

Treading Water

School District Finances
Mostly Stable—For Now
But Growing Student Needs
A Cause for Concern



Ninth Annual Survey

of New York State
School Superintendents
on Financial Matters

November 2019


THE COUNCIL^{of}
SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS
LEADERS • EDUCATORS • ADVOCATES

HIGHLIGHTS:

- 14% of superintendents reported that their district’s financial condition had improved over a year ago, down from 17% in 2018, the third straight year this number declined. 20% said their district’s financial condition had worsened.
- Asked to look ahead 3 years or so, results were little changed from 2018: only 25% expressed optimism about their district’s financial prospects; 8% said their districts cannot provide adequate services *now*.
- 65% of superintendents expressed concern about their district’s reliance upon reserves or fund balances to pay recurring costs—nearly double the 33% reporting that concern in 2018.
- For the third consecutive year, improving mental health services was the most widely cited priority for new funding, chosen by 67% of superintendents as one of their top three priorities—a jump of 11 points from the 56% doing so in 2018.
- 51% of superintendents said that their district budgets this year would improve student mental health services—only the second time in nine years that a majority of superintendents said that their district budgets would improve services in any area.
- The possibility of inadequate state aid was named by 48% of superintendents as their greatest concern in thinking about financial prospects for their schools, followed by the tax cap (11%), and fixed or hard to control costs (9%).
- This year’s report includes a new section on districts which appear to have the greatest financial struggles. Cities, districts with small enrollments, districts with higher student poverty, and districts in the North Country, Southern Tier, and Western New York are most likely to report they are unable to provide adequate services now or that student opportunities are diminished compared to 10 years ago.

Overview

“Treading water” might aptly summarize the financial condition of most school districts, based on responses to the New York State Council of School Superintendents’ ninth annual survey of superintendents on financial matters.ⁱ

For good or ill, financial circumstances among New York State public school districts, *as a whole*, remain roughly stable compared to a year ago—or to the year before, or the year before that. Looking ahead, not many superintendents are optimistic about future prospects and more express concern about reliance on reserves. Few, however, report weakened overall condition compared to a year ago and more recognize improvements in specific service areas.

But the currents that schools now navigate are becoming more turbulent. Children are coming to school with greater needs than before and they should leave school better prepared for what is to come next in their lives.

Growing Concern Over Needs of Students

For the third straight year, improving student mental health-related services was most widely cited by superintendents statewide as a priority for new funding, should their districts receive revenue beyond that needed to maintain current services and satisfy mandates (See Section V).

Sixty-seven percent of superintendents identified improving student mental health services as a top three funding priority, up from 56% in 2018 and from 35% in 2016. Improving these services was the most widely cited priority for all categories of districts we examined, whether grouped as city, suburb, or rural, or by region, or by financial outlook, or by percentages of students in poverty.

Further, 53% superintendents this year said their district budget this year would improve student mental health services—only the second time in the nine years of our survey that a majority of

superintendents anticipated that their district budget would have a positive impact on any area of services (See Section II).

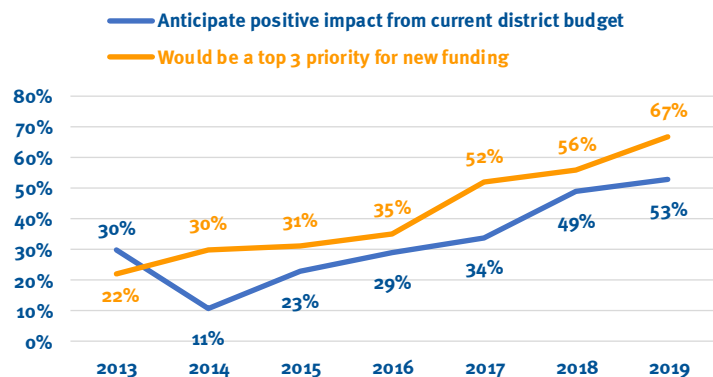
The survey findings are echoed in the words of superintendents. An upstate small city superintendent said, “We count the hours of psychiatric hospitalizations among our students in the thousands.” In an open-ended comment to our survey, a Long Island superintendent wrote, “Our highest priority is in the social emotional well-being of our students and there is never enough funding to meet this growing demand. Our society is changing and the safety, health and welfare of our students is receiving greater attention to fill the gaps not being met at home.”

Over one-third of superintendents said that their district budgets would improve student mental health services *and* that improving those services further would remain a top priority for new funding.

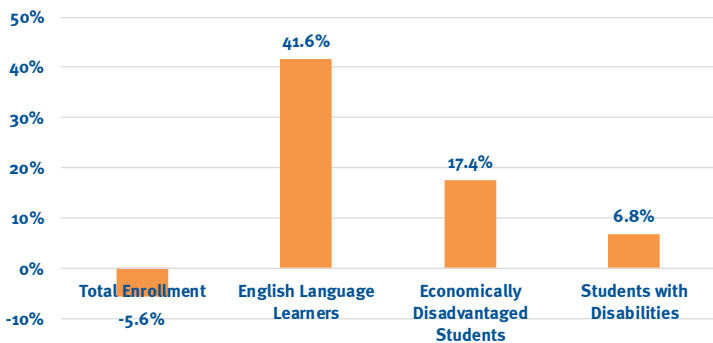
That students are coming to school with greater needs is not merely a perception among superintendents. According to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the percentage of adolescents nationwide experiencing a major depressive episode in the past year has increased every year since 2010—from 8.0% to 14.4% in 2018.ⁱⁱ

Pupil count data compiled by the State Education Department also point to the conclusion that student needs are growing. Between 2011-12 (the year the Council’s surveys began) and 2018-19, the numbers of students in districts outside New York City who are English language learners, economically disadvantaged, or students with disabilities all increased, even as total enrollment declined.ⁱⁱⁱ A result is that shares of total enrollment represented by each category as grown. One example: since 2011-12, the share of students who are economically disadvantaged increased from 35.7% to 44.4%.

Superintendents making improving mental health services a priority



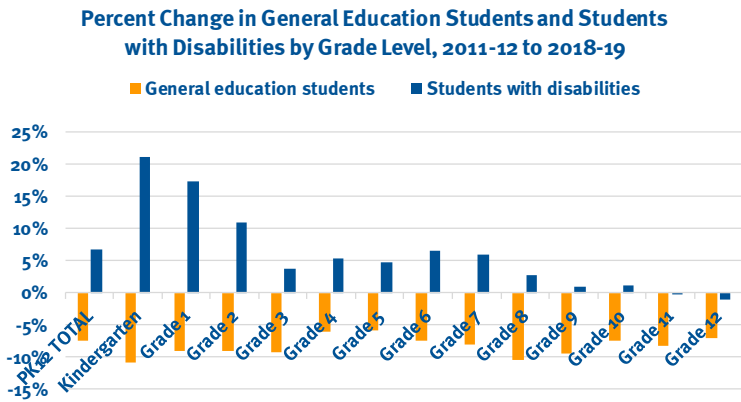
% Change in Pupil Counts, 2011-12 to 2018-19 (New York City not included)



Share of Total Enrollment	2011-12	2018-19
Economically Disadvantaged Students	35.7%	44.4%
Students with Disabilities	13.6%	15.4%
English Language Learners	4.0%	5.8%

SOURCE: Council analysis of NYSED enrollment data

There is a particularly striking pattern in counts of students with disabilities, with far greater increases occurring in the earliest grades. In grades three through 12, the number of students with disabilities in school districts outside New York City rose by 3.1% Between 2011-12 and 2018-19 between 2011-12 and 2018-19. But in kindergarten through second grade, their number rose by 16.3%. If this pattern persists, schools will see much higher shares of students in special education in future years.



SOURCE: Council analysis of NYSED enrollment data; New York City not included

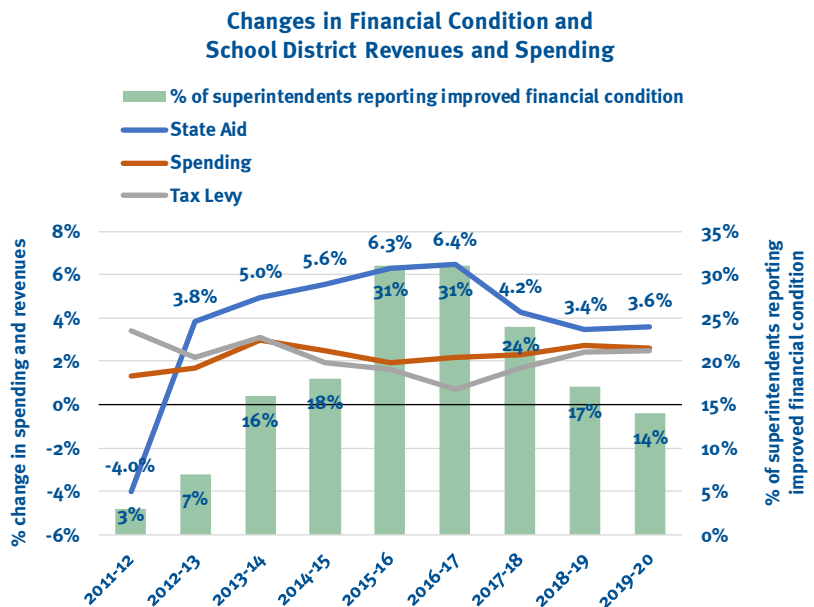
Financial Outlook

This year, 14% of superintendents statewide said that their district’s financial condition is better than a year ago, 21% said it is worse, and 65% reported no change (see Section I). The share of superintendents reporting improvement peaked in 2016 and has declined each year since.

