

A Study of the Potential Impacts of a Single versus Multiple Schools Systems in Valdosta- Lowndes County



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Executive Summary

At the request of the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce, the Carl Vinson Institute of Government and the Fanning Institute undertook a study of the potential economic development advantages and disadvantages of two options for organizing the governance of schools in the Valdosta-Lowndes community districts. The options examined were: 1) a community where public education is governed by single unified school district and 2) a community where public education is governed by two or more school districts.

The study involved assessing these options along a number of dimensions. The following outlines the key findings and presents a summary assessment of whether the advantage on a particular dimension appears to lie with a consolidated or a non-consolidated system.

The Summary Findings is organized into two tables: Table 1: findings from a review of the literature and analyses of records and academic studies; and Table 2) findings from a survey of business site location consultants, comparison community business leaders, and business and education leaders in communities that have undergone a recent consolidation of their local school systems.

The findings are summarized from the perspective of whether a consolidated school system on the dimension in question would appear to represent a net advantage (+) or disadvantage (-) in comparison to a non-consolidated system.

In Table 1 the summary finding of an advantage or disadvantage is identified as existing under two possible scenarios: Scenario A: the consolidation does not result in any changes in the enrollment zones or school attendance systems (and therefore does not result in any changes in the composition of the student body in terms of race and class) ; and Scenario B: the consolidation results in changes in school enrollment zones or school attendance systems such that the composition of the student body at individual schools becomes more diverse with regard to race and class.

Finally, a particular dimension may be assessed as an advantage in a general or typical case of consolidation, but may not have been found to be an advantage in the case of Valdosta-Lowndes. In these cases, we have marked the dimension as not demonstrating an advantage. Dimensions where neither a consolidated system nor a non-consolidated system appear to have an advantage are marked with a question mark (?). For some dimensions, the data may be ambiguous but has a tendency in one direction: these cases are marked as either +? or -?.

Table 1: Assessment of Advantages/Disadvantages of Consolidation for Dimensions Identified in the Literature Review and Data Analysis

Dimension	Scenario A	Scenario B
Historical perceptions of business and educational leaders	+	+
Ability to work effectively with foundation funders (e.g., Gates Foundation’s support of small schools has gone to larger school districts)	+	+
Ability to build a unified community identity and vision for educational change	+	+
Ability to assure equal property tax funding for all students in the community and equal sharing of the property tax burden in support of the education of youth in the community	+	+
Ability to provide for rational facilities planning and facility locations within the community	+	+
Ability to address issues of racial and class segregation in the community and to reduce the distortions and hindrances to economic development that this causes	?	+
Ability to improve the school performance and graduation rates of minority students	?	+
Ability to minimize the cost of administrative functions through reduction in duplicative systems (accounting, personnel, information technology) and positions (e.g., directors of administrative units).	+	+
Ability to support more specialized educational programs and services	+	+
Likelihood of decreased operational costs due to improved economies of scale	?	?
Likelihood of improved student performance	+?	+?
Likelihood of increased housing values among disadvantaged homeowners ¹	+?	+?
Likelihood of increased earnings for African-American graduates ²	?	+
Likelihood of increased earnings for the average household ³	?	+

¹ The potential for a consolidated school district to provide for more equalization of schools in terms of performance should work to reduce the discount that disadvantaged homeowners experience as a result of their housing choices being limited to areas with relatively poorer performing schools.

² The increase in annual earnings of African-American households in the community beginning 10-years from a consolidation is estimated at approximately \$14 million annually at the point of full-impact (i.e., approximately 20 years after the point of initial impact).

³ The increased earnings estimated for African-American households will, through the working of economic multipliers, act to benefit most households in the community.

Likelihood of improved funding through the state’s QBE funding formula. ⁴	-	-
Likelihood of lowered personnel costs due to equalization of local salary supplement (short-run)	-	-
Likelihood of lowered personnel costs due to equalization of local salary supplement (long-run) ⁵	+	+
Likelihood of improved financial assistance from the State for facilities planning and development	+	+
Likelihood of community satisfaction with consolidation	+	+

This report summarizes the findings of three sets of interviews: 1) interviews with business site location consultants; 2) interviews with leaders in communities that have experienced a consolidation in the last 20 years; and 3) business leaders in peer communities to Valdosta-Lowndes.

All of the interview respondents were asked to compare two hypothetical school districts (see Community A and B below) and to identify which community—all else being equal—would have an advantage with regard to some dimension of school and community development.

Community A	Community B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple school systems • Multiple superintendents • Multiple finance, personnel, facilities, and transportation service units (i.e., each school system will have one set of these units) • Multiple school boards • Multiple sets of policies, procedures, and programs • Some school systems made up almost entirely of minority students, while others are almost entirely white. • Some school systems will have high performance levels and others low performance levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One unified school system • One superintendent • One set of finance, personnel, facilities, and transportation service units in the school system • One school board • One sets of policies, procedures, and programs • An integrated student body that reflects the demographics of the community. • There is one performance level for the entire school system.

⁴ The consolidated system would likely receive less funding for district administrative positions, and depending on the millage rate for the consolidated system, it may also receive less funding from the equalization grant.

⁵ While a consolidation will typically result in higher costs for local salary supplements due to the lower paying schools system’s supplement being brought up to the higher paying school system’s supplement, in the long run the equalization of the supplements should result in elimination of competition—the force that drives supplements higher---between the school systems.

Table 2: Findings from A Survey Of Business Site Location Consultants, Comparison Community Business Leaders, And Business And Education Leaders In Communities That Have Undergone A Recent Consolidation Of Their Local School Systems.

Overall Averages N=35				
Dimension	Preferred A	Preferred B	No difference	Other (N/A, Not Sure, Depends)
Businesses forming school-business partnerships	14.3	68.6	17.1	0.0
Businesses being able to influence school curricula and policy	11.4	80.0	8.6	0.0
Businesses having capacity to manage the scheduling of employees who are parents of school-age children	5.7	74.3	20.0	0.0
Business employees ability to comprehend, influence, and participate in school system policies, procedures, and programs	25.7	42.9	31.4	0.0
The community's ability to address community needs that are related to school operations	17.1	71.4	8.6	2.9
The community's ability to manage issues of diversity and human relations	14.3	62.9	20.0	2.9
The community's ability to limit distortions in the housing market	11.4	54.3	34.3	0.0
Educational leaders' ability to streamline the business operations (e.g., finance, personnel, transportation, etc.) of the school systems	11.4	85.7	0.0	2.9
The community's ability to have lower school property taxes (all else being equal)	14.3	65.7	17.1	2.9

The community's ability to maintain an image of educational quality	14.3	71.4	11.4	2.9
The community's ability to cultivate the skilled workforce of the future	20.0	60.0	17.1	2.9
The community's ability to avoid divisions based on social, racial and economic characteristics	17.1	71.4	11.4	0.0
The community's ability to provide a wide array of school programs and services	28.6	60.0	11.4	0.0
The community's ability to conduct a comprehensive educational improvement effort	5.7	80.0	5.7	8.6
Overall preference for school system organization	14.3	60.0	14.3	11.4

While the general tendency of the responses of all respondents indicated a strong preference for a unified school system, the preference for such a consolidated school system was even stronger among business site location consultants. **On the “bottom line” question of overall preference for the unified versus multiple school districts, only 5.9% of the business site location consultants preferred the multiple school district organizational form of governance. Similarly, among the sub-set of responses by community leaders in communities that had experienced a school consolidation, only one respondent in this group preferred the multiple school district organizational form of governance.**

Qualifications, Conclusions, and Next Steps

The studies and data reviewed for this report are diverse in their findings and as the reader of the full report will come to realize rarely as definitive as policy makers might desire. This is not unusual in an area of public policy as complex as the field of educational governance, particularly as this relates to other intertwined and equally complex issues such as school performance, racial and class segregation, and economic development. The literature in each of these areas is rich, but also rich with qualifications and nuances. Moreover, studies that were undertaken in a different era may not be as relevant today as they once were. In developing the summary tables presented above we employed a “preponderance of the evidence standard” as well as our professional judgment. Nevertheless, we recognize that our judgment in this regard may

not be accepted by all who are called upon to weigh the evidence. For example, in assessing the likelihood that a Valdosta-Lowndes consolidated school district community is more likely to attract new businesses than the current dual district community, we report the results of a survey of business site location consultants that has a “limited” number of respondents. However, while the number of respondents is limited we believe that it represents a “pretty good” basis for assessing the issue in that we used several sources to identify consultants working in Georgia area and we attempted to contact each of these identified consultants a number of times. Hence, while the sample size is not large, we believe that it represents a significant proportion of the consultants who are positioned to impact Valdosta-Lowndes’ economic development and who are willing to express an opinion on the matter.

The issue that this study addresses—whether to make a change in the governance of the public schools in the Valdosta- Lowndes community—is one that by its nature holds out the promise of great results. Unfortunately, many of these results are contingent on the leadership of the new school system that the community would choose were the current school systems consolidated. There is no magic to consolidation itself; rather it represents an opportunity to create a new vision and to choose to take advantage of the “potential” advantages that consolidation opens the door for. Only the community can choose to take the steps needed to go through that door and to enact the programs and policies that can change the “likelihood” of a particular benefit into a real one. This is particularly the case with respect to addressing issues of educational quality and results for all youth of the community. While the focus of this study has been on educational governance, in the course of the study it became apparent to the authors and the advisory committee that educational governance is linked to larger issues of student performance, youth development, the vitality of neighborhoods, and the relative ability of disadvantaged households to have equal access to the opportunities that a quality education can offer. In this study we point out the areas where a change in educational governance might afford opportunities to also change residential patterns and trends (e.g., toward increased segregation and a spatial mismatch between where new jobs are likely to be generated and the residences of the persons who could fill these jobs) that contribute to economic and social isolation which in turn undermine both school performance and economic development.

However, we recognize that a change in educational governance cannot by itself address all of the challenge that face the local school system. In this regard we support further study and ultimate implementation of educational programs and policies that will help to increase graduation rates, improve student achievement, and reduce the causes of alienation from the educational system by both disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged students.

Finally, while the data and findings presented in this study indicate that there is a great deal that is still unknown about the various impacts of a school district consolidation, the great majority of the findings that relate to economic development in the sense of

Impacts of Single versus Multiple School Systems

building a community that will be attractive to business leaders and business site location consultants is fairly clear cut and favors school district consolidation.

Introduction and Background

At the beginning of 2008, the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce requested that the Carl Vinson Institute of Government and the Fanning Institute undertake a study of the potential economic development advantages and disadvantages of two options for organizing the governance of schools in the Valdosta-Lowndes community districts. The options examined were: 1) a community where public education is governed by single unified school district and 2) a community where public education is governed by two or more school districts.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was to provide the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce with some guidance as to whether their promotion of a change in school system organization and governance in the county would be warranted. Specifically, the Chamber is interested in knowing if there would be benefits to the community were it to choose to move from having two school systems to having only a single or consolidated school system.

Scope of the Study

The study involved assessing school system organization options along a number of dimensions, including:

- Identifying the degree to which professionals in business site selection consider school system organization as a factor in business location.
- 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.
- 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)).
- Identifying the relationship between school system organization, school performance, and economic development.
- 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.

While the primary purpose of this report is to identify economic development impacts, it was thought to be beneficial to also review the literature on school consolidation issues so as to better understand how school consolidation might impact the community and the education of its young people.

The issues that have been related to school consolidation include such things as:

- The explicit and implied motives for consolidation,
- The role of the business community,
- The community context,
- The potential impacts on school system cost, efficiency and effectiveness;
- The potential impacts on tax bills and millage rates,
- The impacts on school demographics,
- The impacts on school achievement,
- The potential impact on transportation, special programs, and facilities use,
- The potential impacts on school personnel salaries, school governance, and the unity of administration,
- The potential impact on housing values,
- The satisfaction with consolidation efforts, and
- The factors that must be considered in facilitating consolidation if the community were to choose to move in that direction.

Study Authors

The Carl Vinson Institute of Government and the Fanning Institute were chosen to conduct the study because the focus of the study spans the expertise of the two service institutes at the University of Georgia.

The mission of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government is to improve governance and the lives of people in Georgia. In carrying out this mission, the Institute can call on the wide-ranging knowledge base of the University of Georgia as well as on 75 years of direct service experience in providing technical assistance, research and policy analysis to local and state governments in Georgia. The Carl Vinson Institute of Government is among the most highly-rated university-based organizations designed specifically to span the gap between best practices research and the existing practice of government. The Institute has developed expertise in numerous areas of public policy, public management, training, and human services and resource development.

Most importantly for the purposes of this study, the Institute's governmental services division has been assisting governments with issues of governance and organization, particularly with regard to issues of consolidation of services or governments. During the course of the last 15 years, the Institute of Government has conducted more studies of consolidation than any other research institute in the United States. The Institute's work in this area has resulted in some

communities such as Athens-Clarke choosing to consolidate while leading others to choose to create new governance structure (e.g., the new cities in Fulton and DeKalb counties).

The Fanning Institute specializes in work with community organizations such as Chambers of Commerce, planning boards, and NGOs. Their particular expertise with regard to the current study is in the area of how communities can best come together to make difficult decisions on a consensus or near-consensus basis.

Organization of the Report

Current Situation on School System Organization in the Community

There are currently two school systems (or school districts) in Lowndes County: Lowndes County Schools and Valdosta City Schools. These school districts feature similar student enrollment numbers, but differ in a number of other respects.

Motives for Consolidation

Efforts at school system consolidation will often have multiple motives with individual motives being more or less prominent in different communities. For example, in some communities, the motive for consolidation will be primarily budgetary based on the belief that the community cannot afford the expense of two or more superintendents and administrative structures. In other communities, the motive will be primarily educational based on the belief that two or more small systems cannot offer the range and depth of educational experiences that are the mark of a high quality school system. In still other communities, the motive for consolidation is related to community needs for identity, social unity and the ability to create strong community collaboratives. Closely akin to these motives is the desire for the community to provide a single face and point of entry for new business development.

The following attempts to discuss in more detail how certain issues that have historically been part of the school district consolidation efforts might play out in the Valdosta-Lowndes County situation.

The Relationship between Business and Consolidation

The business community has a strong interest in schools as the source of skilled labor and as a point of pride for business owners and employees.

Historically speaking, the business community has been supportive of school consolidation. The rise of industry in the late nineteenth century contributed to the school consolidation movement as industrial leaders came to the conclusion that education could best contribute to social order by adopting organizational structures that were successful in industry (Orr, 1992). Such organizational structures included a centralized model of administration (Kay, Hargood, & Russell, 1982) and larger (industrial scale) schools. Such structures were believed to help school systems achieve economy of scale which would thereby make the school more efficient.

In addition to policy-makers and education professionals, private businesses, in the interest of financial gain, would sometimes encourage school consolidation. International Harvester Company was a major promoter of school consolidation in the 1930s. Part of this company's interest in consolidation was in its ability to more easily sell its newly manufactured International Harvester school buses (White, 1981).

Business-government linkages in support of school consolidation are still believed to be evident today. For example, one observer sees this linkage in West Virginia where a business interest helped to persuade the legislature to fund capital improvements for school districts in a way that required these districts to meet mandated enrollment levels set by the state. Such a funding scheme would force consolidation of small schools.

Concerns about international competitiveness have also helped to promote consolidation efforts (DeYoung, 1989; Spring, 1987). For example, both Sputnik and the Cold War created increased concerns that small high schools, most of which were rural, were not developing the kind of human capital needed to promote national interests (Ravitch, 1983). Similarly, the driving force behind school reform in the 1980s was the Nation at Risk report. As part of the Nation at Risk movement proponents of educational reform argued that as the economy became more complex larger school systems were better positioned to produce students who had the skills and values to contribute to a national, social economic order (DeYoung & Howley, 1992). There has continued to be a concern among business leaders that parents and educators in rural communities may be more interested in preparing students for a life on the farm rather than educating them as "human capital" to contribute to the nation's economic growth.

The most prominent business-related educational reform effort today is being mounted by the Gates Foundation. The foundation's K-12 reform efforts are increasingly concentrated on high school reform, primarily through its small schools initiative. Based on the research suggesting that small schools can provide a quality educational experience particularly for disadvantaged students, the Foundation has a goal of "redefining the American high school" by creating new small, high-quality high schools and converting low-performing large high schools into smaller learning communities.

However, it should be noted that while the Gates Foundation is supporting a type of de-consolidation at the school level, the primary recipients of the foundation's grants have been large, consolidated school systems. Some of its major grantees have been the

consolidated school systems in New York City, Chicago, Oakland, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Boston, Kansas City, San Diego, and Indianapolis.

Definitions

Consolidation

What is being considered in Valdosta-Lowndes County and is the subject of this study is the consolidation of the two school systems. Such a consolidation is typically referred to as *administrative consolidation* which involves:

- the merger of decision-making bodies (i.e., boards of education),
- the consolidation of administrative support functions including:
 - transportation
 - human resources
 - finance
 - records and information systems
 - curriculum
 - social services
 - facility maintenance, and
- the elimination of dual leadership functions such as superintendent, and administrative department directors

What is not being considered is the merger of actual schools. As has been noted before, “The hardest animal to kill is a school mascot.”⁶ However, as survey research from Mississippi suggests, the public is unlikely to always make the distinction between school and school system consolidation, and professional educators will also suspect that the consolidation effort will not necessarily stop at the system level. (e.g., seventy-two percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed the consolidation of school district superintendents and administrative offices will eventually lead to larger school consolidation efforts in Mississippi.)⁷

While school district consolidation can, and often does, occur without any substantial changes in the school enrollment zones, in choosing what to review as issues or potential impacts of school district consolidation, we have chosen to include a wider array of topics based on the assumption that we cannot predict how a unified district would choose to govern the education system in the future. However, we can predict to some degree the types of new opportunities that a unified school district might have in

⁶ As cited by Pierson in Kelly (2002), p.1.

⁷ Peters, Gary B. & Freeman, David. School Consolidation Efforts in Mississippi . Online Submission. 15 p. 15. 2007. (ED494981)

comparison to the current situation of having multiple school districts. Some of these new opportunities may be reflected in the motivations that have historically been given for consolidation efforts.

Performance

Performance refers to the ability of schools to enable students to do well on standardized tests. School performance can be an imperfect measure of school success since schools that tend to provide climates that encourage students to drop out may actually 'perform' better on tests since only the more skilled students are left in school to take the tests.

Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the ability of schools to operate at a lower cost per enrolled student. Efficiency can be related to the size of the school or school system.

Graduation Rates

Graduation rates have historically been difficult to measure because schools have not always been effective or accurate in the way they document students who leave school for various reasons (e.g., transfer to another school, moving away from the community, dropping out, etc.). For this reason, graduation rates have historically shown much more variation among schools than may actually be the case.

Georgia's Graduation Rate Formula:
(# of students who graduate with a regular diploma)
÷
(# of 9th-12th grade dropouts from appropriate years
+ graduates + other completers)

Some states calculate graduation rates by identifying the relationship between the number of 9th graders four years prior to the current number of high school graduates. While this measure can reduce erroneous variation among school or school system graduation rates, it is still susceptible to errors due to variations in transfer rates and declines or growth in age cohorts.

School District Consolidation - Background information

Between 1950 and 1980, the number of school districts in the United States fell from 83,642 to 15,987.

As the data below suggests, the number of districts continues to decline but much less rapidly than during the 30s, 40s, and 50s.

Number of School Districts In the U.S. by Period	
1937-38	119,001
1993-94 .	14,881
2004-05	14,205

Economically speaking, much of the decline in the number of school districts was made possible by the decline in the farm population and increase in population density, which has made it easier to take advantage of scale economies.

In addition, many of the smaller school districts were so small that the schools themselves were also very small. The conventional wisdom indicated that these schools were not of sufficient size to provide for a quality education, and in many cases there was truth in the conventional view (e.g., teachers could not develop or implement a challenging curriculum for students who were of mixed ages in one-room schools; also, it was impossible to provide specialized language, science and math courses or any higher level courses for talented high school students).

Also, as a larger proportion of education funding came from the states, states began to develop policies that would discourage smaller school districts. Several states have laws that require school district and county (or state) boundaries to coincide, and Georgia has outlawed the creation of any new independent or city school districts.

In the 1980s, the conventional wisdom about school size (and therefore about a key motivation for consolidation) changed somewhat. For example, research on the costs of operating small versus large schools undermined somewhat the idea that large schools are necessarily more efficient. This research suggested that small schools are potentially as efficient as large schools. (Though neither was found to be as efficient as medium sized schools, e.g., Fox's (1981) study of educational costs as a function of school size yielded a U-shaped curve in which both the very small and the very large schools were the most expensive to operate.

Perhaps more importantly, Columbia University research found that small schools have “strengths of smallness” not evident in large schools (Nachtigal, 1982). The thought was that not only were small schools necessary, their strengths included a higher number of students involved in extracurricular activities, higher numbers of students taking academic courses, more attention by teachers due to lower pupil-teacher ratio, and students who had a close connection to their communities.

Relevance for Valdosta-Lowndes County Situation: While school district consolidation has historically been motivated, in part, by a desire on the part of educational and political leaders to achieve schools of sufficient size so as to allow for more educational opportunities for students, this motivation would not seem to be particularly relevant to the Valdosta-Lowndes situation in that both school districts are of sufficient size to afford such opportunities.

With regard to the research on school size, moreover, it might seem that the historical motivation for consolidating school districts should be turned on its head. It could be asked for example: Wouldn’t school district consolidation likely result in schools that were too large rather than too small?

While a larger district could certainly support the creation of larger schools, we doubt that this would be the case for a couple of reasons: First, the relatively recent research on appropriate school size has not been lost on school administrators in large school systems. These administrators, understanding that large schools create an impersonal climate that contributes to school failure for some students, have themselves turned to creating “schools within schools.”

Secondly, the City of Valdosta and Lowndes County have already met the state minimum enrollment for each type of school in their respective districts.⁸ That is, a new unified school district would not result in any additional incentives to increase the enrollment size of individual schools. We recognize that while the Georgia Department of Education capital funding policies do provide incentives for school districts to reach certain minimum sizes, the state does not provide incentives that would discourage the creation of school of larger sizes (i.e., sizes that might be larger than would be desirable from an educational performance perspective). Hence, there is nothing in the state policy that could prevent larger school sizes, but there are also no further incentives that would promote the creation of larger school sizes than currently exist.

⁸ **160-5-4-.08 SCHOOL SIZE.** Authority O.C.G.A. § 20-2-260.

(1) REQUIREMENTS.

(a) School systems shall be eligible to receive full funding under the capital outlay program when they have met the requirements of law regarding the minimum school size and system organizational pattern.

(b) Capital outlay program participation by local school systems shall be limited to administrative units with not less than 200 FTE in any single grade or combination of grades K-8 for elementary schools or not less than 400 FTE in any single grade or combination of grades 4-8 for middle schools or not less than 500 FTE in any single grade or combination of grades 9-12 for high schools.

School Districts and Consolidation in Georgia

Georgia currently has 181 school districts. Each of Georgia's 159 counties has a county school district, with the remaining districts being comprised of city or specialized school districts.

Reflective of the opinion that Georgia may already have too many school districts for efficient governance, the Georgia Constitution prohibits the creation of any new school districts.

While there have been studies of school-level consolidation in Georgia,⁹ we could not find any studies of school district consolidations in Georgia.

Since 1987, six communities in Georgia have consolidated their school districts. These consolidations generally involved a city school district giving up its charter. The school districts that have been dissolved in this manner include:

AMERICUS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
FITZGERALD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
HOGANSVILLE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
LAGRANGE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
THOMASTON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
WAYCROSS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

⁹ The Consolidation of a Rural School District: A Case Study. By: Leisey, Robin M.; and Others. 1990 61 pp. (ED336216). Leisey (1990) reported on the Coffee County (Georgia) Board of Education's vote to consolidate Nicholls and Broxton High Schools with Coffee High School. This case study analyzes the issues of school consolidation, benefits to students and financial implications through sociological and political science perspectives. Data were collected by personal interview, document analysis, and a questionnaire survey. Three major conclusions were reached. From the political science (financial) point of view, the decision to consolidate was in the best interest of the citizens of Coffee County because: (1) there were three high schools, but the available state money was only enough to support one; (2) the county supported 50 teachers with local funds, to keep 2 small high schools functional; and (3) the current school millage was 20 mills, which is the maximum allowed by law. From the political science (power) perspective, the state's Quality Basic Education Act placed financial pressure on systems to consolidate by granting "reward" money. While the local board of education had the power to vote on the decision, citizens and students appeared powerless. From the sociological perspective, the smaller schools will lose their identity and community spirit as a result of consolidation; however, curriculum advantages will be gained

We have used this list of school district consolidation communities as the basis for some of the analysis presented later in this report as well as the basis for identifying respondents who might speak intelligently regarding the perceived impact of consolidation on their community.

GDOE Position on Consolidation of Districts

While the Georgia Department of Education does not have any official policy for or against school consolidation, interviews with GDOE official in charge of facilities planning indicated that the Department is highly supportive of communities that choose to consolidate, particular with regard to helping these communities create and manage a more rational set of capital assets.

Interviews with Georgia Department of Education Officials suggested that the Georgia DOE:

- Has had a strong interest in seeing the consolidation of Valdosta and Lowndes County schools. This interest is based on previous experiences with school district mergers in other communities (see section below).
- Is aware that the school systems' facilities and buildings are in need of refurbishment, repair and replacement.
- Will assist the community, if it chooses to merge, by:
 - Identifying the need for new or refurbished facilities due to the merger of the school districts (or even individual schools)
 - Providing loan-type funding on very generous terms with no local matching funds required (e.g., the Department will loan the money without charging interest and will allow for some below-cost repayment in full in a short time frame).
 - Sending down a team of experts to evaluate and then help the merged district to find the best possible solution to its facilities needs.
- The community would benefit by having educational revenue come from a pool of taxable properties.

School District Consolidation in Georgia & School Level Integration

As suggested above, school district consolidation can, and often does, occur without any substantial changes in the school enrollment zones. Consequently, if district consolidation were to occur without any changes in enrollment zones, it is unlikely that the district merger would have any impact on school level racial integration—at least in the short term. However, to the degree that: 1) a new unified school district will attempt to create new attendance zones based on the new unified district area rather than the split

district areas; and 2) residential patterns will be less constrained by the salience of the choice between two demographically diverse school districts, we can expect some degree of increased school integration when compared with the existing situation.

State Incentives/Disincentives for Consolidation

In Georgia, state support for school districts primarily is provided through Quality Basic Education (QBE) funding. A review of state laws, Georgia DOE regulations, and current funding data suggest that a school district merger can potentially impact four areas of Quality Basic Education (QBE) funding. Two of these areas are in the QBE Allotment funding and two in the funding of capital projects. Estimates of the potential impact of a Valdosta-Lowndes consolidation on QBE funding are presented in a later chapter.

Satisfaction with Consolidation

Most school consolidations have exercised a plan, but few have followed up with an evaluation. In 2000, Self conducted a follow-up study of the last school consolidation to take place in Ohio in 1992. The study included a survey of teachers, parents, and students to determine the success of the consolidation and the feelings of those involved 8 years later. When asked in 1992 if the consolidation were good for everyone, 11 of the 13 teachers responding to the survey offered a positive response. The same response was offered 8 years later. Fifty-eight parents (78 percent) surveyed in 1992 expressed satisfaction with the consolidation. The same number was still pleased with the arrangement 8 years later. Also, 60 percent of parents believed their children enjoyed school after the consolidation. Those who responded with written comments were very positive about the consolidation (see also in this report the findings of interviews with community leaders in Georgia communities that have undergone school consolidation).

Moving to Consolidation

A 1992 case study of a school district consolidation found that lack of understanding of local culture resulted in resistance from community members about consolidation issues (Ward & Rink, 1992). A study of eight communities in North Dakota that had experienced school consolidations showed that the most important factor in easing the process of consolidation was holding public meetings (Sell, Lustrate, & Thompson, 1996).

Consolidation is often met with anxiety and hostility from stakeholders. In an effort to identify strategies that facilitate consolidation, Cummins (1997) conducted interviews

with the superintendents of 16 rural Oklahoma school districts that had participated in 8 voluntary consolidations. The superintendents discussed strategies used to enhance the consolidation process for teachers, parents and community, students, support staff, administrators, and board members, as well as strategies that proved unproductive.

Thirteen successful strategies were identified. Addressing the number one staff issue--job security--all eight consolidated districts guaranteed the positions of administrators and support staff, while five new districts retained their entire teaching staff. Keeping staff informed and providing employee displacement compensation were other staff strategies. Maintaining all school sites greatly enhanced the consolidation process for students and community members; this was accomplished in six consolidations. Other student and community strategies included community meetings, media releases, focus on the student benefits of consolidation, and joint student-body activities. Administrative issues were addressed through pre-consolidation administrative appointments, joint board meetings, extensive planning, and state assistance.

Community Educational System Background

The Valdosta-Lowndes community is served by two school systems, and each system faces particular challenges in terms of preparing the next generation to take its place in the community's civic and economic life. Data on the two systems appears in Appendix G. However, the reader should be aware that school performance data often requires considerable interpretation in order to make judgments about school quality or the effectiveness of school teachers and administrators. In particular, school performance is highly associated with factors that are not under control of the school system (e.g., factors such as parents' level of education, socioeconomic background, and exposure to reading in the pre-school period).

