

Molloy College/Gardiner Foundation Project:
“Long Island: How Did We Get Here?”
Education and Poverty and the Working Poor Combined Themes
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Changing Demographics

Education	Poverty and the Working Poor
<p data-bbox="203 514 787 840">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 interviewees. While demographic changes can be tied to federal law, historically, there is a specific story for Long Island because of its location as a N.Y. suburb.</p> <p data-bbox="203 871 787 1060">Languages - Dual language programs are having success in leveling the playing field for ENL students. ENL students are the ones who struggle the most; they are the most troubling population.</p> <p data-bbox="203 1092 787 1207">Racial Changes - Changing demographics have created instructional challenges and racial issues within districts.</p>	<p data-bbox="820 514 1412 955">Immigration/Racial Changes - “The ENL rate is getting larger in every district. Rich or poor, you know? And instead of looking at that as a positive thing, it comes down to that us versus them too, you know. For some reason we want to just not see diversity as not a good thing anymore and that’s a big problem, you know? So until, maybe, we start looking at diversity as the only way somebody can learn, you know, and, that the best teacher is to learn from each other, then I don’t know. I don’t know. It’s a whole mindset shift.”</p> <p data-bbox="820 987 1412 1270">Languages - “I think that the Hispanic, the growth of the Hispanic population in schools, the class sizes had to get adjusted and changed, right? Also, the language barrier, having more folks who are bilingual, so that's always something else that folks are looking at, trying to hire bilingual staff on a regular basis.”</p> <p data-bbox="820 1281 1412 1459">“I definitely would reiterate that. We have a Haitian population on Long Island. But you know, not as many people in the field speak Creole. So that's something that's always going to be an ongoing challenge.”</p>

Opportunity Gap/Inequities in Education

Education	Poverty and the Working Poor
<p>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.</p> <p>Economically Disadvantaged Students - 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.</p>	<p>Funding - “When you look at poverty numbers, we don't get the anti-poverty dollars that we need here in the region, because when you look at Buffalo, Syracuse, and Rochester, they have about 33% or so folks living in poverty where we have, you know, well under 10. I think it's about 7.2% and 6.5%, in the two counties. But when you actually drill down to the numbers, and this is just Federal Poverty numbers, so it doesn't account for our high cost of living, it doesn't account for the fact that they have public transportation, and we don't, so we have all these additional challenges. We've got 100 less people living in poverty, and yet we're getting them the dollars. So there's the continued challenge of who we are as a region, being part of the story, as well as the very significant impact of segregation.”</p> <p>Economically Disadvantaged Students- “...the children that are living in communities where they don't get what they need at home, are coming to school, and they're being expected to perform well on tests, to behave exceptionally all the time, but we're not taking into account the fact that some of these kids aren't getting breakfast at home. I mean, I'll give you a case in point, in a district out east that I used to work and do programs in, and we used to give out snacks in the after-school program. And there was this would happen all the time, there was this one particular day where this kid was taking this trying to grab as many snacks as he can, as he could. And I said, you don't have to do that. You don't have to try to take the snacks, if you want more, just ask me. And he told me well, I know I'm sorry, but you know, I just don't know if I'm gonna be able to eat tonight so I'm just taking what I can now.”</p>

Community Identities/Fractured Governments

<p>Education</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Poverty and the Working Poor</p> <p>Community Identity - “Each town, village, hamlet is its own little island within Long Island. They have their own cultures, they have their own socioeconomic pressures. They also have their own different things that are unique to that section.”</p>
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Segregation

Education

Expansion of Suburbs - 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.

School Segregation - 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.

Tracking - 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.

Poverty and the Working Poor

Expansion of Suburbs - "For example, a community like Levittown, where, you know, we have racial covenants and things like that, that exclude certain people from purchasing real estate in certain areas. And then we ask these people, why can't you build wealth? Well, how do most of us build wealth? Through homeownership. You're excluding people from that, that advantage, but then you're asking them to make a life for themselves. "The fact that our region was developed with discriminatory principles. So in all of our regional planning, going back to, you know, Robert Moses' development of the parkways. The goal is to keep people of color from coming to our region by making it challenging for folks in urban environments to get here by design."

School Segregation

"I think that when you look across the state, the level of segregation that we face in our region is very significant and unique. It is because we have 124 school districts, for example, you know, you can have a child who lives next door to another child who by the time they enter preschool have radically different trajectories just based on the zip code or the zoning in which they're born."

"And they were from South Africa. And they went on a tour of Long Island. And after their tour for a couple of days, they sat ... and they said what you have here is apartheid. It was visible to them. And they didn't know how it had happened, that it was that legal, that it was done here legally, that it's all set up"

Recurring Themes in Poverty and the Working Poor Interviews

- Hidden faces of poverty
 - Most people equate poverty with homelessness; they do not view it as a condition their neighbors may be living in, struggling to pay the mortgage, and feed themselves or their children. Several interview subjects alluded to the fact that poverty on Long Island has changed in the last decade and the working poor represent more of those living in poverty than ever before.
- Natural Disaster
 - Superstorm Sandy was an awakening for Long Island, not only because of the destruction, but also because it was the first time in many Long Islanders' lives that they had to seek out public assistance simply to survive. It was a significant event mentioned by several of the people whom we interviewed. Covid-19 has presented a new challenge.
- Poverty level v. Survival income
 - The federal poverty level was set at \$11,880 in 2016 for a single person living on Long Island, but the survival income was more than double that in both Nassau (\$25,092) and Suffolk (\$28,740). The difference was even more remarkable for a family of four where the federal poverty level was set at \$24,300 but the survival income on Long Island was nearly quadruple that at \$89,208 for Nassau and \$97,296 for Suffolk.
 - Reference - ALICE Report
- Segregation and Fragmented Governments
 - The establishment of school district boundaries on Long Island is unique and identified by the subjects of our interviews as a source of systemic segregation. Similarly, the fragmented municipal government systems further contribute to the racial and economic segregation on Long Island.
- Opportunity Gap
 - Due to disparities in income, inequalities in educational opportunities as a result of the aforementioned segregation and differences in the working hours of parents and guardians, the children and eventually the adults on Long Island face an enormous opportunity gap depending on the community in which they live.
- Transportation
 - Due to the lack of access to public transportation, especially on the east end of Long Island, it is extremely difficult for those without cars to get around. In Suffolk, Social Services are spread out all over the county, forcing people to take multiple buses to get from one service location to another. In Nassau County, Social Services are located in one central location, but it still takes many numerous transfers from one bus line to another to get there.

Poverty on Long Island Important Events

1932 - Great Depression

1947 - Levittown was built- Suburban sprawl pushed farms out east.

1973 - Gas Crisis

1980s - Savings and Loans Crisis

1987 - Stock Market Crash

1989 - Junk Bond Crash (leading to a recession)

1989-1994 - Closure of Grumman and Republic Aviation

1999-2000 - Dotcom Bubble

9/11/2001 - Terrorist Attacks

2007 - Housing Crisis

2008 - Global Financial Crisis (Great Recession)

2012 - Superstorm Sandy

2020 - Coronavirus Pandemic