Asked to look ahead three years or so, only 25% of superintendents professed optimism about their district’s ability to offer adequate services to their students. Fifty-four percent said they are somewhat pessimistic about future prospects, 13% said they are very pessimistic, and 8% said their schools cannot offer adequate services now—the equivalent of roughly 50 districts perhaps in a state of educational insolvency. These numbers have been essentially stable for the four years the survey has included this question.

The percentage of superintendents expressing concern about their district’s use of reserves and fund balance to pay recurring costs nearly doubled from a year ago—from 33% in 2018 to 65% this year.

We find some correlation between the size of increases in state aid and the percentage of superintendents reporting their district’s financial condition improved: both percentages climbed after 2011-12—the first year of the survey and the last year School Aid was cut—then peaked in 2016-17. State aid increases have been smaller in



SOURCES: Council surveys and Council analysis of NYSED School Aid and Property Tax Report Card data. New York City not included.

percentage terms since that year, as have the percentages of superintendents reporting improved district financial condition.

The prospect of inadequate state aid is the most prevalent cause of concern among superintendents in thinking about financial prospects for their schools, cited by 48% of superintendents (See Section III). Next came the property tax cap, named by 11%.

Asked about cost-related issues, 56% of superintendents identified increasing special education costs as a “significant problem”—more than any other item (see Section III). This may reflect, in part, district efforts to respond to growing student mental health needs and, again, the number of students with disabilities outside New York City has increased by 6.8% since 2011-12.

This year’s report includes a new section examining the circumstances of districts which appear to be struggling the most financially—those whose superintendents reported that their district is unable to offer adequate services to students now or that opportunities for students are diminished from a decade ago—when the Great Recession hit (see Section VII). Cities, districts with high student poverty or small enrollments or both, and districts located in the Southern Tier, North Country, and Western New York are more likely than others to fall into one or both of these groups.^{iv}

Looking Ahead

Our survey results show many schools struggling to achieve what is being asked of them now. But more could be asked.

The Board of Regents has embarked on a multi-year review of state graduation requirements. The exercise is about more than deciding whether students should be required to pass Regents Examinations. It should also be about more than whether it is now too difficult or too easy to earn a diploma. Instead, a goal should be to assure that all students have access to opportunities that will prepare them for success in college, a career, or both.

In our survey findings and in other research, evidence about the prevalence of those opportunities and their effectiveness is mixed

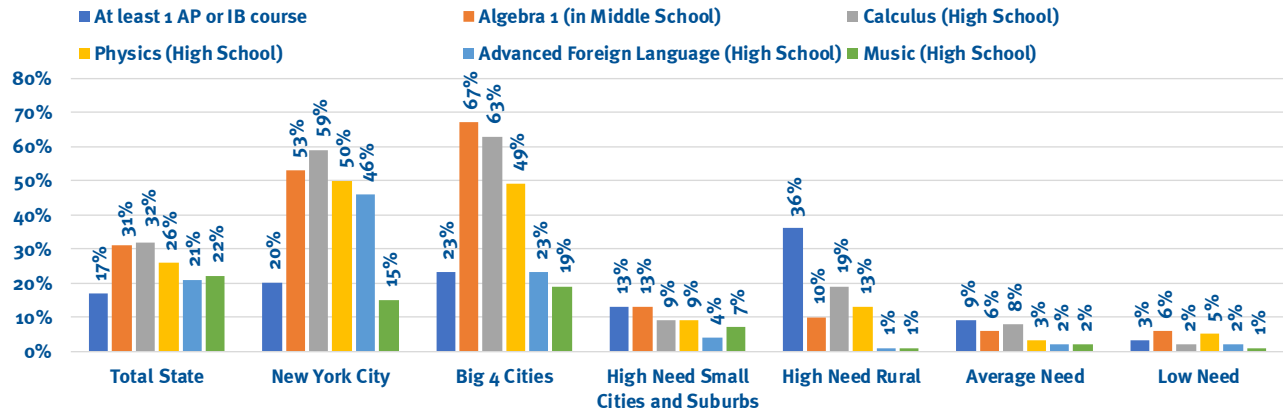
In a new Council survey question (see Section IV), majorities of superintendents responded that they are somewhat or very satisfied by the opportunities their districts offer related to preparing students for life after high school—serving in the military, pursuing further education, entering the workforce, or becoming informed and engaged citizens. Superintendents statewide were *least* likely to be *very* satisfied with opportunities preparing students to enter the workforce (38%), become engaged citizens (35%), or gain admission to a competitive college or university (32%).

But results from a 2018 survey of over 1,000 recent New York State high school graduates by Education Trust—New York should signal concern: only one in three recent graduates felt they had been significantly challenged in high school and nearly half reported having to take at least one remedial class in college.^v

Another Education Trust—New York initiated effort found wide disparities in access to what it and its coalition allies termed “gatekeeper courses”—courses found to be pivotal in preparing young people for success in college, careers, and civic life.^{vi} These include, for example, physics, calculus, algebra in eighth grade, earth science in middle school, and Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and college dual enrollment classes. Half or more of large high need urban districts were not offering

even a single class in physics, calculus or middle school algebra. Rural high need districts, on the other hand, were least likely to offer AP, IB, or dual enrollment courses, with 36% of schools in this group found to be offering students none of these opportunities.

Percentages of schools without selected "gatekeeper" courses...



SOURCE: Adapted from *Within Our Reach*. New York Equity Coalition. May 2018

In the Council’s 2019 survey, increasing access to advanced classes such as AP, IB, or college dual enrollment classes was the third most widely cited priority for new funding statewide, chosen by 21% of superintendents. If not for the widespread urgency attached to addressing student mental health needs, it might rank higher—in 2017, 28% of superintendents named increasing advanced classes as a top funding priority. One upstate suburban superintendent observed, “We are spending resources on mental health issues, and not funding rigorous academic courses.”

I. Overall Financial Condition

Change in Financial Condition

For nine years we have asked, “Compared to one year ago, how has the financial condition of your district changed, in terms of its ability to fund services meeting expectations of parents in the community?”

Our first survey was done in 2011, a year when state aid had been cut by \$1.3 billion. Seventy-five percent of superintendents that year reported their district financial condition had worsened. For a few years thereafter, steady improvements occurred. In 2015, for the first time, more superintendents reported that their district’s financial condition had improved rather than worsened, by 31% to 18%.

Since 2016, however, gains have stalled, with diminishing numbers of superintendents seeing improvement in district financial condition.

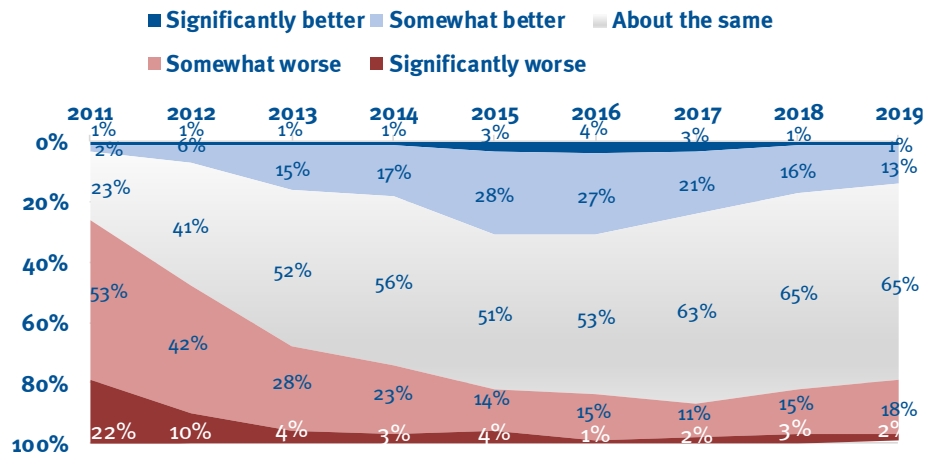
For 2019, 14% of superintendents said their district’s financial condition has grown better, 20% said it has gotten worse, and 65% saw no change, the second year in a row that more superintendents reported worsening rather than improvement. But for each of the last three years over 60% of superintendents anticipated no change in the district financial condition.

Never in any of the nine years of our survey have more than 31% of superintendents reported improvement in the financial condition of their school systems.

Superintendents leading city districts were most likely to report that the financial condition of their district had grown significantly worse since a year ago.

Superintendents of districts in the lowest student poverty group (0 to 10% of students estimated to be eligible for free or reduced-price lunches) were most likely to say that district financial condition had grown somewhat or significantly worse. This result appears related to greater tax-related concerns among superintendents in this group: 44% of superintendents in the low poverty/worse financial condition group reported that the new \$10,000 federal cap on deductions for state and local taxes (SALT) had had a significant impact on district budget decisions, compared to only 6% of superintendents statewide.

Compared to one year ago, how has the financial condition of your district changed, in terms of its ability to fund services meeting expectations of parents in the community?