Unfortunately, schools do not typically have data on all of the factors that determine the level of challenge that a student body presents due to school officials. The proxy measures for level of challenge that do exist are percent of free and reduced lunch and percent minority students. Both of these are potential proxies for the socioeconomic factors that are highly associated with school achievement. Minority racial status, it should be noted, is only a potential proxy in regions where there is a strong association between race and the key socioeconomic factors that are associated with school performance. Given the demographic profile of Lowndes County, data on race would seem to be a fairly legitimate proxy for these socioeconomic factors.

It should also be noted that with regard to economic impacts, some school performance measures appear (given current research findings) to be more highly associated with measurable economic impacts. Specifically, school graduation rates appear to be a more important measure in this regard than student achievement levels.

Readers should also be aware that student achievement (e.g., on standardized tests) can be impacted as much by the participation rate in the testing as by the actual knowledge of the students being tested. As the participation rate in a test increases, the average test scores tend to go down. This is due to the fact that the added participants (over and above the initial participants) tend to be more marginal students.

Finally, data that attempts to relate the relative level of challenge faced by a school system to school performance is, we believe, more revealing than data that does not. In this regard, readers may want to pay particular attention to the section below on effectiveness and efficiency.

Impacts of School District Consolidation on Students

The impacts of school consolidation on students who are enrolled in the district schools are essentially of two types: 1) impacts on the performance of students irrespective of any particular change in the composition of the student body; and 3) impacts on the performance or life successes of students that are associated with a change in the demographic composition of the student body. This section deals with the latter impacts and the next section deals with the operating costs and performance impacts.

1) Impacts on Student Achievement Irrespective of Potential Demographic Changes

School district production studies examine the impacts of district size on student achievement. That is, production studies have to do with the cost of achieving a certain level student performance (e.g., on standardized tests). These studies are relevant to school district consolidation because such consolidation leads to the creation of a school district that is, by definition, larger than the size of the individual school districts that have been combined.

Five of the studies reviewed estimate returns to size at the district level. District-level studies provide mixed results on economies of size (Table 4). Walberg and Fowler (1987) and Ferguson (1991) find decreasing returns to size, that is, larger districts are associated with lower student performance. Sebold and Dato (1981) and Baum (1986) find either constant returns to size (statistically insignificant coefficients on the enrollment variable), or increasing returns to size. Ferguson & Ladd (1996), in methodologically one of the strongest production function studies we reviewed, find clear evidence of increasing returns to size for Alabama school districts. Given the wide variation in specifications between these studies, and given that none of these studies used a quadratic specification for the enrollment variable; it is difficult to identify the reasons for the inconsistent results.

2) Impacts on Student Achievement Under the Condition of a Change in Student Demographics

While school consolidation does not necessarily lead to any changes in the demographic composition of the student body, in cases where consolidation does result in increased socio-economic integration of the student body the research literature suggests that this change can impact the student in the school system.

The most cited piece of work on the relationship between desegregation and achievement is the report on *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, or Coleman Report, which confirmed Brown v. Board of Education's holding that segregation adversely affects academic achievement. In particular, Coleman found that all racial and ethnic groups perform higher in schools with greater proportions of white students.

Crain and Mahard's (1978) findings only partially agree with the Coleman Report. They found that higher concentrations of white students positively affects black college attendance, survival, and achievement for Northern blacks, but adversely affects Southern blacks. Rather, Crain and Mahard discovered that Southern blacks perform higher in schools with low percentages of white students. They merely report the findings and do not attempt to devise a theory why the results ended that way. They do, however, investigate whether self-selection of blacks in predominantly white Northern schools influences their findings. Crain and Mahard found that self-selection was a factor. Because Crain and Mahard's research is 30 years old and was conducted in the early years of desegregation, the findings may no longer be valid.

The findings of the Coleman Report, however, have been modified somewhat by other researchers. Guryan (2004), for example, reports that the dropout rates of blacks decreased two to three percentage points as a result of desegregation. His methodology compares high school dropout rates of black students that desegregated in the '60s, '70s, and '80s in the years 1970 and 1980. Guryan's research found that the dropout rate amongst '70s desegregators declined from 14.3% to 10.5% from 1970 to 1980. After controlling for age, gender, family income, and family education, Guryan concluded that a 2.8 percent decline in the dropout rate, which is significant, could be attributed to desegregation. Additionally, Guryan only found a 0.5 increase in high school dropout rates for whites during this period, which is not significant.

While the Coleman Report is considered the authority on the subject, its methodology has often been criticized. Winkler (1974) investigates whether integration improves educational opportunity at certain transition points (an area Coleman never treated). Winkler points out that integration appears to hurt blacks as they transition from a predominantly black elementary school to a junior high school with a lower proportion of blacks.

One of the most cited works to follow up on the Coleman Report is Hanushek et. al (2002). Hanushek's research indicates that higher concentrations of blacks only affect high performing blacks in a negative fashion. The effects on lower ability blacks, whites, and Hispanics appears to be negligible. Hanushek believes that higher proportions of black students may decrease the achievement rates of higher performing black students because larger concentrations of black students may reduce teacher's expectations, or low ability black students may pressure their peers not to achieve up to their abilities.

The seemingly contradictory findings in Winkler and Hanushek's research indicate that some factor other than race may affect achievement. The Coleman Report even hints at

other sociological factors such as background and educational aspiration to explain their findings. One such factor, explored by Brookover et. al (1978) and Rumberger and Palardy (2005), is the importance of school composition. Brookover used the socioeconomic status and percentage of white students as school composition variables. Brookover found that 90% of the variance in his findings could be attributed to socioeconomic status, racial composition, or the “climate” variables. The climate variables consist of factors such as student sense of academic futility, teacher’s education, or parental concern. Brookover’s findings indicate that climate is the “necessary condition for high achievement” (p. 317). While certain compositions are associated with certain climates, such as low socioeconomic status and low climate, these variables do not necessarily move together.

Rumberger and Palardy reached a strikingly different conclusion than Brookover. Whereas Brookover’s findings focused on the importance of factors personal to the student such as their perceptions or parental education, Rumberger and Palardy find that the socioeconomic status of the entire school has the greatest influence over achievement. That is, they estimate that more than three-quarters of the difference in academic achievement among students is explained by the socioeconomic status of their peers, rather than general differences in school facilities and programs. Hence, schools that are segregated by socioeconomic status (SES) will tend to disadvantage students who are grouped into exclusively lower SES schools, while providing some advantage to students who are grouped into higher SES schools.

Rumberger and Palardy believe that any gains from integration could be offset by losses if the integration resulted in a change from a high socio-economic status school to a middle-class school. Their findings suggest that integration could lower achievement gaps between blacks and whites, but potentially decrease overall achievement rates. Rumberger and Palardy also point to the lack of political and individual will to integrate as a reason not to focus on this measure. Rather, the researchers believe that changes in family and community resources would be a more effective path for achieving equality of opportunity.

Other research seems to confirm the significance of socioeconomic factors on school performance. David Rusk, for example, cites the following research findings in support of policies designed to increase the mixing of children from lower income families with those of middle- and upper-income families:

- “in an Albuquerque study of 1,108 individual pupils, the average pupil from a public housing household increased Iowa Test of Basic Skills scores by 0.22 percentile points for every one percent increase in middle class classmates (Rusk & Mosley, 1994); the difference between a public housing child’s attending Cochiti Elementary (80 percent low-income classmates) and that child’s attending John Baker Elementary (80 percent middle-class classmates) would be, on average, a 13 percentile improvement in the child’s ITBS ranking;
- in a study of 373 elementary schools in metropolitan Baltimore, for every one percent increase in middle class classmates, a low-income pupil’s scores

- improved, on average, 0.18 percentile points on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (Rusk, 2003). The difference between a low-income pupil's attending Mosher Elementary in Baltimore City (80 percent low-income classmates) and that child's attending Rivera Beach Elementary in Anne Arundel County (80 percent middle-class classmates) would be, on average, an 11 percentile improvement in the child's CTBS ranking;
- in a study of 186 school districts in the five largest metro areas of Texas, for every one percent increase in middle class pupils, low-income pupils increase their chances of achieving a passing rate on the Texas state exams (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills, or TAAS) by 0.27 percentage points (Rusk, 1998); the difference between a low-income child's attending a typical elementary school in the Southside Independent School District (80 percent low-income classmates) and a typical elementary school in suburban Alamo Heights Independent School District (80 percent middle-class classmates), on average, would be a 16 percentage point improvement in their chances of achieving a passing rate in TAAS; and
 - in a study of 60 elementary schools in Madison-Dane County, for every one percent increase in middle class classmates, the average low-income 4th grade pupil's likelihood of achieving Advanced or Proficient levels on the state WINSS tests improved 0.64 percentage points in reading; 0.50 percentage points in language; 0.72 percentage points in math; 0.80 percentage points in science; and 0.74 percentage points in social studies (Rusk, 2002). In other words, the difference between a low-income pupil's attending a school with only 45 percent middle class classmates (e.g. Lincoln or Mendota) and that pupil's attending a school with 85 percent middle class classmates (e.g. Crestwood or Northside) would typically be a 20 to 32 percentage point improvement in that low-income pupil's probability of achieving A & P thresholds.”¹⁰

Peer group composition also appears to affect student achievement in ways that suggest that school integration would have positive impacts. Hallinan and Williams (1990) found that peer influences are a strong factor in whether high school students expect to attend college and whether they actually attend college. The researchers compared high school students with people that they identified as one of their three best friends. As expected, Hallinan and Williams found that two friends on the academic degree track were more likely than two friends on the vocational degree track to expect to attend college and actually attend college. However, they were surprised to find that different-race friends were more likely than same-race friends to expect to attend college and actually attend college. This finding proves that different-race friends may be more influential than same-race friends. Some of the effects of this finding can be explained away by the relatively few cross-race best friendships in the sample or that, by nature, “interracial friendships may feel an especially strong sense of solidarity” (p. 130).

¹⁰ Findings provided by correspondence with David Rusk. Source: *Housing Policy Is School Policy*, David Rusk (forthcoming).

While the research on the impacts of school integration on student achievement are somewhat mixed, research on the social and economic impacts of school (and neighborhood) segregation (by income and race) are more straightforward. For example, Gary Orfield et al.(2004) find a link between segregation and dropping out of school, unemployment, imprisonment, and persistent poverty.

In addition, it is argued that “the networking effects of desegregation may be far more important than [even] the cognitive effects.”¹¹ If children are to have equal chances of economic opportunity, public schools may need to provide networking opportunities equally. Similarly, access to high SES role models may be important in terms of children acquiring high aspirations and knowledge of how to achieve these aspirations.

In this regard, researchers have noted that:

- Black students who attend racially integrated and economically integrated schools complete more years of schooling than those who attend segregated schools.
- Black students who attend racially integrated and economically integrated schools are more likely to attend college
- In comparison with students who had only same-race friendships, both white and black students tend to have higher educational aspirations if they have cross-race friendships.¹²

While school achievement is certainly desirable, economically speaking, the more important measures of school success may be related to issues of character development (e.g., the willingness to complete one’s education) and the development of social relationships. In this regard it is significant that most empirical studies find little or no relationship between achievement test scores and later labor market success. However, there has been empirical evidence that school segregation can have negative impacts on later labor market success.¹³

Relevance for Valdosta-Lowndes County Situation: School segregation by race and income has impacts that go beyond student achievement. One of the major goals of public education is the preparation of young people to live in a democratic society and to work effectively with others in a diverse workforce. Using this goal as a criterion, the

¹¹ Richard Kahlenberg, *All Together Now: Creating Middle-Class Schools through Public School Choice* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press 2001), 30 (quoting Gary Orfield).

¹² See Michael A Boozer, et al., *Race and School Quality Since Brown v. Board of Education*, Brookings Papers Econ. Activity, 1992; Richard Kahlenberg, *All Together Now*; Robert Crain and Rita Mahard, “School Racial Composition and Black College Attendance and Achievement Test Performance,” *Sociology of 51* (1978): 81; and Maureen Hallinan and Richard Williams, “Students’ Characteristics and the Peer Influence Process,” *Sociology of 63* (1990): 122.

¹³ See Michael A Boozer, et al., *Race and School Quality Since Brown v. Board of Education*, Brookings Papers Econ. Activity, 1992.

persistence of segregated schools and school systems would certainly be considered as a hindrance. As such, the Valdosta-Lowndes community is right to be concerned with residential demographic changes that have resulted in increased segregation since the 1990s.

Based on the current school system demographics, the potential for desegregation impacts of consolidation are considerable. Currently, Lowndes County Schools are majority white, while Valdosta City Schools are majority black. If these two school districts were consolidated, the unified district would be 44.9% black and 46.8% white.

However, without some concerted efforts to realign the demographics at the elementary level, the negative effect on blacks who transition from a predominantly black elementary school to a more mixed-race middle school or junior high school would continue to exist and potentially increase in saliency.

The research would suggest that the consolidation would likely have some positive effects on the total dropout rate for the community. Such an effect could be quite beneficial since failure to finish high school has a substantial impact on students' long term earnings prospects.

However, were some desegregation to occur as a result of district consolidation, there is some evidence that it would result in an increase in school performance for blacks, but a slight decrease in overall performance. This estimate is based on data that would suggest that the two school systems have different overall socio-economic status levels. Specifically, it appears that the Lowndes County schools have a lower proportion of lower SES students as measured by the percentage of Free and Reduced Lunch program participants.

Lowndes County: Free and Reduced Lunch Percentage: 40.79

Valdosta: Free and Reduced Lunch Percentage: 68.38

While the literature may suggest that a change from a higher SES to a lower SES overall school status can negatively impact student achievement, it is unclear that overall achievement should trump the larger social goal of promoting civic education for a diverse society. Additionally, the consolidation of two school districts would not necessarily mean that school level integration would involve a merging of student population so as to reach a level of SES integration suggested by the average of the two districts SESs. Instead, school level integration could be more selective so as to only change the SES level in particular schools by small amounts.

Potential Cost Impacts Due to School District Consolidation

1) School District Operational Cost and School Size

A recent review of the economic literature on school districts suggests that per pupil costs tend to decrease as school districts grow in size, at least up to a certain size (i.e., 6000 students). The following summary of finding is taken from “Revisiting Economies of Size in American Education: Are We Any Closer to a Consensus?” *Economics of Education Review*, 2002, vol. 21(3), 245-262:

District level studies can be divided into three groups based on the specification of the enrollment variable. Three studies specify enrollment in either a linear or log-linear form. Two of the studies (Ratcliffe et. al (1990) and Downes & Pogue (1994)) find statistically significant economies of size. Downes & Pogue, for example, find using data for Arizona that a 1% increase in enrollment is associated with a 0.18% decline in per pupil operating and maintenance costs using a fixed-effects model, but only a 0.09% decline with a random-effects model. Two of the district level studies have estimated the more general translog cost function. At the mean value for all variables, both Gyimah-Brempong and Gyapong (1991) and Callan & Santerre (1990) find economies of size. The translog function is more flexible, but the specific studies using this model have addressed fewer of the methodological issues discussed above.

A third group of studies includes estimates from a log-linear cost function with the log of enrollment and its square to capture a U-shaped per pupil cost curve. These four studies (Downes & Pogue; Duncombe et. al (1996); Reschovsky & Imazeki, 1997, 1999) have been since 1994 and address most of the methodological issues raised by Fox (1981). As expected, a U-shaped cost curve is found for most types of expenditures. For total costs, the cost-minimizing district enrollment is circa 6000 students, for operating or instructional costs the optimal is in the 2000–3500 range, and for transportation costs the optimal enrollment is just over 1000. In contrast, economies of size for administrative costs were estimated to exist over all ranges of enrollment in their sample. Even for total costs, Duncombe et al. (1995) found that 90% of the cost savings were exhausted by the time the district reached 1500 pupils. For New York State, they found that one-half of the cost decrease was due to declining per pupil administrative costs, which dropped from US \$1124 per pupil with 50 pupils to \$193 per pupil with a size of 1500.

2) QBE Allotment Funding

Funding for Administration

Each school system in Georgia is provided state funding for a school superintendent and for up to 6 assistant school superintendents. With the merger of the Valdosta and Lowndes County school systems, there is a potential for decrease in state funded positions due to the failure to “earn” support for an additional school superintendent or support for additional assistant superintendents beyond the maximum of 6 specified in the QBE funding formula.

Upon analysis of the existing school systems’ allotment sheets, we discovered that both existing school systems qualify for less than the maximum credit for superintendent positions, i.e., 1 superintendent and 6 assistant superintendents. However, each system qualified for 1 superintendent and 4 assistant superintendents or a total of 10 superintendent-type positions. Since the maximum number of these positions that a school system can earn is 7, the consolidated school district would lose funding for 3 administrative positions. The following table provides the calculation of the estimated loss of funding for central administration credits.

State Contribution for Superintendent and Assistant Superintendents	\$50,336
Estimate of Number of Superintendents/Assistant Superintendents for each System	3
Total Estimated Loss	\$151,008

Equalization Grants

According to Georgia law, QBE provides funding for equalization grants in the following manner:

(b) The State Board of Education shall annually calculate the **equalization grant** for each qualified local school system in the following manner:

(1) Subtract the assessed valuation per weighted full-time equivalent count for the

local school system from the assessed valuation per weighted full-time equivalent count for the guaranteed valuation school system;

(2) Divide the difference resulting from paragraph (1) of this subsection by 1,000;

(3) Subtract five from the effective millage rate for the local school system and use the resulting number of effective mills or 15 effective mills, whichever is less, as the number of effective mills to be equalized;

(4) Multiply the quotient resulting from paragraph (2) of this subsection by the number of effective mills to be equalized pursuant to paragraph (3) of this subsection; and

(5) Multiply the product resulting from paragraph (4) of this subsection by the most recent weighted full-time equivalent count for the local school system.

(6) "Guaranteed valuation school system" is defined as the local school system ranking at the seventy-fifth percentile in dollars of assessed valuation per weighted full-time equivalent count, where the ranking of school systems is such that the one-hundredth percentile school system is that with the highest amount in dollars of assessed valuation per weighted full-time equivalent count. For the purpose of determining the assessed valuation per weighted full-time equivalent count of the guaranteed valuation school system only, a reduction of the assessed valuation for exemptions authorized by Code Sections 48-5-44 and 48-5-48 shall be calculated whether such exemptions are granted or not granted by the guaranteed valuation school system.

(Source: O.C.G.A. § 20-2-165)

Table 15: Current Equalization Grant Amounts	
System	Equalization Grant Amount (2008 Allotment Sheet)
Lowndes County Schools	\$5,816,365
Valdosta Schools	\$902,958

Data and a spreadsheet with the current calculations for the Equalization Grants for Valdosta and Lowndes County systems were obtained from the Georgia DOE. Based on these data, we attempted to identify the impact of the proposed merger on the Equalization Grants. However, because the calculation of Equalization Grants is based on a specific millage rate that is to be equalized, we had to make an assumption about the

millage rate that a merged system would apply. The assumption we made is that the merged system would levy a millage rate that was the average of the two existing millage rates.

Table 16: 2005 Millage Rates (Used in the most Current GDOE Equalization Grant Calculations)	
Lowndes	15.149
Valdosta City	14.980

Based on the assumption of the new merged school system adopting a millage rate that is the average of the two existing millage rates, the estimated impact on Equalization Grant Totals is presented in the following table.

Table 17: Estimated Impact on Equalization Grant Totals based on Assumption of an Averaged Millage Rate	
Estimated Merger Equalization	\$6,531,189
Current Total of the Two Systems Equalization Grants	\$6,719,323
Estimated Change in Equalization Grant Total Based on	(\$188,134)

QBE Capital Project Funding

Potential of State Support for New Construction and Renovation

As the following section of the Official Code of Georgia indicates, a voluntary school system merger can lead to the funding of new construction or renovation of existing facilities without any financing costs: (Source: O.C.G.A. § 20-2-291)

§ 20-2-291. Financing construction of facilities for voluntary consolidation

(a) In the event a local school system is voluntarily merged with one or more adjoining local school systems under the provisions of Code Section 20-2-60 or Code Sections 20-2-370 through 20-2-372, all local school systems which are party to such voluntary merger shall not be required to finance any portion of the costs for new construction or renovation of existing facilities qualified under Code Section 20-2-260 that are needed to effectuate the merger of the school systems, subject to appropriation

by the General Assembly.

(b) In the event two or more local school systems voluntarily consolidate two or more elementary, middle, or high schools into a single school which meets or exceeds the minimum sizes specified in subsection (q) of Code Section 20-2-260 or 100 percent of the student population for the respective school level from all local school systems which are party to the consolidation will attend such school, all local school systems involved in such consolidation shall not be required to finance any portion of the costs of new construction or renovation of existing facilities qualified under Code Section 20-2-260 that are needed to effectuate such **school consolidation**.

(c) As used in this subsection, the term:

(1) Reserved.

(2) Reserved.

(3) Reserved.

(4) "Elementary school" is defined as a school which contains any grade below grade four and does not contain any grade above grade eight.

(5) "High school" is defined as a school which contains any grade above grade eight.

(6) "Middle school" is defined as a school which contains no grade below grade four and no grade above grade eight.

(7) Reserved.

(8) "School level" is defined as a grade range which is consistent with paragraph (4), (5), or (6) of this subsection.

In the event a local school system consolidates an elementary, a middle, or a high school which is smaller than the minimum size specified in subsection (q) of Code Section 20-2-260 for that respective school with one or more other schools of the same school level within the same local school system, resulting in the consolidated school or schools being at least as large as the minimum size specified in subsection (q) of Code Section 20-2-260 or containing all the students within the local school system for the respective school level: the local school system shall be required to finance one-half the costs that the local school system would otherwise be required to finance under the provisions of Code Section 20-2-260 for any new construction or any renovation of existing facilities needed to effectuate such consolidation of schools.

(d) All benefits to local school systems as provided under this Code section shall be conditioned upon the following:

(1) No student shall be expected or required to travel a greater time than the maximum travel time prescribed by the State Board of Education to attend a school unless the state board explicitly authorizes an exemption based upon the greater good for all students which will result from such local school system merger or **school consolidation**; and

(2) In the event of such local school system merger or **school consolidation**, all instructional facilities will be utilized for public educational purposes to the extent feasible and practical.

(e) All benefits to local school systems as provided under subsections (a) and (b) of this Code section shall be conditioned upon the following:

(1) The local boards of education which are potential parties to a merger of local school systems or a consolidation of schools have approved resolutions requesting the State Board of Education to conduct a feasibility study;

(2) The state board has conducted a feasibility study;

(3) The local boards of education which are to be parties to a merger of local school systems or a consolidation of a school or schools have approved the recommendations of the feasibility study;

(4) The voters of the affected local school systems, if appropriate, have approved the merger of the local school systems; and

(5) The state board has approved the recommendations of the feasibility study.

Potential for Exceptional Growth Access to Capital Projects

As the following section of the Official Code of Georgia indicates, a school system merger is one of the criteria for being eligible for exceptional growth capital outlay funds from the Georgia Department of Education. (Source: [O.C.G.A. § 20-2-260 \(2007\)](#), TITLE 20. EDUCATION, CHAPTER 2. ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION, ARTICLE 6. QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION, PART 10. CAPITAL OUTLAY FUNDS , § 20-2-260.)

(6) Local school systems may receive state capital outlay funds for exceptional growth projects if that system experienced exceptional growth and the following conditions are met:

(A) The local school system has specifically requested funding under this subsection prior to submission of the annual budget request for the state board to the General Assembly;

(B) Any construction project submitted to utilize growth entitlement shall include

construction of at least three new instructional units. If sufficient growth entitlement is not currently available for all of the new instructional units needed under this subsection, additional local funds or entitlements available to meet construction needs identified in the school system's facilities plan pursuant to subsection (g) of this Code section may be combined with any entitlement available for exceptional growth pursuant to this subsection for the purpose of completing all construction needs identified at a school. Entitlements earned under this subsection shall not be withheld, recalculated, or otherwise reduced for any construction project approved under subsection (g) of this Code section. Exceptional growth entitlement shall be utilized for construction of new instructional units at an existing school or for new schools only for those schools which, following the completion of such construction, meet the minimum size specified in subsection (q) of this Code section. Other funding sources must be utilized for any renovation or modification activities which may be needed; and

(C) The local participation required under subsection (f) of this Code section and all other procedural requirements of this Code section are met.

(k) The State Board of Education shall request separate appropriations for each of the following categories:

(1) Regular entitlements pursuant to subsection (g) of this Code section;

(2) Regular advance funding projects pursuant to paragraphs (1) through (4) of subsection (h) of this Code section;

(3) Construction projects resulting from the consolidation of schools across local school system lines pursuant to paragraph (5) of subsection (h) of this Code section;

(4) Construction projects resulting from merger of local school systems pursuant to subsection (a) of Code Section 20-2-291;

(5) Advance funding projects for consolidation or reorganization of schools pursuant to subsection (i) of this Code section; and

(6) Exceptional growth construction projects pursuant to subsection (j) of this Code section.

3) Transportation and Facilities Use

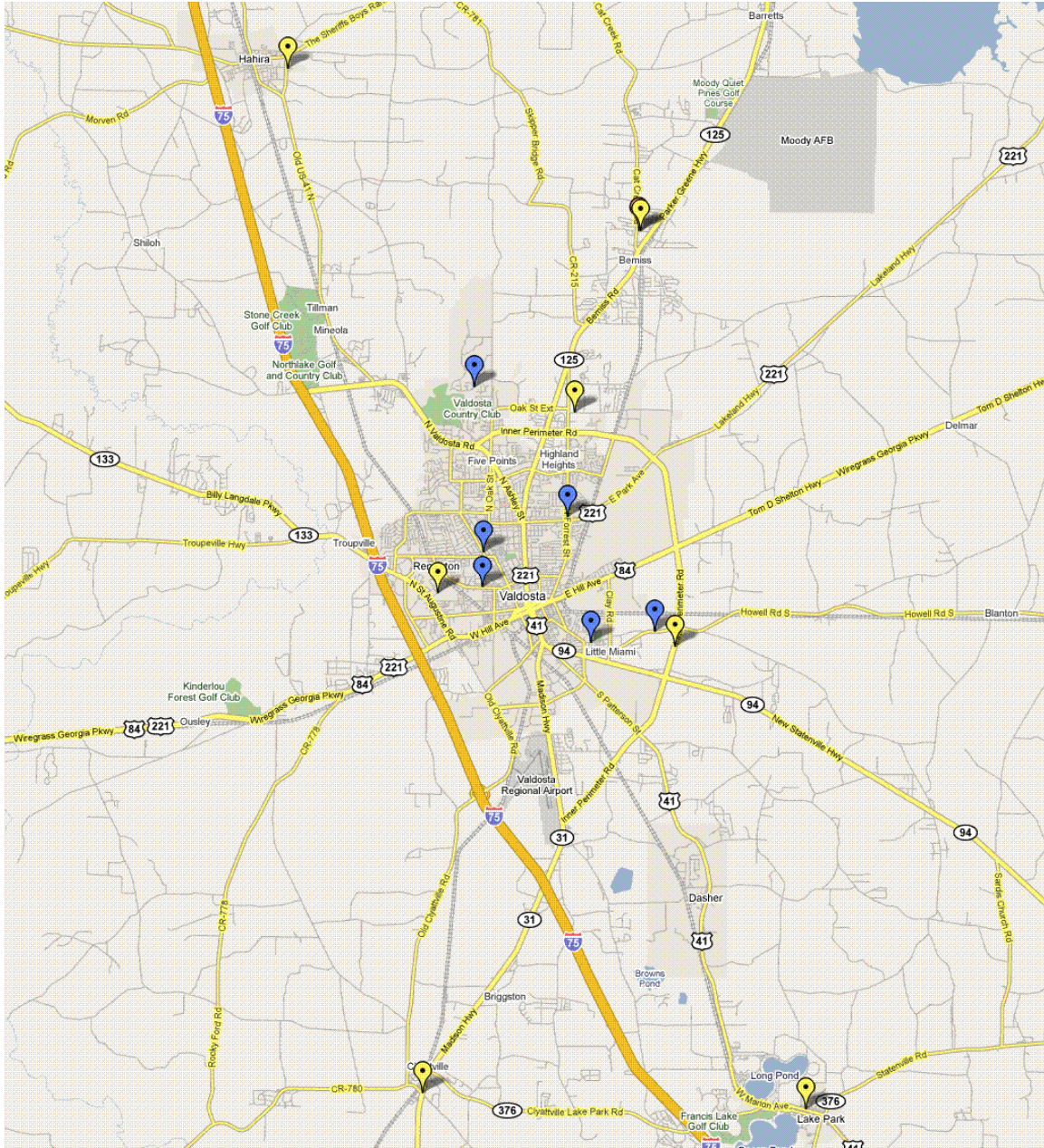
One argument frequently made for school district consolidation is that it can increase transportation costs, including the cost of lost time for bused students. However, in the case of a Valdosta-Lowndes merger, there are two likely scenarios:

- Scenario 1: Only school district consolidation occurs and there is no school-level consolidation. In this case there should be no negative (or positive) impact on transportation costs since in this scenario all students currently going to a particular school would continue to go to that school.
- Scenario 2: School enrollment areas are redesigned to make them more efficient in terms of transportation.

