

THE EMPTY CLASSROOM SYNDROME

A Discussion Brief on the State of School Enrollment Projections in the Hudson Valley



**Facing the Crisis of
Future Enrollment Declines**

May 2013

**HUDSON VALLEY
PATTERN FOR PROGRESS**

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Enrollment Drops, and No End in Sight

The news of closing schools and tight budgets is everywhere. While it seems as if discussions about school closures have hit a saturation point and will now start abating, the numbers suggest otherwise.

According to projections through 2020, the conversation about closing schools and reorganizing districts is just beginning for many of school districts in the Hudson Valley and in New York State.

The constraints of the state's tax cap and Gap Elimination Adjustment (money taken from school aid to close the state's budget deficit) have their impacts. So do hefty pension costs plus contracted health care, salary and step increases. However, there is nothing that indicates the region is facing a crisis more strongly than present and projected enrollment declines. For most of the Valley, school-age populations are falling and they are not bouncing back. We have stopped growing.

One year ago, in Spring 2012, Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress laid out the issues facing the region's school districts. For those counting on student population growth, the picture was not pretty. In this update, we examine future enrollment realities for the 114 public school districts in Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester Counties

In 94 of the districts (or 82%), the enrollment is either flat or declining. Of the declining districts, half are predicted to shrink by 10% and more from their peak enrollments over the past 20 years.

The numbers predict a sobering reality for more than half of the districts involved. Public school enrollment is in a freefall for the majority of the region's districts and many are not bottoming out — at least until after 2020, according to current projections from Cornell University's Program on Applied Demographics. Factoring out Westchester County, a flat or falling enrollment is nearly universal.

There are many reasons for the decline. Among them:

- Babies: there are fewer of them. The number of babies born in our counties each year has been flat or declining. From 2001-2011, the number of babies born in the Hudson Valley dropped by 11%, or about 1% each year.
- Continuing unemployment and a sparse influx of new jobs, is impacting family size; so is the cost of housing. To some extent, young couples are weighing whether they can afford to support more than one or two children.
- Families with children are not moving to the Hudson Valley from urban areas at the rate they once did. Taxes and the high cost of living in New York State are two reasons for this. The population spike of those fleeing New York City post 9/11 is over.
- Growth in the region and the state has slowed. Orange County, once among the fastest growing counties in New York State, slowed to an annual growth rate of less than 1% in the 2012 census figures. Only two counties in the state showed a growth of more than 1%; none grew more than 2%.
- School age populations are among the fastest shrinking. In the region, the fastest growing age brackets by far are those 65 and older, often growing at 10-times the rate of the 0-19 year old set.

Will Closing School Buildings Close the Gap?

There are 3,050 public school buildings in New York State, according to the NYS Association for Superintendents of Buildings and Grounds. The Hudson Valley is home to 538 of them.

From 1999 through the end of this school year, more than 30 school buildings across the region have closed or will close.

School leaders are trying to keep up with enrollment contractions by shrinking the physical infrastructure of their districts.

Below is a list of selected districts that are wrestling with decisions to close schools. Also given is district enrollment as of 2010 alongside projections through 2020.

Marlboro — has proposed closing Milton Elementary and Middlehope Elementary. *From 2010 to 2020, district enrollment is projected to drop by 148 students.*

Newburgh — has discussed, but is holding off on closing one of its elementary schools. *From 2010 to 2020, district enrollment is projected to drop by 445 students.*

Valley Central — will close Maybrook Elementary School. *From 2010 to 2020, district enrollment is projected to drop by 364 students.*

Warwick — will close Kings Elementary School this year. Has talked about closing Park Avenue Elementary School. *From 2010 to 2020, district enrollment is projected to drop by 310 students.*

Wappingers — has discussed closing the Evans Elementary School; as of March 2013, the school was spared. *From 2010 to 2020, district enrollment is projected to drop by 342 students.*

Has Money Helped to Hide the Problem?