Regions/Groups with Highest % Reporting Worse Financial Condition from 1 Year Ago

Significantly Worse	
City	12%
Mohawk Valley	5%
North Country	5%
Central New York	4%
Mid-Hudson Valley	4%
Over 60% FRPL-Eligible	4%
Finger Lakes	4%
Somewhat or Significantly Worse	
0-10% FRPL-Eligible	34%
Southern Tier	26%
11 to 20% FRPL-Eligible	25%
Central New York	24%
City	24%
21 to 30% FRPL-Eligible	24%
Capital Region	24%
FRPL-Eligible--% of students estimated to be eligible for free or reduced price lunches	

SUPERINTENDENTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

Lower Hudson Valley Suburb: We have been very creative in increasing opportunities with our increasing costs, however, I am concerned about being able to continue to fund programs without appropriate state aid. Our taxpayers cannot continue to support increases to their taxes.

Western New York Suburb: The moral imperative of public education is to serve each child, and their families, according to their needs. We simply can't sustain our current efforts under the current funding structure. We will be either financially or instructionally insolvent in five years if things don't change. The multiplier effect tied to the social costs of that insolvency will snuff out this renaissance that Western New York has begun to experience and negatively impact the state's ability to compete with the world for jobs and opportunity.

Central New York Suburb: We have made great strides in providing opportunities for our students. The community continues to decline at an alarming rate, which mitigates this effort to some degree.

Mid-Hudson Valley Rural: We are presently providing an exceptional array of learning opportunities, supports, and co and extra-curricular activities. We are considered a high wealth district despite our poverty index doubling in the past 10 years. I fear we will not have enough state aid, coupled with the tax cap to continue to fund these programs that have distinguished the district as a high performing, and gap closing district.

North Country Rural: We have little to no capacity to provide the range of programs for our students as opposed to more urban, more wealthy, or larger districts. While we have committed staff and a supportive community, we are near capacity of offering AP courses, due to limited staffing/time. Merger votes are few and far between, with only negative votes during the straw poll for districts in this region. Enabling legislation for regional high schools would allow us to at least begin planning how to make our programs, and our students transcripts, competitive with those around the state.

Finger Lakes Suburb: We are spending resources on mental health issues, and not funding rigorous academic courses. Choices continue to narrow. There will be class type disagreement in this budget cycle. Funding fights for poor underserved by taking from the wealthy, is a very unhealthy position.

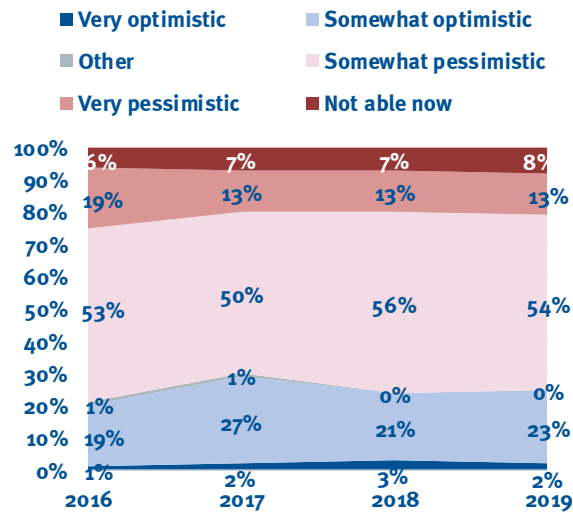
Capital Region Suburb: We provide additional supports such as Summer School, Alternative Education, Inclusion/Co-Teaching classes, ENL supports etc. For our district to compete with some of our neighboring districts, it is critical to be able to provide this extra level of programming for our students... I'm concerned we will not be able to provide the same level of programming in the future.

Future Financial Prospects

For the last four years we have asked superintendents, “Thinking ahead three years or so, how optimistic or pessimistic are you about whether your district will be able to fund programs and services adequate to the needs of your students?”

On this question, as well, results have been essentially stable. But never have more than 30% of superintendents professed optimism about their schools’ financial prospects.

Thinking ahead 3 years or so, how optimistic or pessimistic are you about whether your district will be able to fund programs and services adequate to the needs of your students?



For 2019, only 25% of superintendents responded that they were somewhat or very optimistic, 54% said they were somewhat pessimistic, and 13% were very pessimistic.

Eight percent of superintendents said that their districts are not able to provide adequate services now—the equivalent of roughly 50 school systems perhaps in a state of educational insolvency. Districts in this last group are most often upstate, small, rural, and higher in student poverty.

Nineteen percent of city superintendents responding to our survey said their districts lack capacity to provide adequate services now.

Among regions, the Southern Tier had the highest percentage of superintendents (14%) reporting that their districts are not able now to provide adequate services, while the Mohawk Valley had the highest percentage (34%) responding either that they are either very pessimistic about their district’s prospects or that it is not able to provide adequate services now.

Regions/Groups with Highest % Reporting Districts Cannot Provide Adequate Services Now	
City	19%
Southern Tier	14%
North Country	12%
Western New York	12%

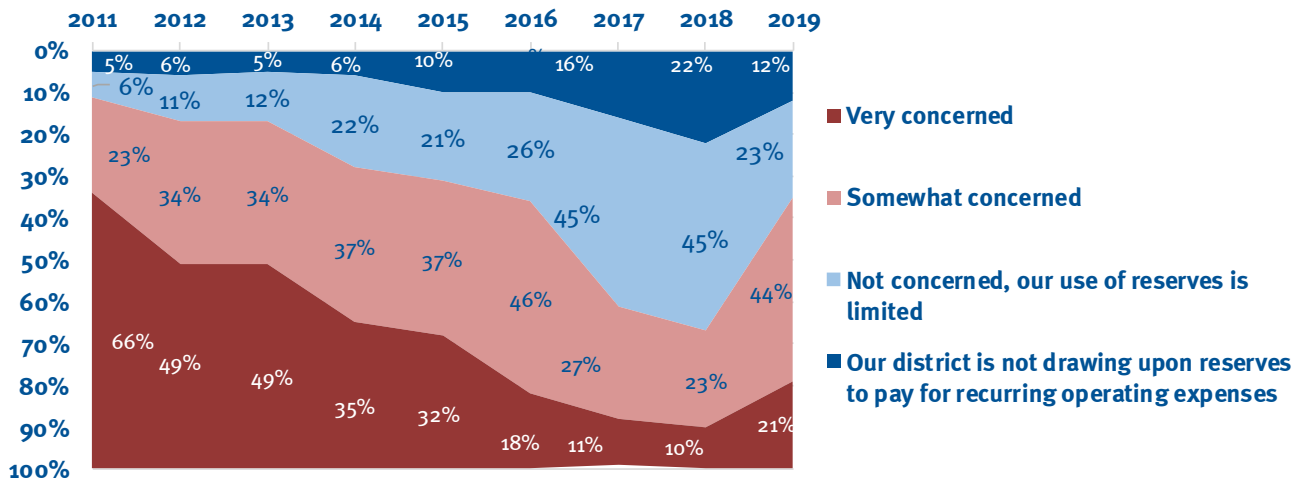
A later section of this report elaborates on the circumstances of the districts with the most pessimism about their prospects.

Reliance Upon Reserves and Fund Balance to Support Recurring Costs

In another question pertaining to overall financial condition we have asked, “To what extent, if at all, are you concerned that your district is drawing upon reserves and fund balance to pay for recurring operating costs?” This year produced a more dramatic shift toward a negative outlook in the responses to this question.

In the survey’s first year (2011), 89% percent of superintendents expressed concern about reliance on reserves and fund balance, with 66% saying they were very concerned. Thereafter, the share of superintendents expressing concern declined. But in our 2019 results, the percentage of superintendents answering that they are somewhat or very concerned about their district’s reliance on reserves and fund balance to pay recurring costs roughly doubled, going from 33% to 65%.

To what extent, if at all, are you concerned that your district is drawing upon reserves to pay for recurring operating costs?



Superintendents leading city districts (81%), Mohawk Valley districts (79%), and low poverty districts (76%) were most likely to express concern about reliance on reserves and fund balance. As with our findings regarding perceptions of overall financial condition among superintendents in this group, this appears to be related to anticipation that the new \$10,000 cap on federal deductions for state and local taxes constitutes a significant problem for their districts: 91% of superintendents who said that the SALT cap had had a significant impact on district budget decisions indicated they are concerned by their districts’ reliance upon reserves to pay recurring costs.

SUPERINTENDENTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

Capital Region Rural: We have used declining enrollment as an opportunity to offer more electives at the secondary level by utilizing existing staff.

Long Island Suburb: Due to declining student enrollment, we were able to reallocate teaching staff to student support roles.

Capital Region Suburb: Our district has added several student support services to help address the rising mental health needs. We have added several social worker positions and have partnered with community agencies to provide school-based mental health programs. These needs continue to grow.

Southern Tier Rural: We are ramping up social emotional education and awareness at the classroom level. We would like to be able to provide additional counseling services/staff but this is not possible at this point in time.

Long Island Suburb: We focused a great deal on mental health resources adding staff to adequately provide greater oversight.

Finger Lakes Suburb: We received flat or almost flat state aid year to year. Our budget levy increase is now our only predictable and non-sustainable revenue driver. I can't drive the levy faster than the cap, and my costs are rising faster. State aid must be better distributed, even to perceived wealthy districts, because we can no longer offset the losses. We may have to go to "pay to play" activities and that will ruin the inroads we have made to alleviate the poverty gap in our district.

