

Chapter VIII

Education

General Characteristics & Trends

Educational resources in Niagara County include ten public school districts, Niagara University, Niagara County Community College (NCCC), the NIOGA Public Library system, the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) system, and 19 private schools, most of which are affiliated with religious institutions. These educational institutions are mapped and identified in Chapter III, Figure III.M.1.

Many schools are located in the historically developed urban areas of the County in and around the cities of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport. Fewer schools are located in the rural towns, but as the County population continues to shift northward, the potential need for additional schools and related educational facilities in suburban and rural areas exists as well. As a result of shifting populations, urban school districts like those in Niagara Falls have accommodated the reuse of school facilities that are no longer needed due to decreases in local population and enrollment.

Niagara County provides financial support to Niagara County Community College and the NIOGA Library System, and operates several job training programs, the County Youth Bureau, education programs in public schools for children with disabilities, and recreation programs.

A number of issues and opportunities related to the role of the County in education and educational initiatives in general have been identified during the planning process and are discussed in this chapter. Many issues and opportunities focus on the County's ability to function as a key coordinating body with other education stakeholders, particularly in its role in providing social services, economic development and job development. Following is a brief summary of current characteristics and trends related to education and educational institutions in Niagara County.

Public School System (K-12)

Based on an annual school enrollment survey conducted by the Niagara County Department of Economic Development, total enrollment in the County's public

schools was 32,421 during the 2006-2007 school year. The largest school districts are those in the County's urban centers. The four largest districts (Niagara Falls City School District, Lockport City School District, North Tonawanda City School District and Niagara-Wheatfield Central School District) account for approximately 65% of the County's public school enrollment. Table VIII-1 summarizes enrollment in the 10 public school districts within Niagara County.

**Table VIII-1 – Public School Enrollment,
2006-2007 School Year**

School District	School Buildings	Total Enrollment ('06-'07)
Niagara Falls City	13	7,551
Lockport City	10	5,169
North Tonawanda City	8	4,353
Niagara-Wheatfield Central	6	4,074
Starpoint Central	4	2,822
Lewiston Porter Central	4	2,338
Newfane Central Schools	5	2,036
Royalton Hartland Central	3	1,553
Wilson Central	3	1,428
Barker Central	3	1,097
TOTAL	59	32,421

**Table VIII-2 – Facilities and Capacity by School District,
2006-2007 School Year**

School District	Elementary Level		Middle / Junior / High School Level	
	Number of Schools	Student Enrollment / Student Capacity	Number of Schools	Student Enrollment / Student Capacity
Barker Central	1	102%	2	103%
Lewiston Porter Central	2	87%	2	89%
Lockport City	7	97%	3	93%
Newfane Central Schools	3	N/A	2	N/A
Niagara Falls City	9	61%	4	50%
Niagara Wheatfield Central	4	92%	2	113%
North Tonawanda City	6	58%	2	59%
Royalton Hartland Central	1	N/A	2	N/A
Starpoint Central	2	N/A	2	N/A
Wilson Central	2	37%	1	44%

Table VIII-2 summarizes school facilities and the percent of total capacity available in each of the 10 public school districts serving County residents. Three districts are nearing or have exceeded their enrollment capacity: Barker Central School District, Lockport City School District and Niagara-Wheatfield Central School District. Data for the 2006-2007 school year was unavailable where noted as “N/A.”

Private Schools

There are 19 private schools in Niagara County, most of which are affiliated with religious institutions or other organizations. The largest of these is DeSales Catholic School, which had an enrollment of 533 students in 2006-2007. Total reported private school enrollment for the 2006-2007 school year was 2,093 students, or about 6% of total school enrollment countywide. Enrollment numbers for private schools can be found in Table VIII-3. Data for the 2006-2007 school year was unavailable where noted as “N/A.” Data on school capacity for private schools is on file, but not presented here given the small share of total school enrollment countywide.