When Pattern set out to examine the scope of the enrollment crisis, one question arose repeatedly. It was about the role that public money may have played in masking the problem from public view.

Much of the public discussion about closing schools focuses on the issue of affordability and that a decline in state aid is, in part, to blame. *Yet state aid figures show the opposite to be true. **Even when enrollment has fallen, for the ten years ending in 2010, overall state aid has risen in the vast majority of school districts.*** The increase in aid over that time period is sometimes dramatic.

A prime example of this occurs in the small, rural Sullivan County school district of Eldred where state aid doubled while enrollment declined by more than 100 students (13%) from 2000 to 2010. Another is Newburgh. Its student enrollment decreased by more than 900 students in this same time period and its state aid increased from \$74 million to \$124 million. [To see the detail on recent state aid increases for districts across the state, visit www.pattern-for-progress.org]

The state aid formula in New York State, legendary for its layers of complexity, is also noted for the political considerations that impact it each year. The result is a formula that, while it begs for reform and has been the subject of many attempts, still resists it at its most basic level.



A number of factors may account for increased state aid despite dropping enrollments. Among these are:

Staffing: Schools may have fewer students, but that does not necessarily mean a district can get by with fewer teachers. whether there are 25 students in the class or 15, a school still needs a third grade teacher. In a related factor, the rise in pension and health benefit costs at the district level have outpaced almost all other costs.

“Save Harmless:” A mechanism called Save Harmless or Hold Harmless was instituted in the state aid formula in New York State in 1962. In the simplest of terms, it guarantees school districts that state aid will not drop from one year to the next. It was meant to stabilize aid in the event of enrollment drops or fluctuations in property values.

The fiscal effect of substantial state aid increases in districts where enrollments have dropped is an ever-increasing cost per pupil*. In the Eldred example, the annual cost per pupil went from \$11,080 to \$26,083 in the course of the ten years examined. The cost per pupil in Newburgh went from \$10,798 to \$21,163. [Recent costs per pupil for all districts in the state can be found at www.pattern-for-progress.org]

Across the state, the cost per pupil over the 10-year period went from \$11,871 to \$20,410. Enrollment dropped from 2.87 million to 2.78 million in the same time period.

*Cost per pupil reflects the NYS Education Department formula using total expenditures.

Enrollment Drops, State Aid Rises

Public School Districts**	Enrollment 2000*	State Aid 2000 (in millions)	Enrollment 2010*	State Aid 2010 (in millions)	% Enrollment Change 2000 to 2010	% Change in State aid
Onteora	2,351	\$7.26	1,545	\$8.18	-34%	13%
Rondout Valley	2,991	\$15.58	2,265	\$21.05	-24%	35%
Livingston Manor	742	\$4.35	577	\$5.21	-22%	20%
Eldred	784	\$2.67	675	\$5.44	-14%	104%
Hyde Park	4,689	\$17.11	4,050	\$23.11	-14%	35%
Kingston	8,178	\$34.66	7,166	\$46.97	-12%	36%
Mount Vernon	10,092	\$57.07	8,904	\$69.92	-12%	23%
Spackenkill	1,804	\$3.82	1,615	\$6.31	-10%	65%
Washingtonville	4,859	\$21.45	4,422	\$26.54	-9%	24%
Ellenville	1,942	\$11.55	1,768	\$16.07	-9%	39%
Ardsey	2,140	\$3.03	1,982	\$5.78	-7%	91%
Port Jervis City	3,237	\$20.18	3,037	\$29.03	-6%	44%

Data: NYS Education Department. *State aid enrollment-count method varies slightly from that used in State Report Card numbers.

** Selected to represent various counties in the region from among districts where enrollment is declining.

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS THAT ENHANCE THE GROWTH AND VITALITY OF THE HUDSON VALLEY.

The View to 2020: Students Are Disappearing

Enrollment declines are now affecting the vast majority of school districts in the Hudson Valley. The Cornell Program on Applied Demographics, a leader in demographic research facilities, has projected school enrollments through 2020 in New York State, and the drop in student numbers is pronounced.

