hindsight.

In many cases, friendships between whites and blacks have faded away, amplifying between the races a gap that seemed too wide at the controversy's height. What re-examination that is present seems to be minimal and most often is described as strained.

Of the three lower-middle-class to upper-middle-class communities that make up the district, Lynbrook and Malverne are virtually all white, Lakeview all black.

In the early 1960's, the three elementary schools reflected the racial composition of the sections in which they were situated, particularly the crowded Woodfield Road School in Lakeview whose enrollment bordered on 50 per cent black.

This year, as it has been since 1968, the Woodfield Road building is not



Continued on Page 13

Flight to private schools



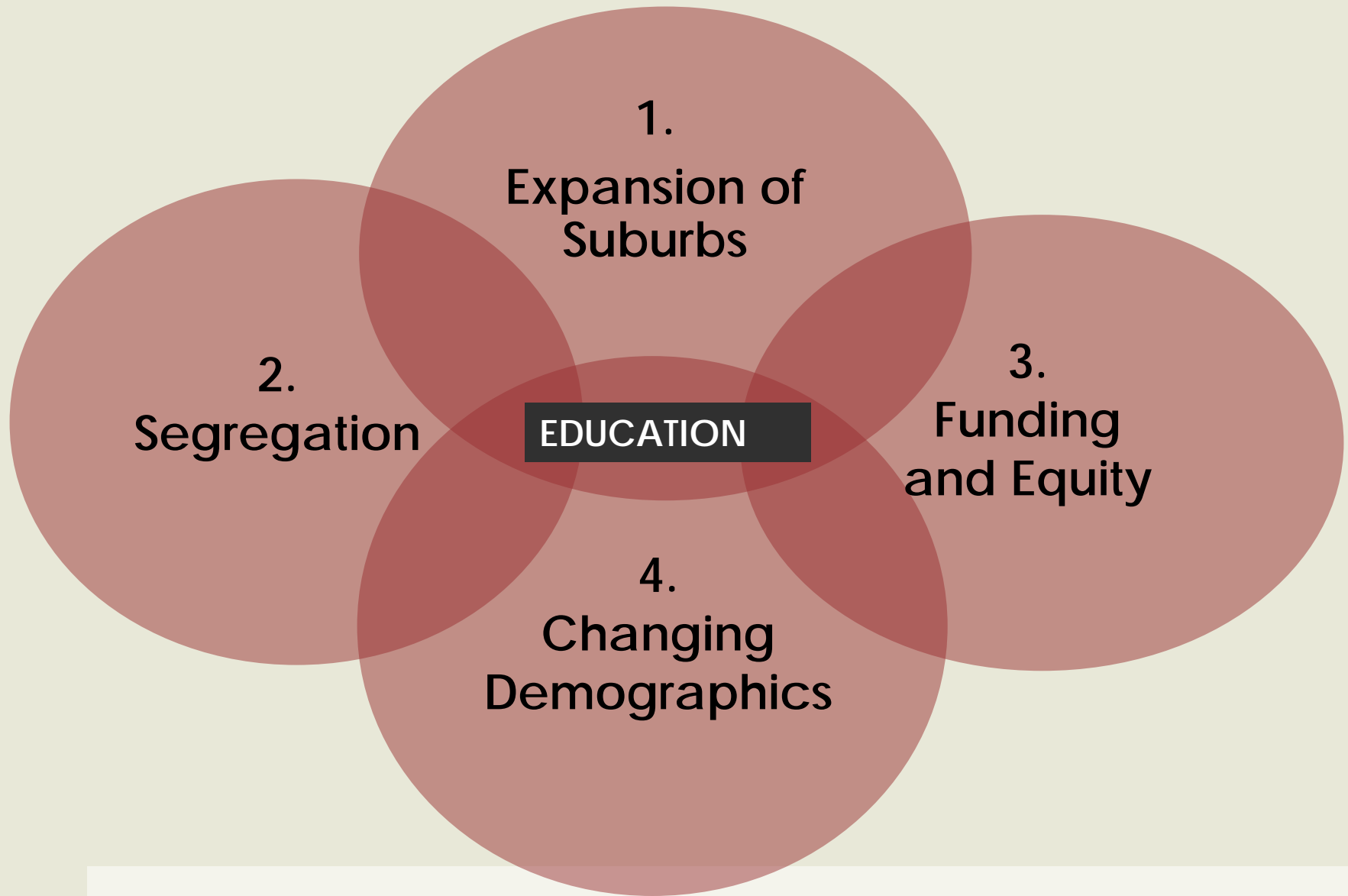
THEME 2: SEGREGATION

Elaine Gross

"Solving structural racism will require a shared understanding of history, objective facts about current challenges and how to address them, and familiarity with and empathy for people who are not like oneself."