Within Scenario 2, there is a potential for savings through a more rational use of existing facilities in terms of locating facilities in discrete service areas as opposed to facilities where there exists service area overlaps. Such service area overlaps can result in higher transportation costs for both the school district and for parents of the children attending schools that are farther from their residences than would be the case were the facilities more rationally located. In order to identify the extent to which there is a potential for the savings of this type, we geolocated all of the schools for the two systems and plotted these on a map. We created one map for elementary school and another for middle and high schools. In the plots below, City schools are marked in blue and County schools in yellow.

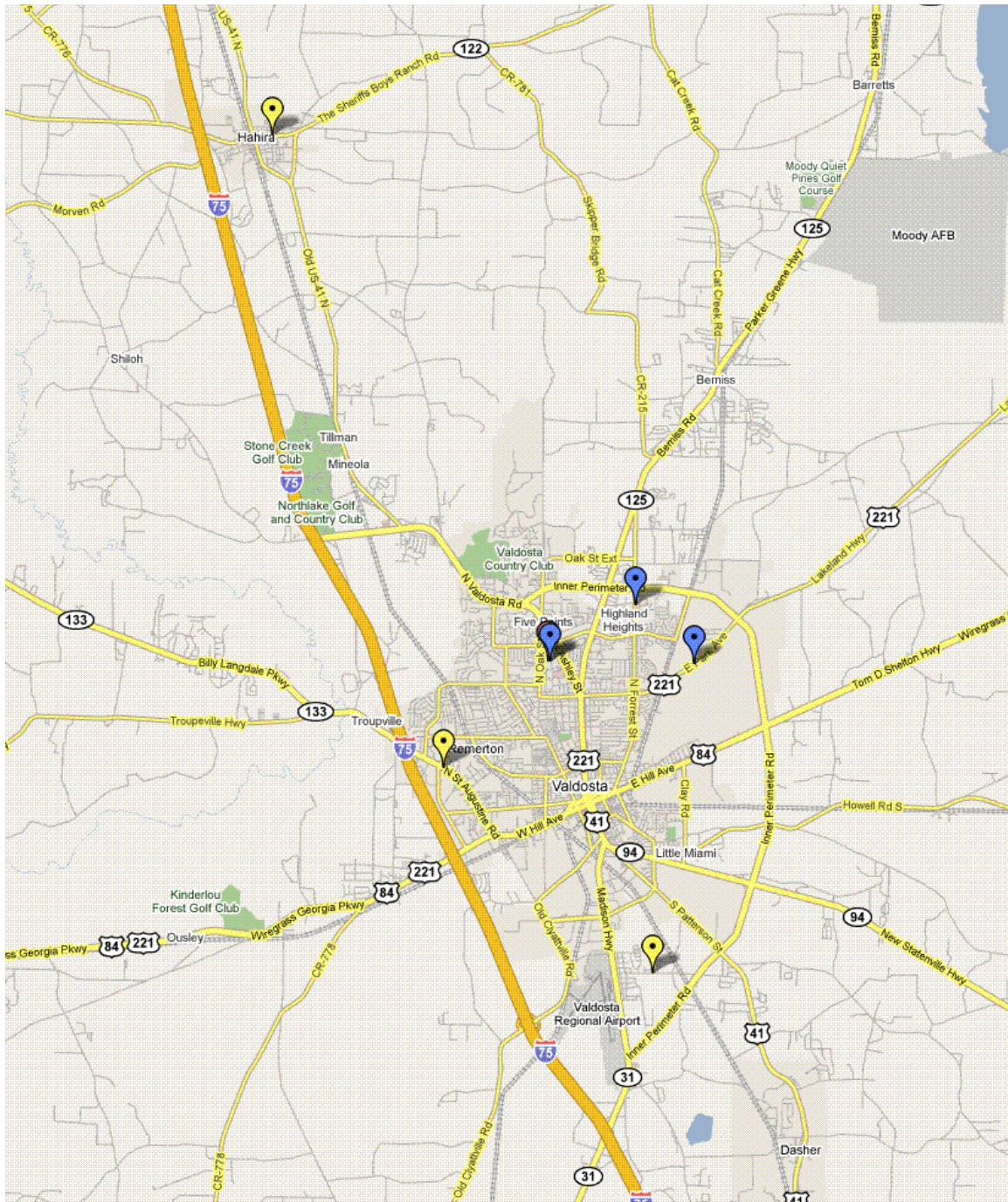
There also exists a potential for savings in cases where consolidation would lead to surplus facilities due to a merging of functions and staff. However, analysis of this type of savings is beyond the scope of the current study.

Impacts of Single versus Multiple School Systems



The plot of elementary schools suggests at least two areas where there appears to be service area overlap.

Impacts of Single versus Multiple School Systems



Because the service areas for middle and high schools are larger than for elementary school, the identification of possible service area overlaps is more difficult. However, the pattern of school locations suggests that some of the City's schools could more efficiently serve the County system students who reside in the eastern, and particularly the northeastern quadrant of the county. In a similar manner, the County school located in the southern part of the City could more efficient.

The Community Context: Residential and Income Segregation

This section addresses the question of what is the relationship between the organization of school systems, residential demographic patterns and economic development.

Residential Segregation

The dissimilarity index measures whether one particular group is distributed across census tracts in the metropolitan area in the same way as another group. A high value indicates that the two groups tend to live in different tracts. D ranges from 0 to 100. A value of 60 (or above) is considered very high. It means that 60% (or more) of the members of one group would need to move to a different tract in order for the two groups to be equally distributed. Values of 40 or 50 are usually considered a moderate level of segregation, and values of 30 or below are considered to be fairly low.

The following table provides information on the top seven cities in Georgia on the Census 2000 dissimilarity index. On this measure, Valdosta is fourth, indicating that residential segregation is high when compared to the average city in Georgia. (It should be noted that a city's minority population can represent a high, medium or low proportion of the population and still have a high or low dissimilarity index. This is the case because the dissimilarity index takes the distribution of the population by race at the city or regional level as given and then assesses how this population is distributed among the census tracts).

Rank	City	Black Population	White Population	Total Population	Dissimilarity Index
1.	Atlanta city	254,062	130,222	416,474	83.5
2.	Albany city	49,643	25,193	76,939	66.9
3.	Columbus city (balance)	80,698	90,200	185,781	65.3
4.	Valdosta city	21,091	20,440	43,724	61.5
5.	Savannah city	74,691	49,903	131,510	60.3
6.	Gainesville city	3,952	12,218	25,578	59.0
7.	LaGrange city	12,289	12,588	25,998	56.8

Next, we chose Albany as a comparison community for Valdosta because it is of a similar size and is also in the interior of South Georgia. As the two charts below indicate, both Valdosta and Albany have become less segregated since 1980, but Valdosta's change to a more integrated city has progressed more than Albany.

Valdosta Change



Albany Change



What is missing from the dissimilarity index data is an ability to understand the level and change in segregation at the regional or metropolitan statistical area (MSA) level. Because Valdosta became an MSA in 2003, these data will be calculated for the first time in the 2010 Census.

Income Segregation

Is residential segregation in this metropolitan area a result of different groups having different income levels? In other words, when we see neighborhoods separated by race, is it really because households are segregated by social class?

The following two tables shows the levels of segregation (the Index of Dissimilarity) between households with different income levels (under \$30,000 in 2000 dollars, between \$30,000 and \$60,000, and over \$60,000) for Valdosta and Albany in the 1990 and 2000 censuses. The tables show dissimilarity measures for poor-to-middle, poor-to-affluent, and middle-to affluent relationships. The higher the measure, the more the income groups are segregated.

These tables indicate that there is a substantial amount of segregation of residences by household income in both cities. For example, the poor-to-affluent index measure in Valdosta for 2000 was 49.23 and in Albany it was 46.3. These measures are fairly high and they suggest that some of the racial segregation may be associated with income segregation and vice versa.

It is also interesting to note that while the poor-to-affluent dissimilarity index in Albany decreased significantly from 1990 (52.1) to 2000 (46.3) , the same measure in Valdosta increased slightly, from 49.1 to 49.23 during this same period.

Valdosta

	Poor		Middle income		Affluent	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Poor	0	0	28.07	25.65	49.1	49.23
Middle Income	28.07	25.65	0	0	31.37	31.76
Affluent	49.1	49.23	31.37	31.76	0	0

Albany

	Poor		Middle income		Affluent	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Poor	*	*	29.3	25	52.1	46.3
Middle Income	29.3	25	*	*	29.6	26.7
Affluent	52.1	46.3	29.6	26.7	*	*

The Relationship between School Composition/Quality and Residential Patterns

School Quality

In April 2006, the National Fair Housing Alliance (NFHA) completed a three-year, 12-city housing discrimination study titled *Unequal Opportunity—Perpetuating Housing Discrimination in America*. Using 145 sales tests in three geographic regions across the country, the NFHA found a subtle pattern of discrimination. Essentially, instead of real estate agents steering white clients away from minority neighborhoods, these agents would use schools as a proxy for racial or ethnic composition of neighborhoods and communities. “Rather than telling white testers to avoid certain neighborhoods because of racial or ethnic composition, many real estate agents would tell the tester to avoid certain [poor quality] schools—schools that were racially identifiable.”¹⁴ While the focus of the NFHA study was on racial discrimination, it can be argued that the same result would

¹⁴ Expanding Educational Opportunity Through School and Housing Choice by Mmyron Orfield and Nicholas Wallace, *CURA Reporter*, Summer 2007.

occur even were school not racially identifiable. That is, as a result of steering prospective homebuyers away from poor quality schools (or simply by self-selection based on school performance data), a segregation of schools and residences by SES will tend to occur.

Hence, there is certainly some truth in the conventional wisdom that new homebuyers who have (or plan to have school age children) are willing to pay a premium for homes in areas where the schools are considered to be better than average. Recently, in an attempt to provide more precision to this measure of conventional wisdom, one of the authors of this study conducted a survey with real estate experts around the country. The survey was focused on land-use and educational variables that might impact the price of housing. Respondents were asked to indicate how much of a premium they felt that consumers would be willing to pay to ensure that the home they were about to purchase provided certain other amenities (e.g., was located near good schools). Specifically, the study found that respondents felt that potential homebuyers are willing to pay around 27% more for a home located within the boundaries of a school district's top performing school versus a home located within the enrollment boundaries of a school that was in the bottom-half in terms of performance. In the survey, respondents were specifically asked to consider elementary school enrollment zones as the frame of reference.

Relevance for Valdosta-Lowndes County Situation: What our study (and other research on) the impact of school quality on housing values indicates is that housing prices for exactly the same house will vary considerably based on the quality of the schools in the area where the house is located. This impact is likely to have additional impacts including:

- 1) A tendency for developers (all else being equal) to invest more heavily in areas where school quality is considered good;
- 2) As development and investment expands in the areas where school quality is considered high, the population will tend to follow. However, it is not just any population that follows; instead, the population that follows is one that is on average more affluent (i.e., able to pay the premium on housing located in the desirable school attendance zone).
- 3) The potential for lower-income families to acquire more house-per-dollar-of-investment in the areas where school quality is below average (i.e., relatively speaking housing in these areas is discounted).
- 4) Because of #2 and #3, there is a strong potential for a clustering of residents by income (i.e., lower income residents in the inner city and higher income residents in the suburban areas).
- 5) As the lower performing schools attract fewer and fewer families with resources, the quality of these schools may deteriorate further, potentially creating a vicious cycle.

The ultimate results of these secondary impacts are to create a pattern of development that is characterized by:

- More sprawled than would otherwise be the case.

- A potential spatial mismatch between where the jobs exist and where critical elements of the workforce live (e.g., while the job growth in retail, construction, entertainment, and food services will tend to occur in the suburbs, much of the workforce that is needed to staff these establishments will live in the urban core).
- A reduction in what economists call agglomeration economies (or the economies that exist because businesses, services, and the human capital involved in these are concentrated into a relatively narrow geographical area).
- A potential for lower levels of economic growth. This potential is based on the analogy between the impacts of separate school systems within an economic region and the impacts of separate jurisdictions within an economic region. That is, research suggests that when cities grow in a way that is congruent with the growth in the economic region (e.g., annex newly developed areas), the result is a more economically dynamic economy and a more integrated population.

As suggested above, there are essentially two scenarios for understanding the school level composition of students in a newly merged Valdosta-Lowndes school district.

- Scenario 1: Only school district consolidation occurs and there is no school-level consolidation. In this case there would be no change in the dynamic of school quality impacts on residential patterns (and vice versa).
- Scenario 2: School-level enrollment areas are changed in order to address the negative impacts of the school quality-residential pattern dynamic. For example, new enrollment districts are designed to provide for relatively equal levels of quality in terms of student achievement and family resources. As a result of such changes, some secondary impacts might include:
 - A reduction in the premium on housing prices that currently exists in the areas where school quality is now higher than average.
 - A reduction in the discount on housing prices that currently exists in the areas where school quality is now lower than average.
 - A potential reversal in the sprawl, spatial mis-match, negative agglomeration economies, and negative prospects for long-term economic growth that were outlined above.

Race, Income and School Segregation

Residential patterns in terms of racial demographics also have an effect on school segregation. Lankford and Wyckoff (2000) found that racial composition is one of the most important factors in school choice and residential location decisions. Lankford and Wyckoff compared the proportions of white students in suburban and urban areas. They found that whites are more likely to be enrolled in suburban public schools than urban public schools irrespective of the minority proportions. Further, they found that for white students in both suburban and urban areas, the higher the proportion of minorities, the less likely whites are to be enrolled in public schools. Since minority proportions are lower in suburban communities, Lankford and Wyckoff controlled for the difference in racial composition between urban and suburban public schools. They found white

students would attend urban schools at nearly the same rate as suburban schools if their racial composition were the same. This led them to believe that racial composition in public schools is a significant factor in determining where people live.

Relevance for Valdosta-Lowndes County Situation: As suggested above, there are essentially two scenarios for understanding the school level composition of students in a hypothetical newly merged Valdosta-Lowndes school district.

- Scenario 1: Only school district consolidation occurs and there is no school-level consolidation. In this case there would be no impact on the racial composition of the schools in the community.
- Scenario 2: School enrollment areas are redesigned to make them more balanced in terms of racial composition. As a result of a movement toward more racial balance among the schools in the community, some secondary impacts might include:
 - Some increase in the number of families choosing to attend private schools. (In the short run such an impact would save the community in terms of tax dollars that need to be collected or provide additional resources to students on a per capita basis. In the long run, too heavy a reliance on private schools can undermine the community's support for public schools.)
 - A reduction in the existing pattern of "white flight" from the Valdosta Schools. In Valdosta, there is some evidence that white families with school age children may have moved out of the City as the Valdosta school system became more racially imbalanced (compared to the countywide population). This implication is based on data showing that the percentage and numbers of blacks and Hispanics have increased over the last decade or more, while the percentage of white students has decreased. That is, the proportion of the total school enrollment accounted for by black student enrollment in Valdosta City Schools increased from 66.1% in 1994 to 75.9% in 2007. White student enrollment as a proportion decreased from 31.7% to 17.8% during this time. Stronger evidence for this white flight dynamic comes from Census Data indicating that during the decade of the 90's, there was an actual 8% (or 1,108 residents) decline in the white resident population in Valdosta. This was during a time when the County population as a whole increased by 10%.
 - Some limited amount of new "white flight" to outlying counties. The amount of white flight would be limited because as the school reached greater racial balance, the ability to find schools that have high percentages of white students is lowered. The only choice in an area like Valdosta-Lowndes is to move completely out of the county. However, both because of the geography of the area (i.e., such a choice would create a long commute) and the relative

quality of the schools in Valdosta compared with more rural counties, the out-of-county choice of residence may be limited.¹⁵

In addition to changes in the demographic composition of Valdosta vis a vis unincorporated Lowndes County, there also appears to have been changes in the relative median income of the residents in these two areas. Specifically, in the 1990s's Census, the median income of Valdosta residents and unincorporated county residents was approximately the same. However in the period between 1990 and 2000, the median income of the unincorporated county residents rose much more quickly than that of the City residents (i.e., 48% versus 40%) such that the median income of the City residents is now more than \$3100 less than that of the unincorporated county residents.

Impacts on Residential Patterns by Race and Residential Wealth

In theory, a school district consolidation can impact the demographics of the community. One hypothesis that can be explored is the potential for a unified school district to reduce the motivation of parents to shop for schools through shopping for residences in a higher achieving school district. In the typical case of such school shopping, higher income parents will choose to purchase residences in the attendance areas of the higher achieving school district. In these cases, one would see a movement of higher income parents to the higher achieving district. Similarly, if the student body of one school district is made up primarily of students of a minority racial group, there may also be a tendency for majority-race parents to choose another school district. When race and income are strongly associated as is the case in most of the United States, the tendency for parental choice, when given the opportunity, to maintain or exacerbate residential segregation is increased.

By definition, a unified school district does not afford such opportunities to choose a different school district. As such, one would expect it can still be the case that parents of school-age children will be able to shop for individual schools even within a single unified school district. Hence, one would only expect a consolidation of school districts to have an impact on residential patterns if the school district consolidation also results in a more thorough integration of individual schools by race and class. Without such school-level integration by race and class, parental choices of residence based on school quality or demographics are likely to maintain or exacerbate residential segregation.

¹⁵ Rossell (1975) analyzed the effect of desegregation on residential patterns. Her research found that in the long term desegregation policies have little to no effect on "white flight." In the few districts where white flight occurred, this change occurred either before the policy was enacted or shortly thereafter. Rossell postures that whites do not leave a community because of problems with segregation, but rather fear of problems. This explains why "high desegregation" school districts experienced lower white flight rates by the third year after desegregation than before the enactment of the policy. She believes that in order to address concerns of desegregation, administrators must work to eliminate fear and controversy before the plan is implemented.

In this section of the report, we explore data that might shed some light on the relationship between school district consolidation and residential patterns. In this regard, we only attempt to see if there is a relationship between district level consolidation and residential patterns; we do not attempt to see if school district consolidation led to more integration of the student bodies at individual schools. The idea is that if school district consolidation does lead to more integration of the student bodies at individual schools that this impact will be reflected in residential patterns.

Since 1987, six communities in Georgia have consolidated their school districts. These consolidations generally involved a city school district giving up its charter. The school districts that have been dissolved in this manner include:

SCHOOL DISTRICT	COUNTY
AMERICUS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	SUMTER COUNTY
FITZGERALD CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	BEN HILL COUNTY
HOGANSVILLE CITY SCHOOL DIST	TROUP COUNTY
LAGRANGE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	TROUP COUNTY
THOMASTON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	UPSON COUNTY
WAYCROSS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT	WARE COUNTY

Patterns of Dissimilarity

If a school district merger were to impact residential patterns, one might expect to see such an impact in a measure known as the dissimilarity index. The dissimilarity index is an index that summarizes the level of segregation numerically. Specifically, the dissimilarity index is a measure of the evenness dimension of segregation. This dimension has generally been considered the most important dimension of segregation, and the dissimilarity index has been the standard measure of evenness throughout the years. Under this measure,

“a group is segregated if it is unevenly distributed (meaning no group and non-group members share a common areal unit of residence). Zero segregation occurs when all areal units have the same proportion of the population group as the city as a whole. The index of dissimilarity measures the proportion of a group’s members that would have to move to achieve an even distribution of population groups in the city. The index ranges from 0 to 1 (or 0 to 100, if using percentages instead of proportions). For example, in 2000, the dissimilarity index was 0.82 for the black population in New York City – meaning 82% of the black population would have

to move to achieve zero segregation.”¹⁶

In order to test whether school consolidations may have impacted residential segregation, we collected hundreds of census tract data points for three sets of communities: the Valdosta-Lowndes community; the set of communities that have experienced a consolidation; and two control communities that have had a unified school district during the entire study period. The study period included the time prior to the consolidations, the time during which consolidations took place, and the time since consolidation. These periods are represented by the 1980, 1990, and 2000 censuses. Using census tract data we calculated a dissimilarity index for each community (or county). (Note: the calculated dissimilarity index is for the county rather than for the metropolitan area which can contain multiple counties). The formula for calculating the dissimilarity index is provided in the Appendix. The demographic data used in the calculation was for persons identified by a single race category.

The following tables provide the results of the dissimilarity index calculations for black residents of the community. Viewed as cross-section (i.e., comparing Lowndes to the other communities studied), these data suggest that Lowndes County has a substantially higher dissimilarity index than the other communities, suggesting that Lowndes is relatively more segregated than is the case with the other communities.

Table 2: Changes in Lowndes Dissimilarity Index			
	1980	1990	2000
Lowndes	0.52	0.49	0.48
Lowndes went from 13 to 16 to 26 tracts during the study period.			

Table 3: Changes in Dissimilarity Index of Communities that have Experienced a School District Merger			
	1980	1990	2000
Ben Hill*	0.15	0.27	0.25
Sumter***	0.25	0.18	0.23
Troup	0.35	0.36	0.38
Upson**	0.37	0.28	0.36
Ware****	0.38	0.40	0.35
**** Ware went from 5 to 10 to 9 tracts during the study period.			
* Ben Hill went from 3 to 4 tracts in the 1980-1990 period, i.e., a major change proportionally			
**Upson went from 5 to 6 tracts in the 1980-1990 period and from 6 to 7 tracts in the 1990-2000 period			
*** Sumter went from 7 to 8 tract in the 1980-1990 period			

¹⁶ Department of Geography, McCalester College. Geography Metro Analysis, 2005. <http://www.mcalester.edu/geography/faculty/smithl/courses/geog262/assignments/002.pdf>

Table 4: Changes in Dissimilarity Index of Comparison Communities that Already Had Unified School Districts			
	1980	1990	2000
Decatur	0.28	0.36	0.33
Spalding	0.34	0.35	0.40
*Decatur went from 5 to 8 to 7 tracts in the study period			
*Spalding went from 8 to 12 tracts in the 1980-90 period			

Unfortunately, when one looks at the trend in the data for the three sets of communities, the findings do not suggest any particular pattern of change in residential segregation. We believe that the inability to identify any pattern in the results is due in part to the reliability of the dissimilarity index over time being sensitive to changes in the geography of the census tracts. That is, it can be difficult, in cases where the geography changes substantially, to cull the changes that may be due to a policy or a change in policy (e.g., school district mergers) from changes that may be due to the redrawing of census tracts. Information about the changes in the number of tracts in each census is provided following each table.

Changes in Values of Residential Property¹⁷

¹⁷ Housing Values

Economists have measured the impact of school district consolidation on capitalized housing prices. In the most recent study, Hu & Yinger (2007) found that consolidation boosted house values and rents by about 25 percent in very small school districts and that this effect declines with district enrollment, as expected based on economies of size. Consolidation appeared to have no impact on house values for districts with more than about 1700 pupils.

In addition to looking at changes in residential integration/segregation by race, we also attempted to identify the extent to which school district mergers might impact the value of residential property. For this analysis, we collected tax digest data for Valdosta-Lowndes and for a community experiencing two school district mergers in the late 1980s and early 1990s (i.e., Troup County). Specifically, we attempted to see if the growth in the value of residential property was significantly different in the non-merged situation (i.e., Valdosta Lowndes) when compared to the merged situation (i.e., Troup). In theory, in the non-merged situation, one would expect, all else being equal, increased growth in residential values in the part of the community where the higher achieving and lower minority-population school district exists (i.e., unincorporated Lowndes County).

Similar to the findings on changes in median income presented in the previous section, the data presented in this section show that residential property increased in value more in the unincorporated area of the community than in the incorporated area. This was true both at gross level and on a per capita basis. In this section, we attempt to extend the analysis, however, so as to identify to the extent possible whether the relatively greater growth in residential property values in the unincorporated area is more substantial in a non-consolidated school district community than in a consolidated school district community.

Specifically, one might expect a higher growth rate in unincorporated Lowndes County when compared the growth rate in the unincorporated part of the community where a school district merger has taken place (i.e., unincorporated Troup County). The difficulty with testing this theory is controlling for other factors. Fortunately, we can and do, by using per capita figures, control for changes in population. Our measure is per capita gross assessed values of the improvement in residential property. (Improvements refer to the building and other features that have been added to raw land.) However, we are not able to control for other factors that may also be contributing to differential investment. One such factor may be the availability of undeveloped land. Another is the provision of new infrastructure (water and sewer lines and transportation arteries) in the unincorporated area. Each of these factors and others are likely to change the relative value and price of residing in the City versus the unincorporated part of the community. However, general observation suggests that for parents of school-age children school quality can be the determining factor in residential choice and in willingness to pay a premium. Consequently, one might expect to see the impact of this factor on relative investment in the unincorporated areas of communities that have a merged via a vis not-merged school district.

The study period for this analysis is 1990-2007. For this period we collected population data and assessed value data for the beginning and end years of the period. The assessed values data are for property improvements (R1 tax digest code). These data are presented in the tables below.

Lowndes County

	2007	2000	1990	% Change 1990-2007
Valdosta	45,830	43,724	39,806	15%
Lowndes	101,790	92,115	75,981	34%
Unincorporated	55,960	48,391	36,175	55%

Table 6: Valdosta-Lowndes Residential Property Improvement Assessed Value 1990			
Lowndes Incorporated 1990			
RESIDENTIAL			
Code	Count	40% Value per Capita	40% Value
R1	11,979	\$ 4,448.68	\$177,083,968
Lowndes unincorporated 1990			
RESIDENTIAL			
Code	Count	40% Value per Capita	40% Value
R1	6,839	\$ 2,721.96	\$98,466,942

Table 7: Valdosta-Lowndes Residential Property Improvement Assessed Value 2007			
Lowndes Incorporated 2007			
RESIDENTIAL			
Code	Count	40% Value per Capita	40% Value
R1	30,066	\$11,567.85	\$530,152,687
Lowndes unincorporated 2007			
RESIDENTIAL			
Code	Count	40% Value per Capita	40% Value
R1	46,055	\$ 8,757.14	\$490,051,026

The data in the tables above suggest that while per capita residential improvement values were substantially higher in the incorporated areas of Lowndes County, the gap has closed substantially during the 18-year study period. Table 8 below summarizes that change in the per capita investment in the unincorporated versus incorporated residential property. As these data indicate, the growth in per capita value of residential improvements has been much greater in the unincorporated area of the county than in the incorporated area.

Table 8: Percent Change in Values: Incorporated versus Unincorporated	
Percent Change in Per Capita Incorporated Values 1990-2007	260
Percent Change in Per Capita Unincorporated Values 1990-2007	321

Troup County

A parallel data analysis to that conducted for Lowndes County above was conducted for Troup County. The results of this analysis are presented in the tables below.

Table 9: Changes in Troup County Incorporated/Unincorporated Population During the Study Period			
	2007	2000	1990
Hogansville	2,932	2,774	2,976
Lagrange	27,928	25,998	25,597
Incorporated	30,859	28,772	28,573
	2007	2000	1990
Troup	63,535	58,779	55,536
Unincorporated	32,676	30,007	26,963

Table 10: Troup County Residential Property Improvement Assessed Value 1990			
Troup Unincorporated 1990			
RESIDENTIAL			
Code	Count	40% Value per Capita	40% Value
R1	6,888	\$ 3,570.39	96,268,354
Troup Incorporated 1990			
Code	Count	40% Value per Capita	40% Value
R1	9,207	\$ 3,594.43	102,703,785

Table 11: Troup County Residential Property Improvement Assessed Value 2007			
Troup Unincorporated 2007			
RESIDENTIAL			
Code	Count	40% Value per Capita	40% Value
R1	10,984	\$ 11,812.80	385,993,016
Troup Incorporated 2007			
Code	Count	40% Value per Capita	40% Value
R1	10,116	\$ 9,551.56	294,753,276

Table 12: Percent Change in Values: Incorporated versus Unincorporated	
Percent Change in Per Capita Incorporated Values 1990-2007	266
Percent Change in Per Capita Unincorporated Values 1990-2007	331

Percentage point difference between Incorporated and Unincorporated Change in Lowndes: 61

Percentage point difference between Incorporated and Unincorporated Change in Troup: 65

Conclusions: When one compares the rate of relative growth in assessed values of residential improvement properties (in the incorporated versus unincorporated areas) in Lowndes and Troup counties the differences are very small, suggesting that without further controls (e.g., on differences such as relative availability of undeveloped land, etc.), it is impossible to conclude that school district mergers impact the relative investments or values of residential improvements.

Other Consolidation Economic and Service Impact Issues

Tax Bills and Millage Rates

School District Consolidation can help build better citizen understanding of their community as it eliminates two separate millage rates and the potential for citizens and property owner to be confused by these separate rates. As the table below indicates, it is currently the case that Valdosta property owners pay a slightly lower property tax rate than do unincorporated Lowndes County property owners.

Lowndes	15.149
Valdosta City	14.980

Because consolidation would result in a single tax rate, it can help to reduce tax billing costs as there is no need to calculate and send separate bills for the two school systems.

