

# **Study to Determine the Impact of School System Organization on Economic Development in Valdosta-Lowndes County**

## **SCOPE OF WORK**

**Carl Vinson Institute  
University of Georgia**

- 1. Identifying the degree to which professionals in business site selection consider school system organization as a factor in business location. Specifically, we focus on whether a community with multiple school systems characterized by differing student body demographics due to community patterns of residential segregation is viewed less positively by business site selectors than communities that have consolidated, community-wide school systems with demographics that mirror those of the community as a whole.**

### Potential Study Methods:

- Interviewing/Surveying business site selectors. (estimated surveys/interviews: 10-15)
- Interviewing/Surveying representatives of communities (e.g., chamber and industrial development board members, and school officials) where the school system is consolidated. (estimated surveys/interviews: 15-20)

- 2. Identifying the degree to which business executives, school and community leaders considering relocation to a community consider school system organization as a factor in choosing employment opportunities. Specifically, we focus on whether a community with multiple school systems characterized by differing student body demographics due to community patterns of residential segregation is viewed less positively by business executives than communities that have consolidated, community-wide school systems with demographics that mirror those of the community as a whole.**

### Potential Study Methods:

- Interviewing/surveying current business executives in the Valdosta-Lowndes community and in other communities with vibrant economies (estimated surveys/interviews: 15-20).

- 3. Identifying the issues in school consolidation efforts (e.g., motives, the role of the business community, school system cost, efficiency and effectiveness; impacts on tax bills and millage rates, transportation, special programs, facilities use, school personnel salaries, school governance, unity of administration, housing values; satisfaction with consolidation; factors facilitating consolidation; factors involved in the implementation (i.e., justice department review)).**

Potential Study Methods:

- Reviewing the literature.
- 4. Identifying the relationship between school system organization, school performance, and economic development. (Note: if no strong and definitive relationship is found between school system organization and school performance, there will be no way to estimate a secondary economic impact).**

Potential Study Methods:

- Reviewing the literature on the relationship between school system organization and school/student performance.
  - Reviewing the literature on the relationship between school performance and future earnings.
  - Estimating the economic value of the increase in student's future earnings on the Valdosta-Lowndes community. A University of Georgia economist will review these estimates.
- 5. Identifying the potential relationship between the organization of school systems (e.g., having multiple school systems versus a consolidated school system in a community) residential demographic patterns, and economic development. The key research question is whether a consolidated school system provides for a more integrated community which in turn helps to support more economic development opportunities. The potential mechanism for such a dynamic might be related to availability of a diverse workforce as opposed to a workforce that is homogenous with regard to race, class, or education.**

Potential Study Methods:

- Step 1: Identify the degree to which school segregation of various types (e.g., racial and income) impacts student achievement. (Research the literature. Initial research suggests that socioeconomic segregation has the most salient impact).
- Step 2: Identifying whether the consolidation of school systems impacts the trend in residential segregation (e.g., by income). This requires computing segregation

indexes for Valdosta-Lowndes for the 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses and computing the same indexes for Georgia communities identified as having consolidated during the last two decades. We have identified 6 system consolidations in this time period. Calculating segregation indexes for these communities at the countywide level will demand fairly intensive data collection, manipulation and analysis.

- Step 3: If Step 2 shows an impact, draw conclusions regarding the potential economic benefits due to any expected decrease in residential segregation. Reviewing the literature on the relationship between demographic characteristics and economic development.

### **Deliverables:**

**A. Seven copies of Draft and seven copies of Final reports.**

**B. Electronic .pdf final report file available on CVIOG's website.**

### **Draft and Final reports will include:**

1. Report of business site selectors' survey results.
2. Report of Valdosta business executives survey results.
3. Report of interviews/survey results of business, school and community leaders in peer group communities (i.e., LaGrange, Albany, Athens, Rome, Whitfield, Warner Robins). Respondents will be asked to provide their sense of how the change in school system organization impacted the economic situations of their communities.
4. Report of the review of the literature on community issues in school consolidation efforts. This report will include an estimate of the fiscal impact related to Georgia QBE funding of school districts.
5. Report of the review of the literature on school performance and efficiency issues related to school district consolidation.
6. Report on the findings regarding the relationship between the organization of school systems (e.g., having multiple school systems versus a consolidated school system in a community) and residential demographic patterns, and economic development.
7. A statement of conclusions regarding the weight of the evidence as to the potential impact of school system organization on economic development in Valdosta-Lowndes County.