GOAL #8

# Healthy People

All people have access to quality affordable health care that focuses on disease and illness prevention.

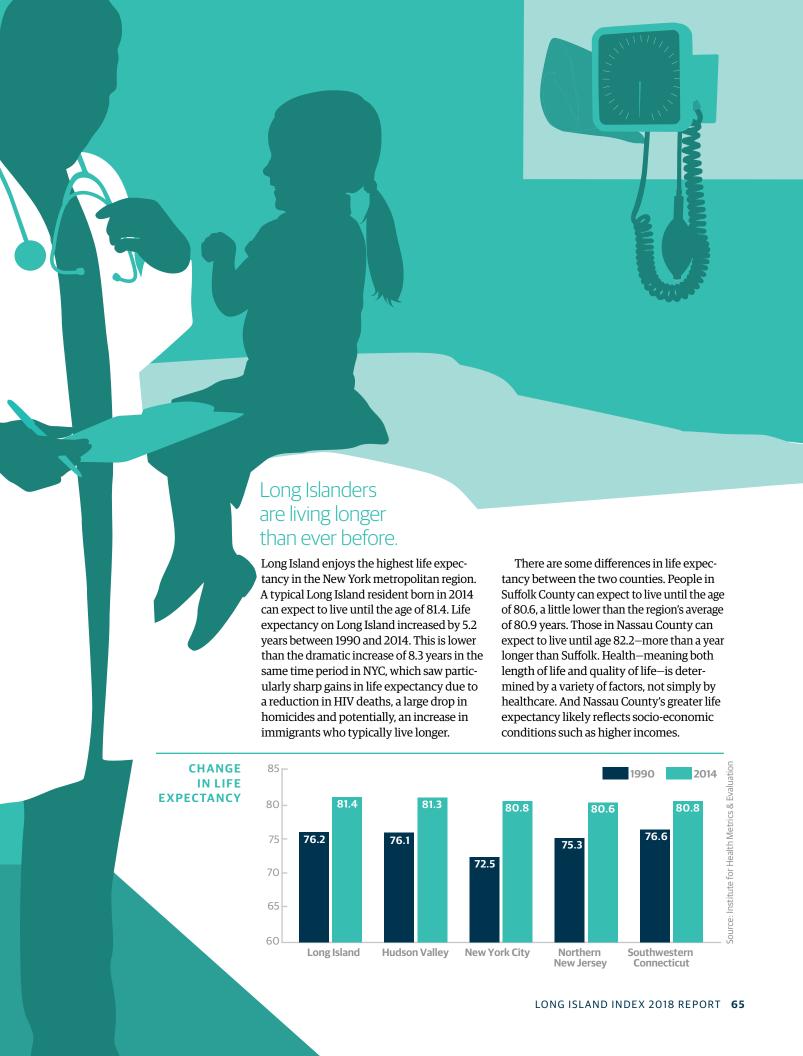
Health is one of the most fundamental indicators of well-being. Access to health care is important for maintaining a healthy population, but far more is determined by environmental and social factors, such as child poverty, air quality, public safety, access to healthy food and physical activity.

Long Island is doing well by health outcomes such as life expectancy, but there is a wide gap between the health of affluent and lower-income residents.

Long Island is doing well by health outcomes such as life expectancy, but there is a wide gap between the health of affluent and lowerincome residents. As in other parts of the New York region,

life expectancy is much lower and rates of disease are much higher for low-income residents. Overall, Long Island has many attributes that correlate with good health-high incomes and educational attainment, clean air and access to nature. But its auto-centered culture also means that Nassau and Suffolk residents have more autorelated accidents than places with higher transit use, and walk less, contributing to obesity and chronic diseases.

Changes that can help Long Island's economy and quality of life, such as improving transit and building more multi-family housing in walkable downtowns, can also improve Long Islander's health. Improving the safety net and expanding education and economic opportunity should also reduce the gap between low and high income residents by improving life expectancy and other health outcomes for low-income residents.