While consolidation can help put all community members into the same position with regard to school property taxes, it also equalizes the amount of property that is “backing” each student in the two school systems. Currently, students in the Valdosta School System have more assessed property value supporting them on a per student basis than do students in the Lowndes County School System.

Consequently, if we assume that tax rates will be equalized in a merged school system, the likely impact would be that students in Valdosta would have less property tax value support per student than is currently the case, while students in Lowndes County would have more property tax value support per student than is currently the case. Similarly, property owners in Valdosta would likely experience a slight tax increase, while property owners in unincorporated Lowndes County would experience a slight tax decrease.

Special Programs

A larger school district may be able to provide more programs for special and exceptional children. This would be the case because smaller school systems often do not have the minimum number of students to justify the creation of certain programs. Also, existing

special programs should be able to achieve better economies of scale in a consolidated system.

Personnel Compensation Impact

Total compensation for school personnel can be impacted in at least three ways by a school district merger. First, there is a potential for higher total costs assuming that the faculty and staff of the school system with the lower local salary supplement will receive the higher salary of the school system with the higher local salary supplement. In order to provide a rough estimate of these costs we gathered data on the local supplement schedules for the two systems.

*VALDOSTA CITY SCHOOLS
FY 2008 SALARY SCHEDULES*

SCHEDULE B

LOCAL SUPPLEMENT SCHEDULE

**CERTIFIED EMPLOYEES
COMPLETED YEARS**

	0-1	2-3	4-9	10-14	15-19	20+
CERTIFIED EMPLOYEES	800	1,000	1,200	1,500	1,900	2,000

Number of Teachers: 660

Lowndes County Local Supplement Schedule				
Completed years	0-8	9-13	14-19	20+
Supplement	1600	1900	2200	2500

Number of Teachers: 796

Based on the salary supplement schedule for the two systems, it appears that Lowndes County provides higher supplements. While a full analysis of the additional cost of bringing the Valdosta Schools supplement up to the level of the Lowndes County supplement is beyond the scope of this study, if we were to assume that the average supplement shortfall for Valdosta teachers was \$500, the cost of equalizing the pay of the teachers in the two systems would be \$330,000 (\$500 time 660 teachers).

Secondly, there is a potential higher cost due to having to merge the employee benefit plans of the two systems. In a typical merger, there is some additional cost of providing the higher-valued benefits (among the two school systems) to the school personnel who

currently receive the lower-valued health, dental, life and disability benefits. Because the level and type of benefits received by employees will differ due to employee choices and circumstances, estimating the cost of equalizing benefits is beyond the scope of this study. However, in most cases of government consolidation the equalization of benefit is typically not a major cost. This is due to the fact that there is no obligation to equalize retirement benefits (which in the case of the school system employees are already equalized).

While the equalization of compensation and benefits will tend to raise costs, one of the expected impacts of consolidation—the elimination of duplicative department director positions—should work to lower total compensation costs. However, it should be noted that in the case of school districts there are typically not as many director-type positions as there might be, for example, in a general purpose local government. Moreover, as part of many consolidation efforts there is typically a guarantee made to current employees that they will continued to be employed at their current salary.

In sum, there are likely to be short-term costs to equalizing the personnel compensation packages of the two system, but long-term cost increases are unlikely, and there is some potential for long-term savings.

Local Control and School governance

Consolidation has reduced the number of districts, while decentralization (e.g., devolution of some governance to the individual schools) reduces the size of the school district by dividing it into smaller units.

Unity of Administration

While total school district consolidation by default creates a unified school administration, there have been some instances of successful sharing of a superintendent among two rural counties. The biggest incentive for school districts to share a superintendent is the cost savings but such an arrangement could also support greater intra-community collaboration.¹⁸

¹⁸ Shared Superintendency and Educational Reform. . By: Jess, Jim. 1991 11 pp. (ED353105)

Implementation and Legal Issues

Justice Review

The consolidation of the Lowndes County and Valdosta City School Districts also presents legal issues. The U.S. Justice Department must approve of the new government's structure to ensure that the government does not disenfranchise protected minority groups. The Justice Department's investigation ensures that the new government formation serves its stated purpose and not given for pretextual reasons.

Prior Experiences

UGA Faculty interviewed state and local officials and community leaders to identify issues among communities that have either consolidated their school systems in the past or have attempted to do so. Findings from these interviews include:

- School district consolidation can be quite difficult for some communities. For example, there have been 3 studies of school consolidation in Jackson County where the studies generally had findings that were positive for the merger option. However, these studies did not lead to a successful merger.
- There is a need to have the movement come from the school leadership. Hard for outside people or groups to lead the movement.
- The Georgia Department of Education must conduct a study that focuses primarily on the issues of facility use prior to implementing a merger.
- There are various reasons for communities choosing to implement a merger. No two communities are alike. Some school districts merged because one school system was having financial difficulties. The merged system was more financially stable.
- Overall, the loss of state QBE funding for administrators that can occur as a result of a consolidation is miniscule. When schools work out the details of reducing the number of total administrative positions, the savings tend to outweigh the costs. **Relevance for Valdosta-Lowndes:** The current study does not attempt to provide a detailed analysis of the potential savings due to the reduction in

duplicative services. However, the current study has provided estimates of the potential loss of a slight amount of state funding if the systems consolidate. Consequently, the reader should be careful not to give these loss estimates more weight than they deserve.

- Sometimes mergers tend to take a good bit of time to really succeed as a unified system. Pre-existing rivalry-- even sports rivalry-- tends to damage the effectiveness of the new system. This appeared to be the case in the Sumter and Americus consolidation: it took a long time to really merge.
- Having a large differential in size of the systems being merged tends to make it go more smoothly.
- As part of the merger process the GDOE conducts a school “facility need” calculation for the new merged system. The resulting needs assessment can be quite different than for the needs assessment that the GDOE might produce for the individual systems. Consequently, the probability for the assessment to conclude, for example, that the new merged system will need to create a new school could change (either up or down) from the assessment of a need for a new school provided to the two pre-existing school systems. **Relevance for Valdosta-Lowndes:** Lowndes County already has a small new high school planned. Such a plan might be changed.

Perceptions of the Economic Development Community

This section of the report is designed to answer the question of whether leaders of economic and community development view particular school system organization options as more or less attractiveness and more or less beneficial to development.

Interview/Survey Design

The development of a survey designed to assess underlying perceptions of a topic that is as potentially controversial as school organization presents certain challenges. No survey is entirely without some wording that can potentially skew the responses of interviewees.. The task is to minimize these features. In this survey, we created a hypothetical scenario of Community A and Community B where "all else was equal"

with the exception of the nature of the school governance. The use of hypothetical communities was designed to help eliminate bias that might exist due to factors other than school governance. For example, if we had used Valdosta and Lowndes school systems as the example for Community B and Dougherty County as the example for Community A, respondents' unrelated impressions about these communities might impact their answer. Moreover, such specificity would have been counterproductive in a survey designed primarily for persons who do not live in the Valdosta-Lowndes community. As researchers our task was to minimize the unusual or idiosyncratic aspects of a specific case that could bias responses. This is particularly the case for a survey that is designed to identify the value of a general policy option. Our creation of the hypothetical Community A and Community B was designed specifically to try to address just this source of bias. That is, in answering a policy question where there is the potential for extraneous fear (e.g., consolidation will result in a merger of my alma mater with that of a cross-town rival) to bias the survey, it is the job of the researcher to try to eliminate the potential for such fears to skew the responses.

We also did not provide elaborate descriptions of the governance options or their potential advantages and disadvantages. To do so would have risked our leaving out some advantages or disadvantages or having some advantages or disadvantages appear to be stronger than others. For example, a description of the importance of community cooperation could have biased the responses toward the unified school district, while a description praising the benefits of competition would have biased responses in the other direction.

It should be noted that survey does not attempt to identify opinions on **all** of the dimensions on which there might be differences in the impacts of the two school-system governance options. The purpose of the survey was to focus on the dimensions that are most closely aligned with the interest of the business community (e.g., coordination with schools, school-business partnership, etc.) . It could be the case that on these dimensions the "common sense" responses would tend to favor a unified school district. However, this finding that one's perception of what is "obviously" the correct response actually is the common response is not unusual in survey research. We recognize that in this regard, every survey that does not attempt to poll on every dimension of an issue can be considered "biased." Obviously, the community might benefit from multiple groups conducting surveys that focus on the various dimensions of the issue that seem most important to them. The result in this regard might be a more thorough airing of the issue, but for this Chamber-sponsored study, the focus is on the perceptions that relate school system organization and economic development.

We believe that the survey findings provide a fair view of the opinions of the respondents on the objective value of school district consolidation--and a view that is much fairer than one that would have been produced were we to have asked about a specific consolidation where issues extraneous to nature of the policy decision could impact the results.

Interview Findings Introduction

This report summarizes the findings of three sets of interviews: 1) interviews with business site location consultants; 2) interviews with leaders in communities that have experienced a consolidation in the last 20 years; and 3) business leaders in peer communities to Valdosta-Lowndes.

All of the interview respondents were asked to compare two hypothetical school districts (see Community A and B below) and to identify which community—all else being equal—would have an advantage with regard to some dimension of school and community development.

Community A	Community B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple school systems • Multiple superintendents • Multiple finance, personnel, facilities, and transportation service units (i.e., each school system will have one set of these units) • Multiple school boards • Multiple sets of policies, procedures, and programs • Some school systems made up almost entirely of minority students, while others are almost entirely white. • Some school systems will have high performance levels and others low performance levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One unified school system • One superintendent • One set of finance, personnel, facilities, and transportation service units in the school system • One school board • One sets of policies, procedures, and programs • An integrated student body that reflects the demographics of the community. • There is one performance level for the entire school system.

Specific dimensions that respondents were asked to assess included:

Businesses forming school-business partnerships
Businesses being able to influence school curricula and policy
Businesses having capacity to manage the scheduling of employees who are parents of school-age children
Business employees ability to comprehend, influence, and participate in school system policies, procedures, and programs
The community’s ability to address community needs that are related to school operations
The community’s ability to manage issues of diversity and

human relations
The community's ability to limit distortions in the housing market
Educational leaders' ability to streamline the business operations (e.g., finance, personnel, transportation, etc.) of the school systems
The community's ability to have lower school property taxes (all else being equal).
The community's ability to maintain an image of educational quality.
The community's ability to cultivate the skilled workforce of the future
The community's ability to avoid divisions based on social, racial and economic characteristics.
The community's ability to provide a wide array of school programs and services
The community's ability to conduct a comprehensive educational improvement effort

In addition to these dimensions, respondents were also asked to indicate which community they would choose to locate their new or expanded business.

Business site locator and peer community respondents were also asked to assess on a scale of 1 to 5 how important a number of different community amenity values were to economic development, with a "unified school district" being one of these values.

	Importance 1= not important at all.... 5 = very important (Circle one)
FACTOR	
City-County collaboration	1 2 3 4 5
A unified school district through which the quality of education can be identified	1 2 3 4 5

....

Respondents in communities where a school district consolidation had taken place in the last 20 years were asked a number of more open-ended questions regarding different potential advantages and disadvantages that the community might have experienced with regard to the pre- and post-merger school system(s) environment.

Business Site Locators

Methodology

CVIOG faculty and staff identified business site locators from independent searches, calls to industry and development associations, and from available databases from Southern development associations (e.g., the North Alabama Industrial Development Association). We compiled a list of 65 business site locators. CVIOG faculty and staff called every business site locator at least once and most were called a number of times until a respondent was either made available or refused to participate in the survey. Seventeen site locator consultants completed the survey. The survey can be found in Appendix A. Ten respondents either believed that they could not assist in the study or were uninterested.

Findings

Section I

The interviews conducted with business site locators indicated that a consolidated school district is preferred to multiple school districts by business site locators on the vast majority of the dimensions assessed. When asked, these individuals consistently stated that uniformity and eliminating redundancy were the reasons they preferred a consolidated school district. With a single school district, respondents indicated that businesses would have an easily identifiable contact in the community and school systems would not have to compete for business' attention.

Only one respondent (5.9%) stated that he would prefer to locate his business in an area with multiple school districts. This respondent believed that multiple school districts will be better able to cater to business needs. Additionally, he asserted that parents can be more involved in smaller districts.

Two of the seventeen respondents (11.8%) reported that school district organization would not make a difference in their location decisions. These respondents selected the consolidated district as having an advantage on nearly all of their answers, but nevertheless indicated that school district organization would not make a difference for their business site location decision. Their answers were consistent with the score of 3 that each gave to the importance of having a unified school district in Section II.

Eleven of the seventeen respondents (64.7%) believed that business employees who are parents of school-age children will be better able or just as likely to comprehend, influence, and participate in school system policies, procedures, and programs under multiple school districts. However, the response of the six minority-opinion respondents (35.3%) indicated that some business site locators recognized that larger school districts could potentially reduce community engagement. Nevertheless, most of the respondents who had a minority opinion on this issue nevertheless chose the consolidated district over multiple school districts. This finding is somewhat conflicting with a finding in Section

II because the site locators ranked “strength of civic involvement and community engagement” fourth on a list of sixteen factors.

The interviewees were also less confident that consolidated school districts would be better able to address community needs with regard to social services, the cultivation of the skilled workforce of the future, or the ability to minimize divisions based upon racial and economic characteristics. Additionally, there was no consensus among the business site locator respondents that a consolidated school district will experience fewer distortions in the housing market with all things being equal.

Business Site Locators Averages N=17				
Dimension	Preferred A	Preferred B	No difference	Other (N/A, Not Sure, Depends)
Businesses forming school-business partnerships	17.6	70.6	11.8	0.0
Businesses being able to influence school curricula and policy	11.8	82.4	5.9	0.0
Businesses having capacity to manage the scheduling of employees who are parents of school-age children	11.8	70.6	17.6	0.0
Business employees ability to comprehend, influence, and participate in school system policies, procedures, and programs	41.2	35.3	23.5	0.0
The community’s ability to address community needs that are related to school operations	17.6	70.6	5.9	5.9
The community’s ability to manage issues of diversity and human relations	5.9	70.6	17.6	5.9
The community’s ability to limit	11.8	70.6	17.6	0.0

Impacts of Single versus Multiple School Systems

distortions in the housing market				
Educational leaders' ability to streamline the business operations (e.g., finance, personnel, transportation, etc.) of the school systems	11.8	82.4	0.0	5.9
The community's ability to have lower school property taxes (all else being equal)	5.9	76.5	11.8	5.9
The community's ability to maintain an image of educational quality	11.8	82.4	0.0	5.9
The community's ability to cultivate the skilled workforce of the future	23.5	41.2	29.4	5.9
The community's ability to avoid divisions based on social, racial and economic characteristics	17.6	76.5	5.9	0.0
The community's ability to provide a wide array of school programs and services	11.8	88.2	0.0	0.0
The community's ability to conduct a comprehensive educational improvement effort	5.9	82.4	0.0	11.8
Business site locators preference for school system organization	5.9	76.5	11.8	5.9

Section II

The means for quality of life factors for business site locators are located in Appendix B. Having business and industrial training institutions in the community was unquestionably the highest-rated quality of life factor. Every respondent, except for two, gave the factor a perfect score of 5. Following training institutions were the factors of ability to complete permits online and low crime rate, respectively. The importance of city-county collaboration and civic involvement were tied for third place. The high ranking for city-county collaboration was consistent with the strong preference for consolidated school districts. The presence of a unified school district through which the quality of education could be identified was tied with an attractive local government website and natural resources for fourth place. Public transportation and the quality of public buildings were the lowest rated factors that influence business site locations. While business site locators attributed high importance to city-county collaboration, the low ranking of a unified school district indicated that they value city-county collaboration for reasons other than school organization.

Consolidated School Districts

Methodology

Our study targeted five consolidated school districts in Georgia: Americus-Sumter County, Fitzgerald-Ben Hill County, Hogansville-LaGrange/Troup County, Thomaston-Upson County, and Waycross-Ware County. Our search began with contacting the local chambers of commerce and boards of education. We asked individuals at these organizations to provide us with the contact information of community members that were in the community before the consolidation. This method produced a total of 36 contacts with 25 individual contacts. We called every contact at least once and called some contacts several times. We were able to complete interviews with over half (13) of our individual contacts. Only four community contacts were unable to provide interviews. Of these individuals, three claimed that they were not in the community long enough to assist with the study.

Findings

The interviews with the consolidated school districts similarly indicated a preference for a consolidated school district. Every individual with whom we spoke, except one, stated that they would not go back to multiple school districts. The advantages of having a consolidated school district most often mentioned included:

- Reduced duplication of services
- Increased uniformity in curriculum and facilities.

- Increased course offerings.

The interviewees also believe that a consolidated school system would be better for businesses because they would have one primary contact in the community which would facilitate communication and prevent unproductive competition for resources and attention from businesses that have limited amounts of both. Consolidated school systems were also recognized as being a cost saver for businesses when compared to having multiple school districts. As some respondents pointed out, in a unified school system community businesses only have to purchase advertising (e.g., in support of educational leaflet, booklets, etc.) from one school district.

Much less frequently, respondents mentioned a disadvantage of consolidation such as:

- Loss of individual attention (due to district or school being too large)
- Loss of a school-district community identity.

Also, it was suggested by a few respondents that consolidation at the district level may lead to individual school consolidation. While it was suggested that school level consolidation may be of some worth in cases where the individual schools are quite small, it can also result in schools that are too large for effective operation and management. In the case of the Ware County School System, the high schools from Waycross City School District and Ware County School System were merged into one new facility. Two of the respondents from that community stated that this new high school was too large. Another respondent from the Thomaston-Upson School System also suggested that the merger of the districts had resulted in school mergers that were not entirely desirable.

Loss of community identity came in the form of changes in athletics programs and adjusting frame of references. Interviewees in South Georgia, which has strong football programs, indicated that combining football programs was one of the hardest parts of consolidation. Residents that have been established in a community often have a hard time eliminating the “us vs. them” mentality. Community contacts indicated that it was older individuals, rather than children, that had the most problems adjusting to change. Rather than consider themselves members of Hogansville, residents of consolidated districts must consider themselves to be members of Troup County. Respondents suggested that “some people may be reluctant to consider the big picture because they are very comfortable with their current arrangement.”

One respondent, who was a superintendent in one of the studied districts during consolidation, believes that it takes about 3-5 years for people to adjust to these changes.

At least one respondent reported that minorities located in the city perceived the consolidation as leading to a loss of political power. Due to the potential demographic changes resulting from the proposed school consolidation (e.g., a merging of an African American majority district with a white majority district), one superintendent was contacted by the Department of Justice. He then had to create a plan which ensured that schools were within 10% of the racial makeup of the community.

In addition to answering prepared questions, interviewees also eagerly provided advice for a Valdosta-Lowndes County school consolidation. First, it was suggested that Valdosta residents vote to remove their city charter and not allow Lowndes County to vote on whether they will absorb the Valdosta school system into Lowndes County. Lowndes County is required to take Valdosta in after its charter is removed. This method was used in both the Waycross-Ware consolidation and Hogansville-LaGrange-Troup consolidation. Second, interviewees suggested that district lines be redrawn like pieces of pie to include members from both the city and the county. This will force all elected officials to address the needs of both groups. Third, interviewees believed that the community should implement all changes at one time. The Americus City School System and Sumter County School System consolidated high schools years after the district consolidation. A respondent familiar with that system thought that it would have been better to introduce these changes during rough times than to implement it after issues were starting to smooth out. She also believed that whatever athletic program consolidation is going to occur should be implemented immediately upon consolidation as well. Lastly, respondents stressed the importance of focusing on the children. Older members of the community, including administrators, will likely have problems with any changes to school organization. Nevertheless, these individuals will not be in the community forever. As one respondent indicated, “Make sure you do the right thing: consolidate.”

Business Leaders in Peer Communities

Methodology

We identified Athens, LaGrange, Rome, Dalton, Warner Robbins, and Albany as peer communities of Valdosta due to size and infrastructure. Contacts for peer communities were gathered primarily from the local chamber of commerce or economic development authority. We were also able to procure contacts from the largest employers in the targeted areas from the Department of Labor as well as from websites which provided information on business organizations, such as the Athens Downtown Development Authority. Finally, for some communities we consulted the online edition of the local newspaper to identify a list of top employers in the community.

We were able to conduct 18 interviews from a list of 135 business contacts. We found that it was difficult to speak to the appropriate authority and frequently left messages only to have these messages go unreturned. While most community business contacts did not return our calls, it does not follow that they were uninterested in our study. Only eight respondents refused or stated that they were unable to assist with the study.

Findings

Section I

While members of peer communities preferred consolidated school districts over multiple school districts on the majority of the dimensions assessed, they selected multiple school districts over a consolidated district in one instance. Forty-four percent (44.4%) of respondents replied that multiple school districts would provide a wider array of school programs and services than a consolidated school district. Only 33.3% of respondents believed that a consolidated school district would provide a wider array of programs and services.

Some peer community respondents did, however, indicate that school district composition would not matter in some instances. Seven interviewees (38.9%) believed that parental influence and participation in the school system would be unaffected by the type of school system. Additionally nine respondents (50%) believed that school system organization would not affect or distort the housing market. Business leaders in peer communities also were not convinced that consolidated school systems would be likely to lower property taxes or manage issues of diversity and human relations.

Most respondents selected the unified school system option as preferable in some measure because they placed a value on uniformity. They suggested that small differences between the school districts, such as dress code and hours of operation, can turn into big problems. They also believe that multiple school systems can lead to an imbalance in the community, and that a unified school district would afford greater economies of scale.

One respondent, from the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce, provided a unique perspective. He believed that it's not school structure, but school policy that influences business site location decisions. He asserted that when businesses are looking at a community, they care about existing figures; they would rather move into an area with a well-performing multiple-district system, than a poor-performing consolidated system. He also asserted that businesses are not looking to move into communities that are plagued with tension. Since school consolidation is often a controversial issue, a consolidated district may actually deter businesses from moving into a community during the consolidation process.

One respondent who favored the consolidated district nevertheless raises a novel argument against consolidation. He asserted that businesses benefit from having a consolidated school district because there is less rivalry and increased likelihood for success. However, he stated that if there is a bad public consolidated school system, businesses will then be forced to turn to the private sector. If there were multiple public school districts, businesses could shift their business to the other public school system.

Only four peer community respondents (22.2%) chose multiple school districts over a consolidated district: These respondents were all from the banking industry. One cited

their desire to cater to their large Hispanic community as a reason for preferring multiple school systems, while another raised concerns about the quality of education in a consolidated school system.

Community Contacts Averages				
N=18				
Dimension	Preferred A	Preferred B	No difference	Other (N/A, Not Sure, Depends)
Businesses forming school-business partnerships	11.1	66.7	22.2	0.0
Businesses being able to influence school curricula and policy	11.1	77.8	11.1	0.0
Businesses having capacity to manage the scheduling of employees who are parents of school-age children	0.0	77.8	22.2	0.0
Business employees ability to comprehend, influence, and participate in school system policies, procedures, and programs	11.1	50.0	38.9	0.0
The community's ability to address community needs that are related to school operations	16.7	72.2	11.1	0.0
The community's ability to manage issues of diversity and human relations	22.2	55.6	22.2	0.0
The community's ability to limit distortions in the housing market	11.1	38.9	50.0	0.0

Impacts of Single versus Multiple School Systems

Educational leaders' ability to streamline the business operations (e.g., finance, personnel, transportation, etc.) of the school systems	11.1	88.9	0.0	0.0
The community's ability to have lower school property taxes (all else being equal)	22.2	55.6	22.2	0.0
The community's ability to maintain an image of educational quality	16.7	61.1	22.2	0.0
The community's ability to cultivate the skilled workforce of the future	16.7	77.8	5.6	0.0
The community's ability to avoid divisions based on social, racial and economic characteristics	16.7	66.7	16.7	0.0
The community's ability to provide a wide array of school programs and services	44.4	33.3	22.2	0.0
The community's ability to conduct a comprehensive educational improvement effort	5.6	77.8	11.1	5.6
Community Contacts preference for school system organization	22.2	44.4	16.7	16.7

Section II

The means for quality of life factors for business leaders in peer communities are located in Appendix C. Members of peer communities and business site locators had similar preferences regarding the importance of quality of life factors. The most important factors for members of peer communities were a low crime rate and the presence of business and industrial training institutions in the community. Like business site locators, city-county collaboration and civic and community engagement were highly ranked. However, members of peer communities regarded a clean environment record as significant, while it was moderately important for business site locators.

The two lowest factors were an attractive, well-organized local government website and quality of public buildings, respectively. The availability of public transportation and the presence of a government-business council were tied for the third lowest ranked factors. It is noteworthy that the ability to complete business-related applications, permits, and licenses online immediately followed. This factor was second for business site locators.

Statistical Analysis

We ran an ANOVA test to demonstrate whether there was a difference between the means of the business site locators and those of the community leaders located in peer communities. We found that there are statistically significant differences between the means even with a 99% confidence level ($\alpha=.01$). The table with the findings is included in Appendix D.

The largest variance between the two groups comes from their means on the importance of the quality of public transportation. Recall that the quality of public transportation was the lowest ranked factor for business site locators. While this factor was still ranked relatively low for businesses in peer communities, the variance between these two groups was large.

The second largest variance came from the ability to complete business licenses and applications on an online government website. The business site locators regarded this factor as their second highest, but the members of peer communities ranked this factor relatively poorly.

The third largest variance is the unified school district factor. This factor was tied for third lowest amongst business site locators, but above average for businesses located in peer communities. These differences in responses indicate the relative weight that these groups might give to the importance of school consolidation. That is, school consolidation is more likely to be seen as important by local businesses that are considering expansion than by businesses that are employing business site location consultants to identify a host community for their new facilities and operations. However, given that the process for new business site location involves identification of small differences between highly competitive communities, even small factors cannot be dismissed as unimportant.

Conclusion

In conclusion all three groups—business site locators, community members in districts that have already consolidated, and business leaders in peer communities—favored consolidated school districts over multiple school districts. These individuals believed that consolidated school districts provide uniformity, a reduction in redundancy, and clearer communication. Consolidation may, however, result in fewer programs and services or declined parental involvement in or comprehension of school programs, policies, and procedures.

While they believed that the benefits outweigh the costs, members of communities that have already consolidated asserted that the process is difficult. Long-time residents can be expected to resist the changes to their community. These individuals often think in terms of the just the city or the county. These feelings are intensified when there are racial differences between the city and county or when both districts have strong athletic programs.

Overall Averages N=35				
Dimension	Preferred A	Preferred B	No difference	Other (N/A, Not Sure, Depends)
Businesses forming school-business partnerships	14.3	68.6	17.1	0.0
Businesses being able to influence school curricula and policy	11.4	80.0	8.6	0.0
Businesses having capacity to manage the scheduling of employees who are parents of school-age children	5.7	74.3	20.0	0.0
Business employees ability to comprehend, influence, and participate in school system policies, procedures, and programs	25.7	42.9	31.4	0.0

Impacts of Single versus Multiple School Systems

The community's ability to address community needs that are related to school operations	17.1	71.4	8.6	2.9
The community's ability to manage issues of diversity and human relations	14.3	62.9	20.0	2.9
The community's ability to limit distortions in the housing market	11.4	54.3	34.3	0.0
Educational leaders' ability to streamline the business operations (e.g., finance, personnel, transportation, etc.) of the school systems	11.4	85.7	0.0	2.9
The community's ability to have lower school property taxes (all else being equal)	14.3	65.7	17.1	2.9
The community's ability to maintain an image of educational quality	14.3	71.4	11.4	2.9
The community's ability to cultivate the skilled workforce of the future	20.0	60.0	17.1	2.9
The community's ability to avoid divisions based on social, racial and economic characteristics	17.1	71.4	11.4	0.0
The community's ability to provide a wide array of school programs and services	28.6	60.0	11.4	0.0

The community's ability to conduct a comprehensive educational improvement effort	5.7	80.0	5.7	8.6
Overall preference for school system organization	14.3	60.0	14.3	11.4

Survey of Chamber Membership

Using the same survey/interview questions that CVIOG faculty developed for interviews with business consultants, peer community leaders, and leaders in communities where school systems have been consolidated in the last 15 years, the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber surveyed its membership using web survey technology. The web survey design did not provide for a “not applicable” or “no difference” response, but it did allow respondents to skip questions. The technology employed provided protections against multiple survey responses from individual computers, but did not attempt to authenticate each respondent.

While 345 Chamber members participated in the survey, for each question a small number (e.g., from 9-17) of respondents skipped the question. Comments on the survey indicated that some respondents used this option to indicate that they thought there was no difference between the Community A and Community B options on that dimension of school-business-community performance or relationship.

The results of the Chamber membership survey were very similar to the responses made by the other groups of respondents. That is, on each dimension from 77 to 83 percent of respondents indicated that the community with the unified school district was preferred. On the summary or “bottom line” question, “In which community would you prefer to locate your business?” 81 percent of the respondents chose the community with the unified school system organization.

Chamber respondents were encouraged to provide comments on the school organization issue, and 213 did so. As with the forced-choice part of the survey, the majority of comments indicating a preference appeared to prefer the single school district model.