**Table VIII-3 – Private Schools in Niagara County
by Enrollment,
2006-2007 School Year**

Private Schools	Enrollment
DeSales Catholic School	533
Prince of Peace School	220
St. Peter’s, Lewiston	212
Niagara Catholic	101
St. Matthew Lutheran	180
Stella Niagara Education Park	180
North Tonawanda Catholic	166
Our Lady of Mt. Carmel	124
St. Peter’s Lutheran -Walmore Rd.	63
Holy Ghost Lutheran	100
St. John Lutheran	68
St. Peter’s Lutheran - North Ridge	64
Sacred Heart Villa	53
St. Mark Lutheran	29
Henrietta G. Lewis Campus School	N/A
Niagara Christian Academy	N/A
St. Dominic Savio	N/A
St. John de LaSalle School	N/A
St. Joseph School	N/A
Total	2,093

Institutions of Higher Education

Niagara County offers three institutions of higher learning within its borders: Niagara University, Niagara County Community College (NCCC), and SUNY Empire State College. These institutions offer Associate, Bachelor and advanced university degrees on full-time and part-time bases. Niagara County is located within a very reasonable one-half hour drive or less from the State University of New York at Buffalo, Buffalo State College and Canisius College. These institutions of higher education afford diverse degree programs to their student populations, with similarly diverse career choices and life interests.

Niagara University

Niagara University was founded in 1856 by the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentians) and was first chartered in 1861 as a seminary. It was re-chartered as a university in 1883. The 160-acre Niagara University campus is located on NYS Route 104 near the northern limits of the City of Niagara Falls. The campus is situated along the top of Monteagle Ridge overlooking the Niagara River Gorge, approximately four miles north of Niagara Falls. Niagara University is a comprehensive university with an enrollment of approximately 2,600 undergraduates and 800 graduate students, with another 750 students enrolled in continuing and community education programs. In addition, Niagara University offers bachelor's and master's degree programs at sites in the Toronto and York regions of Ontario. All programs operate with written consent from the Ministry of Training and enroll more than 300 students annually. More information is available at: www.niagara.edu

Niagara County Community College

Niagara County Community College was established in the City of Niagara Falls in 1962 as a locally-sponsored college supervised by the State University of New York. The present campus in Sanborn was constructed in 1973 on 267 acres of land at Saunders Settlement Road (NYS Route 31) and Townline Road (NYS Route 429) in the Town of Cambria. The College offers over 60 programs of study and the campus includes nine buildings. In August 2008, Village College Suites was opened to provide on-campus housing for approximately 300 students. Total full-time and part-time enrollment at the College is approximately 7,000 students in credit programs with another 7,500 students enrolled in workforce and community education programs. More information is available at: www.niagaracc.suny.edu

Empire State College, State University of New York

Empire State College is a component of the State University of New York that is dedicated to providing educational opportunities to working adults. There are Empire State College locations in 34 cities in New York, including the Niagara County location in the City of Lockport.

Empire State College offers a wide array of online courses and specializes in distance learning. Its offices in Lockport function primarily as a place for students to meet with faculty advisors and to access the College's resources and student services.

Job Training / Adult Education

Employment and Training Department

The County's Employment and Training Department provides employment services for job seekers such as on-the-job training and vocational classroom training, as well as business services for employers seeking workers. The County provides these services to about 10,000 residents annually. Services include: job opening information, skills and aptitude testing, resume assistance, career counseling, interview coaching, vocational training, workshops and meetings with employers.

Niagara County Community College

NCCC's Division of Workforce and Community Development provides an umbrella of educational services for youth and adults in the Niagara region. Available in a variety of formats, programs include: foundational instruction, life skills, employment readiness, vocational training, career development, professional preparation, testing, and technology education.

Workshops, as well as short-term and long-term training sessions, assist students in developing computer skills and directs students to entry into a certificate or a college program; immediate employment; or immediate employment with continuing education to obtain a certificate or an academic degree. The focus is determined by student need and desire.

The department's case manager works closely with students to identify their interests and skill levels, appropriate options, and available resources for funding. As students become involved in programs, the case manager will continue to help students throughout their experience.

Collaboration with several government and neighborhood organizations means students get more resources to help achieve lifelong goals. The department is also one of the WorkSource One-Stop Partners, a cluster of more than 10 groups working together to provide coordinated delivery of employment services to businesses and job seekers.