Rural schools are projected to see the worst of it. In Pattern's nine-county area, Columbia and Greene Counties are projected to see the greatest decreases with enrollments dropping more than 25% county-wide. Ulster and Sullivan counties come next.

Urban schools in low-employment areas are not far behind. Kingston is a good example; it is set to see an enrollment decline of 23% from its recent peak in 2001 and has already closed school buildings. Newburgh is projected to see a decline of 15% from its peak in 2003, and has wrestled with the idea of closing at least one elementary school.

Even those suburban districts that initially appear to fare well in the Cornell projections are now also flattening out. Cornwall Central School District, for instance, with its new high school and "good-results" reputation, has now ceased its upward enrollment climb, said Orange-Ulster BOCES Chief Operating Officer Terrence Olivo looking at the newest enrollment numbers released to BOCES last month. The trend of

in-migration for Cornwall has now slowed as has the birth rate, two factors affecting many other districts.

It's a crisis, yes, said Olivo. But it is one that provides the motivation for reforms that have been talked about for years but never fully explored or acted upon. "It's forcing us to take a long, really hard look at doing things differently," he said. "We have held onto the agrarian model for too long. It's clear we held onto the real property-based model for too long."

"The school enrollment crisis certainly gives a reason to think that different organizational structures should be investigated."

Terrence Olivo
Orange-Ulster BOCES, COO

Hudson Valley schools are not alone; regions north of Albany and in central New York State are in even steeper declines, said New York State Education Department Deputy

Commissioner Charles Szuberla. Szuberla, once the head of facilities throughout the state, told Pattern that the department is proceeding with extreme caution before approving any plans for school expansions. New York State Education Department Commissioner John King has issued a renewed call for district consolidation saying that the state's system of 684 separate districts is simply unsustainable.

Rank Within Region	Public School Districts* (with peak year since 1993)	Rank Within County	1993	2000	Peak	2010	2020 projection **	Change From Peak Year to 2020
Columbia County								
5	New Lebanon CSD (1998)	C-1	655	635	690	470	414	-40%
14	Germantown CSD (1997)	C-2	748	807	840	589	569	-32%
16	Hudson City SD (1993)	C-3	2,500	2,406	2,500	1,880	1,706	-32%
18	Kinderhook CSD (1994)	C-4	2,464	2,385	2,476	1,961	1,713	-31%
20	Chatham CSD (1997)	C-5	1,550	1,512	1,569	1,262	1,121	-29%
25	Taconic Hills CSD (1999)	C-6	1,709	1,885	1,898	1,510	1,420	-25%
	Columbia County Totals				9,973		6,943	-30%
Dutchess County								
8	Northeast CSD (1993)	D-1	1,085	944	1,085	771	655	-40%
7	Pine Plains CSD (1994)	D-2	1,529	1,491	1,565	1,108	943	-40%
24	Spackenkill Union Free SD (2003)	D-3	1,483	1,761	1,835	1,613	1,372	-25%
27	Hyde Park CSD (2002)	D-4	4,352	4,611	4,729	4,050	3,601	-24%
36	Rhinebeck CSD (2000)	D-5	1,227	1,298	1,298	1,162	1,045	-19%
45	Arlington CSD (2005)	D-6	7,852	9,462	10,322	9,724	8,683	-16%
46	Beacon City School District (2004)	D-7	2,903	3,312	3,601	3,292	3,036	-16%
50	Dover Union Free SD (2001)	D-8	1,644	1,820	1,833	1,560	1,559	-15%
52	Pawling CSD (2007)	D-9	1,134	1,298	1,462	1,354	1,252	-14%
54	Red Hook CSD (2005)	D-10	2,060	2,339	2,364	2,163	2,048	-13%
72	Millbrook CSD (2008)	D-11	1,004	1,182	1,229	1,180	1,144	-7%
78	Wappingers CSD (2006)	D-12	11,021	11,836	12,504	12,314	11,972	-4%
80	Poughkeepsie City SD (2003)	D-13	3,882	4,331	4,676	4,451	4,515	-3%
	Dutchess County Totals				48,503		41,825	-14%
Greene County								
2	Hunter-Tannersville CSD (1997)	G-1	513	565	589	409	296	-50%
9	Windham-Ashland-Jewett CSD (1998)	G-2	521	542	556	399	341	-39%
10	Cairo-Durham CSD (2001)	G-3	1,511	1,780	1,825	1,442	1,190	-35%
23	Greenville CSD (2000)	G-4	1,283	1,465	1,465	1,248	1,089	-26%
44	Catskill CSD (2003)	G-5	1,717	1,757	1,817	1,672	1,523	-16%
53	Coxsackie-Athens CSD (1993)	G-6	1,642	1,622	1,642	1,527	1,414	-14%
	Greene County Totals				7,894		5,853	-26%