In these comments:

Chamber respondents emphasized the following as attributes on which they felt that a unified school system would provide superior benefits:

- Elimination of duplication and related costs
- Everyone being on the “same page,” the same team, with the same schedule, a level playing field and a single focus, and a resultant reduction in discord.
- Building a community that is not seen as racially segregated
- Superior course offerings
- Less distortion in the choices as to where to live (due to differences in school quality) and whether to own a home (i.e., renting may be preferred as a way to avoid the risk of living in an area served by an inferior school)
- Superior growth in the long term.
- Equalized curriculum
- A reduction in the “decay of the city” and stemming of urban sprawl
- A reduction in bussing expenses
- A lessening of segregation of affluent and poor; lower income students would benefit from association with affluent peers.
- A lowering in the cost of school bonds
- A reduction in unhealthy competition between the systems
- A reduction in the stigma that accompanies enrollment in the system seen as being of lower quality

Chamber respondents emphasized the following as attributes on which they felt that a non-unified school system would provide superior benefits:

- A more reasonable size
- More small area control of education. Parents and educators can have more voice.
- Healthy competition and choice.
- Less “red tape”
- Flexibility in scheduling
- The benefit to businesses of having “some” business or customers on the days when one system is out and the other is still in session.
- Smaller transportation zones and less time spent by children on busses.
- Provision of a fairer level of support to the schools in the city

Some respondents felt like the effort to consolidate the school systems was distracting the community from tackling larger problems (e.g., the home environment and more effective schools).

One respondent indicated that he or she answered the questions from a business perspective, but would have provided different answers if he or she had responded from a parental perspective.

One respondent indicated that they would like to combine the administrative advantages of a single school system with greater choice (e.g., charter schools and school vouchers) within that system.

One respondent indicated that with new technologies, school systems could be effectively consolidated at a regional level while allowing for more choice through online learning.

Some respondents (10, < 5% of respondents) indicated that they thought the survey was biased. However, it was unclear in most cases what the respondent thought was the source of the bias. In cases where a source was indicated, it was noted that 1) the survey did not ask about dimensions on which the multiple school systems might have advantages, and 2) where the word “unified” was used to describe Community B, the word “one” or “single” should have been substituted as “unified” has positive connotations. At the same time, however, other respondents indicated that the advantage on some dimensions went to the unified system, while on other dimensions the advantage went to the multiple district system.

Estimating Economic Impact based on the Best Available Research

In order to attempt to identify the potential economic impact of school district consolidation, we reviewed the literature on the relationship between school structure and economic performance. Unfortunately, we were not able to find any studies that specifically identified or estimated the contribution that school system structure might make to economic performance. While there does appear to be some relationship between school system structure and student achievement, the fact that most empirical studies find little or no relationship between achievement test scores and later labor market success makes it difficult to extrapolate meaningful economic impacts from these findings. Similarly, while there does appear to be some relationship between school system structure and school system costs, given the size of the Valdosta-Lowndes systems and the uncertainty regarding the expected revenue/cost structure for a new merged school system, extrapolating meaningful economic impacts from this relationship is also not likely to be feasible.

The study that comes closest to identifying the direction (if not an estimated amount of) economic impact of school district consolidation on economic performance is David Rusk's study of *Cities Without Suburbs*. In this study, Rusk finds a strong relationship between what he calls cities without suburbs or central cities that account for a large percentage of their metropolitan area and growth in manufacturing and non-manufacturing jobs and growth in per capita income and median family income. He found that these type of cities also are less segregated by race and income and generally are more economically dynamic. Rusk describes cities without suburbs as central cities **and** unified school systems that are elastic in the sense that they are able to grow outward as the population grows outward. Cities without suburbs are ones that contain what in other cases would be unincorporated suburbs or small towns and villages. Cities without suburbs are able to be elastic because they (and by extension school systems) take action to grow with the population growth in the area either through annexation or consolidation. While the Rusk study is not able to estimate the individual contributions that various "city without suburb" factors (e.g., unified planning and zoning, unified business recruitment strategies, improved linkages between school systems and local businesses, improved spatial matching of labor and labor demand, etc.) make to the economic growth that these cities experience, Rusk hypothesizes that a more unified city and school district that contains a large proportion of the metropolitan economic area is better positioned to make use of the region's available resources, better able to resist pleas on the part of special interests (e.g., townships that act to exclude certain types of growth or residents) that can hamper economic growth, and better able to prevent the creation of racial and economic ghettos that can doom an entire metropolitan area to experience only stagnant economic conditions.

While we were unable to find studies that focused specifically on the relationship between school structure and economic performance, we were able to identify one study that looked at the relationship between school racial integration and economic performance (or earnings) on the part of students who attend schools with various

demographics. In this regard, the work by Boozer, Krueger, and Wolkon (1992) presents the most relevant findings. These researchers created a number of regression models that related individual and school characteristics to changes in earnings. The individuals sampled were black Americans age 25 to 65 years old who had at least 10 years of schooling. The individuals provided information about their wages, their gender, their age, the state where they grew up, and their current region of residence. They were also asked whether they attended a school in which students were: all blacks, mostly blacks, about half blacks, mostly whites, or almost all whites. The researchers converted this to a proportion by assuming values of 1, .75, .5, .25 and .1 respectively.

The inclusion of the age, gender, state of origin, and region of current residence variables in the model indicates that the findings will consider these factors as explaining their share of the variation in earnings among the study subjects. After controlling for these factors, findings of the study suggest that for each unit change in the proportion of blacks in high school that there was between 8.6 and 11.5 percent difference in the earning of the study subjects. The finding of the model that identified an 11.5 percent difference in the earning of the study subjects was significant at the 10 percent level. However, this model (an OLS or ordinary least squares model) did not control for the potential that middle class black families may be more likely to live in the suburbs and send their children to integrated schools. The findings of the model that did attempt to control for this possibility (a two stage least squares model) were not significant. However, the coefficient for the school segregation variable on wages “ had roughly the same magnitude and sign as in the OLS model.”

The study authors were careful to qualify their findings. Some of these qualifications include the potential for the results to be due to non-random selection factors, non-school related racial isolation, lower school resources in predominately black schools or some combination of these factors.

Relevance for Valdosta-Lowndes: If we assume that the changing of the school district organization would lead to a single unit change in the proportion of blacks in Valdosta high school (i.e., from .75 to .5), and if we assume that as a result of this change, the African-American youth with at least 10 years of schooling who attend Valdosta High go on to earn approximately 10% more than they otherwise would have earned due to attending a more segregated school, we can estimate the potential economic benefit for African American households and for the community as a whole.

Step 1: Identify the proportion of African American households that would be impacted.

- A. Identify the size of the 10th grade cohort in the Valdosta School System.
- B. Calculate the proportion of all potential 10th grade students in the County that the Valdosta 10th grade cohort represents. To do this we first, assume that due to compulsory education that the 9th grade cohort in the previous year represents the size of the potential 10th grade cohort.

Estimate of Potential 10th Grade Cohort	
Valdosta 2005 9th Grade Cohort	650
Lowndes 2005 9th Grade Cohort	825
Total Potential 10th Grade Cohort	1475

Valdosta 10th Grade Cohort 2006	514
Percent of Total Potential 10th Grade Cohort Represented by Valdosta 10th Grade Cohort	35.1%

2. Assume that the “Percent of Total Potential 10th Grade Cohort Represented by Valdosta 10th Grade Cohort” also represents the percent of African American households whose earning would be impacted by the reduction in school segregation, and then calculate how many households would be impacted.

Number of Black Households¹⁹	20,293
Percent of Households Impacted	35.1%
Estimate of Households Impacted	7115

3. Identify the median household income for black households in Valdosta and estimate the value of a 10% increase in income for an individual household.

Median Household Income for Blacks Alone 1999	20876
10% of Median Household Income	\$ 2,088

¹⁹ Source: 2000 Census.

4. Estimate the total impact by multiplying the number of households impacted by the estimated impact per household.

Estimate of Households Impacted	7115
10% of Median Household Income	\$ 2,088
Estimate of Annual Economic Wage Benefit	\$ 14,853,291

5. Because the Boozer, Krueger, and Wolkon model also indicates that there is a negative effect on earning of African Americans attending schools where the proportion of African American students increases, and because this proportion will increase in the Lowndes County schools under the assumed scenario, this impact must also be accounted for.²⁰

Estimated black households impacted	2,050
11.5% of median household income	-\$2,401
Estimated annual economic black income change	-\$4,922,050

Net estimated annual economic black income change	\$9,931,241
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6. The estimate of the annual economic wage benefit calculated above assumes that all of the cohorts of graduates of the new school system who are the primary household earners have entered the workforce so that they represent 35.1% of black households in the community. However, in order for this to occur, it would require numerous sets of graduates so as to fully populate the workforce. If we assume that this will take 20 years to occur, the level of net benefit at Year 1 of the hypothesized policy impact (which is 10 years from the time of the policy change, would only be one-twentieth or 5% of the estimate or \$496,562. In each succeeding year up to the hypothesized full-impact year the estimated impact would grow by this amount.

²⁰ This estimate is based on work by Dr. Cynthia Tori.

Conclusion

While the economic wage benefit estimated above is one that is believed to accrue primarily to African American households,²¹ economic benefits that are experienced by one group in the community will also work to expand the general economy in the community through the impact of economic multipliers. While estimating the economic multiplier effect of this benefit is beyond the scope of this study, it is generally the case that regional economic multipliers for income will range from 1.3 to 3. Regional economic multipliers will vary considerably given the scope of the “region.” Typically, as the region to be considered becomes larger, there is less leakage (to the area outside the region) and therefore a greater impact.

Notes and Qualifications

We recognize that the estimate of earnings impacts on African American households in Valdosta is far from precise. In certain respects we believe that the estimate is likely to be conservative or understated in that we use median income as the basis for the estimate. Generally, the median income tends to be smaller than the average income because of the skewed nature of the income distribution in the United States (i.e., a small percentage of households account for a disproportionate share of household income). On the other hand, the estimated impact may be overstated in that we do not consider the potential for a merger to result in black students who are currently in the Lowndes County system potentially being negatively impacted by the increase in the proportion of black students in the school population. However, because estimates of quasi-linear models are most reasonable in the area closest to the mean value of the data, and less so the further from that one extrapolates, we believe that the latter (potentially negative) impact could be minor.

Finally, while the estimated impact is one that would be annual and would therefore be substantially larger over time, we recognize that this level of impact would not likely occur until a number of years in the future (e.g., 10 year or more) since the study is based on earning of individuals who are at least 10 years beyond the 10th grade.

Graduation Rates and Earnings

While the Boozer, Krueger, and Wolkon study attempted to directly estimate the effects of student body diversity on the earnings of African Americans, Dr. Cynthia Tori of Valdosta State University has attempted to identify how student body diversity in Georgia high schools impacts graduation rates and, in turn, how these changes in graduation rates might impact future earnings of students in the Valdosta-Lowndes community. Dr. Tori used data gathered from the 2006-2007 K-12 Report Card for the State of Georgia. Data was collected for all high schools having at least 300 students

²¹ We could not find any studies that estimated benefits to the community as a whole.

graduate during the 2006-2007 year. The study used these data to attempt to explain the contributions of a set of independent variables (i.e., percent of school population black, percent of school population Hispanic, percent of school population white, percent of the school population economically disadvantaged, the percent of the student population classified as disabled, the schools' Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and the county unemployment rate) on the overall graduation rate, black graduation rate, and white graduation rate. In developing the model Dr. Tori discovered that the variables other than economically disadvantaged, percentage non-white enrollment, and AYP either did not significantly explain graduation rates or were highly correlated with the variables used.

Dr. Tori's regression model results suggest:

- An increase of the percent of economically disadvantaged students has a significantly negative impact on overall graduation rates and graduation rates for blacks and whites.
- A school meeting Adequate Yearly Progress significantly increases overall graduation rates and graduation rates for blacks.
- An increase of the percent of non-white enrollment has a significantly positive impact on overall graduation rates and graduation rates for blacks.

Using the parameters identified in this model, and based on the assumption that a consolidated Valdosta-Lowndes school system would reassign students to achieve racial balance, households do not relocate, and the AYP status of the schools does not change, Dr. Tori estimates a net effect of a 0.4 percentage point increase of graduation rates for the consolidated school system or nineteen additional high school graduates each year. This effect translates into an expected direct effect to annual income of an additional \$125,495. Including the expected additional indirect effect of \$62,748, the expected annual total economic impact is \$188,243. Over 10 years, this impact would be estimated at approximately \$1.9 million.

Due Diligence

In order to ensure greater reliability of the findings, the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber: 1) commissioned Dr. Cynthia Tori to review the findings of the CVIOG estimation of direct effects of student diversity on earnings and 2) commissioned CVIOG faculty to review Dr. Tori's finding related to the effects of student diversity on earnings via the impact on student graduation rates. After discussions and minor revisions in methods and language, the two groups of researchers essentially concur with each others' findings.

Summary of Likely Consolidation Impacts on Financial Status of the Resulting Unified System

Long-range educational outcomes are notoriously difficult to change. School systems are engaged in 12 year production cycles that include multitudes of variables that can impact long-term outcomes. Many of the most effective educational programs as measured by short-term school performance indicators are found to have negligible impacts in terms of long-range effects on measures such as graduation rates or future earnings. This does not mean that these programs are not beneficial; rather, it means that there are too many other factors that contribute to long-range outcomes that cannot be controlled for in social science studies. As a result, the multitude of “chance” factors will tend to overwhelm the “signal” that any one program or policy change will have dramatic impacts. This is particularly the case because social scientists tend to adhere to a very high standard of proof (e.g., a 95 or 99 percent probability that the impact is not due to chance). Because social science is rarely able to prove that any one program or policy change will result in a dramatic improvement in long-term outcomes, policy makers who are interested in changing these outcomes are forced to rely on evidence that is not as clear-cut as social scientists demand of themselves. In these cases, policy makers will need to use their judgment as to the preponderance of the evidence or the tendency in the findings of several studies. This “preponderance” or “tendency” may only suggest an incremental change or impact; however, in the area of long-term educational outcomes, “incrementalism” has for the most part been the only path to improvement available to policy makers. With regard to the issue of the likely impacts of a school district consolidation that is accompanied by increased socio-economic diversity at the school level, the data suggest that policy makers desiring to see a positive economic impact would give serious consideration to the consolidation option.

Likelihood of improved funding through the state’s QBE funding formula. ²²	-
Likelihood of lowered personnel costs due to equalization of local salary supplement (short-run)	-
Likelihood of lowered personnel costs due to equalization of local salary supplement (long-run) ²³	+
Likelihood of improved financial assistance from the State for facilities planning and development	+

²² The consolidated system would likely receive less funding for district administrative positions, and depending on the millage rate for the consolidated system, it may also receive less funding from the equalization grant.

²³ While a consolidation will typically result in higher costs for local salary supplements due to the lower paying schools system’s supplement being brought up to the higher paying school system’s supplement, in the long run the equalization of the supplements should result in elimination of competition—the force that drives supplements higher—between the school systems.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

Schools, Local Government and Business Location Decisions

As a business/community leader or business site locator you are naturally concerned with the quality of life in the communities where you choose to place your or your client’s businesses. This survey is designed to capture your thoughts on how school system organization and local government services might impact the quality of life from a business leader’s perspective.

Section I: School System Organization.

In this section you will be asked to choose which of two communities—Community A or Community B-- is likely to be better with regard to achieving certain quality of life goals. Carefully read over the characteristics of these two communities before making your choices. In making your choices, you should assume that all other factors (e.g., business incentives, tax rates, labor availability, etc.) are the same for the two communities.

Community A	Community B
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple school systems • Multiple superintendents • Multiple finance, personnel, facilities, and transportation service units (i.e., each school system will have one set of these units) • Multiple school boards • Multiple sets of policies, procedures, and programs • Some school systems made up almost entirely of minority students, while others are almost entirely white. • Some school systems will have high performance levels and others low performance levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One unified school system • One superintendent • One set of finance, personnel, facilities, and transportation service units in the school system • One school board • One sets of policies, procedures, and programs • An integrated student body that reflects the demographics of the community. • There is one performance level for the entire school system.

	<i>Check A or B</i>	
	Community A	Community B
In which community would businesses be more likely to		

form school-business partnerships (e.g., mentoring programs, volunteer programs, school adoption programs, corporate sponsorships)?		
In which community would businesses be more able to influence school curricula and policy so as to better meet business needs?		
In which community would businesses have more capacity to manage the scheduling of employees who are parents of school-age children?		
In which community would business employees who are parents of school-age children be better able to comprehend, influence, and participate in school system policies, procedures, and programs?		
Which community do you think would be better positioned to address community needs with regard to health care, child care, after school activities, mentoring youth, and creating strong school-business-government linkages?		
In which community would the community (and the businesses in the community) be better able to manage issues of diversity and human relations?		
Which community do you think would experience fewer distortions in the housing market? ²⁴		
In which community would educational leaders be more likely to be able to streamline the business operations (e.g., finance, personnel, transportation, etc.) of the various school systems?		
Which community would more likely have lower school property taxes (all else being equal: e.g., equal property value, equal desire to provide resources to schools, etc.) ?		
Which community would be better able to maintain an image of educational quality (or less likely to have “bad press”)?		
Which community would be more capable of cultivating the skilled workforce of the future (e.g., one characterized by diversity and teamwork)?		
Which community is less likely to experience divisions based on social, racial and economic characteristics (e.g., residential segregation by income or		

²⁴ School policies (e.g., related to school choice, quality and demographics across school systems and the shape of school attendance zones) can all impact local housing markets.

race)?		
Which community do you think would be able to provide a wider array of school programs and services?		
In which community would you be more likely to see a comprehensive educational improvement effort?		
In which community would you choose to locate your business?		

Please tell your reasons for why you answered these questions the way you did?

Section II: Local Government Services. Please rate how important are the following quality of life factors in your decision making about business locations or expansions. (Note: We recognize that factors such as tax rates and other monetary incentives represent some of the strongest business recruitment factors. However, they have been well researched. This survey is focused on the less studied quality of life factors).

	Importance 1= not important at all.... 5 = very important (Circle one)
FACTOR	
City-County collaboration	1 2 3 4 5
A unified school district through which the quality of education can be identified	1 2 3 4 5
Having business and industrial training institutions in the community	1 2 3 4 5
The quality of public buildings and spaces (design, landscaping, availability for civic meeting, etc.)	1 2 3 4 5
The ability to complete business-related applications, permits, and licenses in on-stop on the local government web site.	1 2 3 4 5
The existence of a city center that mixes shopping, restaurants, and cultural activities	1 2 3 4 5
An attractive well-organized local government web site	1 2 3 4 5
Better than average natural resources (e.g.,	1 2 3 4 5

Local government sponsorship of a government-business council	1 2 3 4 5
Quality arts and recreation programs	1 2 3 4 5
A clean environmental record (e.g., low pollution levels, few or no Brownfield areas, etc)	1 2 3 4 5
A low crime rate	1 2 3 4 5
The availability of tax increment financing ²⁵	1 2 3 4 5
Availability of reliable governmental and economic statistics	1 2 3 4 5
Quality of public transportation	1 2 3 4 5
Strength of civic involvement and community engagement	1 2 3 4 5
parks, walking trails, etc.)	

QUESTIONS for Communities that have Merged School Systems

When comparing the school systems after and before the merger:

- What advantages and disadvantages did the community experience with regard to the pre- and post-merger school system(s).
- Was there any difference in the community's willingness to invest in or support the public schools?
- Was there any difference in the business community's relationship with the school system(s)?
- Was there any difference in the perception of the administrative efficiency/effectiveness of the school system?
- Was there any difference in the relations among races and ethnic groups in the community?
- Was there any difference in the community's sense of identity?
- Was there any difference in the comfort level of parents of school age children with regard to sending their children to school?
- Knowing what it knows now, would the community now choose to return to having multiple school system?

²⁵ Tax increment financing allows for improvements made through redevelopment bonds to be paid for through the growth in property values cause by the improvements. The portion of the property values going to the local government general fund is frozen during the period of the bond repayment.

Appendix B: Business Site Locator Means

	Business Site Locator Means
Having business and industrial training institutions in the community	4.823529412
The ability to complete business-related applications, permits, and licenses in on-stop on the local government web site	4.411764706
A low crime rate	4.352941176
City-County collaboration	4.117647059
Strength of civic involvement and community engagement	4.117647059
Availability of reliable governmental and economic statistics	3.882352941
The existence of a city center that mixes shopping, restaurants, and cultural activities	3.764705882
A clean environmental record (e.g., low pollution levels, few or no Brownfield areas, etc)	3.764705882
The availability of tax increment financing	3.764705882
Quality arts and recreation programs	3.647058824
Local government sponsorship of a government-business council	3.588235294
A unified school district through which the quality of education can be identified	3.529411765
An attractive well-organized local government web site	3.529411765
Better than average natural resources (e.g., parks, walking trails, etc.)	3.529411765
The quality of public buildings and spaces (design, landscaping, availability for civic meeting, etc.)	3.235294118
Quality of public transportation	3.176470588

Appendix C: Business Leaders in Peer Communities Means

	Business Leaders in Peer Communities Means
Having business and industrial training institutions in the community	4.375
A low crime rate	4.375
City-County collaboration	4.1875
A clean environmental record (e.g., low pollution levels, few or no Brownfield areas, etc)	4.1875
Strength of civic involvement and community engagement	4.1875
A unified school district through which the quality of education can be identified	4.0625
Availability of reliable governmental and economic statistics	4.0625
Better than average natural resources (e.g., parks, walking trails, etc.)	4
Quality arts and recreation programs	4
The availability of tax increment financing	4
The existence of a city center that mixes shopping, restaurants, and cultural activities	3.9375
The ability to complete business-related applications, permits, and licenses in on-stop on the local government web site.	3.875
Local government sponsorship of a government-business council	3.75
Quality of public transportation	3.75
The quality of public buildings and spaces (design, landscaping, availability for civic meeting, etc.)	3.6875
An attractive well-organized local government web site	3.5

Appendix D: Anova: Two-Factor Without Replication

Anova: Two-Factor Without Replication

<i>SUMMARY</i>	<i>Count</i>	<i>Sum</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Variance</i>
		8.30514	4.15257	
Row 1	2	7	4	0.00244
		7.59191	3.79595	0.14209
Row 2	2	2	6	2
		9.19852	4.59926	0.10058
Row 3	2	9	5	9
		6.92279	3.46139	0.10224
Row 4	2	4	7	5
		8.28676	4.14338	0.14405
Row 5	2	5	2	8
		7.70220	3.85110	0.01492
Row 6	2	6	3	9
		7.02941	3.51470	0.00043
Row 7	2	2	6	3
		7.52941	3.76470	0.11072
Row 8	2	2	6	7
		7.33823	3.66911	0.01308
Row 9	2	5	8	4
		7.64705	3.82352	0.06228
Row 10	2	9	9	4
		7.95220	3.97610	0.08937
Row 11	2	6	3	7
		8.72794	4.36397	0.00024
Row 12	2	1	1	3
		7.76470	3.88235	0.02768
Row 13	2	6	3	2
		7.94485	3.97242	0.01622
Row 14	2	3	6	6
		6.92647	3.46323	0.16446
Row 15	2	1	5	8
		8.30514	4.15257	
Row 16	2	7	4	0.00244
		61.2352	3.82720	0.19491
Column 1	16	9	6	1
			3.99609	0.05909
Column 2	16	63.9375	4	8

ANOVA

<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
	3.04500			3.97971	0.00558	3.52219
Rows	3	15	0.203	3	2	4
	0.22818		0.22818	4.47344	0.05157	8.68311
Columns	5	1	5	6	2	7
	0.76513		0.05100			
Error	1	15	9			

Impacts of Single versus Multiple School Systems

Total	4.03831	9	31
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Appendix E: Index of Dissimilarity

One of the methods used to describe the spatial separation of groups in a city is a segregation index. These indices summarize segregation numerically, making it easy to compare results among races and/or cities. We discussed the five dimensions of segregation in class: evenness, exposure, concentration, centralization, and clustering. Most indices are strongly intercorrelated among dimensions, and overlap empirically to a considerable degree. Groups that are found to be segregated by one dimension are usually segregated by the others as well.

Evenness has generally been considered the most important dimension of segregation, and the Index of Dissimilarity has been the standard measure of evenness throughout the years. Under this measure, a group is segregated if it is unevenly distributed (meaning no group and non-group members share a common areal unit of residence). Zero segregation occurs when all areal units have the same proportion of the population group as the city as a whole. The Index of Dissimilarity measures the proportion of a group's members that would have to move to achieve an even distribution of population groups in the city. The Index ranges from 0 to 1 (or 0 to 100, if using percentages instead of proportions). For example, in 2000, the Index of Dissimilarity was 0.82 for the black population in New York City – meaning 82% of the black population would have to move to achieve zero segregation. The Index of Dissimilarity was 0.67 for the Hispanic population in New York City in 2000, reflecting a somewhat lower level of segregation than the black population. Both these values reveal extremely high levels of segregation, however. The Index of Dissimilarity was lower for the Asian population in New York City in 2000, at 0.51. Still, 51% of the Asian population would have to move to achieve zero segregation.

The formula for the Index of Dissimilarity

is:

$$D = \left[\sum_i (t_i |p_i - P|) \right] / [2TP(1-P)]$$

where t_i

i

= the total population of a census tract

p_i

i

= the specific population group's proportion of a census tract

P = the specific population group's proportion of the MSA

T = the total population of the MSA

Source:

http://www.macalester.edu/geography/courses/geog262/assign_2_fall05.pdf.

Appendix F: School System Data Profile

While we examined school system data at the beginning of the study, some of these data may have been updated since this time. Consequently, we recommend that the reader visit the following web site to view the most recent data.

Valdosta City Schools

Georgia DOE- Adequate Yearly Progress Data

<http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/ayp2008/overview.asp?SchoolID=792-0000-b-1-0-0-0-0-0-0-8-0-0>

Governor's Office of Student Achievement

<http://reportcard2006.gaosa.org/k12/indicators.aspx?TestType=Indicators&ID=792:ALL>

Lowndes County Schools

Georgia DOE- Adequate Yearly Progress Data

<http://public.doe.k12.ga.us/ayp2008/overview.asp?SchoolID=692-0000-b-1-0-0-0-0-0-0-8-0-0>

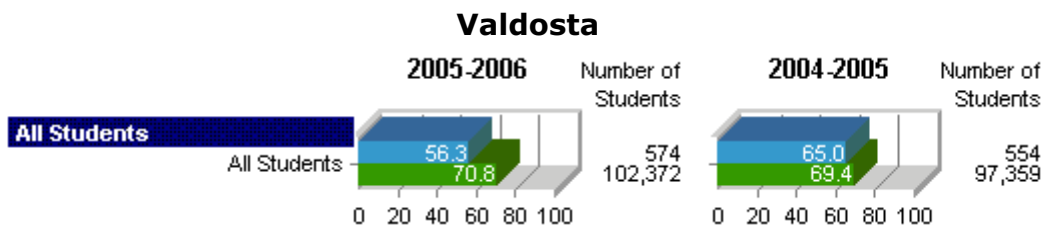
Governor's Office of Student Achievement

<http://reportcard2006.gaosa.org/k12/indicators.aspx?TestType=Indicators&ID=692:ALL>

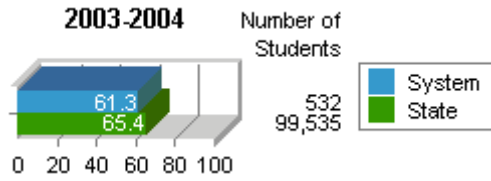
Graduation Rates

A key factor in preparing the next generation to take its place in the economic and civic life of the community is the ability to graduate students from high school.

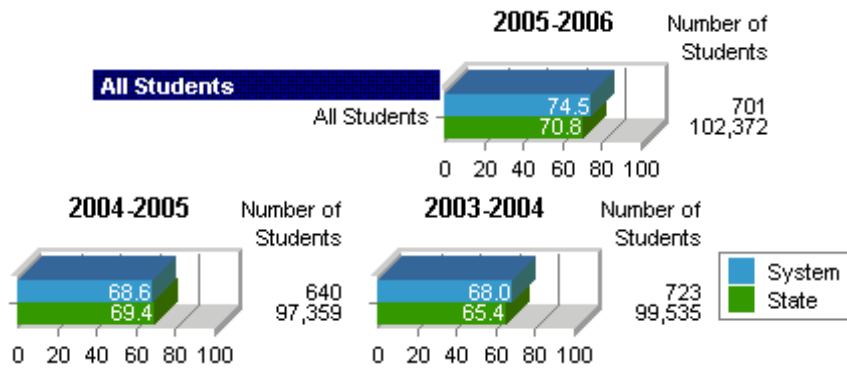
Three-Year Comparison of Graduation Rates



Impacts of Single versus Multiple School Systems



Lowndes



Graduation of high school represents a key success maker both for individual students and for the community’s ability to achieve its economic goals. Students who graduate are much more attractive to employer and are a key measure of the desirability of the community to businesses who are considering Valdosta-Lowndes as a potential site for a new or expanded business site location. In order to identify how well the community is doing with regard to this key indicator of educational success, we collected data on the graduation rates for both school systems for the three most recent years for which the data has been published by the Georgia Department of Education. Having multiple years of data helps to smooth out some of the year-to-year variation that can disguise the underlying state of the school system’s health in this area.