At the Career Education and Counseling Center, based at the Trott ACCESS Center, staff members focus on foundational instruction and job-readiness training. Preparation and testing for TABE and COMPASS are also provided.

NCCC participates in the College Acceleration Program (CAP) which is an articulation between NCCC and area high schools that provides over 1,200 students with the opportunity to obtain college credit while still enrolled in high school. Seniors and highly qualified juniors are eligible to be part of the program. The college-level courses are taught at the high school. By taking advantage of this opportunity, students are able to gain college credit while in high school and provide for a smoother transition to college.

Workforce and Community Development programs and services are always being evaluated and updated to provide students with the current information and skills students need to discover and enjoy lifelong learning. In addition to the Sanborn campus, offices are located at NCCC's Niagara Falls Extension Site, and at the Corporate and Business Development Center in the City of Lockport.

Niagara University

Through the university's Family Literacy and Counseling Centers, job readiness programming and educational assistance in literacy and math skills are available. The Office of Continuing and Community Education at NU provides a number of workplace and professional development programs in areas such as computer applications, web graphics, personal enrichment and language. Professional certificates in Geographical Information Systems and Emergency Management are among program offerings. The Department of Nursing offers a bachelor of science nursing completion degree for registered nurses prepared in an accredited Associate Degree Program or Hospital School of Nursing as well as leadership workshops for nursing professionals.

Orleans/Niagara Board of Cooperative Educational Services (ONBOCES)

The Orleans/Niagara Board of Cooperative Educational Services (ONBOCES) provides a variety of vocational and alternative education programs to students in Niagara and Orleans counties. The ONBOCES district encompasses the ten public school districts in Niagara County and two school districts in Orleans County.

ONBOCES offers career and technical education training in over two dozen fields, including automotive repair, computer technology, law enforcement, and health occupations. ONBOCES also offers continuing education and special education programs.

During the 2006-2007 school year, ONBOCES served 1,021 general education students and 490 students with disabilities. According to the ONBOCES 2006-2007 Report Card, 71 percent of the previous year's graduates were either employed (35 percent) or continuing with post-secondary education (36 percent).

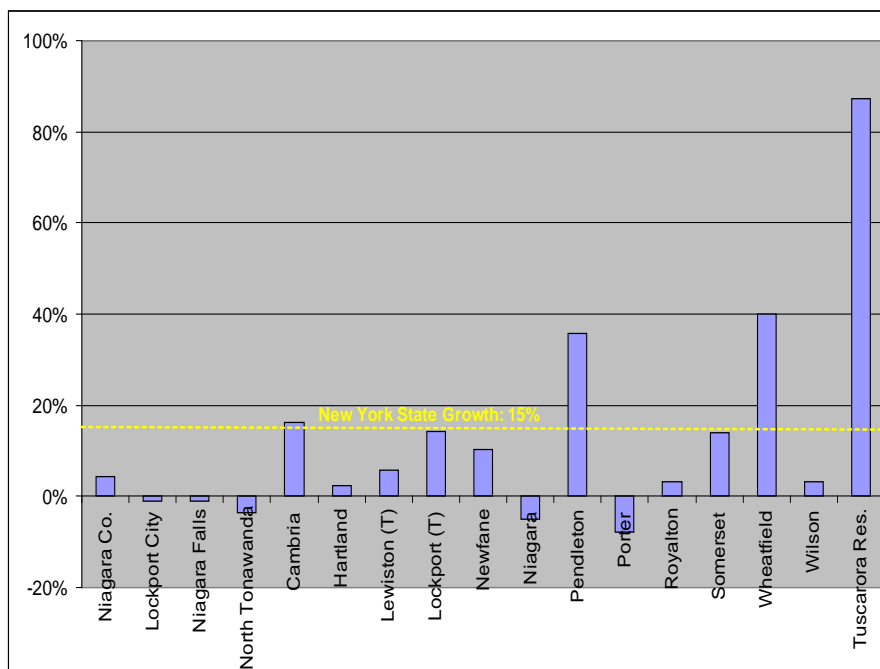
ONBOCES' Niagara County facilities are clustered in Sanborn in western part of Cambria, and include Niagara Academy and Niagara Career and Technical Educational Center and the Orleans / Niagara East Conference Center both located next to NCCC on Saunders Settlement Road.