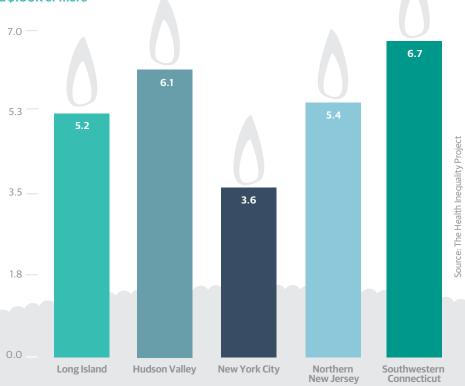


### There are large life expectancy gaps by income

But there are also big gaps in life expectancy between different incomes on Long Island. Lower income people—those with household incomes of less than \$38,000typically live five years less than higher income people-those with incomes greater than \$100,000, according to an analysis by the Health Inequality Project. This is part of a national trend that has been growing in recent years, where life expectancy is highly correlated with income, not only for the very rich and the very poor but at all incomes. In fact, according to some estimates, life expectancy for the bottom two income quartiles in the United States has actually dropped in recent decades.

The life expectancy gap on Long Island is somewhat smaller than the gap in the Hudson Valley, northern New Jersey and southwestern Connecticut but higher than that of New York City. While precise causes are not known, some researchers suggest that variations in levels of public health programs such as healthy food programs and smoking cessation efforts help explain the gap, but other factors from housing to neighborhood environmental conditions likely play a role as well.\* Overall, however, the life expectancy gap between rich and poor in the New York region is far smaller than many other parts of the country.

#### **DIFFERENCE IN LIFE EXPECTANCY Between People with Household Incomes** of \$38K and \$100K or more



Rising obesity and diabetes rates are a major health concern.

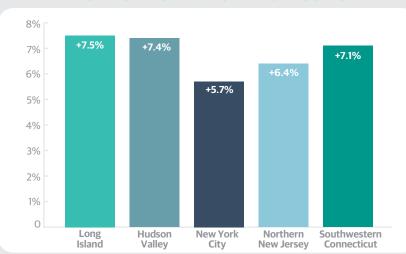
In recent decades, health conditions related to physical activity, food access and poverty have become a great concern nationwide. Obesity rates, associated with conditions such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes, have been increasing sharply across the country. While Long Island is fairly well positioned compared to the nation overall, it has not been spared these trends. In 2011, 31.2% of adults in Long Island were obese, an increase of 7.5 percentage points since 2001. Today, Long Island's obesity rate is lower only than that of northern New Jersey.\*\* The

share of those with diabetes, a chronic illness that severely impairs people's quality of life and is very costly to treat, has doubled between 1998 and 2015.

By contrast, Long Island's share of adults with diabetes, 11%, is lower than in any part of the region other than southwestern Connecticut.

- \* https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/04/11/  $up shot/for \hbox{-}the-poor-geography-is-life-and-death.html}\\$
- \*\* Note: there are several sources on obesity rates. We selected a longitudinal source from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation

#### **PERCENT CHANGE IN OBESITY FROM 2001-2011**



Source:Institute for Health Metrics & Evaluation

**LESSONS LEARNED** BY THERESA REGNANTE

# Improving Health on Long Island

Long Island has extraordinary hospitals and health care services, but access to care alone does not ensure health. Poor health outcomes and deep poverty are closely linked, and poor eating habits and unhealthy homes are byproducts of poverty as well. Long Island needs to take a neighborhood-by-neighborhood approach to improving health, recognizing that health, education, and financial stability are three legs of a stool.

Ms. Regnante is President and CEO of United Way of Long Island.

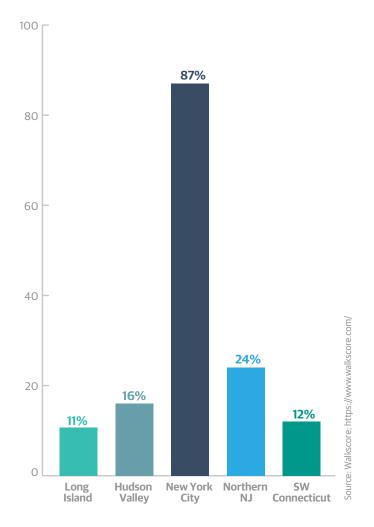


### Long Island's built environment may play a role.

While the causes are complex, an unhealthy diet and a more sedentary lifestyle are often implicated with obesity and diabetes. These local factors are

why successful interventions have often been local and targeted to diet and exercise. One way to get exercise easily is simply to incorporate it into one's daily life. People who live in areas served by the subway in New York City, for example, typically walk one hour a day. But when it comes to walkability, Long Island performs fairly poorly. 11% of Long Islanders live in places which are very walkable, meaning that most errands, such as shopping for milk or doing laundry, can be completed on foot. This is the lowest share compared to other suburban areas. In the Hudson Valley, for example, 50% more people, comparatively, live in walkable places.