Valdosta-Lowndes Combined 3 year Averaged graduation rate: 66%

Next, in order to put this graduation rate into context, we identified two other communities that appear to have similar rates of poverty, minority population percentages, and median income. Laurens and Thomas counties were identified as the two communities most like Valdosta-Lowndes in this regard.

County	Percent Black	HS-Non-completion rate	Median Income	Poverty Rate	Per Capita Income Dollars 2000	Pct. w/Bachelors Degree
<u>Laurens</u>	34.53	29.66	32010	18.43	21597	14.45
<u>Lowndes</u>	33.99	22.34	32132	18.35	21759	19.66
<u>Thomas</u>	38.86	26.46	31115	17.39	24459	16.78

We then calculated a similar graduation rate using the same 3-year smoothing process and averaged the graduation rates for the two comparison communities. Finally, we conducted a similar calculation for the state as a whole.

Averaged Comparison Communities 3 year Averaged graduation rate: 70%
Statewide 3 year Averaged graduation rate: 69%

The data on graduation rates suggests that the Valdosta-Lowndes educational system as a whole does not appear to be as effective as either the average community in the state or as effective as similarly situated communities in terms of successfully graduating its students.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

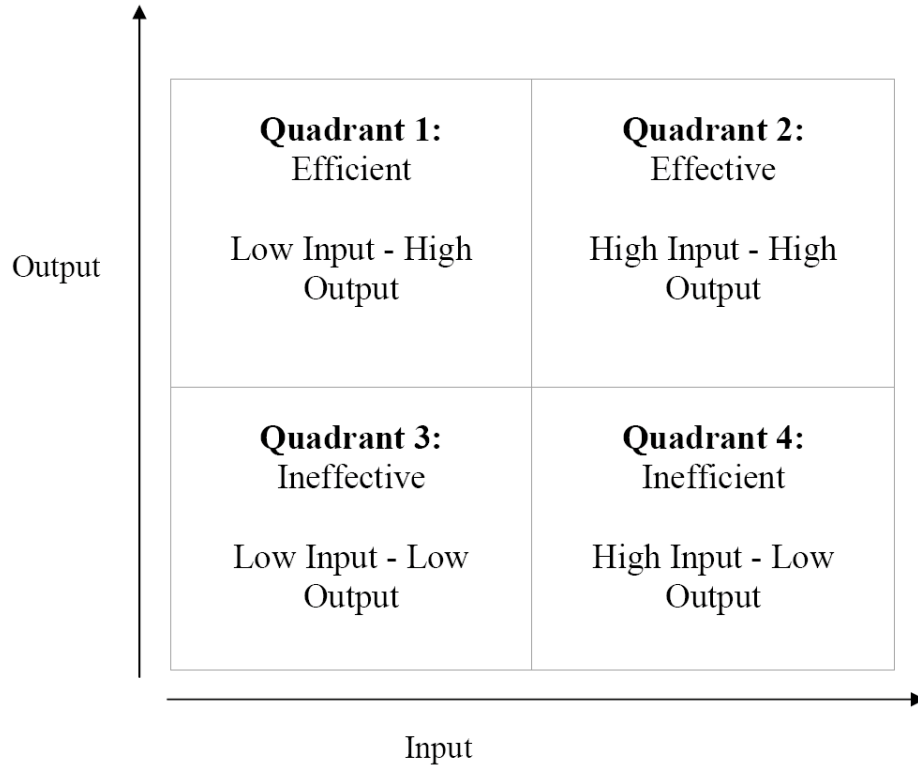
While the community educational system appears to be less successful than the state as a whole on the issue of school graduation, it may still be the case that the school systems are themselves relatively effective and or efficient given the inputs that they currently have and employ. In this regard, the inputs to the educational system include both what the students bring to the table in terms of their background and what the system(s) brings in terms of resources. While the most important system resources are ultimately the skills of its corps of teachers, the measurable resource in this regard is the expenditures being made on behalf of a student’s education. (The two tables below provide data on the expenditure levels of the community’s two school systems). A more efficient school system will use its limited resources to employ the most effective teachers it possibly can.

Lowndes County Expenditures	
Enrollment	9,118
General Fund Expenditures (exclusive of capital and school nutrition)	\$58,983,150
Expenditures per Student	\$6,468.87

Valdosta City Expenditures	
Enrollment	7,017
General Fund Expenditures (exclusive of capital and school nutrition)	\$43,126,194
Expenditures per Student	\$6,145.96

In assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the two schools systems, we draw on the recent work of University of Georgia scholar Eric Houck who has analyzed the productivity of school systems in Georgia using a modified quadriform analysis. Data for this analysis was obtained from the annual report cards and statistical reports of the Georgia Department of Education for the 2005-2006 academic year. The modified quadriform exists as the result of two linear regressions – one predicting total input amounts and a second predicting output for different academic output measures. Each regression consists of the same set of district characteristics. Following on the conceptual work of Stevens (2007), each variable of interest was regressed against five unalterable district characteristics: enrollment, percentage of free lunch students, percentage of special education students, percent of minority students, and the tax base per pupil. The results of the analysis is a plotting of the district scores or measures into four quadrants that represent different levels of efficiency and effectiveness relative to the norm (or 0,0 point in a plotted chart). As Houck explains:

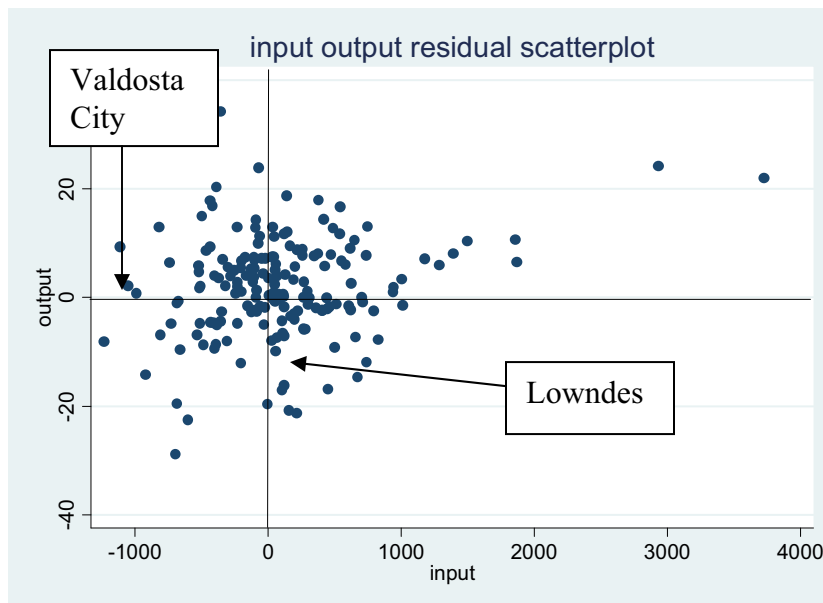
“*Efficient* public districts are those that generate higher than expected educational outcomes using lower than expected expenditures (Quadrant 1). *Effective* public districts and schools are those that generate higher than expected educational outcomes using higher than expected expenditures (Quadrant 2). *Ineffective* public districts and schools are those that generate lower than expected educational outcomes using lower than expected expenditures (Quadrant 3). Finally, *inefficient* public districts and schools are those that generate lower than expected educational outcomes with higher than expected expenditures (Quadrant 4).”



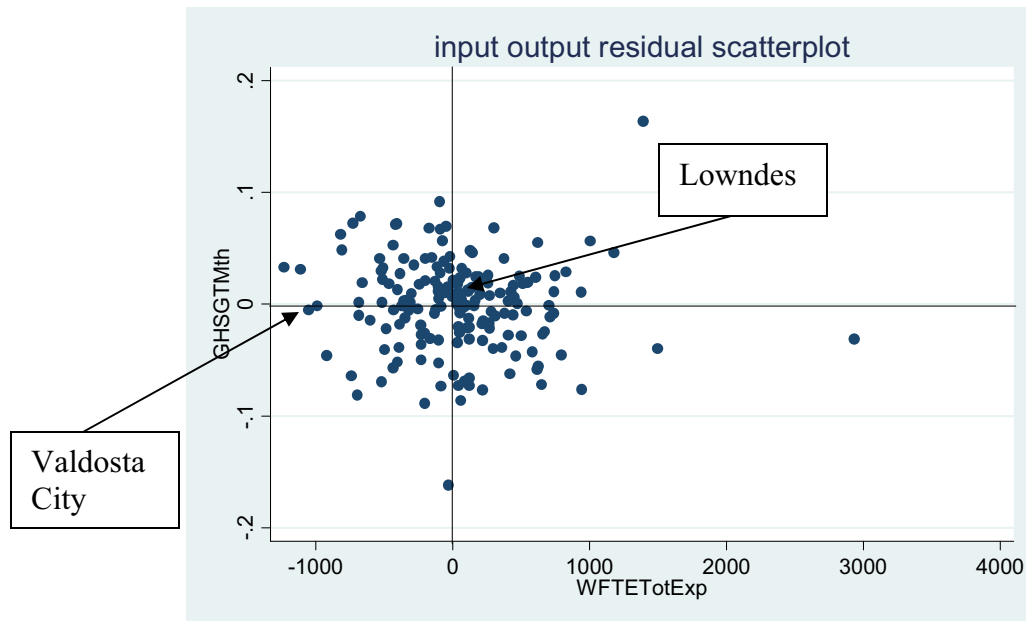
Dr. Houck has kindly shared with us the results of his analysis of Georgia School Systems and has identified the placement of the Valdosta and Lowndes County school systems in relation to the quadrants on four measures: . AP tests, GHSGT Math, Graduation Rate, and SAT scores.

The summary of his findings are presented in the following table, and the scatterplots below the table identify more specifically the position within the quadrant

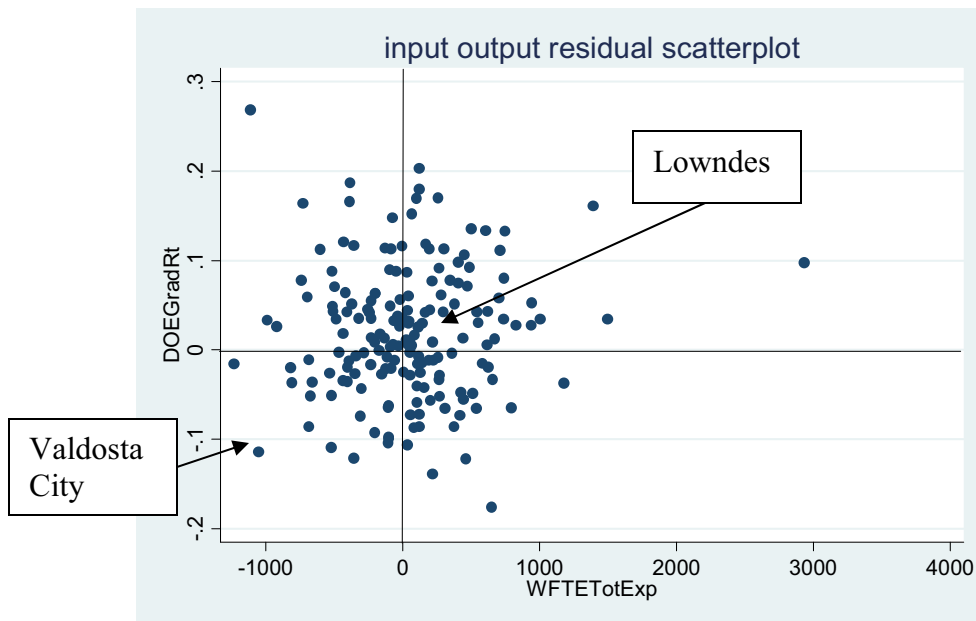
Table: Quadriform Analysis for Lowndes and Valdosta School Systems			
Outcome measure	Lowndes	Valdosta City	GA Average
AP tests	26.3, -7.9: Inefficient	-1052.5, 2.1: Efficient	95.3, 1.8 : Effective
GHSGT Math	26.3, .01: Effective	-1052.5, -.006: Ineffective	95.3, -.0004: Inefficient
Graduation Rate	26.3, .01: Effective	-1052.5, -.1: Ineffective	95.3, .019: Effective
SAT	26.3, 2.8: Effective	-1052.5, 71.4: Efficient	95.3, -4.9: Inefficient
Data reported: Input residual, Outcome residual: Category			



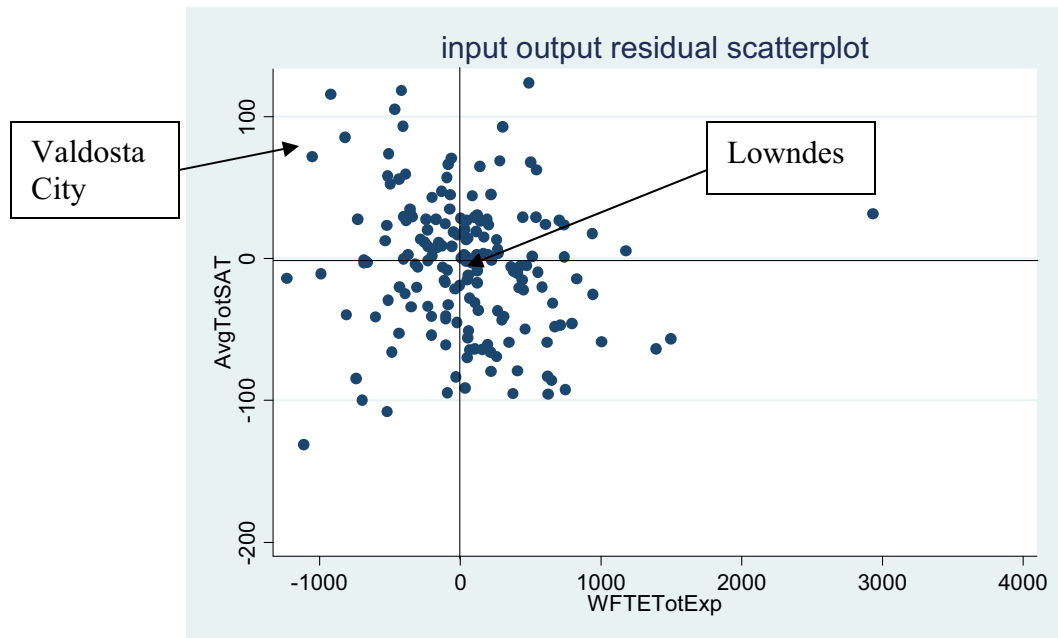
When examining the graph for AP tests passed per 1,000 FTE students, we notice that Lowndes' expenditures are slightly above expected for the state of Georgia, while Valdosta City's expenditures are much less than expected relative to the state of Georgia. Lowndes produces fewer than expected AP test passers, while Valdosta City produces very slightly more AP test passers. Therefore, Lowndes is categorized as inefficient, and Valdosta City is categorized as efficient.



When examining the graph for Georgia High School exit exam passing rates in math, we notice that Lowndes' expenditures are slightly above expected for the state of Georgia, while Valdosta City's expenditures are much less than expected relative to the state of Georgia. Lowndes produces slightly higher than expected test passers, while Valdosta City produces very slightly less test passers than expected. Therefore, Lowndes is categorized as effective, and Valdosta City is categorized as ineffective.



When examining the graph for graduation rates, we notice that Lowndes' expenditures are slightly above expected for the state of Georgia, while Valdosta City's expenditures are much less than expected relative to the state of Georgia. Lowndes produces slightly more than expected graduates, while Valdosta City produces very slightly fewer graduates than expected. Therefore, Lowndes is categorized as effective, and Valdosta City is categorized as ineffective.



When examining the graph for average SAT scores, we notice that Lowndes' expenditures are slightly above expected for the state of Georgia, while Valdosta City's expenditures are much less than expected relative to the state of Georgia. Lowndes produces very slightly higher than expected SAT scores, while Valdosta City produces quite higher than expected SAT scores. Therefore, Lowndes is categorized as effective, and Valdosta City is categorized as efficient.

Overall, Lowndes seems to perform much as expected across all four outcome measures; that is, Lowndes plots much closer to the point 0.0 on these graphs. Valdosta City, on the other hand, has much less than expected predicted funding, and functions better or worse than expected on outcome measures. That is Valdosta is a more variable system. Valdosta City seems particularly good at producing SAT scores relative to its funding and demographics, normal or as expected for math and AP tests, and worse than expected in graduation rates given its funding levels and demographics.

School Locations

The following maps show the location of the elementary schools (Map 1) and middle and high schools (Map 2) in the County. City schools are designated by a blue marker and County schools by a yellow marker.

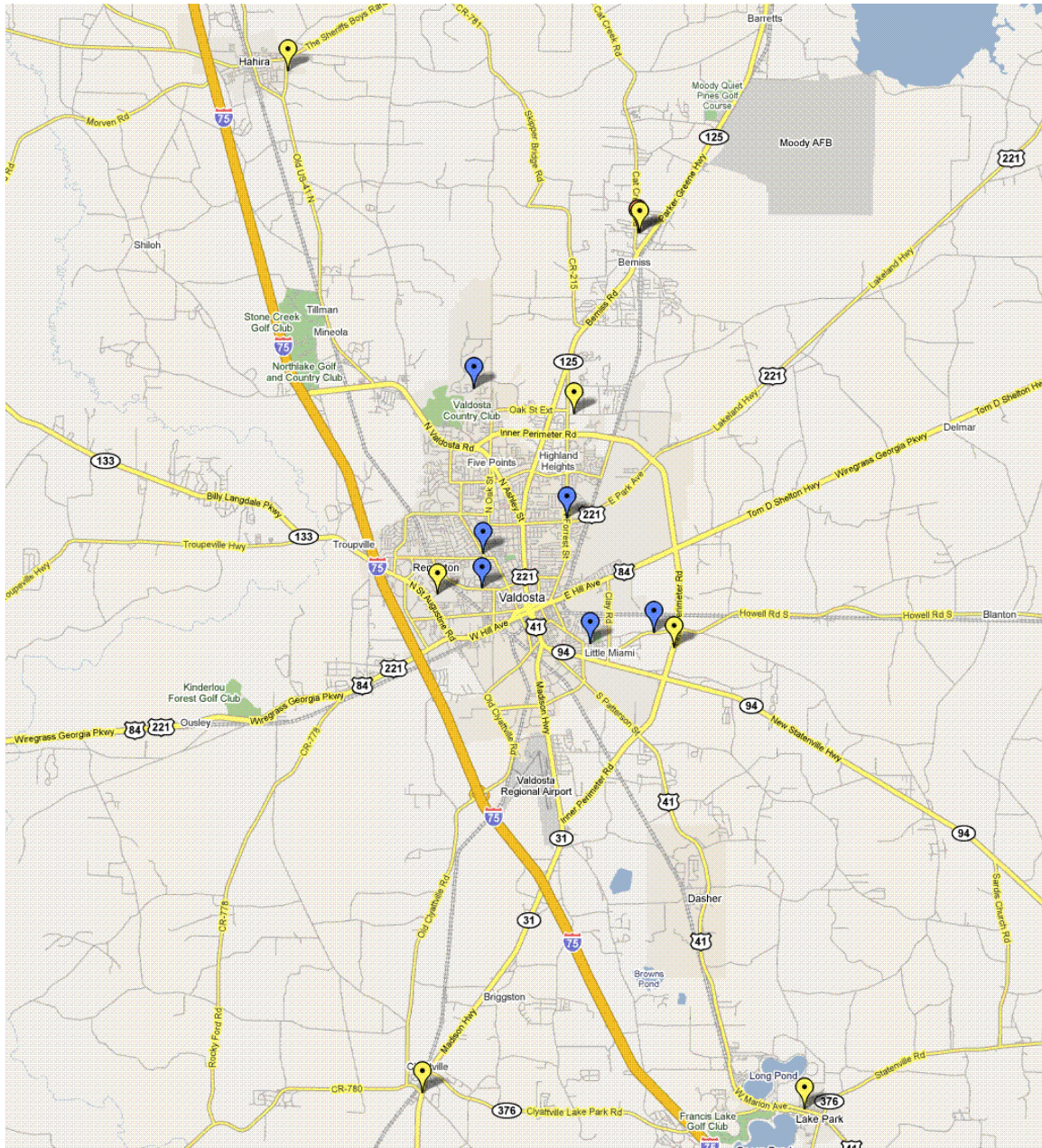


Figure 1: Map 1

Impacts of Single versus Multiple School Systems

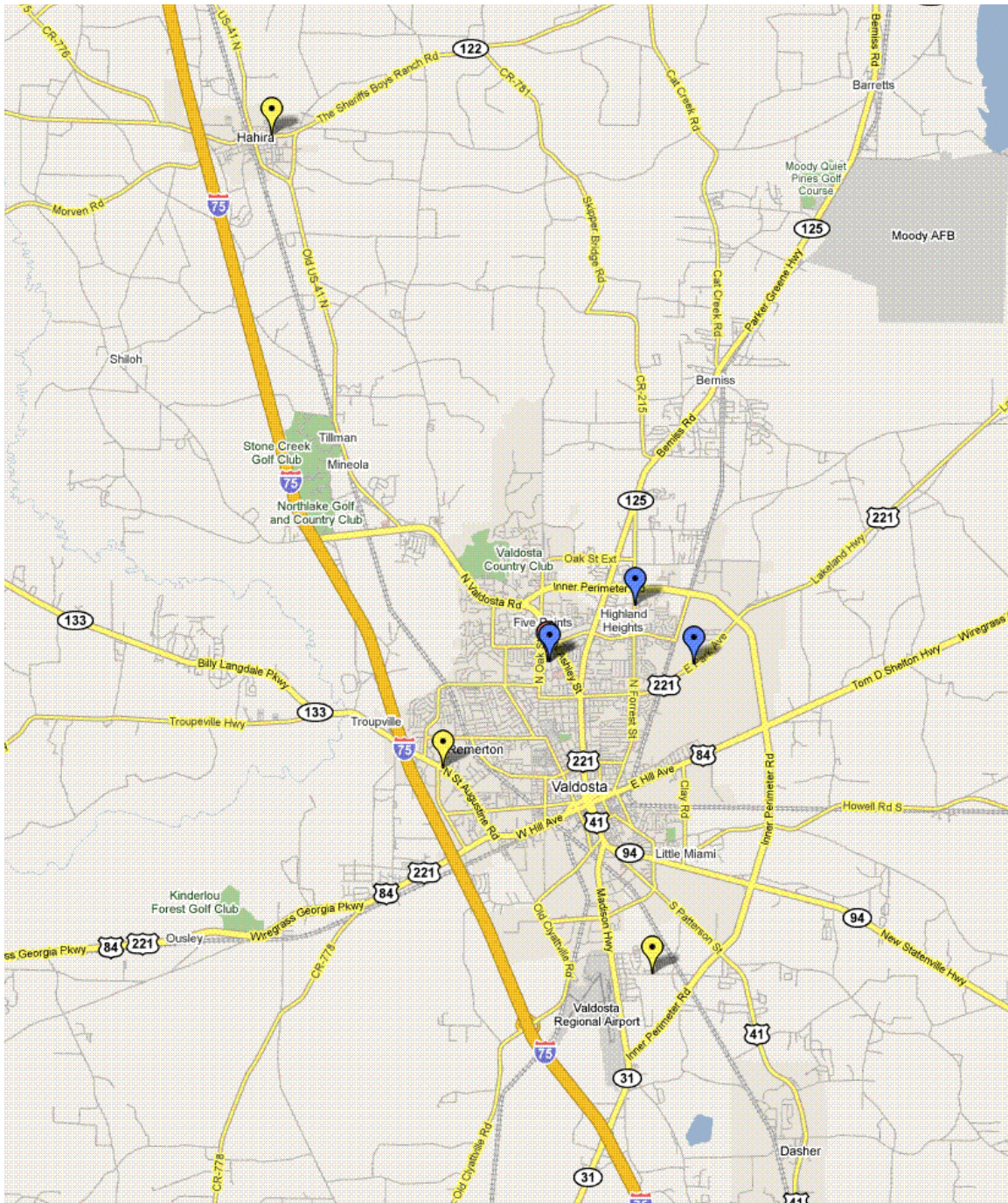


Figure 2: Map 2

QBE Data on the Valdosta and Lowndes County School Systems

Lowndes County QBE Allotment (2008)

School System: 632 - Lowndes County

HB95DOE SB 10 Reductions (new)

THE BASIC UNIT COST IS DEFINED TO BE THE AMOUNT OF \$2,642.32

DIRECT INSTRUCTIONAL COST	FTE	SALARY	OPERATING	QBE EARNINGS	LESS LOCAL 5 MILLS	STATE FUNDS	Teacher	Subj. Spec	Couns.	Tech. Spec	Earnings (\$)				Earned Positions					
											Indirect Cost	Prin.	Asst. Supt.	Asst. Prin.	Accont.	VT/AV	Psych.	Sp Ed Ltr	Media Center	
Kindergarten Pgm	637	3,334,012	39,979	3,373,991	409,722	2,964,269	42.47		1.39	0.93										
Kindergarten Early Infr Pgm	46	3,111,988	2,887	3,114,875	38,238	2,764,647	4.18		0.10	0.04										
Primary Grade (1-3) Pgm	1,720	7,119,211	121,277	7,239,488	879,131	6,360,357	101.18	4.99	3.72	1.56										
Primary Grd Early Infr (1-3) Pgm	181	1,120,055	12,762	1,132,817	137,564	995,253	16.45	0.52	0.39	0.15										
Upper Elementary Grade (4-5) Pgm	1,088	3,436,143	59,872	3,496,015	424,540	3,071,475	47.30	3.15	2.35	0.99										
Upper Elem Grd Early Infr (4-5)	129	798,272	7,099	805,371	97,801	707,570	11.73	0.37	0.28	0.12										
Middle Grade (6-8) Pgm	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00										
Middle School (6-8) Pgm	2,070	7,325,887	113,913	7,439,800	903,456	6,536,344	103.50	6.00	3.32	1.88										
High School Gen Educ (9-12)	1,846	5,527,705	181,295	5,709,000	693,275	5,015,725	80.26	4.62	4.62	1.63										
Vocational Leads (9-12) Pgm	581	1,981,818	181,743	2,163,561	262,733	1,900,828	29.05		1.45	0.34										
Students with Disab Cat I	49	394,106	11,445	405,551	49,248	356,303	6.13			0.04										
Students with Disab Cat II	50	593,142	6,958	600,100	72,973	527,127	9.23			0.05										
Students with Disab Cat III	297	3,811,773	56,076	3,867,849	469,667	3,398,182	59.40		0.27	0.05										
Students with Disab Cat IV	66	1,405,199	26,864	1,432,063	174,389	1,257,674	22.00		0.05	0.01										
Gifted Student Category VI	15	120,645	6,105	126,750	15,392	111,358	1.88			0.01										
Remedial Education Pgm	32	136,131	1,346	139,477	16,937	122,540	2.13			0.03										
Alternative Education Pgm	295	1,587,473	25,226	1,612,699	195,939	1,416,760	24.59		0.27	0.10										
Alternate Education Pgm	113	559,703	6,218	565,921	68,723	497,198	7.53		1.13	0.10										
Exp. Svcs of Other Leg. (E200)	25	229,593	1,051	230,644	28,008	202,636	3.57			0.02										
Spec Ed. Instruct.				21,479	2,508	18,971														
Spec Ed. Supplemental Speech				15,782	1,916	13,866														
TOTAL DIRECT INSTRUCT.	9,250	39,797,806	862,116	40,659,923	4,942,080	35,717,843	572.57	15.03	18.74	6.39										
INDIRECT COST																				
Central Admin		1,145,229	142,360	1,287,589	156,359	1,131,230														
School Admin		2,051,249	250,309	2,301,558	280,309	2,021,249														
Facility M & O		2,756,501	2,756,501	2,756,501	334,737	2,421,764														
Sub Total (INDIRECT COST)		3,141,815	2,963,524	6,105,339	741,405	5,363,934														
MEDIA CENTER PGM		1,005,195	129,167	1,134,362	137,754	996,608														
20 DAYS ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTION		356,717		356,717	43,318	313,399														
STAFF & PROFESSIONAL DEV				213,174	25,887	187,287														
MIDTERM HOLD HARMLESS																				
Amended Formula Adjustment						(850,495)														
QBE FORMULA EARNINGS		44,301,533	3,954,827	48,256,360	5,890,444	42,365,916	572.57	15.03	18.74	6.39										
CATEGORICAL GRANTS				1,231,696		1,231,696														
Full Transportation Pgm (Includes 78 Drivers and bus replacement funds of 205,956)				1,231,696		1,231,696														
Sparsity - Regular				0		0														
Sparsity - Alternative Program				0		0														
Sub Total (SPARSITY)				0		0														
Principal Supplement (Weighted FTE is 0)				0		0														
Migrant Education				0		0														
TOTAL EARNINGS FOR QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION				49,738,451		42,997,552														
Education Equalization Funding Grant				5,816,355		5,816,355														
TOTAL STATE FUNDING ON THIS ALLOTMENT SHEET				55,554,806		48,813,917														
Nursing Services				171,538		171,538														
TOTAL FUNDING ON THIS ALLOTMENT SHEET				55,726,344		48,985,455														