Population and School Enrollment

Figure VIII-1 illustrates changes in school age population for municipalities in Niagara County between 1990 and 2000. At the time of the 2000 Census, 41,000 school-age children (ages 5 to 17) resided in Niagara County, a four percent increase over 1990. While the County's school-age population increased over this time period, it failed to keep pace with the rest of the State: Statewide, the school-age population increased by 15 percent.

The greatest proportional increase in school-age children was on the Tuscarora Reservation, which experienced an increase of 122 children, or an 87 percent increase over 1990 enrollment. The towns of Wheatfield and Pendleton experienced increases of 40 and 36 percent, respectively, and the Village of Barker experienced a 34 percent increase. Several communities had growth approximately on par with the Statewide rate: The towns of Cambria, Lockport, Newfane and Somerset gained school-age residents at rates between 10 and 16 percent between 1990 and 2000. The Village of Middleport also gained population in this age bracket.

Figure VIII- 1 Change in School-Age Population, 1990-2000



The towns of Porter and Niagara experienced the greatest declines in school-age population, with a total loss of nearly 200 school-age residents. The cities of Niagara Falls, North Tonawanda and Lockport lost population in this age cohort, at rates of about one percent in Niagara Falls and Lockport and 3.7 percent in North Tonawanda. In real numbers, these three cities lost a total of 368 school-age residents between 1990 and 2000. The villages of Youngstown, Lewiston and Wilson also experienced decreases in this age cohort.

Niagara County began conducting an annual school enrollment survey in 1999. Using information from this survey, Figure VIII-2 summarizes changes in public school enrollment countywide between 1999 and 2007. Public school enrollment in the 1998-1999 school year was nearly 36,000.

Figure VIII-2 Change in Public School Enrollment Countywide, '99 – '06

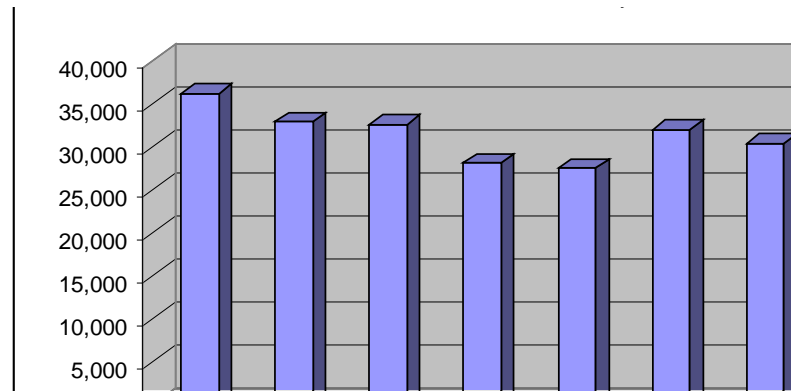


Table VIII-4 summarizes public school enrollment in the 1998-1999 and 2006-2007 school years. Public School enrollment declined between these two school years by approximately 3,500 students to its current level of approximately 32,400 students. Decline was greatest in the three city school districts: North Tonawanda (-18 percent), Niagara Falls (-17 percent) and Lockport City School Districts (-17 percent). Three school districts added to their enrollment in this period: Barker Central (+27 percent, Niagara Wheatfield (+5 percent) and Starpoint Central (+7 percent).

Table VIII-4 – Change in Public School Enrollment, 1998/'99 – 2006/'07

Public School District	Enrollment		Change	
	1998/99	2006/07	Number	Percent
Barker Central	863	1097	234	27%
Lewiston Porter Central	2504	2338	-166	-7%
Lockport City	6197	5169	-1028	-17%
Newfane	2068	2036	-32	-2%
Niagara Falls City	9108	7551	-1557	-17%
Niagara Wheatfield Central	3884	4074	190	5%
North Tonawanda City	5295	4353	-942	-18%
Royalton Hartland Central	1772	1553	-219	-12%
Starpoint Central	2636	2822	186	7%
Wilson Central	1556	1428	-128	-8%
TOTAL	35883	32421	-3462	-10%

Educational Attainment

Table VIII-5 summarizes educational attainment during the 1990 - 2000 school year. Between 1990 and 2000, educational attainment improved in Niagara County, with a seven percent increase in the proportion of residents attaining at least a high school diploma. This compares favorably to a five percent increase nationally, and a four percent increase statewide. In Niagara County, this measure of educational attainment improved in every town and city in the County and by 22 percent within the Tuscarora Indian Reservation.