Finger Lakes Rural: With limited State Aid projected and then received in the budget development process, we were not able to meet growing student mental health needs as we believe we need to add a social worker and clinical substance abuse counselor to our Middle/High School programs.

Mohawk Valley Rural: Added a .2 social worker at the high school. We have been actively involved in engaging outside agencies to provide counseling and other services at no additional cost to the district -- yet it still isn't enough.

Long Island Suburb: Declining enrollment has allowed us to shift resources from classroom teachers to mental health support for students.

Finger Lakes Rural: We added positions specifically this year to address mental health concerns for our students. This required a decrease in resources available for academics and extracurricular offerings.

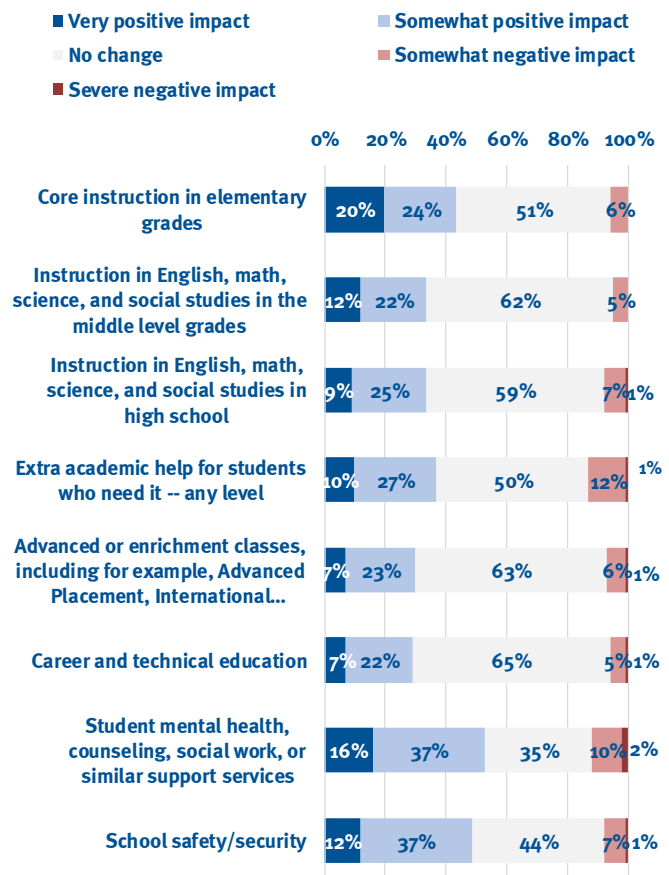
Central New York Rural: Increases were for additional mental health providers and special education teachers.

II. 2019-20 District Budgets and Program Impact

Mental Health Services, School Security Most Likely to Have Improved

Each year we have also asked superintendents to assess the probable impact of their district budgets upon various student-related services. Results suggest somewhat more positive current circumstances than does our question regarding changing overall financial condition. For example, while 20% of superintendents said that their district's overall financial condition had worsened over the prior year and 14% said it had improved, an average of 38% of superintendents anticipate that their 2019-20 district budget will have a positive impact on core instruction at all school levels (elementary, middle and secondary) while only 6% foresaw a negative impact.

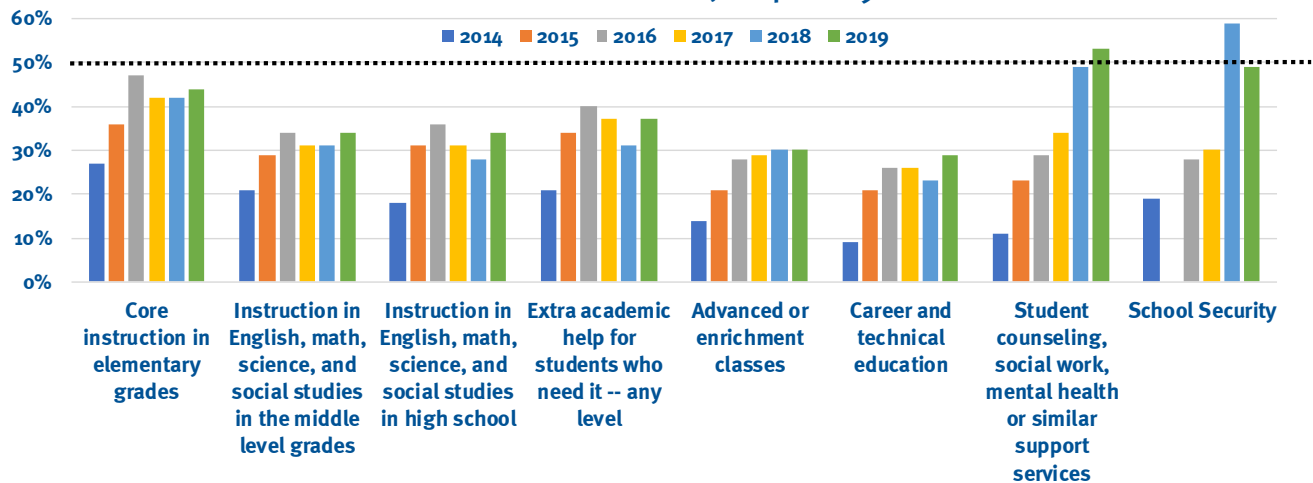
What was the impact of 2019-20 budget decisions on each of the following areas of student services:



Still, as with overall financial condition, the pace of improvement has stalled for most service areas. There were steady increases in the shares of superintendents reporting improvement in most key services areas from 2011 through 2016, but those have faltered in the years since.

Two areas have had recent *and dramatic increases* in the shares of superintendents anticipating improvements. In 2018, school security became the first area in the then eight years of the survey to have a majority of superintendents anticipate improved services. Mental health-related services attained that peak in this year's survey, with 59% of superintendents expecting improvement.

% of superintendents anticipating positive budget impact on selected student services, 2014 to 2019



III. Concerns and Problems

Prospect of Inadequate State Aid the Greatest Concern

By a wide margin, the prospect of inadequate state aid is the single factor which causes superintendents the greatest concern in thinking about their district's financial outlook, with 48% selecting it. Next came the tax cap, cited by 11% of superintendents.

Asked to name *all* factors causing concern, five items stood out: inadequate state aid (named by 88% of superintendents statewide), increasing special education costs (80%), increases in fixed or hard to control costs such as pensions and health insurance (73%), the tax cap (71%), rising levels of economic disadvantage (69%), and increasing costs from state or federal mandates (68%).

In our 2018 survey, pension and health insurance costs were the second most widely cited concern; that item dropped to third place in 2019. Otherwise, results from the two years were very similar.

Objectively, there were greater reasons to fear an increase in teacher pension costs for next year, with one year of exceptionally strong investment earnings dropping out of the five-year average used by the retirement system to calculate its required employer contribution rate. After the survey was conducted, the New York State Teachers Retirement System announced that the employer contribution rate to be paid against 2020-21 school year salaries will increase from 8.86% to between 9.25% and 10.25%, increasing costs for school districts outside New York City by an estimated \$100 million to \$300 million.

Which of the following issues cause you concern in thinking about the financial outlook for your school district?

	Check all that apply	Which causes the greatest concern
Inadequate state aid	88%	48%
Increasing special education costs	80%	8%
Increases in fixed or hard to control costs (e.g., pensions, health insurance)	73%	9%
The tax cap	71%	11%
Rising levels of economic disadvantage among students (greater student poverty)	69%	5%
Additional costs arising from state or federal mandates	68%	3%
Declining student enrollment	50%	4%
High property taxes or perception of high property taxes	43%	4%
Weak local economy	39%	2%
Growing numbers of students for whom English is not their first language (ELL, ENL students)	35%	2%
Impact of new \$10,000 federal cap on deductions for state and federal taxes	27%	2%
Increasing student enrollment	8%	0%
Poor or uncertain community support for the schools	7%	0%
Costs due to students enrolling in charter schools	6%	0%
Other (Please specify)	4%	1%

Regional Variations: “Weak Local Economy” and the “SALT Cap”

As with other questions, results vary across regions and other district characteristics. For example, fewer than 10% of Long Island and Lower Hudson Valley superintendents cite “weak local economy” as a concern in thinking about their district’s financial outlook, but 74% of Southern Tier superintendents do, as do over half of superintendents in the Mohawk Valley, North Country, and Western New York.

In our 2018 survey, we included impact of the new \$10,000 cap on federal deductions for state and local taxes as a possible concern. Lower Hudson Valley superintendents were especially likely to cite it as a concern, with 72% doing so, compared to 32% for the entire state. The figures from this year’s survey are 73% for the Lower Hudson Valley and 27% for the state as a whole.

So far, it is hard to find evidence of an effect from the SALT cap in 2019 school budget vote outcomes. For example, the Lower Hudson Valley was the only region of the state in which all school budgets passed in May votes. But in a separate question, we asked to what extent the SALT cap affected district budgeting decisions for 2019-20. Thirty-one percent of Lower Hudson Valley superintendents said it had had a significant impact, compared to 6% for the entire state. As noted in Section I, we also conclude that the SALT cap is a factor in negative perceptions of overall district financial condition among superintendents leading low poverty districts.