Expenditure Controls for FY2008 are as follows:
 1. Each Local school system shall spend 100 percent of funds designated for direct instructional costs on one or more of the 19 QBE programs at the system level.
 2. 100 percent of funds designated for media center costs shall be spent at the system level.
 3. 100 percent of funds designated for professional development shall be spent for such costs at the system level.
 4. 100 Percent of the funds for 20 Days of Additional instruction must be spent for this purpose at the system level. Up to 15 Percent of these funds may be spent for transportation costs associated with this program.
 5. Salary increases 3 % effective Sept 1. Health insurance increases to 18.534% . Retirement rate is 9.28%.
 6. Funds for Principals Supplement eliminated ; Formula Adjustment reduced by 26,646,128

NOTES

Valdosta QBE Allotment (2008)

OFFICIAL

Georgia State Department of Education
Earnings Sheet for FY 2008

12/10/2007



School System: 792 - Valdosta City		HB95DOE SB 10 Reductions (new)										THE BASIC UNIT COST IS DEFINED TO BE THE AMOUNT OF \$2,642.52									
		Earnings (\$)					Earnings (\$)					Earnings (\$)					Earnings (\$)				
Category	FTE	SALARY	OPERATING	QBE EARNINGS	LESS LOCAL S MILLS	STATE FUNDS	Teacher	Subj. Spese	Couns.	Tech. Spese	Supl.	Asst. Supl.	Prin.	Asst. Prin.	Booly.	Accout.	VT/AV	Payoh.	MSL Center		
Direct Instructional Cost	517	2,589,039	32,448	2,621,487	445,755	2,172,732	34.47		1.12	0.47											
Kindergarten Pgm	119	770,962	7,469	778,331	133,237	645,094	10.82		0.26	0.11											
Kindergarten Early Infr Pgm	1,445	5,676,557	101,867	5,778,444	969,173	4,799,271	65.00	4.19	3.13	1.31											
Primary Grades (1-3) Pgm	229	1,345,151	16,146	1,361,297	233,031	1,128,266	20.82		0.65	0.21											
Primary and Early Infr (1-3) Pgm	787	2,399,369	42,208	2,341,597	400,842	1,940,755	33.35	2.22	1.66	0.70											
Upper Elementary Grades (4-5) Pgm	188	986,636	9,245	996,081	170,512	825,569	15.27		0.49	0.36											
Upper Elem and Early Infr (4-5)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00											
Lower Elementary (6-8) Pgm	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00											
Lower Elem and Early Infr (6-8)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00											
Middle School (6-8) Pgm	1,454	4,884,601	80,014	4,964,615	849,859	4,114,756	72.70	4.21	2.33	1.32											
High School Gen Educ (9-12)	1,522	4,383,008	151,439	4,534,447	775,221	3,759,226	67.04		3.86	1.40											
High School Labr (9-12) Pgm	269	970,993	64,146	985,139	163,504	791,635	19.45		0.67	0.24											
Students with Disab Cat I	18	137,425	4,204	141,629	24,245	117,384	2.25		0.02	0.02											
Students with Disab Cat II	86	525,497	6,494	531,991	91,068	440,923	8.62		0.05	0.05											
Students with Disab Cat III	242	2,348,179	45,691	2,393,870	512,500	1,881,370	48.40		0.22	0.22											
Students with Disab Cat IV	52	1,053,917	21,165	1,075,082	184,036	891,046	17.33		0.05	0.05											
Students with Disab Cat V	27	206,137	10,990	217,127	37,169	179,959	3.38		0.02	0.02											
Students with Disab Cat VI	117	597,647	10,005	607,652	104,020	503,632	9.75		0.11	0.11											
Gifted Student Category VI	16	65,559	673	66,232	11,338	54,894	1.07		0.01	0.01											
Remedial Education Pgm	81	380,537	4,457	385,294	65,956	319,338	5.40		0.07	0.07											
Alternate Education Pgm	11	95,993	463	96,356	15,495	79,861	1.57		0.01	0.01											
Eng Spchs of Other Lang (ESOL)																					
Spec. Ed. Instruct.				43,655	7,475	36,180															
Spec. Ed. Supplemental Speech				0	0	0															
TOTAL DIRECT INSTRU. INDIRECT COST	7,130	29,817,527	629,144	30,450,336	5,219,435	25,270,901	450.69	11.77	14.70	6.47											
Central Admin	803,963	109,732	1,013,695	173,528	840,167																
School Admin	1,554,913	50,358	1,604,371	274,641	1,329,730																
Facility M & O	2,124,740	2,124,740	365,720	1,759,020																	
Sub Total (INDIRECT COST)	2,457,976	2,284,830	4,742,606	811,689	3,930,917																
MEDIA CENTER PGM.	749,350	100,298	849,648	145,445	704,203																
20 DAYS ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTION	265,278	265,278	265,278	45,411	219,867																
STAFF & PROFESSIONAL DEV																					
MIDTERM HOLD-HARVEST																					
Amended Formula Adjustment					(640,244)																
QBE FORMULA EARNINGS	33,290,131	3,014,272	36,515,402	6,250,825	29,624,333	450.69	11.77	14.70	6.47												
CATEGORICAL GRANTS			667,336		667,336																
Pupil Transportation Pgm (Includes 32 Drivers and bus replacement funds of 95,464)			0		0																
Sparsity - Regular			0		0																
Sparsity - Alternative Program			35,802		35,802																
Sub Total (SPARSITY)			35,802		35,802																
Principals Supplement (Weights FTE @ 0)			0		0																
Migrant Education			0		0																
TOTAL EARNINGS FOR QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION			37,218,540		30,327,471																
Education Equalization Funding Grant			902,958		902,958																
TOTAL STATE FUNDING ON THIS ALLOTMENT SHEET			38,121,498		31,230,429																
Nursing Services			136,607		136,607																
TOTAL FUNDING ON THIS ALLOTMENT SHEET			38,258,305		31,367,236																



- Expenditure Controls for FY2008 are as follows:
- Each Local school system shall spend 100 percent of funds designated for direct instructional costs on one or more of the 19 QBE programs at the system level.
 - 100 Percent of funds designated for media center costs shall be spent at the system level.
 - 100 Percent of funds designated for professional development shall be spent for such costs at the system level.
 - 100 Percent of the funds for 20 Days of Additional Instruction must be spent for this purpose at the system level. Up to 15 Percent of these funds may be spent for transportation costs associated with this program.
 - Salary increases 3 % effective Sept 1. Health Insurance increases to 18.534% . Retirement rate is 5.28%
 - Funds for Principals Supplement eliminated ; Formula Adjustment reduced by 25,646,128



NOTES

Appendix G: Chamber Member Survey



Impacts of Single versus Multiple School Systems



1. In which community would businesses be more likely to form school-business partnerships (e.g., mentoring programs, volunteer programs, school adoption programs)?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Community A: Two School Systems	 18.5%	62
Community B: Unified School System	 81.5%	274
	<i>answered question</i>	336
	<i>skipped question</i>	9



2. In which community would businesses be more able to influence school curricula and policy so as to better meet business needs?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Community A: Two School Systems	 17.3%	58
Community B: Unified School System	 83.0%	278
	<i>answered question</i>	335
	<i>skipped question</i>	10

3. In which community would businesses have more capacity to manage the scheduling of employees who are parents of school-age children?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Community A: Two School Systems	 17.4%	58
Community B: Unified School System	 82.9%	276
	<i>answered question</i>	333
	<i>skipped question</i>	12

Impacts of Single versus Multiple School Systems

4. In which community would business employees who are parents of school-age children be better able to comprehend, influence, and participate in school system policies, procedures, and programs?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Community A: Two School Systems		19.3%	64
Community B: Unified School System		81.0%	268
		<i>answered question</i>	331
		<i>skipped question</i>	14

5. Which community would be better positioned to address community needs with regard to health care, child care, after school activities, mentoring youth, and creating strong school-business-government linkages?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Community A: Two School Systems		17.2%	57
Community B: Unified School System		83.4%	277
		<i>answered question</i>	332
		<i>skipped question</i>	13

6. In which community would the community (and the businesses in the community) be better able to manage issues of diversity and human relations?			
		Response Percent	Response Count
Community A: Two School Systems		21.1%	71
Community B: Unified School System		79.2%	266
		<i>answered question</i>	336
		<i>skipped question</i>	9

7. Which community would experience fewer distortions in the housing market?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Community A: Two School Systems	17.4%	57
Community B: Unified School System	82.9%	272
	<i>answered question</i>	328
	<i>skipped question</i>	17

8. Which community's school system(s) would be more able to streamline their business operations (e.g., finance, personnel, transportation, etc.)?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Community A: Two School Systems	16.6%	55
Community B: Unified School System	83.4%	277
	<i>answered question</i>	332
	<i>skipped question</i>	13

9. In which community would school taxes (all else being equal) most likely be lower?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Community A: Two School Systems	18.2%	60
Community B: Unified School System	81.8%	270
	<i>answered question</i>	330
	<i>skipped question</i>	15

10. Which community would be better able to maintain an image of educational quality (or less likely to have "bad press")?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Community A: Two School Systems	19.9%	65
Community B: Unified School System	80.4%	263
	<i>answered question</i>	327
	<i>skipped question</i>	18

11. Which community would be able to provide a wider array of school programs and services?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Community A: Two School Systems	23.7%	79
Community B: Unified School System	76.6%	256
	<i>answered question</i>	334
	<i>skipped question</i>	11

12. In which community would you be more likely to see a comprehensive educational improvement effort?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Community A: Two School Systems	20.5%	68
Community B: Unified School System	80.7%	267
	<i>answered question</i>	331
	<i>skipped question</i>	14

13. In which community would you prefer to locate your business?		
	Response Percent	Response Count
Community A: Two School Systems	20.8%	69
Community B: Unified School System	80.1%	266
	<i>answered question</i>	332
	<i>skipped question</i>	13

14. Please tell your reasons for why you answered these questions the way you did.	
	Response Count
	213
<i>answered question</i>	213
<i>skipped question</i>	132

1. Areas of our state with unified school systems have all of the "community B" characteristics listed in this survey. I am a proponent of a unified system, however, in fairness to others with a different view, I feel this survey does not offer a single question to address any of the plus points offered by having two systems. This survey addresses possible gains. What are the thoughts on what we could lose with a unified system? Tue, 9/23/08 2:25 PM
2. I am in favor of school consolidation. As a working adult with children it would be easier if schools (all) were on the same schedules. etc Tue, 9/23/08 11:35 AM
3. Having separate school systems has a negative impact on whether or not we lease an apartment. Tue, 9/23/08 11:30 AM
4. From a business standpoint, working with a unified school system would be easier because you'd only have to deal with one entity versus two or more. There's more cohesiveness in a unified system which basically means that everyone is on the "same page." Tue, 9/23/08 11:23 AM
5. having worked in county school system I know they would work together better if they were unified, and the students would not feel so much competition between the different schools. Anytime you can unite people and make a bigger group I think the support is always better. One Team. Tue, 9/23/08 10:42 AM
6. The ones I left blank mean that I did not think it would make a difference. Tue, 9/23/08 10:40 AM
7. I'm a proponent of school consolidation. Tue, 9/23/08/10:30 AM
8. Because of the unintentional result of two virtually racially segregated school systems, there is a perception of those coming to town or relocating within town to tailor their home location to their desired school system. This has had a decided effect on the local real estate market. This notwithstanding, there is so much obvious duplicating of efforts, expenditures and services in managing the two systems that the inefficiency is a serious problem. Tue, 9/23/08 9:37 AM
9. If Valdosta and Lowndes joined together, I believe that the school would become a power house of achievement, not only in athletics, but also in academics. If everyone would just let go of the past in competition and embrace a new future, the possibilities of what the school and Valdosta area could achieve would be great. Tue, 9/23/08 9:24 AM

- 10.** I think there should have been a "does not matter" option to check. We have two glaring issues that must be truthfully addressed: racial and economic inequality. Primarily black schools underachieve primarily white schools. Until we, as a community, decide how to best teach white and black children together, we will have a natural segregation. There is no discipline in the schools, there is an apparent lack of care in the home, and we have a group of people (white and black) living with a victimized mentality. It is not the school's fault that children are taught as 2, 3, and 4 year olds at home. It is the school's fault that they refuse to discipline properly, they allow these kids to use the excuse such as, "My mom and dad aren't home, so I have to take care of my little sister" ... This may be true, and shame on the mom and dad, but big brother needs to be told to do his homework and learn something. Two School systems is idiotic from the standpoint of costs: two school boards, two administrative offices, two of everything. However, two school systems give people a choice and creates competition- and competition works. I'm just tired of our community, along with every other community that I know of, being afraid to discuss the truth. We dance around issues that need to be fixed! Parents need to take care of their children... when they refuse, the school tries to put a band-aid on it- they feed breakfast and "feel sorry" for the kids... hello, does anyone see why this does not work? We are perpetuating a "government agency taking care of you" mentality. Tue, 9/23/08 8:57 AM
- 11.** The competition in this community as it currently stands is not focuss on the child's education, but on OLD Tradition in sports. I believe not all children are college material and that with a unified system the consitration could be more diversified. Tue, 9/23/08 8:52 AM
- 12.** There needs to be one school system so everyone will be on the same schedule. Good luck though. I am not from here originally, but some of the Viking and Lowndes fans are so into i, they will fight the change forever. Tue, 9/23/08 7:58 AM
- 13.** Having two school systems gives the impression to outsiders and newcomers that we are divided, and that we are segregated by race. Tue, 9/23/08 7:30 AM
- 14.** What a biased survey! These questions are written to elicit the 'unified school system' response. When is the Chamber going to give up this WITCH HUNT. Leave the school systems alone, and get back to the business sector. Changing the school system structure is not going to solve any problems....the problems will still be there. Let's work on solutions, not camouflauge! Mon, 9/22/08 7:17 PM
- 15.** Where there is unity there is strength. Mon, 9/22/08 6:04 PM

- 16.** It is just a overall better way of doing things and financially smarter to have only one school system. Mon, 9/22/08 4:31 PM
- 17.** Knowledge of the community. Mon, 9/22/08 4:18 PM
- 18.** Having an awareness of the two school system situation in Valdosta, GA, this survey seems very bius. The Valdosta City School system needs to consolidate financially, whereas the County school system is doing very well. Mon, 9/22/08 3:44 PM
- 19.** It would be best for everyone. Mon, 9/22/08 3:40 PM
- 20.** I answered the questions from a business perspective. If you asked the same questions from a parental perspective, my answers would be different. Mon, 9/22/08 3:26 PM
- 21.** I think ALL governmental service agencies should be working toward effeciency, effectiveness and stewardship. The transition will be incredibly painful, but necessary. The Schools, Recreation and Parks Department, Arts Center and Library should be partnering more. Mon, 9/22/08 3:19 PM
- 22.** I am strongly in favor of a unified system for the benfit of the community as a whole. Mon, 9/22/08 3:08 PM
- 23.** I believe in the current system. We have a county and city system that offer different advantages and disadvantages which provides parents with greater overall choice in education. My experience living in communities with unified systems is that it is not a panacea and in fact some of those communities (Albany for one example) have a unified system that no one with any resources for private school will choose to send their child to. Mon, 9/22/08 2:54 PM
- 24.** This survey is a joke. I do believe that one school system would be more efficient but the way these questions are asked is not fair to people who feel the other way. Mon, 9/22/08 2:34 PM
- 25.** A unified school system would have one set of administrators working for the good of the entire county & there would be a reason to be fair across the system. More monies & parental involvement would take place in a unified system, however I don't think the community would be happy with a unified system due to sports & having control of areas of education. Mon, 9/22/08 2:30 PM
- 26.** one system is just to large . Mon, 9/22/08 2:00 PM

- 27.** Primarily because of duplication of effort and administrative cost with the existing two system setup, including buses that have to drive by a city or county school to get to another, and because of the obvious housing and self-realized segregation of the existing systems. Mon, 9/22/08 1:58 PM
- 28.** One shouldn't have to ask. It only makes common sense. Mon, 9/22/08 1:54 PM
- 29.** Seems obvious that a unified system would be much more efficient, saving money by reducing the duplication of tasks, that could be passed along to improve all items mentioned in the survey. Costs and "community" would improve if we had only one administration. As an aside, I also think we would be better off with a consolidated city/county government for the same reason. Mon, 9/22/08 1:51 PM
- 31.** Too much time and effort is put into the competition between the two school systems that could be put to better use. Mon, 9/22/08 1:47 PM
- 32.** As a professional in the Marketing field I do not I have ever seen a more bias survey. Mon, 9/22/08 1:46 PM
- 33.** There is no legitimate argument for continuing to have two school systems in this community. A unified system is truly the best and most fair investment of my valuable tax dollar. Mon, 9/22/08 1:45 PM
- 34.** A unified school system is the only logical future thinking way to go. Mon, 9/22/08 1:40 PM
- 35.** Two school systems create less problems !! Mon, 9/22/08 1:38 PM
- 36.** More flexibility in scheduling not everyone would need off at the same time. Separate systems give the public the right to chose . Mon, 9/22/08 1:38 PM
- 37.** I have lived and worked in communities where there were two (actually 3) separate school systems and in another where it was a county-wide system with multiple schools/ high schools and I found that the course offerings were superior in the combined system. It was also easier to coordinate holidays, school breaks, etc with a single system. Mon, 9/22/08 1:36 PM

- 38.** These questions could have been condensed into two or three. The answers to these type of basically business related are no brainers. Mon, 9/22/08 1:35 PM
- 39.** I think, on balance, our community would benefit by consolidation. Mon, 9/22/08 1:32 PM
- 40.** Because this "split" of our school systems in this community creates alot of confusion to non valdostonians...and new people that move into ur town. People move to neighborhoods based on where their kid will goto school- duh... why is the "older" parts of town (inside city limits, & south side of town) shriveling up into poverty, over run with drugs, gangs etc. ...that is why my family and all my friends family's chose or moved to the neighborhood we live in, because we can afford to and i want my kids to go; it is not based on anything but the fact that the way our schools are zoned- city, county this side of town that side of town whatever, is totally ridiculous - in my opinion, anonymous Mon, 9/22/08 1:28 PM
- 41.** I am obviously in favor of school consolidation as a business leader, parent and community citizen. I feel consolidation can only improve our community and do not understand the hesitation to move forward. Mon, 9/22/08 1:23 PM
- 42.** I believe there is no greater impediment to economic development than having the current split in school systems. In light of the meltdown in the financial markets and the likelihood of slower growth in the near term, our community will need every advantage to compete in that marketplace. A unified school system is an advantage that we need. Mon, 9/22/08 1:23 PM
- 43.** All 13 questions depend on how "community" is defined. Survey is skewed/designed to achieve specific results. This was a waste of my time. Mon, 9/22/08 1:21 PM
- 44.** A unified school system is just crazy and it would not benefit the children, it would be to benefit the system and that is not what we want in this town. Plus the new school districts that have been designed recently are crazy and ridiculous. I think that the school board needs to take another look at the districts that they have created this year. Mon, 9/22/08 1:18 PM
- 54.** First, I am appalled that the chamber would get involved in school system operations in an effort to 'promote more businesses to our area'. Education exists to SERVE the community by making its future citizen literate and job-worthy, not to make more money for our community. Education is not a money-making venture. Secondly, I resent the wording of these questions. These questions are so

obviously slanted toward a particular point-of-view. Shame on you for leading our chamber members to complete this survey with the answer you are wanting! You obviously do not want to know what people really think – you want the answer that you WANT - consolidation! Mon, 9/22/08 1:18 PM

46. Consolidating the systems would free up more revenue to expand on programs/upgrades needed in the school system. All efforts would be focused on building a more solid team instead of competing with locals. Mon, 9/22/08 1:16 PM

47. I am originally from an area of North Florida where the city and county are consolidated not only with educational services, but government and all services. I believe in the long run this saves the tax payer money not to have duplicated services and school systems. Two school systems like ours cost money, create unnecessary competition for business support dollars, deters business growth, impedes policy decision making for the good of the community. We should consolidate for the long-term growth and health of our community. We can still support and cheer on our favorite high school football teams regardless. Mon, 9/22/08 1:15 PM

48. Past experiences. Mon, 9/22/08 1:11 PM

49. A two school system gives me a choice of students to choose from. It should give the school systems a challenge to compete with each other to better each systems education values. Mon, 9/22/08 1:10 PM

50. I don't believe it is in the best interest of the students to combine them all in one system and it limits parents choice of deciding where to send their kids. If they don't like the school system they are in the city they can move to the county and vice versa. Mon, 9/22/08 1:09 PM

51. I believe that a unified system promotes more continuity and consistency in the system, both for the students and the community. Might evoke more community support. Mon, 9/22/08 1:01 PM

52. We are one community, we should have one local government as well as one school system. Mon, 9/22/08 1:00 PM

53. I believe it is necessary to have a strong school system whether it is a two school system or unified school system organization. I also believe it will take a huge PR blitz to make the unified school system Possible Mon, 9/22/08 12:56 PM

- 54.** Would be happy with unified school system, but survey is completely biased toward unification and does not ask a single question pertaining to the current situation or the effect on the children, community or businesses if there was a change. Some businesses like two different systems because of business on the days that one system is out and the other is still in session. Mon, 9/22/08 12:50 PM
- 55.** I have experienced the us and them attitude here in Lowndes County and feel that one system would be better for the children, parents and businesses. Mon, 9/22/08 12:50 PM
- 56.** I have not answered the questions because you have phrased them in such a way that the only outcome of this “survey” would be to unify the school districts. This is something I am adamantly opposed to doing. As it is now my children face a 9 hour day when you take the bus ride into account. When homework is put into the equation it equals a 12 hour day! Something most grown ups would not work. After 12 hours is it a wonder children despise school? My point is with your obvious biased toward moving us to a unified school system a lot of children would be bussed to schools farther from their home thereby increasing the number of hours per day they spend in school related activities. I challenge anyone to dispute what I am stating in this message. Look at what happened in Albany when they unified Dougherty County with the Albany school districts. As a reminder the neighboring county (Lee) experienced explosive growth taking much needed tax revenue from Dougherty County. Are we so blind that we think it would be different for us? Please feel free to call me with any questions or comments. Thank you, Jerry Rumker Work 229-671-7053 Cell 229-548-2294. Mon, 9/22/08 12:45 PM
- 57.** STONGLY BELIEVE IN TWO SCHOOL SYSTEMS. Mon, 9/22/08 12:43 PM
- 58.** I believe that combining the school systems will be better for the future of Lowndes County and Valdosta. It will prevent duplication of jobs within the two systems and save money. It will balance the numbers of students for the schools. Mon, 9/22/08 12:42 PM
- 59.** Way past time to consolidate city and county systems and the governments as well. Budget restraints alone make the efficiency of one system necessary. Mon, 9/22/08 12:32 PM
- 60.** Simply the costs. It makes more sense to unify. Mon, 9/22/08 12:32 PM

- 61.** Two Schools Systems are typically better for location on geographically disparate locations. A unified school system presents the ability to put all your resources into one system rather than having to split your resources. Splitting resources typically get hammered with "favoritism" press.
Mon, 9/22/08 12:31 PM
- 62.** I believe that a Unified School System would be much better for our community. I really believe that it would cut down on the cost of running the school systems once the "kinks" are worked out. Mon, 9/22/08 12:29 PM
- 63.** Because the way the questions were worded, it would make you look stupid to answer "Community A; Two School system". Each has it's advantages and disadvantages, but these particular questions tend to require a specific answer which is "Community B; Unified School system" Mon, 9/22/08 12:28 PM
- 64.** Two school systems add an additional layer of distraction from the real academic issues that our community in areas such as academic performance, institutional discipline, and future opportunities of the students and community as a whole. Mon, 9/22/08 12:21 PM
- 65.** There is no good reason to continue with two separate school systems. Why not enjoy the benefits of economies of scale that would come with one larger system instead of continuing to duplicate services and other efforts in two separate systems. Worse yet, the two separate systems could be perceived as racial segregation. Why continue with something that makes no sense and may carry significant risk for all of us. Oh, yes, high school football, that's why. Come on, it's time to grow up! Mon, 9/22/08 12:19 PM
- 66.** I have lived in Valdosta for only 2 years. The only reason I can see for maintaining what is in place now is "it has always been like this." It is very hard for people to change, even if it is change for the better. People don't want to lose their memories. I would suggest honoring the schools as they were, if and when the school system can change to a unified system. Again, as an outsider -- I see no logic or reasoning to sustain what is in place today. Mon, 9/22/08 12:17 PM
- 67.** One system would be much easier when planning schedules for the office and taking time off. It would also be easier for employees arranging childcare and/or time off. Mon, 9/22/08 12:00 PM
- 68.** Unification creates a better environment for fair and just treatment under the law. Sat, 9/20/08 12:43 PM

- 69.** These questions do not relate to having one or two systems. You really are asking one question...Do people want one or two systems? You are implying that having two systems causes some of these issues or having one system resolves these issues. That is an assumption not based on facts. Therefore your survey is not valid. Fri, 9/19/08 7:47 AM
- 70.** With a unified school system, we could implement a greater range of excellent academic programs. Wed, 9/17/08 5:01 PM
- 71.** The duplication of school systems in an area of this size...speaks of segregation. It paints a picture, whether true or not, of discord within the community and a lack of priorities in our school system. Duplication of school system administration consumes enormous amounts of money that could be spent on the important portion of this equation...the student. Wed, 9/17/08 4:23 PM
- 72.** Unification=Progress Wed, 9/17/08 1:46 PM
- 73.** A Unified School System evens the playing field across the board. Tue, 9/16/08 9:08 AM
- 74.** I believe that they are based on truth Tue, 9/16/08 8:20 AM
- 75.** Although it's complicated and painful to consolidate or unify the school systems, I feel it's necessary to level the playing field and stop the comparison due mostly to demographics. Their is a strong perception that one of the school systems provides poor education based on the high number of minorities, and that the only way it will improve is to "dumb" down the tests, or teach the tests. Consolidate the schools, equalize the curriculum, and shift the focus from sports to education, where it belongs. Stop teaching the test, regardless of AYP, and teach the basics as well as provide for college bound students. We owe it to our youth, the future community leaders, to provide solid education on an equal basis. Not all families can afford private schools, so fix the public schools. Mon, 9/15/08 4:32 PM
- 76.** I believe having 2 school systems is detrimental to the community, particularly when there is such racial disparity. The racial imbalance has created perceptions that have influenced housing trends in a negative way, has encouraged sprawl, and has resulted in duplication of precious resources in areas

- such as water and sewer and other infrastructure. The message being sent to outsiders, intentional or otherwise, is one of a racially divided community. These issues tend to foster a decay of a city and suburban sprawl and higher taxes. Also lower academic achievement occurs when children from less affluent and educated families and all others are not intermingled. We end up with a less qualified work force and one system with high dropout rates, less than adequate performance as measured against peer cities, and thus less interest from high quality businesses who desire a skilled and well educated workforce. Mon 9/15/08 3:38 PM
77. Two school systems require duplication of many administrative services that support the academic programs. Consolidation will allow students to attend schools closer to their homes reducing busing expenses and reduce the student school. In addition, a consolidated system could implement a single strategy to meet our county's educational shortfalls rather than the fragmented approach taken by the two separate systems. Mon, 9/15/08 2:54 PM
78. It is time that our community go to one system for the good of everyone. Mon, 9/15/08 1:08 PM
79. Two allows for choice. Two makes each smaller and more unique. Mon, 9/15/08 12:30 PM
80. Any unified programs will have a stronger voice in making any decisions for the community as a whole. Mon, 9/15/08 11:25 AM
81. We should think and act as one community not as many small ones focusing on our differences. Mon, 9/15/08 9:40 AM
82. Unification will allow the playing field to be leveled for the betterment of all students and business. The preferred status of location will dissolve. Mon, 9/15/08 9:20 AM
83. One system would calm down a lot of local differences. We could work together, with many benefits. IF the two of them came together, then the city, and county could do the same. This could be a tremendous benefit in all directions. A county with a quiet school system, and a local government working in one positive direction. Good Luck to you Fri, 9/12/08 8:26 PM
84. Our community and our children deserve the very best education we can offer. We cannot let petty power struggles, racism and ignorance get in the way. Your new logo states.... "Leading businesses....Leading communities". I applaud your leadership on this very sensitive issue. 9/12/08 7:23 PM