"The familiarity and empathy gaps on Long Island will not lessen if segregation remains so widespread and unchallenged. Central to the prosperity and sustainability of Long Island is the extent to which Long Islanders tackle segregation head-on."

“America’s First Suburb” Overlapping Themes



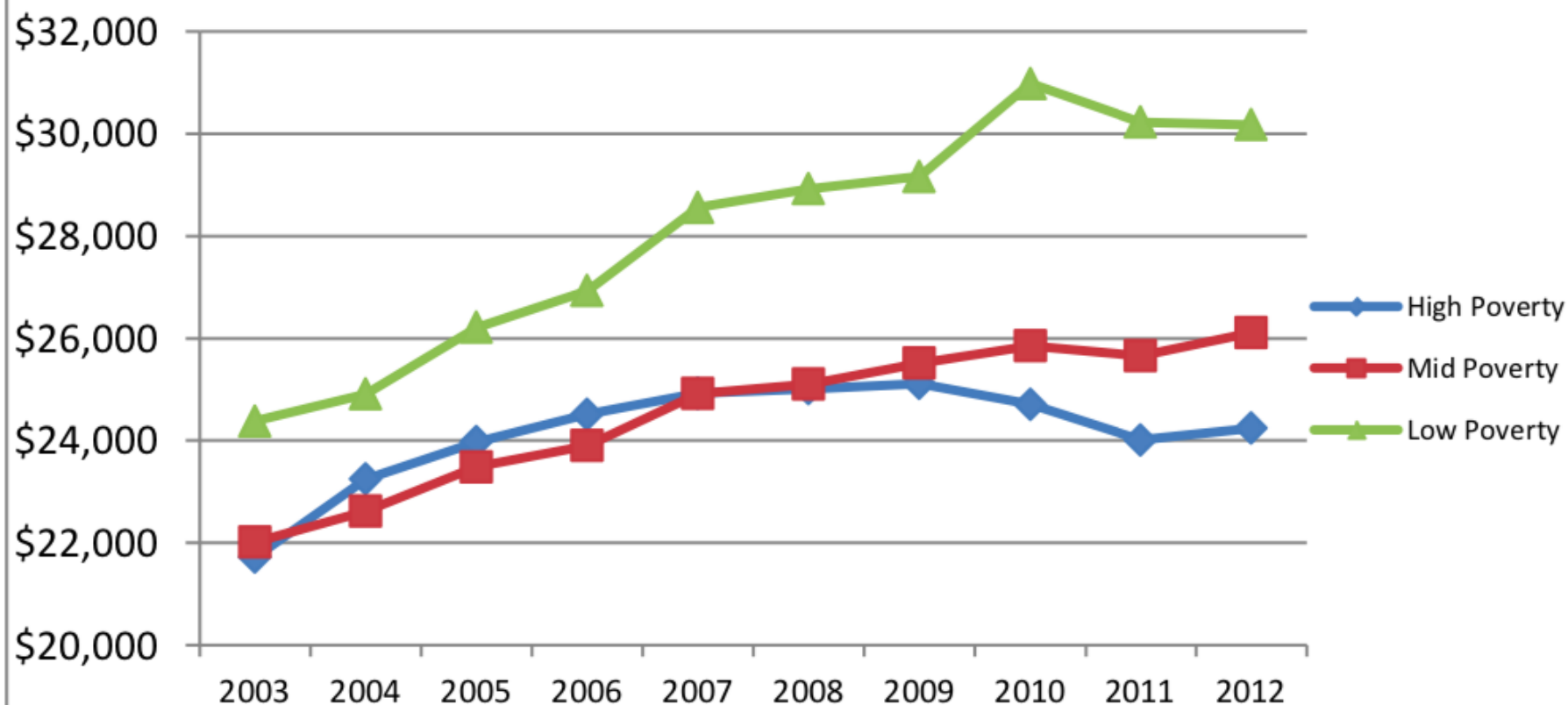
Findings & Themes

THEME 3: Equity

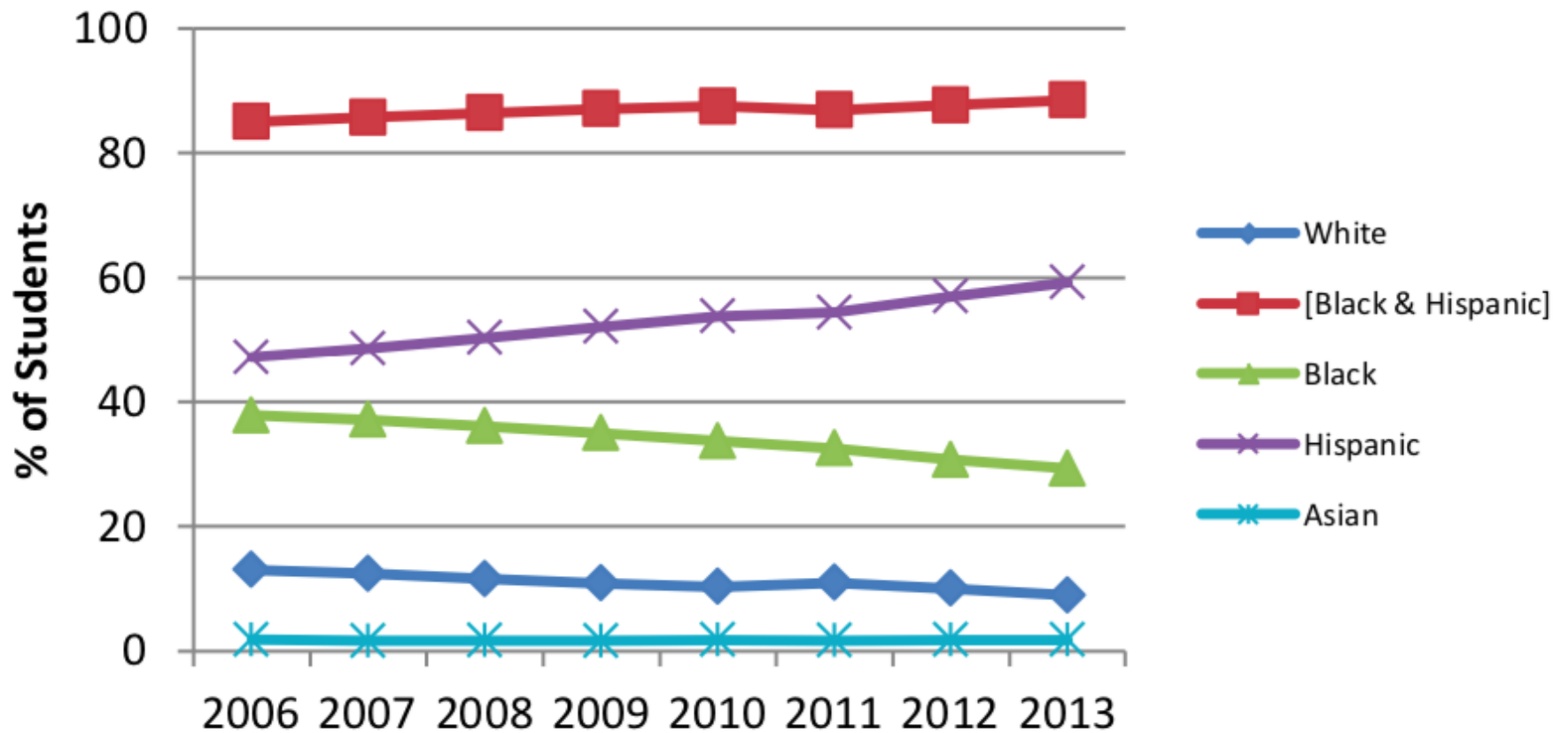
The “Haves” and the “Have-Nots”

“I think the Equity issue is...one of those primary issues that needs to be addressed. The gap between the haves and the have nots has got to be narrowed and we’ve got to figure out how to do it. I believe the schools are the way to do it.” (Superintendent A)

**LI Average Expenditures per Pupil by District Poverty
(2013 Dollars)**



Schools in *High Poverty* Districts on LI: Percent of Students by Racial/Ethnic Category



THEME 3: EQUITY

Leveling the Playing Field: School #1

"The village is basically very White, but the district is the largest black enclave on the island in terms of a community."

"In the late 70s, early 80s we had a separate Black elementary school and a separate White school, and the kids didn't meet until high school."

- **Superintendent B**

"
Now! We had 71 AP scholars last year!"

"We're the only district in Nassau County that has a biomedical, architecture, and computer science college level STEM program - Project Lead the Way."