#### **SHARE OF POPULATION LIVING IN VERY WALKABLE NEIGHBORHOODS** (Walkscore of 71 or higher), 2013



GOAL #9

## Educational Readiness

All students are prepared to learn at each stage of the educational pipeline.

Long Island has a large number of high quality educational institutions from pre-schools to universities. It also has a high level of educational attainment. Over 90% of adults have a high school diploma and nearly 40% graduated from college. Maintaining excellent schools and a well-educated population is critical on many levels. Educational attainment is one of the most reliable predictors of individual success, from good health to a high standard of living. It is also one of the main avenues for climbing from poverty to the middle class. An educated workforce is perhaps the most important factor in maintaining a competitive regional economy, and good schools are one of the first qualities that families seek when moving to a new community.

These indicators show a wide gap in educational readiness by income and race among Long Island's schools, and potential signs of a need for most schools to catch up with a changing economy.

Measuring how well students are learning and preparing for college and careers is complex. There are a variety of indicators from standardized test results to graduation rates to qualitative measures, and these can vary from year to year based on changes

in tests and measurement standards. They are also determined by factors beyond the classroom, from the socioeconomic background of the students to the safety and environment of both home and school. Two measures, how well 8th graders perform on New York State English and math tests, and a state measure of college readiness, are problematic for measuring how students or schools are improving from year to year, but can show how Long Island compares to other parts of the state, and how schools on Long Island compare to each other.

These indicators show a wide gap in educational readiness by income and race among Long Island's schools, and potential signs of a need for most schools to catch up with a changing economy. Low-income, Black and Hispanic students are highly concentrated in high-poverty schools, a product of Long Island's segregated residential communities and school districts.

These high-poverty schools perform well below both average and low-poverty schools. Only 12% of students in these schools are ready for college, according to state measures. National studies and a number of successful school districts have shown that low-income students perform better in economically and racially integrated schools, with no decline in the performance of more affluent students.\* Other models have improved academic performance through increased resources and reforms within high-poverty schools.

These differences are also reflected in school spending and taxes. Long Island spends more per student and raises more from local property taxes than any other part of the New York region, but there is a wide variation by the size, wealth and ethnicity of the school district. Smaller and wealthier school districts spend more per student and raise more from local property taxes than other districts.

But problems may not be isolated to high-poverty schools. In the 80% of schools between the highest and lowest poverty levels, only 32% of students were considered college ready. Even though Long Island students perform well versus others in New York State, postsecondary education and life-long learning are increasingly important in an economy where secure, well-paying careers continually require higher levels of education and cognitive abilities.

Long Island students outperform state averages academically, but less than half are considered proficient in English and math or ready for college.

Using test scores to track progress is difficult, because testing requirements and difficulty can change from year to year, and in recent years many families have chosen to not have their children participate in these tests. For example, the sharp drop in 8th grade students deemed proficient in English and math between 2012 and 2013 is largely the result of more difficult tests introduced in 2013 based on Common Core learning standards. And Long Island scores may have dropped more sharply in 2014 and 2015 because more families chose not to take the tests than statewide.

With these caveats, only 50% of Long Island 8th grade students were considered proficient in English in 2016 and only 20% were considered proficient in math. Just seven years earlier, the percent proficient were 81% and 90%. The more rigorous testing standards are controversial, but are intended to more accurately reflect that knowledge and skills needed in today's economy and society. Regardless of the time period, Long Island students outperform the state average. For example, in 2016 only 35% of 8th graders were proficient in English and 15% in math statewide.