Creating further urgency for new thinking is the new reality that schools can no longer turn to taxpayers to fill budget gaps. The tax cap, while it can be surpassed by a 60% majority vote, has put an end to that practice. The effect is already on the horizon. In a recent survey conducted by the NYS School Boards Association, 40% of school superintendents predicted that, within four years, they will be unable to balance their budgets and still provide mandated levels of education. Even so, an April 2013 State Comptroller's report shows only 5% of school districts plan to override the tax cap in 2013.

Rank Within Region	Public School Districts* (with peak year since 1993)	RANK Within county	1993	2000	Peak	2010	2020 projection**	Change From Peak Year to 2020
Orange County								
13	Tuxedo Union Free SD (2006)	O-1	439	549	655	623	440	-33%
11	Greenwood Lake UFSD (1996)	O-2	725	781	844	547	554	-34%
21	Highland Falls CSD (2002)	O-3	1,043	1,172	1,229	1,019	893	-27%
26	Port Jervis City SD (1998)	O-4	3,483	3,427	3,555	2,957	2,665	-25%
30	Washingtonville CSD (2002)	O-5	4,429	4,999	5,122	4,451	4,010	-22%
41	Warwick Valley CSD (2003)	O-6	3,453	4,265	4,681	4,166	3,856	-18%
43	Valley Central SD (2002)	O-7	4,468	5,014	5,319	4,810	4,446	-16%
51	Newburgh City SD (2003)	O-8	11,057	12,255	12,672	11,227	10,782	-15%
55	Pine Bush CSD (2005)	O-9	5,536	5,819	6,174	5,696	5,358	-13%
64	Minisink Valley CSD (2005)	O-10	3,571	4,182	4,680	4,425	4,180	-11%
71	Florida UFSD (2003)	O-11	634	804	903	849	838	-7%
87	Monroe-Woodbury CSD (2007)	O-12	5,396	6,829	7,503	7,375	7,388	-2%
91	Goshen CSD (2009)	O-13	2,337	2,660	2,973	2,951	2,996	1%
97	Chester UFSD (2010)	O-14	859	932	1,055	1,055	1,091	3%
104	Middletown City SD (2010)	O-15	5,392	6,235	6,828	6,828	7,174	5%
114	Cornwall CSD (2010)	O-16	2,465	2,848	3,457	3,457	4,278	24%
	Orange County Totals				67,650		60,949	-10%
Putnam County								
6	Garrison UFSD (2002)	P-1	255	271	299	260	180	-40%
37	Brewster CSD (2003)	P-2	2,878	3,471	3,726	3,421	3,000	-19%
38	Mahopac CSD (2004)	P-3	4,040	4,943	5,377	4,949	4,342	-19%
67	Putnam Valley CSD (2002)	P-4	1,256	1,360	1,945	1,819	1,774	-9%
70	Carmel CSD (2002)	P-5	4,402	4,856	4,956	4,581	4,591	-7%
93	Haldane CSD (2009)	P-6	745	846	902	892	912	1%
	Putnam County Totals				17,205		14,799	-14%
Rockland County								
49	Clarkstown CSD (2006)	R-1	8,531	8,990	9,473	9,028	8,034	-15%
57	East Ramapo CSD (Spring Valley) (1998)	R-2	8,701	9,028	9,299	8,118	8,157	-12%
74	South Orangetown CSD (2006)	R-3	2,423	2,986	3,478	3,441	3,273	-6%
79	Haverstraw-Stony Point CSD (2003)	R-4	6,969	7,730	8,229	7,925	7,883	-4%
81	Nanuet UFSD (2006)	R-5	1,719	1,997	2,314	2,299	2,240	-3%