Table VIII-5 – Change in Educational Attainment, 1990 - 2000

Town / City	Residents w/at least a HS Diploma		
	1990	2000	Change
Lewiston	87%	89%	1%
Somerset	81%	84%	3%
New York State	75%	79%	4%
Porter	85%	90%	4%
Niagara	74%	79%	5%
United States	75%	80%	5%
North Tonawanda	80%	85%	6%
Cambria	82%	88%	6%
Wilson	77%	83%	6%
Wheatfield	80%	87%	7%
Lockport (Town)	81%	88%	7%
Royalton	77%	84%	7%
Niagara County	76%	83%	7%
Lockport	74%	81%	8%
Pendleton	83%	91%	8%
Hartland	74%	83%	9%
Niagara Falls	68%	77%	9%
Newfane	76%	86%	10%
Tuscarora Reservation	64%	86%	22%

Fiscal Conditions

Following is a fiscal overview of the 10 Niagara County school districts from the 2001 - 2002 school year to the 2005 - 2006 school year, the most recent school year for which information is currently available. Information for Niagara County has been compared to statewide data whenever possible, in order to place County conditions in a suitable context for comparison.

This section summarizes data from the New York State Education Department (NYSED) Chapter 655 Report and reports generated by NYSED's Fiscal Analysis Research Unit (FARU). Specific analyses conducted by NYSED and/or FARU were also utilized, as noted.

The FARU reports provide a comprehensive analysis of fiscal statistics and trends for each New York State school district, as well as aggregate data at the state level. In addition, the Chapter 655 Report provides specific per pupil revenue and expenditure data and data on enrollment trends and student performance. This overview focuses on the financial aspects of the Niagara County school districts.

Financial Data

Revenue and expenditure numbers for Niagara County's ten school districts, and for New York State as a whole, are provided below. Revenues and expenditures are broken down into subcategories and compared to statewide standards in order to provide a complete picture of where local schools' funds come from, how they are spent, and how local trends compare to the rest of the State.

Revenues

Revenues are broken down into three sources: State, local and Federal. Descriptions of these sources follow.

State Sources - State sources are divided into two categories:

STAR - Represents revenues from the State for school tax relief (STAR) payments. Under this program New York State provides revenues to school districts so that homeowners may receive an exemption (in whole or in part) from the district property tax. State Aid - represents revenues received by a district from New York State

Local Sources - Local sources include General Fund revenues, interfund transfers, and proceeds of long term debt.

Federal Sources - All revenues provided by the Federal government.

Expenditures

Board of Education - This item consists of expenditures related to the Board of Education, including the Board of Education members, the district clerk's office, auditing services, the treasurer's office, the tax collector's office, legal services, and the school census.

Central Administration - This item consists of expenditures for central administration, including the chief school officer (superintendent), the business office, the purchasing office, the personnel office, the records management officer, public information and services, and fees for fiscal agents.

Instructional Expenditures - This item consists of instruction-related expenses, such as teacher salaries, curriculum development and supervision.

Operation & Maintenance - This item consists of General Fund and Special Aid Fund expenditures for the operation and maintenance of physical facilities plus repair reserve expenditures.

Fringe Benefits & Other Undistributed Funds - This expenditure item consists of teacher related benefits such as retirement and health insurance. It also includes other undistributed funds mainly used for outside service fees.