\* National Coalition on School Diversity, School Integration and Educational Outcomes, Brief #5, 2011; The Century Foundation, Hartford Public Schools, 2016

#### PERCENT OF STUDENTS SCORING WITH **PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH 8**



Source: NYS Department of Education

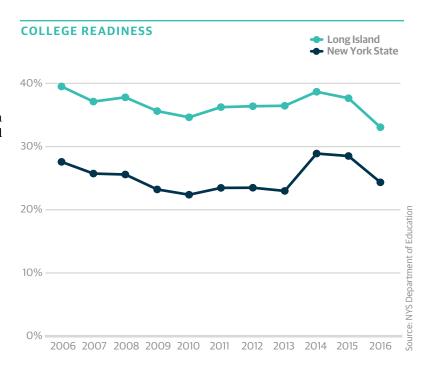
#### PERCENT OF STUDENTS SCORING WITH **PROFICIENCY IN MATH 8**



Source: NYS Department of Education

Using an alternative measure, college readiness, which the New York State Department of Education defines as the percent of students scoring above 85% on key Regents examinations, the share of high school students ready for collegelevel academics has declined from 40% in 2006 to 33% in 2016. These scores are still higher than state averages.

These comparisons cannot determine how well schools are improving the academic performance of their students. Affluent areas like Long Island generally have fewer high need students and score higher on academic performance measures at least in part because of the socioeconomic background of their students. But both test scores and college readiness indicate that there is substantial room for improvement in current proficiency levels.



#### **LESSONS LEARNED** BY HUBERT KEEN

# Training Long Island's Morkforce



It is common to hear that one cannot live comfortably on Long Island without a college degree, typically meaning bachelor's degree. Educational indicators, however, reveal that many high school graduates are not college-ready. The four-year degree may not be realistic, neither for the potential of many recent high school graduates nor for their interests. The ongoing demographic shift has resulted in more students in high-poverty schools who are not college-ready.

While it is essential to persist toward the goal of "college and career ready," a rethinking is needed on both elements of that strategy. First, expecting all high school graduates to earn bachelor's degrees is and will continue to be unrealistic. Associate's degrees in technological fields are in high demand, yet are not being produced. Second, as many employers shift their expectations to focus on skills rather than degrees, motivated high school graduates who earn certificates in areas of technological need can expect prompt employment. The CEO of IBM states that 15% of the company's "new collar" hires do not have bachelor's degrees, and that this is the anticipated trend for the company's hires.

As Long Island's economy adapts to the 21st century, our educational system must also adapt. It is essential for educational institutions to serve the full range of workforce needs as well as to match our educational programs with students' potential and interests. That is one of the keys to building a strong future for the region.

Dr. Keen is President of Nassau Community College.

Average school performance masks wide disparities by income.

Whether measured by state test scores or college readiness, there is a wide gap between schools depending on the share of students who are living in poverty. While 78% of 8th grade students are proficient in English in the 10% of schools with the lowest poverty levels, only 30% are proficient in the schools with the highest poverty levels. For math, the gap is 22% to 10%, and for college readiness it is a difference of 56% to only 12%.

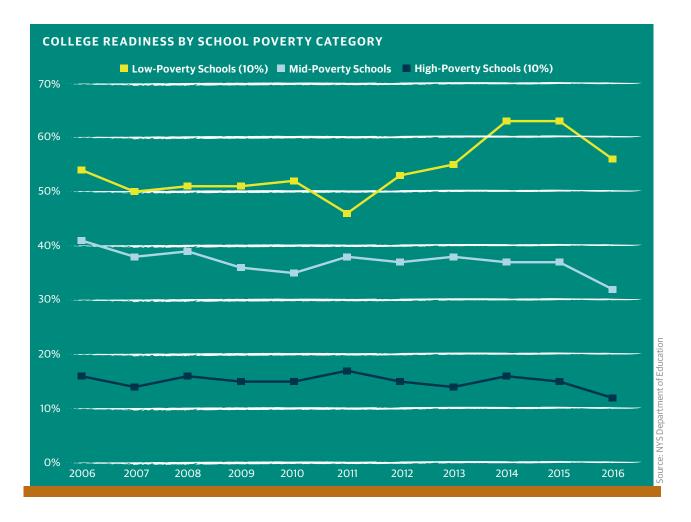
Because high poverty schools are larger than low or mid poverty schools, 15% of all students attend the 10% of schools with the highest poverty levels. In 2013, the average school in a high poverty district had 753 students, compared to 693 students in mid poverty districts and 614 in low poverty districts. Not only does this mean that poor students are highly concentrated in low performing schools, but that schools lack the advantages of smaller