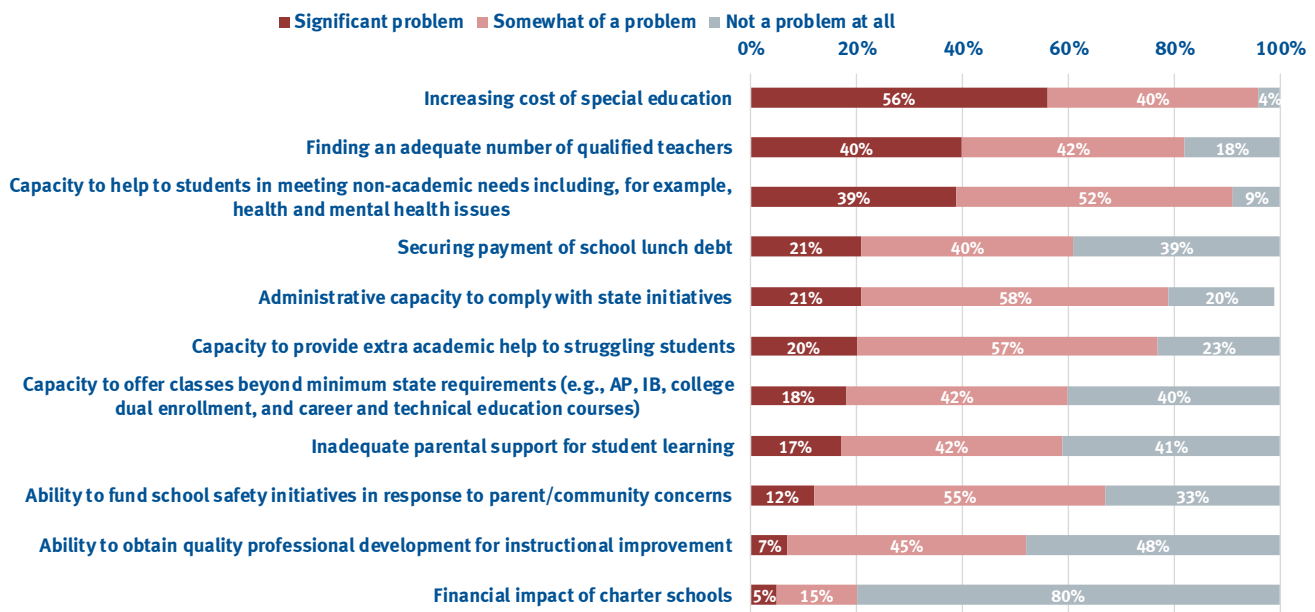
“Significant Problems”—Special Education Costs, Finding Qualified Teachers, Meeting Non-Academic Needs

We also asked to what extent a series of cost-related items are problems for school systems. Three items stand out. Increasing costs for special education were cited by 56% of superintendents statewide as a significant problem and by 40% as somewhat of a problem—results virtually identical to a year ago. In all but one region of the state increasing special education costs were most widely cited as a significant problem.

Finding an adequate number of qualified teachers was identified as a significant problem by 40% of superintendents statewide. In the North Country, 72% of superintendents report it as a significant problem, making it the one region where it was more widely cited than special education costs. Southern Tier, higher poverty, and city superintendents also reported difficulty in finding an adequate number of qualified teachers.

“Capacity to help students in meeting non-academic needs, including health and mental health issues” was third most widely cited as a significant problem, named by 39% of superintendents statewide. Southern Tier, city, and higher poverty school district superintendents were most likely to name this concern as a significant problem.

To what extent, if any, have the considerations below been problems for your district?



Issues cited as "significant problems" by at least 50% of superintendents in a group or region

Issue	Group/Region	Percentage
Increasing cost of special education	City	77%
	Southern Tier	74%
	Mohawk Valley	68%
	31 to 40% FRPL-eligible	66%
	Over 60% FRPL-eligible	64%
	51 to 60% FRPL-eligible	63%
	Lower Hudson Valley	62%
	Capital Region	62%
	Rural	57%
	Western New York	57%
	Central New York	56%
	Statewide	56%
	Finger Lakes	53%
	41 to 50% FRPL-eligible	51%
Suburb	50%	
Mid-Hudson Valley	50%	
21 to 30% FRPL-eligible	50%	
Finding an adequate number of qualified teachers	North Country	71%
	Southern Tier	64%
	Over 60% FRPL-eligible	59%
	City	58%
	51 to 60% FRPL-eligible	57%
	Statewide	40%
Capacity to help to students in meeting non-academic needs including, for example, health and mental health issues	Southern Tier	60%
	City	58%
	51 to 60% FRPL-eligible	52%
	Over 60% FRPL-eligible	50%
	Statewide	39%
Inadequate parental support for learning	City	62%
	Statewide	17%

"% FRPL-eligible"—% estimated % of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch program

SUPERINTENDENTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

Capital Region City: We are able to provide 1st generation college attendees that come from economically disadvantaged households the opportunity to receive an associate's degree for free. We have EPK and UPK for 3 and 4 year old economically disadvantaged children to help "level the playing field" and every student receives free breakfast and lunch to help prepare them for the day as well as free health care in our clinic.

North Country Rural: Our academic program pales when compared to other regions of the state. We are unable to maintain the financial requirements and staffing needs to offer choices other regions can maintain.

Southern Tier Rural: We are lacking in a variety of academic opportunities based on limited staffing. I believe this is a disadvantage to some of our top ranked students seeking acceptance to Universities expecting a more rigorous transcript.

Lower Hudson Valley Suburb: We have restored some of the offerings that were cut in the past, but increased demands per guidance and ELL regs coupled with special ed and transportation costs will likely again lead to reductions in offerings.

Mohawk Valley Rural: We have increased the number of courses that will provide students with Dual College Credit. Due to declining numbers, we will most likely have to eliminate some of our upper level dual credit and AP courses.

Finger Lakes Rural: The opportunities we are able to provide our students are quite limited as compared to suburban districts just 15-30 minutes away.

Capital Region Rural: We have restored programs that were eliminated during the 2008 recession by strategically partnering with higher education, shifting to shared services through BOCES, and continually reallocating resources inside of our general fund.

IV. Opportunities for Students

This year's survey included a new question: "To the extent you are able, compared to 10 years ago, how would you say that the programs and opportunities your district is able to provide for students have changed?" The objective was to assess the extent to which leaders see their districts recovering from budgetary trauma endured during the Great Recession and its aftermath.

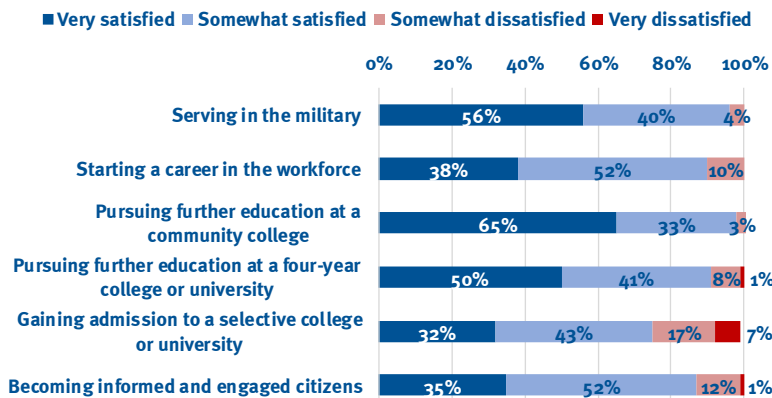
The answers statewide were more positive than we might have anticipated:

- 61% of superintendents said student opportunities in their schools had improved from 10 years ago;
- 15% said they were about the same;
- 14% said they had diminished, including 4% who described student opportunities as significantly diminished.
- 10% of superintendents responded that they were not able to give an answer—a necessary response option, given turnover in the superintendency.

But the results do suggest that there are nearly 100 school districts whose superintendents see as unable to offer their students opportunities matching those of a decade ago. This outlook is especially prevalent among superintendents in the North Country—37% perceive student opportunities as diminished from a decade ago.

In another new question, we asked superintendents how satisfied are they that their schools are able to provide adequate opportunities to prepare students for post-high school activities. Superintendents were most satisfied with the opportunities preparing students to attend a community college (98%) or serve in the military (96%). They were least likely to be *very* satisfied with opportunities to prepare students to gain admission to a selective college or university (32%), become informed

How satisfied are you that your district is able to provide adequate opportunities for students in preparing them for the following activities upon leaving high school?



and engaged citizens (35%), or to enter the work force (38%). They were most apt to be *dissatisfied* with opportunities to prepare students to gain admission to selective colleges and universities (24%) and become informed and engaged citizens (13%).

Again, there are variations across regions and other district groupings. For example, among superintendents leading high poverty districts (those estimated to have more than 60% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches), only 44% were very satisfied with opportunities preparing students for further education at a community college, compared to 65% of superintendents statewide.

Thirty-seven percent of city superintendents were dissatisfied with workforce preparation opportunities, compared to just 10% of all superintendents.

Dissatisfaction with opportunities to prepare students for admission to selective colleges and universities was highest among superintendents in the Southern Tier (45%), North Country (34%), and Mohawk Valley (32%).

SUPERINTENDENTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

Southern Tier Rural: Strengths: Ability to offer college level courses in the high school, ability to work with local businesses to provide job shadowing experiences. Concerns: special education costs and the ability of the district to provide safe and appropriate programs for special needs students - we have some children who create an unsafe environment for themselves, other students and staff and yet there is no support from the State to find an appropriate placement. I support inclusion 100%, but some children for which we simply do not have ability to provide an appropriate program.