84	Pearl River UF SD (2009)	R-6	1,898	2,403	2,664	2,649	2,587	-3%
86	Ramapo Central SD (Suffern) (2005)	R-7	3,894	4,357	4,751	4,707	4,617	-3%
102	Nyack UFSD (1995)	R-8	2,965	2,917	3,082	2,922	3,226	5%
	Rockland County Totals				43,290		40,017	-8%
Sullivan County								
3	Roscoe CSD (1993)	S-1	368	303	368	235	190	-48%
15	Sullivan West CSD (1999)	S-2	N/A	1,672	1,755	1,276	1,197	-32%
17	Livingston Manor CSD (1995)	S-3	735	683	768	507	531	-31%
32	Eldred CSD (1996)	S-4	707	759	779	647	614	-21%
33	Liberty CSD (1995)	S-5	1,763	1,725	1,866	1,499	1,473	-21%
56	Tri-Valley CSD (2004)	S-6	1,137	1,192	1,246	1,130	1,084	-13%
58	Monticello CSD (2010)	S-7	3,600	3,467	3,955	3,955	3,483	-12%
61	Fallsburg CSD (2006)	S-8	1,367	1,348	1,460	1,347	1,298	-11%
	Sullivan County Totals				12,197		9,870	-19%
Ulster County								
4	Onteora CSD (1998)	U-1	2,311	2,318	2,469	1,533	1,331	-46%
12	Rondout Valley CSD (1998)	U-2	2,760	2,838	2,974	2,223	1,971	-34%
29	Kingston City SD (2001)	U-3	7,554	8,206	8,237	6,851	6,339	-23%
34	Saugerties CSD (1997)	U-4	3,316	3,424	3,472	2,978	2,751	-21%
40	Ellenville CSD (1994)	U-5	1,947	1,962	2,002	1,705	1,637	-18%
62	New Paltz CSD (2000)	U-6	2,225	2,391	2,391	2,229	2,126	-11%
65	Marlboro CSD (2005)	U-7	2,046	2,119	2,137	2,060	1,912	-11%
66	Wallkill CSD (2006)	U-8	3,166	3,476	3,658	3,435	3,310	-10%
69	Highland CSD (2005)	U-9	1,813	1,883	1,943	1,852	1,799	-7%
	Ulster County Totals				29,283		23,176	-21%
Data: Cornell University Program on Applied Demographics								

In school enrollment projections published by the Cornell Program on Applied Demographics, the region's rural districts are seeing the greatest declines, but almost every district is touched by the downward trend.

Even Cornwall, which had been leading the region in growth, is now slowing to a near halt from its peak which occurred in 2010, new Information from BOCES reveals.

*Projections include the vast majority of school districts in the region. In rare cases, data was unavailable due to reconfiguration.

**Of the projections tracks available from Cornell, shown are the "robust" figures, i.e. those that are less influenced by a single outlying value.

Westchester Story: Splitting the Difference

Westchester's proximity to New York City paints a somewhat different picture for its school populations. Factors including high paying jobs that are nearby, easier and greater commuting options and an influx of immigrant families are projected to mean growth for 18 of the 42 districts included in the Cornell Program on Applied Demographic figures. Growth, for the most part, is modest and is predicted, with some exceptions to occur in those districts closest to metropolitan New York.

