



Long Island Regional Planning Board



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TO: Long Island Regional Board Members
FROM: Seth Forman
DATE: July 26, 2006
RE: Briefing on School District Segregation: 1991-2004

The racial composition of Long Island public school districts underwent significant change between 1991 and 2004, but the general pattern of white, non-Hispanic predominance remained the same. In 1991, white pupils made up 79.7 percent of all public school students on Long Island. In 2004 they made up 70.3 percent of all pupils. The proportion of black pupils increased from 10.2 percent to 11.4 percent, while the proportion of Hispanic students increased from 6.8 percent to 13.1 percent. The proportion of Asian and all other students ("Asian/Other") increased between 1991 and 2004, from 3.3 percent to 5.2 percent.

Total student population increased by 90,298 between 1991 and 2004, or 23.5 percent, going from a total of 384,084 to 474,382. In terms of percentage increases, the white student population increased by 8.9 percent between 1991 and 2004, the black pupil population increased by 38.2 percent, the Hispanic pupil population increased by 138 percent, and the Asian/Other pupil population increased by 95 percent.

The Racial Imbalance of Long Island School Districts

Long Island school districts remain racially imbalanced. That is, white students continue to be isolated from black and Hispanic students to a degree that is disproportionate to the representation of these groups in the total population. Nevertheless, Long Island's schools are racially diverse. In 2004, the average school district on Long Island was made up of roughly 25 percent non-white students. Today on Long Island the average black pupil attends a school with a student body that is approximately 34 percent white and 26 percent Hispanic.

(This discussion will not include a detailed analysis of the category of “Asian/Other” pupils. While the Asian student population on Long Island has increased rapidly over the past decade, their absolute numbers remain too small to say anything meaningful about their integration. Asian students do not constitute a majority in any single school district on Long Island and are almost completely integrated with white students.)

But while Long Island public schools appear to be racially mixed, they also have sustained and significant racial imbalances. While whites make up 70.3 percent of all students on Long Island, the average white student goes to a school that is 81 percent white. While black students make up 11.4 percent of Long Island’s students, the average white student goes to school in a district where just 5.4 percent of students are black. The average white student goes to a school where 8.3 percent of students are Hispanic, though Hispanics make up almost 13.1 percent of total pupils on Long Island.

In 2004, the average black student attended a school district that was 33.8 percent white, 36.5 percent black, and 25.8 percent Hispanic. The average Hispanic student attended a district that is 44.4 percent white, 22.5 percent black, and 29.3 percent Hispanic.

The average white student became slightly more exposed to other groups between 1991 and 2004. The school district attended by the average white student was 5.3 percent black in 1991 and 5.4 percent black in 2004. The school district attended by the average white student was 5 percent Hispanic in 1991 and 8.3 percent Hispanic in 2004.

The average black student became less exposed to white students and more exposed to Hispanic students. The school district attended by the average black student was 41.1 percent white in 1991 and 33.8 percent white in 2004. The school district attended by the average black student was 14 percent Hispanic in 1991 and 25.8 percent Hispanic in 2004.

The average Hispanic student has become less exposed to whites and slightly more exposed to blacks. The school district attended by the average Hispanic student was 58.7 percent white in 1991 and 44.4 percent in 2004. The school district attended by the average Hispanic student was 21 percent black in 1991 and 22.5 percent black in 2004.

SOURCES: 1991 school district demographic data from the New York State Department of Education Chapter 655 of the Laws of 1987 Reports. 2004 school district demographic data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

Methodology: One measure of school segregation is a class of exposure indices that refer to the racial/ethnic composition of the school district attended by the average member of a given group. For example, the average white student might attend a school that is 70 percent white, 15 percent black, 14 percent Hispanic, and 1 percent Asian/Other. The exposure indices for each group must add up to 100. A larger value means that there is greater exposure to other groups, a lower value means that there is less exposure to other groups.

These indices are presented in two categories: exposure of the average member of a group to other members of that group (which is called the Index of Isolation) and exposure of the average member of a group to members of other groups (Exposure Index). The Isolation Index is the percentage of same-group population in the districts where the average member of a racial/ethnic group attends school. It has a lower bound of zero (for a very small group that is quite dispersed) to 100 (meaning that group members

are entirely isolated from other groups). See index definitions from the Lewis Mumford Center at Albany State University, "Nassau/Suffolk, New York PMSA" at <http://mumford1.dyndns.org/cen2000/SchoolPop/SchoolSegdata/5380sb.htm>.



