

Gardiner Foundation Project
Education Themes and Summary of Investigation
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I. Overarching Themes:

- **Expansion of Suburbs**- The enormous growth of Long Island's suburbs driven by the G.I. Bill and the expansion of roads and parkways led to large capital investment in schools between the early 1950s continuing through the 1960s. This is a theme that lends itself to collaboration between the Education and Land Use teams and will be explored this semester. A significant aspect of this expansion was the systemic racism that undergirded community development, both in the GI Bill's mortgage allotments and the *de facto* and *de jure* segregation that followed. These historic factors shaped neighborhoods and communities in ways that remain significant.
- **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 have remained relatively stable over time while others have changed dramatically. The story of schools and communities is 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 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 New York suburb.

II. Historical Events and Turning Points:

Colonial New York

- No school system
- Individual schools – church and town sponsored, run by independent schoolmasters

Hudson Valley and Long Island

- Dutch settlers predominated
- Schooling was a community responsibility carried out through the Dutch Reformed Church
- None of the schools were public

Under George Clinton – first governor of NY

1784 – Regents of the University of the State of New York

- Function was to encourage the creation of a network of educational institutions throughout the State

1787 – First school established in Suffolk County - Clinton Academy

- Early academies were a public/private hybrid
- Offered college-preparatory subjects like Latin, Greek, and math as well as practical topics such as engineering and embroidery
- Although independently governed, academies were seen as public institutions because they carried out the State's public educational purposes
- At times, funds were appropriated to the Regents for distribution to academies

1813 – A Literature Fund was created to provide regular State subsidies to the academies

NOTE: Private academies for more advanced students were established before the elementary public school system.

1795 – The Legislature inaugurated a system of State aid to encourage establishment and support of common schools

- Each year 50,000 would be divided among various towns
- In each town the citizens were supposed to create school districts
- Each school district would receive the State subsidy and a matching town subsidy in proportion to pupil attendance
- Over 1300 schools enrolling almost 60,000 pupils qualified for State aid

1805 – Creation of Common School Fund, based on proceeds of State lands

1812 – A new Common School Law reestablished the system of school districts, supported by State and local funds and tuition, and administered by a State Superintendent of Common Schools

- This reflected the belief that education was considered essential to every person, however humble his/her situation in life

NOTE: Many of the present-day school districts of the State date back to the years immediately following the implementation of the 1812 law.

Turning Points:

1840s – Controversies over which version of the Bible – Protestant or Catholic – led to the development of a separate church-sponsored parochial school system

1853 – State Superintendent of Common Schools ruled that Bible-reading could not be required in public schools

1916 – New York City Teachers Union established

- Mid-nineteenth century – NYS Teachers Association, affiliated with the National Education Association was founded
- Advocated for the professional status of teachers

1925 – With the support of Governor Alfred E. Smith, the State adopted a landmark Equalization Law, basing state aid on a formula that recognized the disparities in school district wealth

1944 – GI Bill of Rights Act - population of suburban Nassau and Suffolk skyrocketed

1951 – Board of Regents adopted an official state-written nondenominational prayer recommending its use by all districts

1954 – *Brown v Board of Education* - Supreme Court declared state laws establishing separate schools for black and white students to be unconstitutional

- Efforts to desegregate supported by the Board of Regents

1962 – *Engel v Vitale* (New Hyde Park) state of NY's prayer violates the First Amendment establishment clause

1965 – Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) passed—allocates federal funds for Title I and bilingual education

1965 – Immigration Act of 1965—revokes quotas—results in wave of immigration from Asia and Latin America

1967 – Taylor Law grants rights to collectively bargain to government employees but makes striking illegal

1972 – Title IX - prohibits discrimination in public schools based on gender

1973 – Rehabilitation Act provides section 504, providing civil rights for students with disabilities

1974 – Equal Education Opportunities Act - prohibits discrimination and mandates action to overcome barriers to equal protection—protects rights of ELL's

1974 – *Milliken v Bradley* – suburbs not responsible for segregation

1975 – The Education of All Handicapped Children Act passed—least restrictive environment