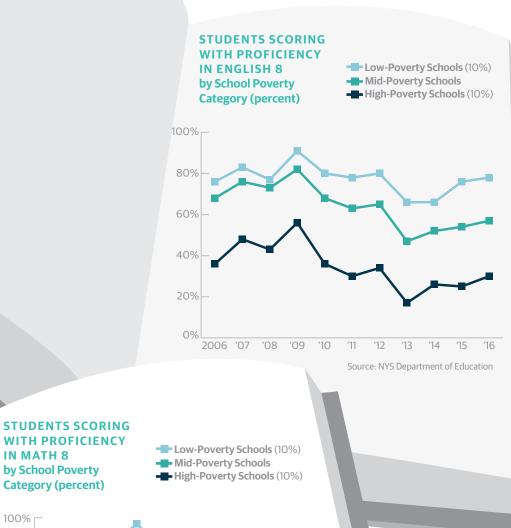
school environments. Since 2008, school size has been getting larger in high poverty school districts while it has been shrinking in other districts.\*

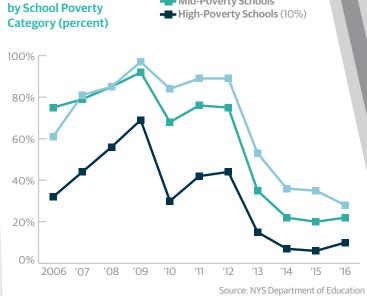
Even though high poverty schools have higher needs, they receive less funding than other schools. High poverty school districts had \$24,100 in revenue per student in 2012 compared to \$26,100 in mid poverty districts and \$30,000 in low poverty districts. While state and federal aid reduce the gap, most education funding still comes from local property taxes, and the higher property values in low and mid poverty districts allow them to direct more resources to their schools.\*\*

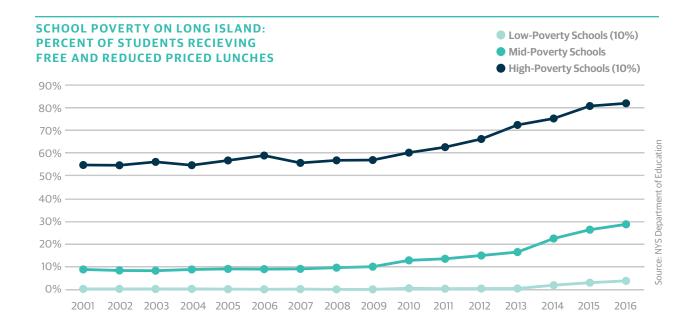
\* William Mangino and Marc Silver, Still Separate and Not Getting More Equal: The Persistence of Economic and Racial Inequalities in Education on Long Island, Long Island Index, 2015.

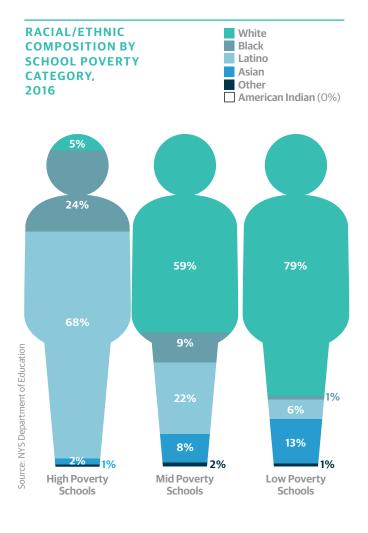
\*\* Ibid.











### Education disparities by income and race are a result of Long Island's highly segregated schools

Low, mid and high poverty schools are all experiencing increases in the number of poor students as measured by the share of those receiving free or reduced price lunch. In high poverty public schools, the share of children receiving free or reduced lunch grew from 55% to 82% from 2001 to 2016. In mid poverty schools the share tripled from 9% to 29%, and in low poverty schools increased from 0.2% to 4%.