Long Island Suburb: Increase in the number of newly enrolled SIFE [i.e., students with interrupted formal education, typically from out-of-state] students of high school age has been a challenge. The district has augmented its staff and services, but it comes at a cost.

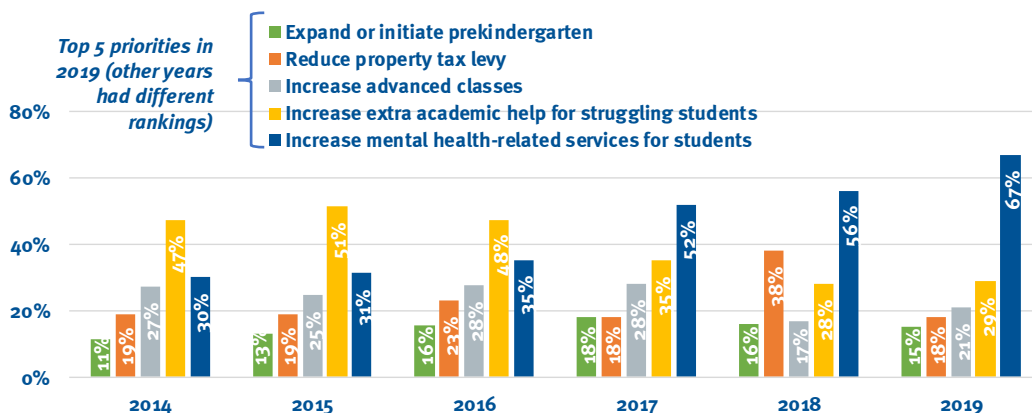
Capital Region Suburb: The inadequacy of program offerings in a small school district compared to larger schools is simply not fair. Smaller schools simply do not have the funding levels to offer high quality academic programs and facilities as do the larger schools. This needs to be addressed.

V. Priorities for Future Funding

Percentage of Superintendents Naming Improving Mental Health Services as a Priority Climbs Again

For the third straight year, improving student mental-health related services was the most widely cited priority among superintendents should their districts receive funding beyond that needed to maintain current services and satisfy mandates. Sixty-seven percent of superintendents included improving mental health services as a one of their top three priorities for new funding, up 11 percentage points from 2018 and nearly doubling the share from three years ago.

If your district were to receive an increase in funding beyond what would be needed to fund mandates and your current level of services, what would be your top three priorities for the use of that funding?



To a greater extent than in past years, the priority given to any one item—in this case mental health services—dwarfs that of any other option. More than twice as many superintendents named improving mental health services as a priority compared to the next highest option. One Finger Lakes region superintendent observed, “We are spending resources on mental health issues and not funding rigorous courses.”

As noted above, 53% superintendents said their district budget this year would improve student mental health services. Since 2015, our survey results have revealed a pattern one would expect: in 2015, 31% of superintendents named improving mental health services as a funding priority and in our 2016 results, 29% of superintendents anticipated their district budgets would have that impact. Similar results have followed in subsequent years. But it is striking that among the more than half of superintendents who answered that their budgets this year will improve student mental health services, 66% would nonetheless make that area a top priority for future funding.

Whether grouped as city, suburb, or rural, or by region, or by student poverty level, improving student mental health services was the most widely cited new funding priority in every case.

Leading Priorities If Additional Funding Available — Districts Grouped by Community, Poverty Level, and Region

	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3
Statewide	Increase mental health services	Increase extra academic help	Increase advanced classes (e.g., AP, IB)
Community			
City	Increase mental health services	Increase extra academic help	Create/add Community School(s)
Suburb	Increase mental health services	Reduce property tax levy	Increase extra academic help
Rural	Increase mental health services	Increase extra academic help	Increase advanced classes (e.g., AP, IB)
Student Poverty Percent (% of students estimated to be eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch Program)			
0 to 10%	Increase mental health services	Reduce property tax levy	Improve school security
11 to 20%	Increase mental health services	Reduce property tax levy	Expand/improve career and tech. ed.
21 to 30%	Increase mental health services	Increase extra academic help	Expand or initiate prekindergarten
31 to 40%	Increase mental health services	Increase extra academic help	Increase advanced classes (e.g., AP, IB)
41 to 50%	Increase mental health services	Increase extra academic help	Increase advanced classes (e.g., AP, IB)
51 to 60%	Increase mental health services	Increase extra academic help	Increase advanced classes (e.g., AP, IB)
Over 60%	Increase mental health services	Increase extra academic help	Create/add Community School(s)
Region			
Long Island	Increase mental health services	Reduce property tax levy	Expand/improve career and tech. ed.
Lower Hudson Valley	Increase mental health services	Increase advanced classes (e.g., AP, IB)	Reduce property tax levy
Mid-Hudson Valley	Increase mental health services	Reduce property tax levy	Increase extra academic help
Capital Region	Increase mental health services	Increase extra academic help	Reduce property tax levy
Mohawk Valley	Increase mental health services	Increase funding of reserves	Increase extra academic help
Central New York	Increase mental health services	Expand or initiate prekindergarten	Increase extra academic help
North Country	Increase mental health services	Increase advanced classes (e.g., AP, IB)	Increase extra academic help
Southern Tier	Increase mental health services	Increase extra academic help	Improve special education
Finger Lakes	Increase mental health services	Increase extra academic help	Reduce property tax levy
Western New York	Increase mental health services	Increase extra academic help	Increase advanced classes (e.g., AP, IB)

Other Leading Priorities—Extra Academic Help, Reducing Tax Levy, Adding Advanced Courses

Improving extra academic help for struggling students was the most widely cited priority in each of the first six years of the survey (2011 through 2016). Statewide, it was the second most widely cited priority in our 2019 results and was the second ranked priority by superintendents in cities and suburbs, in all district groups with more than 20% of students in poverty (measured by free or reduced price lunch eligibility), and in the Capital Region, Southern Tier, Finger Lakes, and Western New York.

Reducing the property tax levy was the second most widely cited priority in suburbs, lower poverty districts, on Long Island, and in the Mid-Hudson Valley. It was third most widely cited by superintendents in the Lower Hudson Valley, Capital Region and Finger Lakes.

Increasing advanced high school classes such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and college dual enrollment courses was a top three priority for superintendents leading rural districts, districts with between 31% and 60% of students in poverty, and in the Lower Hudson Valley and Western New York regions.

For the highest poverty districts, adding one or more Community Schools was a priority. In Central New York expanding or initiating prekindergarten was the second most widely cited priority should funding become available. Increasing funding of reserves came in second as a priority among Mohawk Valley superintendents—it was the region with the highest share of superintendents (79%) expressing concern about reliance on reserves to fund recurring costs.

Prekindergarten

In a separate question, we asked superintendents about considerations which might deter their districts from launching or expanding prekindergarten programs. Statewide, 35% of superintendents responded that needs are being met by existing programs, whether funded by state or district revenues or by private pay. The implication is that nearly two-thirds of superintendents see a need for additional prekindergarten opportunities.

But while most superintendents report unmet pre-k needs, only 15% identified expanding or initiating pre-k as one of their top three funding priorities for their districts.

Adequacy of state funding was the most widely cited deterrent to expanding pre-k. Fifty-six percent of superintendents identifying additional need said their district would consider expanding pre-k but state

SUPERINTENDENTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

Central New York Rural: We would create more wrap around services and programs for students and families struggling with social emotional concerns and provide professional development for all faculty and staff in this area.

Finger Lakes Rural: I would like to see our full range of social emotional support for students be actualized, so that every student knows where to find the support he or she needs. I would like to see regional, statewide, and government support of school districts become less competitive and more systemic.

Long Island Suburb: Our highest priority is in the social emotional well-being of our students and there is never enough funding to meet this growing demand. Our society is changing and the safety, health and welfare of our students is receiving greater attention to fill the gaps not being met at home. We need to advocate for dedicated funds in this area.

Mohawk Valley Rural: We would like to add mental health services but that is as much a lack of qualified individuals as it is a funding issue. In this area we cannot get school psychologists or social workers to meet our needs. Those available go to the larger schools or down state where they pay a significant amount more. We have also looked to add a few AP courses and a full-time principal versus a superintendent serving in a dual role as principal as well.

North Country Rural: I would like to be able to afford additional teachers at the secondary level to lower teacher loads so they can provide more advisory and AIS time for students. I would also like to see more career exploration including internships in the local communities.

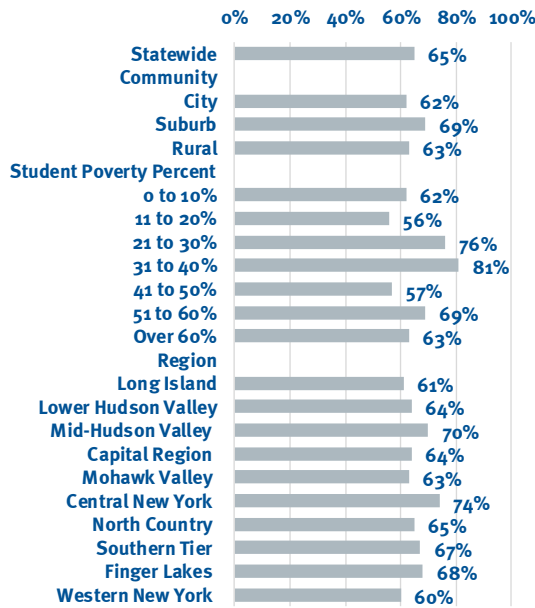
Long Island Suburb: We currently have three social workers for 3,000 students. I would double this number if possible, but would certainly devote funds to this much needed and important area.