THEME 3: EQUITY

How Did They Do It?

Focus on:

- Educational Excellence
- Intentional allocation of resources
- Innovative and committed leadership
- Renovation of schools and grounds
- Cultivating a common language



THEME 3: EQUITY

School #2: Transformed Through Detracking

1986 - A snapshot....

- Minority students and low-socioeconomic-status students overrepresented in the lowest tracks
- Low track classes - low expectations - tensions in the classroom
- Wide achievement gaps in remedial and low-track classes
- The slower the curriculum, the wider the learning gap between the high-track students and the low-track students

THEME 3: EQUITY

How Did They Do It?

- Groundbreaking thinking: All kids will earn a Regents diploma.
- High expectations of all students
- A strong support system
- Exposure to higher level courses for all kids
- Every kid will take at least one AP or IB class before they graduate.
- Used data to inform curricular decisions

Findings & Themes

THEME 4: SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS

All participants interviewed identified the changing demographics of Long Island as a primary challenge for schools. The increase in the Latinx population has presented numerous challenges for school districts across Long Island and has resulted in varied approaches to meeting the needs of the ELL population.

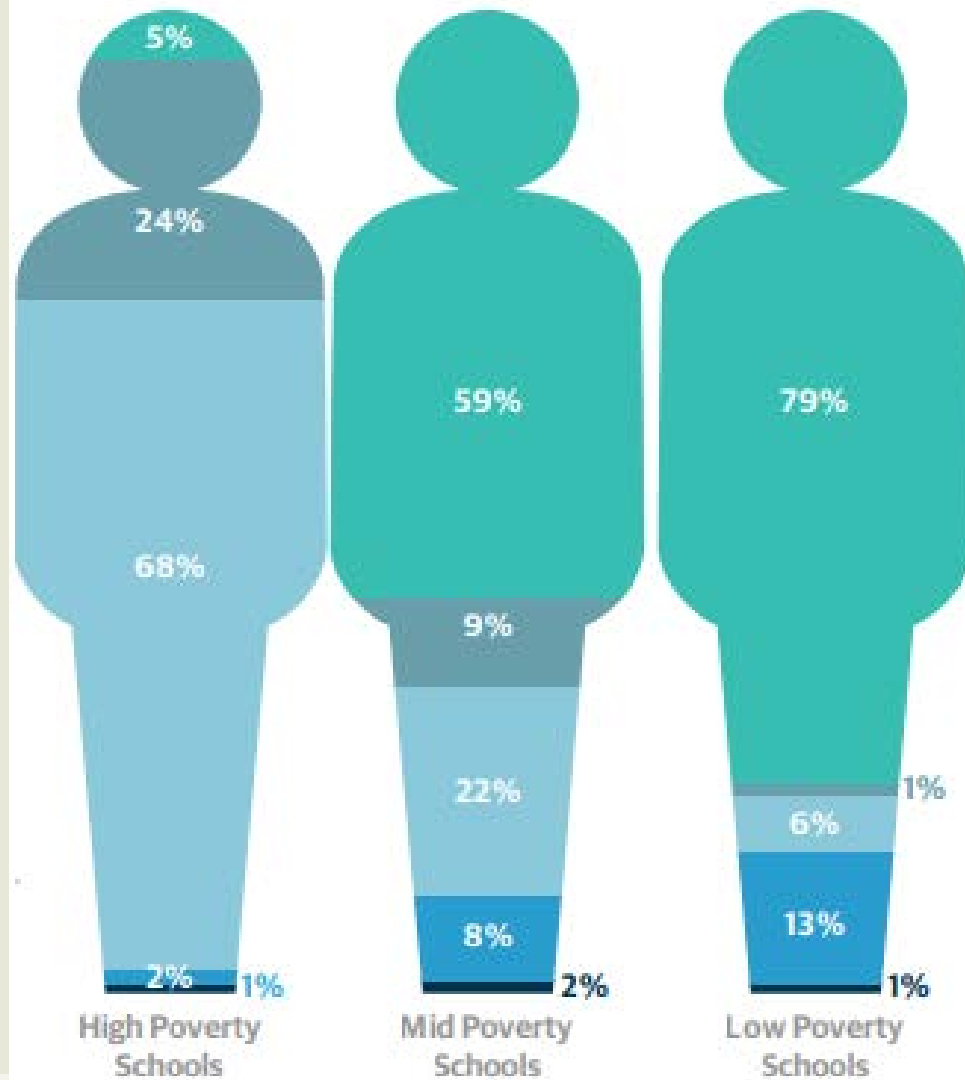
THEME 4: SHIFTING DEMOGRAPHICS

Four Categories of Demographic Change

1. Schools that remain mostly White and usually affluent
2. Diverse schools with increasing Asian population and declining White population
3. Diverse schools as Black and Latinx population increases and White population declines
4. Schools with almost no White students remaining; 95% of the segregation lies between rather than within districts. Newer suburban families are more likely to house extended families.