High poverty schools also have much higher percentages of students of color. 92% of students in high poverty schools are black or Hispanic, compared to 31% in mid poverty schools and 7% in low poverty schools. These findings are consistent with the 2012 Long Island Index study that found Long Island school districts are among the most segregated in the United States. The study found that by one measure racial segregation in Long Island's schools is nearly twice the national average, and in Nassau is almost triple the national average. It also found that the segregation was almost entirely due to segregation between, rather than within, school districts, reflecting Long Island's segregated residential communities.\*

<sup>\*</sup> Douglas Ready, Inter-District and Intra-District Segregation on Long Island, Long Island Index, April 2012

**LESSONS LEARNED BY ROBERT A. SCOTT** 

## **Educational Readiness:** An Assessment of Long Island's Progress

From the start, the operating principle of the Index was a belief that "good information presented in a neutral manner can move policy." The Index has been an effective regional pioneer in gathering and publishing objective information in aggregate and detail. Yet here we are, fifteen years later, and the signs of educational readiness among public school students give cause for continuing concern. Fragmented, segregated school systems persist. College and career readiness seems to have declined, and pre-school, with its known benefits, lags for Suffolk County children.

While a political response to this report might be to blame the teachers and school leaders, the data indicate that the culprit is public policy. Students cannot benefit from pre-school programs, and teachers cannot teach in them, if programs are unavailable.

Fragmented, segregated schools are a systemic societal problem, not a school problem.

And declines in college-readiness may well result from an over-reliance on standardized testing. Such testing is analogous to picking up a grape plant by its root to check its health, instead of providing watchful care, necessary stimulation to the soil, and appropriate nourishment.

In order for students to enter school ready to learn, they need to have had a good night's sleep in a safe and protective environment, adequate and regular healthcare, nutritious meals, and a quiet place to do homework. It is no wonder that student achievement and poverty are highly correlated.

If we are to achieve our educational goals, policy makers must engage in systemic, not silo thinking. Academic achievement and college and career readiness are effected by societal issues, including poverty, homelessness, inadequate healthcare, unemployment, the underfunding of schools, and curricula that give short shrift to the humanities, expressive arts, and the responsibilities of citizenship.

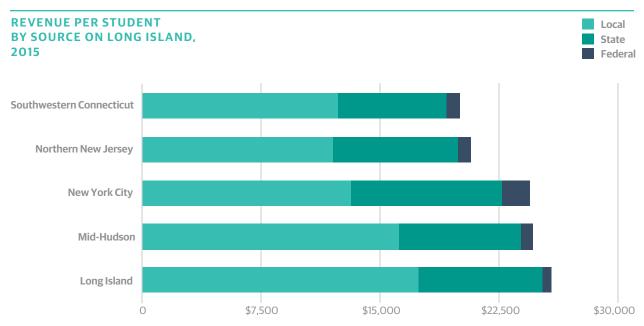
These are the lessons to be learned from the data and the core of the agenda to be pursued.

Dr. Scott is President Emeritus and University Professor Emeritus at Adelphi University.

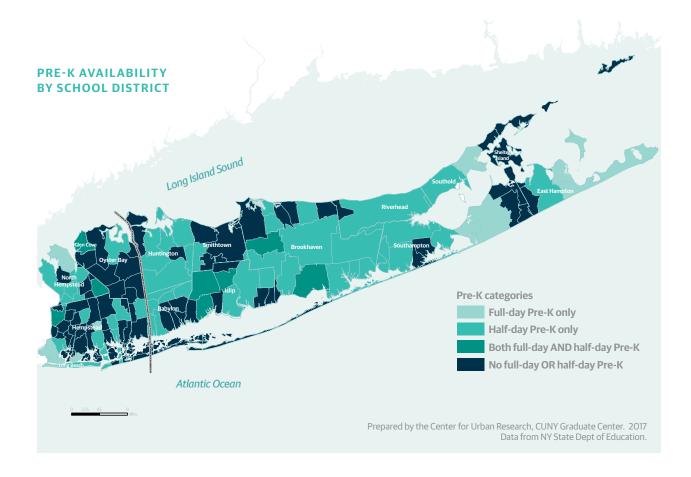
Long Island spends more per student than other parts of the region, but with smaller and wealthier school districts spending more in local taxes than larger and poorer ones.