Lower Hudson Valley Suburb: Expand mental health services.

Mid-Hudson Valley Rural: Career and tech ed would be great for a good number of our students who are not interested in college. We would also like to offer adult career and tech ed for those students who did not have success in college.

Mid-Hudson Valley Suburb: I did not list security as one of my three priorities even though it is our highest priority. We could spend a tremendous amount more on doors, windows, cameras, personnel, etc. but I do not feel confident that anyone can say anyplace is secure from gun violence in America today.

Percentage of superintendents identifying unmet need for prekindergarten opportunities in their districts



funding is not adequate. Availability of space and lack of community-based organizations to house programs were other common obstacles.

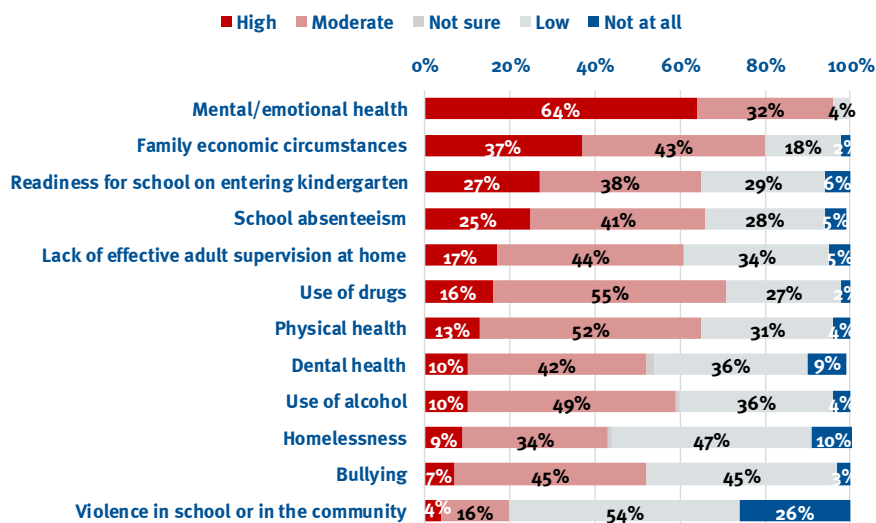
Central New York was the region with the highest share of superintendents (74%) identifying unmet needs for pre-k. Small and large districts—those with 500 students or less or more than 10,000—were most likely to report fully adequate pre-k opportunities, with 55% and 50%, respectively, saying needs are met by existing programs.

VI. Student Well-Being

In light of anecdotal reports from superintendents about growing student needs and our survey findings about surging mental health service demands, in 2018 we added questions asking superintendents about their levels of concern about various aspects of well-being among children served by their schools. We continued that question in this year's survey.

Our results show little change from year to year. In both years, 96% of superintendents indicated high or moderate levels of concern about their students mental/emotional health although the share citing a high level of concern declined from 67% to 64%. Thirty-seven percent of superintendents expressed high concern about their students' family economic circumstances; in 2018, 39% did so. Concerns about readiness for kindergarten did decline more significantly—from 33% in 2018 to 27% this year.

What is your level of concern about the various aspects of child well-being listed below for the children served by your district's schools?



Superintendents leading city, high poverty, and Southern Tier school districts were most likely to express high levels of concern about multiple aspects of child well-being.

Percentages of superintendents indicating a high level of concern about various aspects of child well-being												
	Mental/emotional health	Family economic circumstances	Readiness for Kindergarten	School absenteeism	Lack of effective adult supervision at home	Physical health	Dental health	Use of drugs	Use of alcohol	Homelessness	Bullying	Violence in school or the community
Statewide	64%	37%	27%	25%	17%	13%	10%	10%	16%	9%	7%	4%
Community												
City	88%	77%	58%	81%	46%	38%	35%	19%	27%	42%	23%	23%
Suburb	59%	17%	11%	12%	5%	9%	2%	10%	16%	5%	6%	2%
Rural	65%	45%	34%	27%	21%	12%	13%	10%	14%	6%	5%	2%
Student Poverty Percent (% of Students Estimated to be Eligible for Free/reduced Price Lunch Program)												
0 to 10%	52%	0%	0%	3%	0%	7%	0%	10%	14%	0%	3%	0%
11 to 20%	56%	0%	0%	3%	0%	6%	0%	19%	19%	3%	11%	3%
21 to 30%	71%	8%	8%	8%	8%	13%	0%	11%	16%	3%	5%	0%
31 to 40%	47%	24%	16%	5%	11%	3%	5%	11%	13%	3%	3%	0%
41 to 50%	57%	37%	24%	19%	13%	10%	6%	7%	11%	5%	5%	2%
51 to 60%	76%	61%	43%	36%	28%	16%	10%	9%	18%	10%	9%	7%
Over 60%	79%	74%	59%	64%	36%	26%	33%	11%	20%	25%	9%	7%
Region												
Long Island	56%	13%	2%	8%	6%	10%	2%	10%	15%	4%	13%	2%
Lower Hudson Valley	58%	8%	8%	8%	0%	8%	0%	19%	27%	0%	4%	0%
Mid-Hudson Valley	63%	42%	21%	38%	13%	25%	17%	8%	13%	13%	8%	4%
Capital Region	57%	40%	31%	38%	21%	10%	12%	10%	12%	12%	5%	2%
Mohawk Valley	74%	53%	53%	21%	32%	16%	5%	0%	11%	11%	16%	5%
Central New York	64%	36%	29%	24%	12%	8%	12%	12%	16%	8%	8%	4%
North Country	61%	41%	41%	37%	20%	12%	17%	10%	15%	7%	7%	7%
Southern Tier	81%	62%	60%	33%	36%	21%	24%	14%	21%	12%	7%	5%
Finger Lakes	68%	34%	15%	19%	11%	13%	6%	0%	11%	9%	0%	0%
Western New York	65%	47%	24%	27%	20%	10%	6%	18%	18%	10%	4%	6%

Red numbers indicate a result at least 20% above the state average

SUPERINTENDENTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

North Country Rural: We have little to no capacity to provide the range of programs for our students as opposed to more urban, more wealthy, or larger districts. While we have committed staff and a supportive community, we are near capacity of offering AP courses (only 4), due to limited staffing/time. Merger votes are few and far between, with only negative votes during the straw poll for districts in this region. Enabling legislation for regional high (or middle/high) schools would allow us to at least begin planning how to make our programs, and our students transcripts, competitive with those around the state.

Central New York Suburb: We continue the struggle to regain programs lost during the period of 2008-13.

Finger Lakes Rural: We have experienced some enrollment decline and with that, we have continually right-sized. Had our enrollment not declined, which afforded an opportunity to save financially through natural attrition, we would be in a very challenging place. Our facilities are very old and in need of capital improvements. Fortunately, we are also living in an area experiencing economic health and growth which is defying many of the odds. We are fortunate for certain but if the state aid situation doesn't improve, we will be in for very challenging times ahead as our enrollment has leveled off and is showing some signs of increasing.

Southern Tier Rural: If we were able to be fully funded to provide our students with an equitable education compared to suburban school districts, I would add social workers and bring back our FACS and Tech Ed program. It is about providing my students with the same educational opportunities that students in other districts have. Yet, it is difficult in small, rural school districts with less than 500 people to provide educational opportunities available in larger school districts.

Mohawk Valley Rural: Due to financial constraints, cuts to electives will come in future years.

North Country Rural: We approved a status quo budget that maintained what we have but did not direct any new or additional resources to areas of highest need -- in particular, toward remedial math support and a social work / home visit professional. We are able to maintain the status quo for now because of our fairly positive economy accompanied by lower inflation. Should either or both of those change I would expect that the minimal tax increases associated with the tax cap and flat or reduced state funding will require significant cuts. So it is for the future beyond 2019-20 that I am most worried.

VII. Financially Struggling Districts

As explained above, on questions concerning overall financial condition, our survey results are mixed: few superintendents are optimistic about future prospects and more are expressing concern about reliance on reserves, but few report weakened overall condition and more are recognizing improvements in specific service areas.

There are, however, 50 to 100 districts whose superintendents are especially troubled by their districts' circumstances.

We asked superintendents to look ahead three years or so and say how optimistic or pessimistic they are about their district's capacity to continue to provide adequate services to their students. Eight percent of superintendents statewide said that their districts are not able to provide adequate services now—the equivalent of roughly 50 districts perhaps in a state of educational insolvency.

In another question, we asked superintendents to assess, if possible, how opportunities their districts provide for students have changed compared to 10 years ago—since the Great Recession. Three-quarters of superintendents responded that opportunities are the same or better than 10 years ago. But 14% said opportunities have diminished—the equivalent of roughly 100 districts.

It is possible, of course, that districts might have been well-endowed and highly regarded 10 years ago and remain so today, even if student opportunities have diminished over that time. But few of the districts reporting reduced student opportunities in our survey fit that description—only 2% of the districts are estimated to have 10% or fewer students poor enough to qualify for free or reduced-price student lunches and two-thirds are estimated to have over 40% of students poor enough to qualify.