(Wells et al., p. 21)

RACIAL/ETHNIC COMPOSITION BY SCHOOL POVERTY CATEGORY, 2016



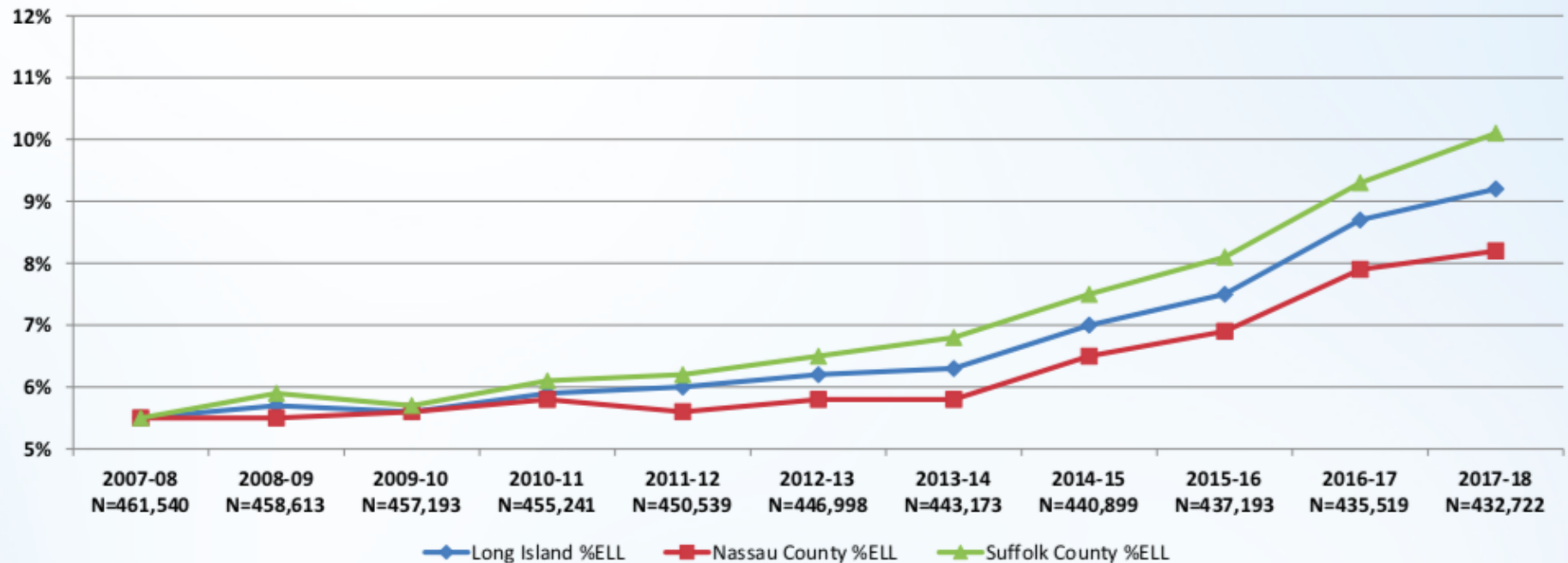
THEME 4: Shifting Demographics

One School's Story

"The face of the district is changing to a more Hispanic face; two years ago, the Hispanic population became the majority."

Long Island -Shifting Demographics

% of ELL Students on Long Island



N = Total K-12 Enrollment

Note: Y-axis only ranges from 5% - 12% to better magnify the data points & trends

2007-08 to 2017-18 NYS School Report Cards

THEME 4: Shifting Demographics

Community and Identity

- 1) Started detracking based on data showing students in Regents classes were performing poorly in comparison to students in honors classes.
- 2) Implemented dual-language program.
- 3) Provided intensive programs for kids with higher needs.
- 4) Cultivated a strong instructional support system.
- 5) Established community connections.