- 85.** A single school system would be better able to coordinate students / parents schedules, have less administrative issues (ie: 1 school board / board of education to make decisions in the best interest of the students and provide a "level playing field" Fri, 9/12/08 3:16 PM
- 86.** The time has past for a two school systems. Economically operating one system will remove the boundaries that often require the systems to move back and forth across imaginary city boundaries. All school names can remain the same, just operated by one system. Let's get it done! Let the die hard whine and get it done. Fri, 9/12/08 2:48 PM
- 87.** I see no reason to have a Unified School System. I was born and raised here and think that it should stay the way it is. Fri, 9/12/08 11:54 AM
- 88.** In my opinion, a unified school system would allow Lowndes County and Valdosta to better focus on quality education for all of the children and young people in our county. We should be able to save tax payer dollars, provide a better distribution of the diversity of students, and an overall unified emphasis on the quality of education provided. Fri, 9/12/08 10:42 AM
- 89.** Unbalanced demographics in our community schools is leading to a lack of ethnic and economic diversity in the individual schools student population. Concentrations of higher student populations on the lower end of the economic spectrum or with percentages of ethnic population that do not match the regions mix do not give the students the opportunity to experience the positive aspects of a diverse society. This situation tends to concentrate affluent neighborhoods and perpetuate poorer ones. Fri, 9/12/08 9:04 AM
- 90.** It just makes sense why duplicate services when the schools are so close together Thu, 9/11/08 8:56 PM
- 91.** school consolidation would lower taxes due to having fewer personnel especially in administrative levels. Plus one system would lower costs associated with issuing bonds. Lastly, I see our community divided over city vs county schools
- 92.** We now have two very different school systems that have evolved over time. One that is advancing and improving but is hindered by tremendous growth in the County. The system that is basically become an inner city school system that is shrinking and is dominated by high risk students from lower economic backgrounds of many races. We basically have evolved to a segregated school system all over again and invariably it will not be "separate but equal." Thu, 9/11/08 5:43 PM

- 93.** Because I care about the education of our students. The better the education, the better the quality of life in the area, and the better the economy. Too many children are being poorly served by the current school systems. The school administrations should be ashamed of the quality of education here, and should be facing all the issues squarely in order to achieve improvement. Racial issues are being swept under the rug, and too much money and resources are being poured into football instead of academics. Both of my children graduated from Valdosta High School. I was quite unhappy with the quality of education they received. I am hoping that their post-secondary educations will make up for what lacked in their secondary education, but there are some things that are learned at a young age that cannot be taught later on. Thu, 9/11/08 4:59 PM
- 94.** Dear Valdosta Chamber of Commerce: This survey clearly debunks your previous assertions that you were not trying to promote the consolidation of the two public school systems in Lowndes County. Someday, I may go along with consolidation through an evolutionary process; however, I will never vote in favor of a forced merger. I represent only the people of the Lowndes County School System. We have worked very hard to improve our schools and we are very proud and protective of our constituency. I suggest that the Valdosta School officials do the same for their system, as well. Thu, 9/11/08 4:40 PM
- 95.** One system will simplify transactions and education. Thu, 9/11/08 4:09 PM
- 96.** Unified system would save tax dollars, and get rid of double personal doing same job in two systems. Thu, 9/11/08 3:52 PM
- 97.** I am sure some are not happy the Chamber has taken on the economic/business perspective with our two school systems. But in my case, I applaud the Chamber. We, our Chamber, community, board of education etc DO have the power to make our schools the best in the nation. It is 2008, time to set aside petty thoughts and actions and face the music. We are below state average in a state that ranks 48th in the nation. Keep the effort going! Thu, 9/11/08 2:54 PM
- 98.** I work in the private school business now, but I am a retired public school teacher. I have worked in both types of systems, and I feel that for a community the size of Lowndes County, one school system would be more efficient and cost effective. I am very concerned about the fact that our two school systems do not do a better job of working together for the good of our community in such issues as scheduling school holidays. I have lived in Valdosta for over 30 years and this is the first time I can remember the two systems having different spring breaks. This is just one example of the inefficiency of two school systems. Thu, 9/11/08 2:08 PM
- 99.** Simple, one school system is best. Thu, 9/11/08 2:02 PM

- 100.** This the most biased survey I have ever taken. It is very obvious what answers you wanted. You should have just made statements instead of twisting questions. I am not opposed to a unified school system at all. However the objections to this are not even mentioned in this survey. I just feel this survey is not a survey at all. The answers should not be listed that way if you want the feelings of citizens. Thu, 9/11/08 12:34 PM
- 101.** Two systems promote division in the community. Thu, 9/11/08 11:59 AM
- 102.** Because these are all valid points that this community should be willing to look into. We must evaluate this in order to make the best decision for our children and community. Thu, 9/11/08 11:30 AM
- 103.** There is a reason that we are one of the last remaining communities with two systems. Besides the reasons listed above, having two systems does nothing to support an overall 'community' feel. There can still be a competitive nature between the two highschools within the same system. Thu, 9/11/08 11:17 AM
- 104.** Difficult to say. The unified school idea feels strange because I've never seen it before. As long as the decision-making power was distributed intelligently and placed in the right hands, a unified system should be superior. Thu, 9/11/08 11:08 AM
- 105.** FOR THE SAME REASONS THAT BUSINESSES CONSOLIDATE, ONE SCHOOL SYSTEM HAS A TREMENDOUS OVER 2 SYSTEMS FIGHTING FOR RESOURCES Thu, 9/11/08 10:42 AM
- 106.** 1st- The questions seem to lead to an answer of Unified. I am for a unified system, but the questions seem a little one sided. 2nd From a business standpoint a unified school or business typically saves money on resources while being able to better serve it's customers when the organization is insync. The leader cannot be good they have to be great for it to work effectively. Wal-Mart has much more power than Fred's or Family Dollar. Thu, 9/11/08 10:31 AM
- 107.** I like competition Thu, 9/11/08 9:34 AM
- 108.** Two systems are economically inefficient. Two school systems both promote and perpetuate inequality, racial segregation, and division in our community. Two systems provide havens for racist. Two systems create an unfriendly and uninviting environment for business and families. Wed, 9/10/08 9:30 PM

- 109.** In two school system you learn what works a lot quicker verses a unified school system Wed, 9/10/08 8:04 PM
- 110.** A business perspective and previous business experiences. Wed, 9/10/08 4:56 PM
- 111.** The benefits for a unified school system are economic - redundant positions in the 2 school systems would be eliminated: 1 superintendent, 1 bookkeeper, etc. Theoretically, this could reduce taxes. That's the main and primary benefit for consolidation. Having 2 systems also has benefits - In smaller school systems, parents and educators can have more of a voice, and more ownership of their school system. Large school systems are not usually better or more efficiently run than smaller systems, and they often add layers of red tape. Wed, 9/10/08 4:44 PM
- 112.** I see the disparity and inequality that exist between the two school systems. If the systems are combined there would be a tremendous need for a transitional support system. I feel that many of the students in the city system act out because of their environment. There is an underlying anger and they do not know why. If their environment improves and they feel that someone really cares about them we will see a change for the better. Wed, 9/10/08 4:41 PM
- 113.** I would prefer a 2 school system due to my ability to locate in two different places instead of one. The single community system would be more combersom due to the sheer numbers of students envolved. One school system- less choices. Wed, 9/10/08 4:38 PM
- 114.** Depending on population size of the community would determine how effective you are in your efforts in any way to the school. It is easier to get the attention of a smaller school. Therefore, two schools would be easier to "promote" ideas, business, etc. However, with a unified school you become one "big" voice, and therefore bring more activities to the school (i.e. various sports, afterschool activities, community involvement). A unified school can support itself within to maintain an image (i.e. bad press). So there are pros and cons to both, but with Valdosta the size that it is and expectations to grow it would not be beneficial to unify the schools. I welcome another point of view for the unification. Wed, 9/10/08 4:35 PM
- 115.** Choice is always better and local business can not have much effect on a school system due to State regulations. Wed, 9/10/08 4:19 PM
- 116.** Unnecessary duplication of systems to operate two schools Wed, 9/10/08 3:56 PM

- 117.** I am in the real estate business. New families moving into the area state a preference for the County schools because they seem to have better performance. I believe a unified school system would make community wide improvement easier. Wed, 9/10/08 3:56 PM
- 118.** simplicity; lower operating expenses; less overhead and dead-weight staff; efficiency; 1 strategic goal for all schools; easy to monitor 1 system Wed, 9/10/08 3:54 PM
- 119.** Too often schools are competing for the "better" students, better locations, better teachers, etc. & I feel that the best results would be in bringing schools under one central governing body so that our county's children can be better educated. Wed, 9/10/08 3:50 PM
- 120.** Two school systems within a community create conflicts, confusion, and divide the community. From a business standpoint, it is simply common sense to be unified. Wed, 9/10/08 3:48 PM
- 121.** It just makes better sense. Wed, 9/10/08 3:38 PM
- 122.** It's the only logical choice. Wed, 9/10/08 3:36 PM
- 123.** I firmly believe that one school system makes the most economic sense. From the school board election process on down to forming and publishing student dress codes and policies, fewer costs will be incurred, and confusion for members of the public without children would be minimalized. Wed, 9/10/08 3:24 PM
- 124.** The Chamber leadership is chasing wild animals. Bring your focus back to economic development and bringing in and supporting businesses. Have you heard the school considering withdrawing my membership with the Chamber and asking others to do so as well if this is the best effort that the Chamber can provide to me in sustaining and making profitable my businesses. Wed, 9/10/08 3:13 PM
- 125.** There is no advantage to a two school system! Everything has to be done twice and there are no efficiencies. Wed, 9/10/08 2:49 PM
- 126.** We have two very good school systems. I do not that hinders our community. Wed, 9/10/08 2:47 PM

- 127.** Common sense Wed, 9/10/08 2:43 PM
- 128.** I believe that the separate systems denote a divided and non-cooperative community rather than a unified people. Wed, 9/10/08 2:40 PM
- 129.** seeing first hand that a two school system does nothing but divide and segregate. Wed, 9/10/08 2:39 PM
- 130.** Because unity in any endeavor is always better. Wed, 9/10/08 2:36 PM
- 131.** It would be easier as a business to partner with one system and it would easier to maintain educational quality Wed, 9/10/08 2:32 PM
- 132.** Simple;to many service needs are duplicated. Wed, 9/10/08 2:26 PM
- 133.** I chose not to answer any of these questions. Those who want a 2 school system will pick all Community A and vise versa. My children attend Ga. Christian and I wish we would give tax credits for those who choose to send their children to the school of their choice. One system or two? We have bigger issues to deal with than this. Wed, 9/10/08 2:14 PM
- 134.** It's time to get rid of duplications and save the taxpayers' money. Trim the fat. Wed, 9/10/08 2:08 PM
- 135.** I strongly feel it would be in the best interest of our children to have one system. As far as economics, our community would be stonger and property values would be at a more stable structure. Wed, 9/10/08 2:05 PM
- 136.** Cost savings, unified image and bringing together community, unified school system would be better for real estate prices Wed, 9/10/08 1:56 PM
- 137.** I personally like the strengths that choice in public schools affords residents of Lowndes Co. Please write a survey that at least makes you think about one or two. The questions in this survey are all slanted toward the idea of a unified system. I will not answer questions that are worded to skew or push an agenda. Wed, 9/10/08 1:56 PM

- 138.** if you combined the schools systems together, it would cost the parents of county schools more money, our lunch prices would go up to compensate the city schools who get free breakfast and lunches. As a business, I don't see where a unified system would help any business as a whole unless you were the one chosen to do their maintenance work. Wed, 9/10/08 1:50 PM
- 139.** First hand comments from local and out of town residential, commercial and investor real estate buyers. Wed, 9/10/08 1:48 PM
- 140.** One standard for all. Lower costs with combined administration and nonduplication, Stronger focus on same quality of education and programs for all students. As a small business owner, it would allow us to participate at a higher level and not having to choose or alienate one over another. Wed, 9/10/08 1:45 PM
- 141.** I feel like Valdosta is too far gone to offer an unified school system. It is too much money invested to change now. As a business owner and a parent, yes I have my house in a certain area so my kids can go to a certain school and I feel the pattern of that as a business owner. Wed, 9/10/08 1:40 PM
- 142.** I beleive that competition between two school systems better prepare students in our today business world. (academics) as far as a unified school system being less expenses to operate, I doubt it, ask Jacksonville, FL Wed, 9/10/08 1:31 PM
- 143.** It doesn't matter to me if there's one or two systems there needs to be more high schools and middle schools built it is unsafe to have as many kids at one high school. Wed, 9/10/08 1:19 PM
- 144.** A unified system reduces the confusion on policies, processes, how things "really" work, schedules, etc. It also allows for reduction in duplication of services, while making scarce quality resources available to all. Negative competition and "one-up-manship" goes away. As you consolidate, like processes can be compared/benchmarked and the best of the two implementations adopted by all. Two school systems which appear to outsiders to be divided by race are a detriment to my business recruiting efforts and to economic development in general (new businesses) as it reflects poorly on Valdosta as "stuck in the fifties". Wed, 9/10/08 12:48 PM
- 145.** There is great duplication which is a waste of our resources in a two school system. Also, the housing market is greatly affected by which "school system" your child would attend depending upon where you live. Wed, 9/10/08 12:45 PM

- 146.** There are economy of scales to be realized in a unified school system. Also, additional resources would become available with a unified system. Wed, 9/10/08 12:43 PM
- 147.** I did not reply to the individual questions because several of them could have been answered with a third option of "either community". Also, the use of the word "unified" instead of "Single" or "One" is prejudicial as "unified" is a positive descriptor. Using "Single" or "One" would have kept the response options more objective. Wed, 9/10/08 12:42 PM
- 148.** The local schools systems have segregated themselves over the years by persons in the community moving to certain areas for their children to go to a particular school. With that, the social economics have decreased in one area but increased in another. It's time to consolidate systems and split the county equally to diversify the students in the schools. Wed, 9/10/08 12:37 PM
- 149.** I think one community one school system this would make the community more unified. Wed, 9/10/08 12:32 PM
- 150.** Because if it was one school system then there would be only one choice. It is my opinion that communities thrive when there is the opportunity for differences and options. Wed, 9/10/08 12:26 PM
- 151.** There are two reasons why we have two school systems in this county. One is football. The other is racism. There are many in this county who think we have schools so we can have football teams to entertain their ignorant asses on Friday nights. And of course, there are those who don't want their children to go to school with blacks at Valdosta High School. Schools should exist to prepare students to be productive members of our community, as employees and business owners. Wed, 9/10/08 12:21 PM
- 152.** Most of my answers fell into the Unified School System. It seems like it would afford for a more streamlined approach to education and continuity in this community. Wed, 9/10/08 12:09 PM
- 153.** It would be equalize the educational classes offered, less expense to operate one system, press coverage would not be seen as an us against them. People moving into the community would not be told "you don't want to live there - bad school system – you want to live in _____ as that school is better. Equalize the number of students attending the schools - number per class. Wed, 9/10/08 12:09 PM

- 154.** Just seems like it would streamline a lot of things, and it would save money Wed, 9/10/08 12:08 PM
- 155.** I served on a similar search committee back in the mid 90's. After visiting several unified school districts, it was evident to me our community would be best served by consolidating our two systems. Wed, 9/10/08 12:08 PM
- 156.** I think that the redundancy of two school system negatively affects all aspects of our community. Funding is already stretched so thin that duplication of efforts is a waste of dollars that could be better utilized. The disparity between the two systems influences real estate purchases and the image of the city itself. Wed, 9/10/08 12:04 PM
- 157.** I believe that consolidation affords better synergy for improvements.....two school systems have been fighting against each other instead of coming together as one to take advantage of a better use of resources. Financial, personnel, transportation, education programs, etc. should become more cost effective to hopefully decrease school taxes by consolidating. I find that the housing market is affected by the differences in school systems....however, this is generated by public opinion and definitely not opinions of the real estate industry. Wed, 9/10/08 11:55 AM
- 158.** I left a couple blank. I don't believe in these instances it will matter one way or the other. In #12 I believe that in our case we have two good school systems and it is not the school system that is at issue. It is the student – we have a lot of people but not a lot of students. So if unity means adding something (true intervention) at a young age to create students (lifetime learners) then I would answer B. In our case and in most cases a unified school system is better. However, larger communities where there are tremendous numbers of students it may not be the best answer (management becomes a problem). I don't believe taxes will be lower, certainly not significantly and school program changes will only be moderate. However it will improve social-economic issues and by doing so will help our diminishing working class (we don't have enough young people that can move up as they age. They typically need constant guidance and don't have any vision beyond a few hours, they need to at least be able to see a month out). All in all we have allowed people not to be responsible for themselves. Unifying the schools doesn't solve this issue but perhaps it reduces the focus on the color of ones skin. Maybe after that we can get closer to the root issue. How do we get people to again feel responsible for themselves and become life time students. Teaching then becomes possible and schools get better because the students not the teachers demand it. "Students can be students without teachers but teachers can never be teachers without students" Wed, 9/10/08 11:55 AM
- 159.** The costs of 2 systems could be reduced. Conflicts between 2 systems could be reduced. It would equalize the education system. Wed, 9/10/08 11:47 AM

- 160.** Overall, I believe the cost of having two school systems in a community is substantial. It would be a benefit to combine resources for a consolidated effort to educate our children. That being said, I think it would be necessary for parents to be able to choose which school their child attended. I think that Charter schools and school vouchers would be a great asset. A unified school system should also provide more resources to offer a diverse selection of activities such as art and drama programs --- things that are slowly disappearing from our school systems due to budget issues. I also believe that we need to evaluate our style of teaching. The standard method of a teacher talking to a classroom as a whole and assuming that each child is comprehending what she is trying to teach is outdated. Evaluating a child's learning style and capability and individualizing their educational environment would go further in assuring that "no child is left behind." Wed, 9/10/08 11:42 AM
- 161.** There are two many variables in the questions as they were asked. It also seems that these questions were asked with only business in mind. I truly think there is much more to this debate than wheather or not we can attract new business. It seems that the kids education always takes a back seat to politics. The Valdosta school system was once very great. The problem is the government regulations on discipline, the care and guidance these kids receive at home, and everyone thinking someone else owes them something. You get out of lifewhat you put in it. And if the parents of the majority of these kids dont have good loving relationships with their kids at home then how can they possibly think the school teachers and administration will. Go to School functions excluding Football games and see which families truly support their children and school. If we consolidate the schools all it will change is the numbers the state sees for Valdosta because of the Lowndes system bringing them up Wed, 9/10/08 11:42 AM
- 162.** Smaller schools focus more on individual.The larger the school, programs take priority over individuals. Wed, 9/10/08 11:39 AM
- 163.** I myself grew up in a big city for the first part of my life and then a small town for the second part. Both school system were unified and equal, one school might have been smaller or better at certain sports but all of them were unified and equal. I live less than a mile from Lowdnes High School but my kids have to go to Valdosta High, that doesn't make any sense. Wed, 9/10/08 11:33 AM
- 164.** I did not answer because I don't think there would be any difference either way. Wed, 9/10/08 11:29 AM
- 165.** We all know that the reason for separation is turf wars over football - get over it soon Valdosta. Wed, 9/10/08 11:28 AM
- 166.** Unified is better Wed, 9/10/08 11:25 AM

- 167.** Duplication of systems and perceived disparity between the two systems is hurting the quality of education in this community and is a ridiculous and wasteful effort to hold on to old loyalties! Wed, 9/10/08 11:20 AM
- 168.** By consolidating the 2 school districts it would have an unifying effect on the community. Wed, 9/10/08 11:15 AM
- 169.** Because we currently have a two school system community I believe that there certainare benefits to continuing to have this, the long-standing LHS-VHS traditions, educational options, diversity, etc. However, in some instances, a unified school system would be more streamlined in relation totaxes, personnel, transportation, etc. Wed, 9/10/08 11:09 AM
- 170.** I think there is so much waste when two separate school systems require all the same admin positions. It wouldn't be an easy transition, but I think it would be good for the future of our community... Wed, 9/10/08 11:07 AM
- 171.** Lowndes County Schools excels in all of it's testing, student/teacher ratios, and most importantly its special education. Wed, 9/10/08 11:05 AM
- 172.** This is another case of the Chamber of Commerce involving our membership in a process that has inconsequential effect on our businesses. Workforce, facilities, cost of production, financing of startup, etc... are much more important issues that the Chamber should address. Wed, 9/10/08 11:04 AM **173.** Because these are one sided questions. The answers are evident when the question was asked. So this survey really just verifies the answers that the people who wanted this survey already had. Wed, 9/10/08 11:04 AM
- 174.** education first - football second Wed, 9/10/08 11:00 AM
- 175.** Two systems is a waste of government resources and causes conflict. I also see socioeconomic and racial segregation between the two. Wed, 9/10/08 11:00 AM
- 176.** Questions appear to preclude Unified response. One system may not solve all areas of concern. Competition can enhance delivery in the classroom as well as on the athletic field. Wed, 9/10/08 10:55 AM
- 177.** two school systems would allow greater diversity in regards to programs, services and activities. What one might not offer the other could. In terms of Real Estate there would be less emphasis placed on the BETTER SCHOOL SYSTEM, and more

- options as far as location being based on selected schools. Wed, 9/10/08 10:53 AM
- 178.** united we stand and divided we fall (fail). Wed, 9/10/08 10:52 AM
- 179.** A unified school system would be far more efficient and capable of dealing with all above issues. Have seen the unnecessary costs and burdens placed on this community for 30 years-zoning, housing, etc. We are a metro area and its time to enter the 21st century. thank you for doing this survey-willbe very interested in the results. Wed, 9/10/08 10:52 AM
- 180.** I believe all things being equal the community would benefit much more from a unified school system. All of these questions brought up very good points. Wed, 9/10/08 10:51 AM
- 181.** Titletown probably was the worst thing for an improved, educational system in this community that has happened in the last 20 years. Separation purely for mascot pride. How sad. Wed, 9/10/08 10:51 AM
- 182.** This is a no brainer that no one seems to have the fortitude to address. It really puts our community at a disadvantage going forward. Wed, 9/10/08 10:50 AM
- 183.** Unified school system should also be regional, should include the smaller counties surrounding Lowndes. We Should not be restricted by City or County Lines. The world has changed from the days we had horses, bugs or walked and the systems for City County Govt, or schools was probably a great model then. Today is different and we should think consolidation regionally in every thing we do, because of the ease of Transportation, Communication, Internet, Greater possibility of Home School taught by Internet classes, testing over the internet, etc. Wed, 9/10/08 10:49 AM
- 184.** I understand the concept of a united school system, however, I moved to Valdosta from a community where there were seven or eight different school districts in the county and only one city school system. There were joint efforts from all districts all the time. The problem here is the community as a whole does not work together, their is such a division and competition based on the twoschool systems. This was evident in the Title Town competition where one system felt slighted compared to the other. We need to all work together as a community as a whole. Wed, 9/10/08 10:43 AM
- 185.** A Unified School System is imperative to our community to improve the quality of the education delivery process. Presently, many students that are able, migrate to the County School System due to a better quality educational experience. The City Schools

have a growing reputation of lower quality education and an increasingly poor school environment, i.e. safety and security. Due to the strong City and County high school sports dominance, I seriously doubt a Unified School System is possible. Too much old school thinking in this town. Wed, 9/10/08 10:43 AM

186. First, I believe that a united school system is vital for our community to create an atmosphere where every student, parent, educator and administrator are working off the same page to insure that our children are receiving the highest quality education as possible. Secondly, I believe a united school system would enable us to make better use of the state and local funds that we are spending on education. Thirdly, I believe two school systems has an adverse affect on how we are viewed as a community by outsiders that may be considering the Valdosta-Lowndes county area as a place to do business. Wed, 9/10/08 10:43 AM

187. Your Survey is BS! Why do you seek to tear down the very thing that makes this Community so special and unique? If you cant attract Industry under the current systems, then maybe we need to find somebody who can! Wed, 9/10/08 10:42 AM

188. 100% in favor of school consolidation. I personally think it is long overdue and our community would have very positive outcome in regards to race relations, housing, business development and educational improvements if the school systems were consolidated. Wed, 9/10/08 10:39 AM

189. I believe there need to be one school system Wed, 9/10/08 10:39 AM

190. we need one school system but lack of competition and unfied control does worry me. Wed, 9/10/08 10:38 AM

191. Unified would make more financial sense in the long run. Wed, 9/10/08 10:37 AM

192. There is a perceived difference in the quality of education between the two current systems. Due to this there seems to be a migration to the county by those who can. Also, those who can afford to buy property in the county can send their children to those schools (albeit paying a rather small tuition) while others cannot, which also implies a perceived difference in quality of education. Having had children you attended both systems, I am quite impressed by both and feel that the perceptions are hurting the city system. A combined system would take away the stigma of the "city" system. It would also help to reduce some of the administrative redundancy currently in place due to having two separate systems. Wed, 9/10/08 10:43 AM

- 193.** I answered the questions in the context of what is the best interest of our community at large without any bias towards personal preference. Using this baseline I found it hard to argue for 2 school systems especially given the leanings of the survey towards economic impact. Wed, 9/10/08 10:35 AM
- 194.** Unified would benefit from complete funding and no dividing lines. Two school systems would be easier to manage Wed, 9/10/08 10:34 AM
- 195.** If we all work together for the same common goal and unify our resources we can easily achieve and possibly surpass educational standards. Pooling the resources and reducing the competitive nature of two systems is the key. Superior education of our youth, future employees, leaders and tax payers is our goal. Wed, 9/10/08 10:33 AM
- 196.** this is the most bias, underhanded, backdoor approach I have ever seen. This is the exact reason no one trusts the chamber. Nor should they Wed, 9/10/08 10:32 AM
- 197.** One big school system is easier to focus on rather than separate boards, super. and staff Wed, 9/10/08 10:31 AM
- 198.** My responses are consistent with my opinion on these topics. My responses represent my opinions on these issues. Wed, 9/10/08 10:28 AM
- 199.** I believe that a unified school system has one goal for the people of the community and that should be to provide quality education for all. I think the biggest reason in this town that a lot of people would not want one system is because of football but that should be the least of our concerns. I came from Houston County and they have had one system for a very long time and they have 3 high schools at present, all very competitive. I graduated from Warner Robins High and Northside was a great competitive opponent. Yes, it will be a difficult transition for some but well worth the effort, I believe. Wed, 9/10/08 10:26 AM
- 200.** Traffic flow - driving from the base to Lowndes High School makes no sense at all when VHS is less than 5 miles from the base - busing students all over town when they live a few miles from the school is not a good use of our resources. Many new people are encouraged to live in certain sections of town based on the school system. I feel like a unified system would allow newcomers the opportunity to live in the city or country. Was told that the systems could save several million dollars by consolidating the system - makes sense from a financial viewpoint. This extra money could be used in improving the schools and various programs that are offered. We also need a new high school. It should be based on where the population is highly concentrated and not based on living in

- city or county. Having spent a lot of time with newcomers moving into our area, the main question is "Why are there two school systems?" I am still trying to answer that one. It just doesn't make sense to invest in two systems if one consolidated system could save money, offer more to our students and help make our community unified under one system. School system should not be racial divided and at the present time they are definitely divided down racial lines. Wed, 9/10/08 10:22 AM
- 201.** I feel for economic reason a unified school system would be better but for the students a 2 school system program would work better because I feel more programs and smaller amounts of students would be beneficial Wed, 9/10/08 10:20 AM
- 202.** A unified school system eliminates dual costs so the cost of running all of the schools will be lower and this should result in lower property taxes to the County's citizens. Wed, 9/10/08 10:19 AM
- 203.** Valdosta/Lowndes County needs an additional high school. Lowndes is extremely overcrowded. Another high school would alleviate these conditions. Also the burden of building another school would be funded in part by state funding, not solely reliable on the backs of the tax payers of Lowndes County. It's time we stop letting an extremely small group of individuals make all the decisions for growth and development in this county. Wed, 9/10/08 10:18 AM
- 204.** Less overhead, more flexibility, one focus on diversity. Two schools drives a wedge in the community. Wed, 9/10/08 10:16 AM
- 205.** A unified school system would bring unity and balance overall to Lowndes County. Control of the Unified School system should be given to the Administration of Lowndes County School, because this is the better managed and most desired school system of the current two school systems. An alternative school should be established for the students that have no desire to get an education, have no respect for teachers, and those with repeat disciplinary problems. Wed, 9/10/08 10:15 AM
- 206.** I feel that with one school system resources could be divided more equally and appropriately, i.e. new schools, to better fit the dynamics of the whole county instead of having two schools serving the same age group being across the street from one another. Wed, 9/10/08 10:14 AM
- 207.** I am firmly convinced that a unified system would be more efficient, have better comprehensive student outcomes, be more equitable in its delivery of educational services, and provide a platform of academic excellence that would attract more and higher paying industry to our area. Wed, 9/10/08 10:14 AM

- 208.** I could only support a unified system if it was done for budgetary reasons. I am doubtful that a unified system would fairly support schools located within the city. I also believe the way you survey questions are worded are designed to guide the responses to Community B. Wed, 9/10/08 10:13 AM
- 209.** Unity is always more beneficial, practical, and financially advantageous than divisiveness! A unified school system could partner the best of each system and promote a better quality of life, education, and community spirit for everyone. Wed, 9/10/08 10:09 AM
- 210.** It just makes sense to have a unified system so we do not have conflicting schedules or plans. I understand we are a large community, but the school systems still could be united. Then as a community we wouldn't feel this division of who is better. Wed, 9/10/08 10:09 AM
- 211.** Having seen a community where the two systems consolidated, I believe there is less conflict and more support from the business community. There are no split loyalties. Wed, 9/10/08 10:00 AM
- 212.** I believe that it is time to unify the schools and the governments to better serve our citizens, our children, and our future. Wed, 9/10/08 9:59 AM
- 213.** When communicating with the school systems or trying to initiate improvement, the work is more than doubled with 2 school systems. I think it will benefit those with lower income to associate with their more affluent peers, with the greater proportion of the affluent living in the county. Wed, 9/10/08 9:54 AM