1977 – *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education* - public-sector unions can require non-members to pay “agency fees”

1978 – Longest teacher strike in NYS history in [Levittown](#)

1980 – The Refugee Act of 1980 admits refugees for humanitarian purposes. More than 3 million immigrants enter under this law

1982 – *Levittown v. Nyquist* – State’s Court of Appeals ruled that equality of school finance was not mandated by the State Constitution

1982 – *Island Trees Board of Education v. Pico* - Court ruled that schools cannot remove books from school libraries because of their content

1984 – Emergency Immigrant Education Act - provides funding to schools to offset cost of large numbers of immigrants

2002 – No Child Left Behind - Emphasis on standardized testing begins

2009 – American Reinvestment and Recovery Act includes Race to the Top
New York adopts APPR and Common Core Learning Standards

2010 – Patchogue teens sentenced to murder for 2008 hate crime

2015 – 150,000 New York students Opt-Out of standardized tests

2017 – New York Civil Liberties Union releases report finding that 20 percent of NYS schools illegally discriminate against immigrants by barring enrollment

2017 – Hempstead and Wyandanch are rated as being in “significant stress” by the State Comptroller (the highest degree of fiscal stress by any non-urban districts in the state)

2018 – 50 percent of students on Long Island Opt-Out of ELA tests

2019 – *Janus v. AFSCME* - overturns *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education*, potentially defunding teachers’ unions

III. Narratives/Themes Presented:

Overall, each of the individuals interviewed identify the changing demographics of Long Island as a primary challenge for schools. (Currently, according to the *Long Island Index*, 2018, Blacks, Hispanics and Asians are now 35% of the population, an increase from 23% in 2000.) They also fully acknowledge Long Island’s reputation as being one of the most segregated regions in the country and recognize that merging school districts is virtually impossible due to several factors, particularly that of real estate values. 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 ENL population. Although school districts are attempting to address the educational challenges that ENL students experience, schools have not found a definitive answer. Tracking is also a related and ongoing obstacle to student achievement.

IV. Related Issues:

- Many students throughout Long Island, even those who attend more affluent schools live in poverty and qualify for free and reduced lunch. The “working poor” is a systemic factor in Long Island’s story.

- Social media has created conditions that often undermine the superintendent's ability to address critical issues.
- Leadership styles vary greatly across Long Island, which raises several questions for the researchers. For example, there are 124 school districts on Long Island, each under the direction of a single superintendent and his or her cabinet. In what ways do specific leadership styles contribute to an equitable education for all students?
- The funding for schools is a system that is bound by tradition and does not result in a fair distribution of financial support across districts.

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Summary Points from 2018 Interviews

1. Greatest Changes

- Changing demographics have created instructional challenges and racial issues within districts.
- There has been an influx of immigrants from countries like Ecuador, for example. New students often enter schools in September or before Christmas.
- The impact of social media has been significant and intrusive. It has created a sense of urgency in the daily responsibilities of a superintendent in the sense that an immediate response is expected.
- Students are exposed to the internet at an early age and are typically unprepared to interact with the information on an intellectual and emotional level.

2. Educational Equity

- The distribution of money among suburban schools has to be different from the way it is distributed in urban schools.
- The differences that separate students – their color, language, culture – will continue to separate them. Schools reflect the segregation that is part of Long Island's culture. It does not seem likely that the housing problem will ever be solved.
- Dual language programs are having success in leveling the playing field for ENL students.
- Critical to a district's success is the shared vision of school boards, the superintendent, teachers, and the community.

3. Quality Education and Challenges

- Prepare kids to read, write, think, and speak rather than direct them to a vocational path. It is crippling for a student to determine that when they are in high school.
- The preponderance of problems occurs in lower track classrooms, which is one reason why tracking should be eliminated.
- The process of de-tracking can be replicated in any school district. It takes time but can be done. Exposure for all kids to higher-level college curriculum leads to academic success for all students, even those who struggle.
- ENL students are the ones who struggle the most; they are the most troubling population.