Meanwhile, projected enrollments through 2020 say more than half the districts will see decreases in their student bodies and in 18 of these the decline will be more than 5%. The tiny Mount Pleasant district has already shrunk to half its 2008 peak-year size. Some city school districts are also in the enrollment slide. Mount Vernon School District is predicted to decline to 7,518 students by 2020 from a peak of more than 10,000 students in 1999.

Rank Within Region	Public School Districts* (with peak year since 1993)	Rank Within County	1993	2000	Peak	2010	2020 Projection**	Change From Peak Year to 2020
1	Mount Pleasant-Blythedale UFSD (2008)	W-1	104	135	239	103	118	-51%
19	Greenburgh CSD (1995)	W-2	1,967	1,893	2,085	1,630	1,464	-30%
22	Mount Vernon City SD (1999)	W-3	9,609	9,884	10,167	8,454	7,518	-26%
28	Ardsey UFSD (2003)	W-4	1,658	2,152	2,343	2,042	1,797	-23%
31	Yorktown Central SD (2004)	W-5	3,395	4,081	4,234	3,796	3,323	-22%
35	Irvington UFSD (2004)	W-6	1,206	1,744	1,998	1,799	1,588	-21%
39	Pocantico Hills CSD (2004)	W-7	289	326	338	280	273	-19%
42	Briarcliff Manor UFSD (2005)	W-8	1,071	1,568	1,797	1,631	1,501	-16%
47	Hendrick Hudson CSD (2004)	W-9	2,287	2,778	2,887	2,621	2,442	-15%
48	Katonah-Lewisboro UFSD (2005)	W-10	2,934	3,987	4,115	3,773	3,481	-15%
59	Byram Hills CSD (2007)	W-11	1,879	2,483	2,818	2,714	2,492	-12%
60	Hastings-on-Hudson UFSD (2003)	W-12	1,252	1,581	1,688	1,609	1,497	-11%
63	Chappaqua CSD (2007)	W-13	3,023	3,869	4,245	4,106	3,776	-11%
68	North Salem CSD (2003)	W-14	1,073	1,394	1,416	1,325	1,297	-8%
73	Somers Central SD (2010)	W-15	2,145	2,719	3,453	3,453	3,243	-6%
75	Peekskill City SD (2005)	W-16	2,488	2,912	2,967	2,845	2,799	-6%
76	Pleasantville UFSD (2008)	W-17	1,289	1,643	1,846	1,800	1,746	-5%
77	Harrison CSD (2010)	W-18	2,474	3,318	3,539	3,539	3,372	-5%
82	Croton-Harmon UFSD (2008)	W-19	1,133	1,386	1,760	1,726	1,706	-3%
83	Bedford CSD (2010)	W-20	3,037	3,823	4,359	4,359	4,232	-3%
85	Blind Brook-Rye UFSD (2008)	W-21	846	1,201	1,555	1,522	1,511	-3%
88	Valhalla UFSD (2010)	W-22	992	1,267	1,573	1,573	1,550	-1%
89	Mount Pleasant CSD (2008)	W-23	1,604	1,807	2,014	2,012	1,985	-1%
90	Pelham UFSD (2010)	W-24	1,762	2,352	2,804	2,804	2,810	0%
92	Lakeland CSD (2009)	W-25	5,324	6,237	6,354	6,282	6,424	1%
94	Scarsdale UFSD (2010)	W-26	3,710	4,314	4,766	4,766	4,826	1%
95	Greenburgh-North Castle UFSD (2010)	W-27	139	164	396	396	408	3%
96	Yonkers City SD (2001)	W-28	20,523	24,682	24,916	24,002	25,693	3%
98	Mamaroneck UFSD (2010)	W-29	3,748	4,562	5,050	5,050	5,240	4%
99	Edgemont UFSD (2009)	W-30	1,397	1,678	1,940	1,916	2,024	4%
100	Bronxville UFSD (2007)	W-31	1,078	1,401	1,569	1,539	1,638	4%
101	Tukahoe Common (2007)	W-32	191	274	344	340	360	5%
103	New Rochelle CSD (2010)	W-33	8,120	9,806	10,596	10,596	11,095	5%
105	Dobbs Ferry UFSD (2009)	W-34	1,115	1,345	1,461	1,445	1,551	6%
106	Tuckahoe UFSD (2010)	W-35	980	966	1,056	1,056	1,127	7%
107	Eastchester UFSD (2009)	W-36	1,868	2,427	3,114	3,081	3,324	7%
108	White Plains CSD (2010)	W-37	5,575	6,546	6,954	6,954	7,432	7%
109	Rye Neck UFSD (2008)	W-38	1,065	1,336	1,502	1,487	1,631	9%
110	Rye City SD (2010)	W-39	1,956	2,472	3,175	3,175	3,485	10%
111	Elmsford UFSD (2009)	W-40	645	871	980	939	1,089	11%
112	Port Chester-Rye UFSD (2010)	W-41	3,029	3,360	4,183	4,183	4,655	11%
113	Ossining UFSD (2010)	W-42	3,199	3,867	4,238	4,238	4,782	13%
	Westchester County Totals				148,834		144,305	-3%