There are overlaps between the two groups. Districts in one group were at least three times more likely to also be in the other group than were all districts statewide:

- 46% of superintendents reporting that their districts are unable to provide adequate services now also said that the opportunities their schools can offer students are diminished compared to 10 years ago; 14% of *all* superintendents reported diminished opportunities.
- 25% of superintendents reporting diminished opportunities also said their schools are unable to offer adequate services now; 8% of all superintendents responded that their schools are unable to offer adequate opportunities now.

Regions/Groups of Districts Most Likely to be Financially Struggling

Districts Unable to Provide Adequate Services Now		Districts Reporting Diminished Student Opportunities Compared to 10 Years Ago	
City	19%	North Country	37%
Enrollment 500 or less	14%	City	23%
Southern Tier	14%	Enrollment 500 or less	22%
North Country	12%	Southern Tier	20%
Western New York	12%	11 to 20% FRPL-eligible*	20%
Over 40% FRPL-eligible*	10%	51 to 60% FRPL-eligible*	19%
All Districts	8%	Western New York	18%
		All Districts	14%

* % of students estimated to be eligible for free or reduced-price lunches

There are also overlaps in the regions and other report significant financial challenges: cities, higher poverty districts, districts serving 500 students or less, and the North Country, Southern Tier, and Western New York regions have high percentages of districts on both lists.

The North Country has the highest percentage of superintendents, 37%, responding that the opportunities their schools can provide students have diminished over the decade—more than two-and-a-half times the statewide figure of 14%.

Nineteen percent of city superintendents answered that their schools are unable to provide services adequate to the needs of their students, more than twice the 7% rate for both rural and suburban districts. In more than three-quarters of the districts said to be unable to provide adequate services now, over 40% of students are estimated to be poor enough to qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

Concern over “weak local economy” as a factor in their schools’ financial outlook is a distinguishing characteristic of the two groups of districts. Fifty-five percent of superintendents answering that their districts are unable to provide adequate opportunities now named “weak local economy” as a concern, as did 50% of superintendents who said student opportunities in their schools have diminished over the last decade. Thirty-six percent of other superintendents cited weak local economy as a concern.

SUPERINTENDENTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

North Country Rural: During the recession, we eliminated Agriculture, Business, and Family and Consumer Science courses from our high school. These were outstanding programs that really engaged students. Our elective offerings now are quite scant. Students who go the CTE route are OK, as are the students who are taking dual enrollment courses. I do worry about students who aren't in either of these groups.

Downstate City: The community profile has significantly changed in the last ten years and we have had to provide more support services to our student population as a result. At the same time, our funding has been impacted significantly.

Southern Tier Rural: With a small enrollment and a small staff, we are increasingly reliant on BOCES and other regional partners when it comes to offering expanded opportunities. Our staff is maxed out, both contractually and with what they can reasonably volunteer to do.

Finger Lakes Suburb: We received flat or almost flat state aid year to year. Our [tax] levy increase is now our only predictable and non-sustainable revenue driver. I can't drive the levy faster than the cap, and my costs are rising faster. State aid must be better distributed, even to perceived wealthy districts, because we can no longer offset the losses. We may have to go to "pay to play" activities and that will ruin the inroads we have made to alleviate the poverty gap in our district.

North Country Rural: Our academic program pales when compared to other regions of the state. We are unable to maintain the financial requirements and staffing needs to offer choices other regions can maintain.

SUPERINTENDENTS IN THEIR OWN WORDS:

Southern Tier Rural: Special education programming needs continue to increase. Legacy healthcare costs and special education programming collectively make up over 30% of our total budget.

Finger Lakes Rural: We have experienced some enrollment decline and with that, we have continually right-sized. Had our enrollment not declined which afforded an opportunity to save financially through natural attrition, we would be in a very challenging place. Our facilities are very old and in need of capital improvements. Fortunately, we are also living in an area experiencing economic health and growth which is defying many of the odds. We are fortunate for certain but if the state aid situation doesn't improve, we will be in for very challenging times ahead as our enrollment has leveled off and is showing some signs of increasing.

North Country Rural: At this point we are barely able to provide a second language. We are also currently only able to offer 7 elective courses. I am extremely upset at our ability to offer our kids the classes they deserve. Our problem is not only financial but we can't even get a single applicant for many secondary teaching positions.

The financial condition of districts reported as unable to provide adequate services now appears especially tenuous. For example, 45% of their superintendents said their district's overall financial condition had grown worse over the past year, compared to 20 percent of all superintendents, and 55% said they are "very concerned" about their district's reliance upon reserves and fund balance to pay recurring costs, compared to 21% of all superintendents.

The prospect of inadequate state aid was a far greater concern than impact of the property tax cap among superintendents who said their district is unable to provide adequate opportunities now. Seventy-two percent cited inadequate state aid as their greatest financial concern; only 3% chose the tax cap. Among all superintendents, 48% picked state aid and 11% chose the tax cap.

Basic Financial Condition of Financially Struggling Districts Compared to All Districts in Council Survey

	All Districts in Survey	Districts Unable to Provide Adequate Services Now	Districts with Diminished Student Opportunities Compared to 10 Years Ago
Financial condition Compared to 1 year ago	20% Worse 14% better	45% worse 3% better	29% worse 12% better
Unable to provide adequate services now	8%	All unable	25%
Student opportunities compared to 10 years ago	14% diminished 61% improved	46% diminished 28% improved	All diminished
Concern about reliance on reserves to pay recurring costs	21% "very concerned"	55% "very concerned"	31% "very concerned"
What causes the greatest concern in thinking about finances			
Inadequate state aid	48%	72%	52%
The tax cap	11%	3%	10%
Fixed/hard to control costs (pensions, health insurance)	9%	7%	12%
Special education costs	8%	10%	6%
"Weak local economy" a concern for district's financial outlook	39%	55%	50%

Concerns related to student needs are especially great among superintendents who said their schools are not able to provide adequate services now. For example:

- 83% named increasing special education costs as a significant problem, compared to 56% of all superintendents;
- 62% identified capacity to help students with non-academic needs as a significant problem, compared to 39% of all superintendents; and
- 66% said they have a high level of concern about their students' family economic circumstances, compared to 37% of all superintendents.

% of Superintendents Identifying Various Cost Issues as "Significant Problems"

	All Districts	Unable to Provide Adequate Services Now	Districts with Diminished Student Opportunities Compared to 10 Years Ago
Increasing cost of special education	56%	83%	67%
Finding an adequate number of qualified teachers	40%	59%	52%
Capacity to help to students in meeting non-academic needs including, for example, health and mental health issues	39%	62%	62%
Capacity to provide extra academic help to struggling students	20%	48%	35%
Capacity to offer classes beyond minimum state requirements, including for example, AP, IB, college dual enrollment, and career and technical education courses	18%	52%	40%
Inadequate parental support for student learning	17%	41%	27%
Ability to fund school safety initiatives in response to parent/community concerns	12%	24%	15%
Ability to obtain quality professional development for instructional improvement	7%	21%	21%
Financial impact of charter schools	5%	14%	8%

% of Superintendents Indicating a "High Level" of Concern About Various Aspects of Student Well-Being

	All Districts	Unable to Provide Adequate Services Now	Districts with Diminished Student Opportunities Compared to 10 Years Ago
Mental/emotional health	64%	79%	69%
Family economic	37%	66%	50%
Readiness for school on entering kindergarten	27%	45%	44%
School absenteeism	25%	48%	40%
Lack of effective adult supervision at home	17%	31%	29%
Use of drugs	16%	28%	27%
Physical health	13%	17%	15%
Dental health	10%	10%	12%
Use of alcohol	10%	21%	15%
Homelessness	9%	17%	8%
Bullying	7%	14%	13%
Violence in school or in the community	4%	14%	10%

ⁱ The survey was conducted online through K12 Insight, a corporate partner of the Council, between August 12 and 25, 2019. A total of 364 superintendents submitted completed surveys, producing a response rate of 53.7%. The Council has conducted an annual survey of its superintendent members every year since 2011.

ⁱⁱ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2019). *Key substance use and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health* (HHS Publication No. PEP19-5068, NSDUH Series H-54). Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. See figure 46. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2018-nsduh-annual-national-report>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Because of its size, New York City has not been included in the Council's annual surveys of superintendents on finance matters. In our surveys, each superintendent and his or her district is counted as one, regardless of size and each is promised anonymity in our reporting of results. New York City accounts for 40% of the state's public school enrollment. Accordingly, its financial circumstances should receive separate reporting.

^{iv} The regions used in this survey and report are comprised as follows:

- Long Island (Nassau, Suffolk Counties)
- Lower Hudson Valley (Putnam, Rockland, Westchester Counties)

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- Mid-Hudson Valley (Dutchess, Orange, Sullivan, Ulster Counties)
 - Capital Region (Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Warren, Washington Counties)
 - Mohawk Valley (Fulton, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oneida, Schoharie Counties)
 - Central New York (Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga, Oswego, Tompkins Counties)
 - North Country (Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence Counties)
 - Southern Tier (Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego, Schuyler, Steuben, Tioga Counties)
 - Finger Lakes (Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates Counties)
 - Western New York (Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Niagara Counties)

^v Education Trust—New York. “Poll: Recent grads call for more rigorous college and career preparation in high schools.” October 9, 2018.

^{vi} New York Equity Coalition. *Within Our Reach*. May 2018