Long Island school districts spend an average of \$25,829 per student from all sources of revenue, higher than any other part of the New York region. By comparison, schools in the Mid-Hudson region spend \$24,632 and New York City spends \$24,484. Schools in northern New Jersey and southwestern Connecticut pay considerably less. Two-thirds of Long Island school revenues come from local sources, primarily property taxes. The share is similar for Mid-Hudson schools. and substantially less in other parts of the region. Most of the remaining revenue comes from state sources. In New York State, state aid is determined by a formula established in 2007 to provide every student a sound basic education based on variations in local costs, the share of impoverished students and those with special needs, and the expected local contribution based on district property values.

There is wide variation in the amount of local taxes depending on the size of the district. Smaller school districts, which tend to be more affluent and have lower shares of Black and Hispanic students, spend far more than larger districts. Small school districts, those with 500-2,000 students, raise an average of \$30,776 per student, nearly twice the \$16,273 raised by larger districts with over 4.000 students. Very small districts with less than 500 students raise \$57,799. These districts enroll less than 1% of all Long Island students. By comparison, over 65% of Long Island students are enrolled in large districts. State and federal aid fills some. but not all, of the gap in revenue between these districts.

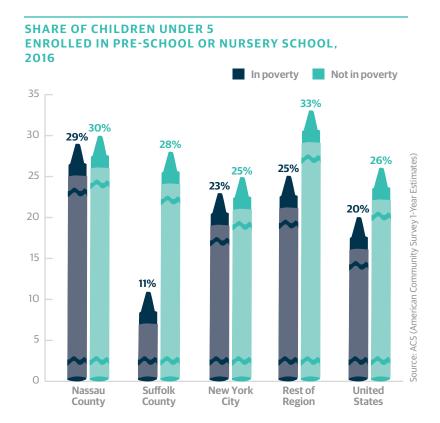






Except for poor children in Suffolk County, pre-school enrollments compare favorably with the United States

High quality pre-school can be an important means for giving children the abilities to do well academically and economically later in life. While data on pre-school quality is unavailable, information on pre-school enrollment shows that more 0-4 year olds, both poor and non-poor, are enrolled in Nassau County than the United States or New York City. The 29% of poor children enrolled is particularly high. In Suffolk County, only 11% of children in poverty ages 0-4 are enrolled in pre-school, compared to 28% of children who do not live in poverty.



#### **LESSONS LEARNED** BY LUCINDA HURLEY

## The Need for a Regional Commitment to Pre-School Education

Long Island has been recognized for strong K-12 educational outcomes, but recently we've seen declines in college readiness as well as persistent and wide educational disparities among our 124 school districts. Fortunately, research indicates that investment in highquality early childhood pre-school, including Pre-K, can close the achievement gap for low- and middle-income children.

These experiences improve outcomes, including high school graduation rates, reduced costs for special education and English-language learners, and improved financial well-being for families and communities. Yet our region receives the lowest New York State funding for Pre-K, and in Suffolk County the rate of pre-school education is significantly lower than in Nassau County.

Structurally, Long Island faces challenges in expanding access to Pre-K. Over the past three summers, The Long Island Pre-K Initiative has convened regional thinkers and stakeholders to consider how best to address such issues as equity, curriculum, assessment, professional development, quality, and family engagement, among others.

Several regional approaches have been suggested, ranging from centralized coordination and administration to partnering across district boundaries to the creation of a regional technical assistance center. Each approach reflects two premises: first, to serve all four-year-olds on Long Island, districts and community-based organizations must work together to leverage resources and expertise; second, families should have multiple publicly funded options for their children, as is the case in New York City.

We need to take on these challenges. Long Island needs to work as a region to assure that all children and families have access to high-quality pre-school/Pre-K programs. Investing early can make all the difference to access, equity, and Long Island's future.

Ms. Hurley is Executive Director of Nassau BOCES Department of Strategic Initiatives.