HUDSON VALLEY PATTERN FOR PROGRESS PROMOTING REGIONAL, BALANCED AND

Adaptive Re-Use of Schools Across the Valley



The Sophie Finn School in the City of Kingston will be converted to college use.

The Kingston Project: Building Toward a Model for Others

The leadership of the Kingston City School District and the vision of Ulster County Executive Mike Hein have been widely praised for taking a forward-thinking approach to the effects of enrollment decline.

By the end of this school year, four of the district's seven elementary schools — Anna Devine, Sophie Finn, Zena and Meagher Elementary schools — will have closed and the fifth-graders from those schools will be moved to the district's middle schools.

Kingston's adaptive re-use plan for the Sophie Finn School has been viewed as particularly innovative. The school district has sold the building to SUNY Ulster for \$300,000 so that it may be repurposed as a satellite campus of the community college. The school's location adjacent to Kingston High School has made the project that much more attractive educationally.

The Ulster County Planning Department, at the direction of the County Executive, is the lead agent in a project that is seen as a lynchpin in an overall effort to revitalize the city of Kingston. The renovation of the elementary school to a state-of-the-art satellite college campus is substantial. The cost is estimated at \$5.9 million and includes a physical re-orientation of the school. The local share of the cost is \$1.1 million which will be paid back over 30 years through savings on rent the college is now paying.

"Through the project, we are creating the foundation for an educational corridor with a modern community college campus right in the heart of Kingston. The architects have provided innovative conceptual design ideas that are expected to provide an environment conducive to learning."

Mike Hein, Ulster County Executive,
in an April 19, 2013 statement

In Brewster, Weighing the Possibilities as a Community

Because Brewster's recently closed Garden Street School is located in a neighborhood, a wide range of potentials are under discussion for its re-use.



After the Garden Street School in Brewster (Putnam County) closed last June, the school district partnered with the Village of Brewster to develop a plan for the best and most feasible re-use of the 1925, residentially sited building. The village does not want to see the school building go vacant for long and hopes to possibly add it to the tax base.

Two main concepts have emerged: conversion of the building to affordable senior housing or to a film production studio with performing arts space. Other ideas have included: conversion to high-end condominiums for professionals commuting to New York via Metro-North; creation of a charter school; or establishment of a college satellite campus.

Public School to Private School

In western Sullivan County, plans are moving forward to sell the long-term empty Delaware Valley Central School building to a private corporation for establishment of a private school for foreign students. The building had been empty since a three-district merger in 1999. When the district merged, it had 1,755 students. In 2010, district enrollment was 1,276.