Diversity Matters

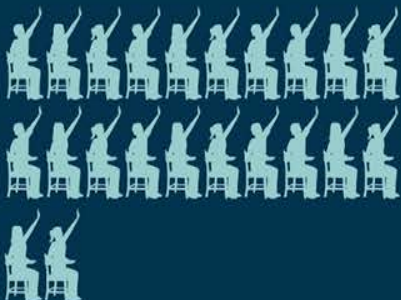
Long Island's 124 school districts divide students by race, ethnicity and income. But when districts are expanded to include

students across these divides, achievement improves. **It's true nationally and it's true on Long Island.**

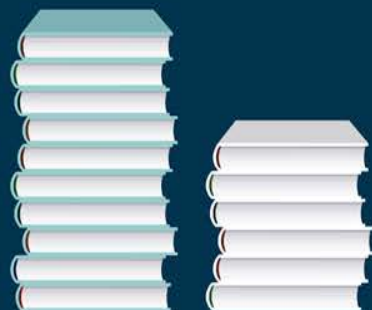


Nationally, low-income students do better in middle-class schools compared to similar students in low-income schools:

Low-income students attending more affluent schools are 22 times more likely to perform well.

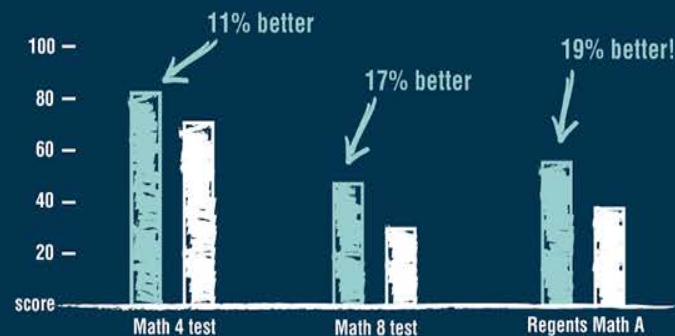


And they performed at a level almost 2 years better than their peers in low-income schools.

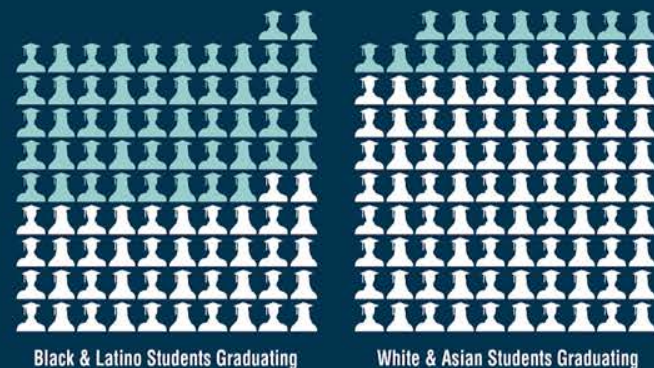


And on Long Island, low-income students also did better in middle-class schools compared to their peers in predominantly low-income schools:

Low-income students attending more affluent schools scored better on state wide tests:



In Rockville Centre, where classrooms were mixed regardless of student background, all students performed better and graduation rates improved significantly.



Additional Findings and Areas for Future Research

- Tax cap of 2011- “Under the current fragmented governance structure, the county cannot provide the needed services for all school districts” (p. 22). Schools with fewer resources are “sinking.”
- Newer suburban families are more likely to house extended families (Wells et al., p. 21).
- The Community Reinvestment Act of 1989 encouraged bank loans to low-income families between 1994-2003 Black and Hispanic home ownership increased twice as fast as White home ownership—**by 2006 the number of people below the poverty line was greater in the suburbs than in the cities.** “Trading Places” phenomenon—Whites moving from suburbs to cities and minorities moving to suburbs.
- **Funding-** The formulas for funding schools, in particular tying property taxes to school funding have had a broad impact on education on Long Island and have resulted in some of the most dramatic district disparities in educational quality in the country.
- **Community identity-** As school districts and schools became centers of communities and high performing schools began to influence real estate markets, individual communities developed distinctive and diverse identities. Some districts have remained relatively stable over time while others have changed dramatically. **The story of schools and communities would be interesting to look more closely at, perhaps as a series of contrasting case studies.**
- **Immigration-** The changing demographics of public schools on Long Island and the challenges in determining how to serve growing immigrant communities was an important story discussed by all of our interviewees. While demographic changes can be tied to federal law, historically, there is a unique story for Long Island because of its location as a N.Y. suburb. **The impact of the Trump administration’s policies are impacting schools in dramatic ways.**