



To: New York State Board of Regents
From: Lisa P. Davis, Executive Director
Westchester Putnam School Boards Association (WPSBA)
Re: Draft NYS Report Card Dashboard
Date: July 26, 2017

WPSBA appreciates your thoroughness in exploring potential information to include in the NYS Report Card Dashboard. With respect to the Funding per Pupil tab, we would like to reiterate comments in my testimony at the June 5th Yonkers ESSA Hearing regarding regional cost, per pupil funding and statewide comparisons. This is particularly relevant, as ESSA requires an analysis of school expenditures.

New York State is somewhat unique in the great disparities in regional costs- salary, housing, healthcare, and other costs of living- between the NY metro area (including the 1st ring suburbs) and the rest of the state.

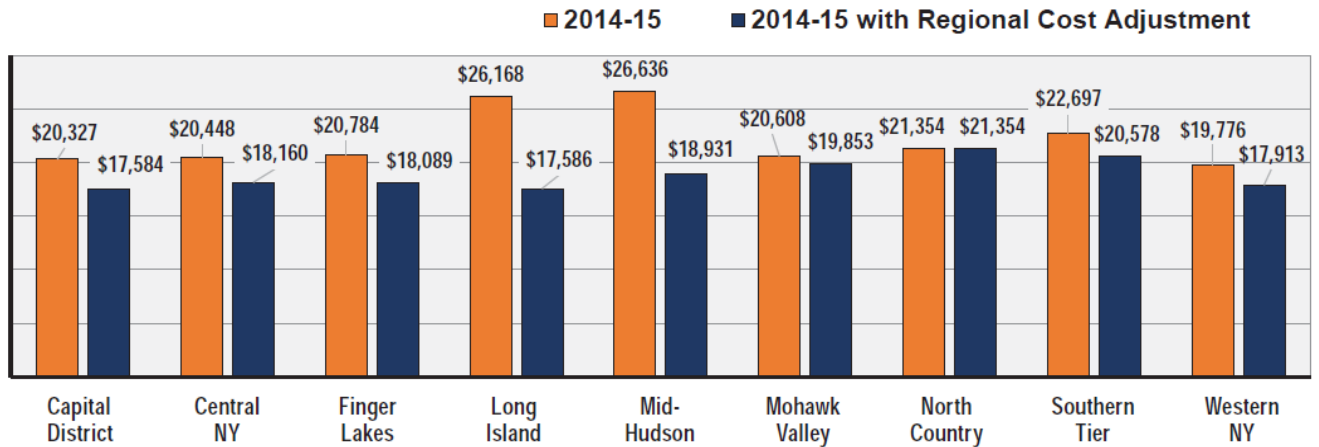
Salary differentials impact regional cost, and must be considered when allocating resources or considering the variance in per pupil expenditures. The United Way ALICE study and SED's county-level building aid factor and regional cost index multiplier confirm this differential. The NYS Comptroller's February 2017 Special Report on Education in New York includes compelling data on how per pupil expenditures flat line when regional cost is factored into the equation. We have attached these documents and regional analysis for your reference.

Daniel Gonzales and Ross Wiener of the Aspen Institute recently wrote that "equity is about giving every student what they need, not giving every student the same."

Salary and benefits account for approximately 75% of school district budgets (or per pupil costs). Given the large differential between the Lower Hudson/NYC/ Long Island regions and the rest of the state, it is disingenuous to publish an analysis that makes no mention of the regional cost index (RCI). In doing so, you create the impression that a district is over- or under-funded compared to others in the state, whereas regional salary and cost differentials explain why different levels of funding can provide similarly appropriate student offerings and services. Instead, the data should also compare a district to other districts in its region, with information on the RCI calculation. This would help identify school districts and/or schools that actually have services and funding equity issues, and minimize false narratives.

As evidenced in the graph below from the Comptroller's February 2017 report, incorporation of the RCI levels the numbers statewide, and in fact regions that may initially appear to be overfunded (or to spend much more per pupil), fall in line with, and/or spend less per pupil than, other regions across the state. We urge the Board of Regents to include data that reflects the impact of the RCI on school district costs in the final NYS Dashboard, and provides a more accurate picture of school district spending by region.

When Regional Cost Variations Are Factored in, Downstate Spending Falls into Line with Other Regions, 2014-15



Source: New York State Education Department (SED), Fiscal Profiles. Figures shown are the median district in each region. SED has created a regional cost index (RCI), updated every three years, to provide a means of adjusting for regional cost variations. This chart uses the 2012 RCI, which is the most recent available. Pupil count used is the DCAADM.

**ALICE: Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed
2016 United Way NYS Study (WPSBA analysis)**