More Ideas for Adaptive Re-Use

Senior housing, medical clinic, business incubator, office building, farmers market, commercial kitchen, fitness center are all ideas for re-use. For a broader discussion of adaptive re-use of school buildings, see a digital copy of Pattern's 2012 report "Closed Schools, Open Minds," at www.pattern-for-progress.org

Potential funding sources

As of 2012, there were 12 state agencies that made funding available through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA). Among them are Empire State Development Corporation and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority. Federal and private sources of funding may also be available, depending on the project.

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS THAT ENHANCE THE GROWTH AND VITALITY OF THE HUDSON VALLEY.

Shaping the Conversation about Declining Enrollments, Closing Schools and Regionalizing Districts

Barring a significant spike in new jobs or a catalyst the magnitude of 9/11, the enrollment crisis in our schools may be with us for years. The challenges created by the demographic shift are considerable, stretching from the closure of school buildings to the idea of consolidating districts. Despite the challenges, solutions and new approaches are possible.

Items for an Education Action Agenda

1. Support innovative legislation.

In March of this year, Hudson Valley-based Congressman Chris Gibson (R-19), reintroduced the “Strengthening America’s Public Schools Through Promoting Foreign Investment Act” (H.R. 1139). The bill would allow foreign students to attend public schools in the U.S. beyond the one year that is currently permitted. Because these students pay full tuition, their attendance can help fill empty classrooms and empty coffers. The Newcomb school district in the Adirondacks is a model for the initiative; foreign students have helped boost enrollment by 50% at the isolated district of 90 students. The bill will require a Senate companion bill and additional sponsors beyond the four it had as of late April.

2. Seek greater consolidation incentives.

Any district wishing to explore consolidation will have an ally in New York State Education Commissioner John King. A hallmark of King’s tenure as head of the state’s public school system has been his repeated remarks about the need to simplify a system with nearly 700 districts, more than half of which educate fewer than 2,000 students each. Gov. Andrew Cuomo has said the same, referring pointedly to the state’s over abundance of school districts in his 2013 State of the State address. While Cuomo pledged renewed “encouragement” for reorganization the recently enacted 2013-14 state budget did not include a marked increase in this type of aid, beyond the current incentives and grant opportunities.

3. Consider regionalizing services.

Shared administrative services, fuel contracts and transportation have become favored ways of savings on costs in recent years. In July 2010, for example, five Sullivan County School districts joined to form a central business office through BOCES. Now, fewer personnel do the work of all five districts, bringing a savings for all participants.

4. Track the progress of New NY Education Reforms.

The Cuomo administration has established what it calls the New NY Education Reform Commission. Its work is reflected in the recently enacted 2013-14 budget. The budget calls for \$92 million (an increase of 4.9%) more in school aid, the distribution of which should perhaps be questioned given the system’s mediocre results, in addition to current and projected enrollment declines.

5. Explore other ways to configure public education.

Public education is organized by district or by city boundaries in New York state. According to the Education Commission of the States, numerous states use structures other than districts in defining school governance. Hawaii has a statewide school district. In Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Nevada, South Carolina, West Virginia, the public education systems are organized largely as county-wide districts. In 18 other states, public education systems support variations on the regional theme to some extent.



For more Information

Visit the [Pattern for Progress](#) website for more school enrollment and finance information, including comparative state aid and cost per pupil figures.

Your thoughts on the Issues?

Contact Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress at (845) 565-4900 or email bgreg@pfprogress.org

Hudson Valley Pattern for Progress is the policy, planning and advocacy organization that creates regional, balanced and sustainable solutions to quality-of-life issues by bringing together business, nonprofit, academic and government leaders to collaborate on regional approaches to affordable/workforce housing, municipal sharing and local government efficiency, land use policy, transportation and infrastructure issues that most impact the growth and vitality of the regional economy.

Become a member of Pattern and be part of the solution!

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