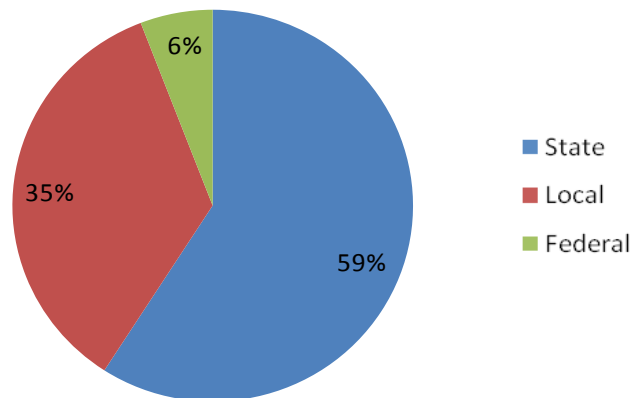
Other Expenditures - This expenditure category consists of all other expenditure items not included in the other categories. This consists primarily of intrafund transfers and community service program (i.e. recreation, youth, parent-teacher association) expenditures.

NOTE: Transportation and debt service (principal and interest) expenditures are considered separately from the above expenditures and are not included in this overview.

Summary of Fiscal Conditions and Trends

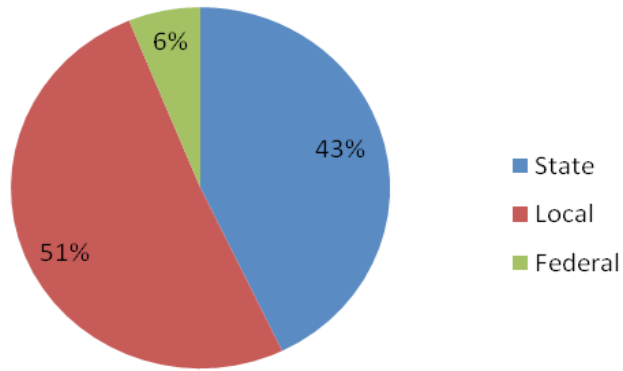
Revenues for the 10 Niagara County school districts totaled \$481.7 million for the 2005-06 school year. As illustrated in Figure VIII-3, State sources, which include the STAR and State Aid components, made up the majority of revenues (59.1 percent), totaling \$284.5 million. Local sources accounted for 35.1 percent of total revenues or \$169.1 million. Federal sources made up the smallest portion, representing only 5.8 percent of all revenues or \$28.1 million.

Figure VIII-3 Distribution of Niagara County School District Revenues by Source, 2005-06



Niagara County school district revenues represented just over 1 percent of all school revenues for the State of New York, which totaled \$46.2 billion for the 2005-06 school year. In contrast to Niagara County, local revenues were the majority source statewide, making up 50.9 percent of total revenues as illustrated in Figure VIII-4. State sources represented 42.9 percent of total statewide revenues. As in Niagara County, Federal sources represented approximately 6 percent of total revenues.

Figure VIII-4 Distribution of New York State School District Revenues by Source, 2005-06

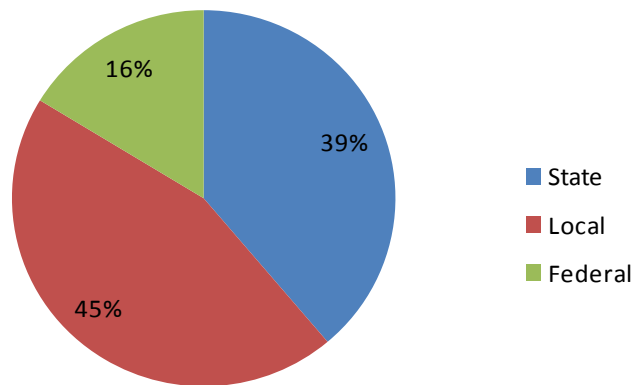


Revenue Growth Trends 2001-02 to 2005-06

Figure VIII-5 illustrates revenue growth for Niagara County schools during the 2001 – 2002 and 2005 – 2006 school years. Total revenues for Niagara County’s school districts grew by \$63.6 million or 15.2 percent during these periods (\$418.1 million to \$481.8 million). This was approximately half the growth rate of statewide revenues, which grew 31.7 percent over this four-year period.

The largest portion of the \$63 million growth in Niagara County school district revenues was in local sources, which accounted for 44.9 percent or \$28.6 million. State sources represented the second largest portion of revenue growth, making up 38.9 percent of total revenue growth (\$24.7 million). The proportion of growth attributed to Federal sources was the smallest, accounting for only 16.2 percent of all revenue growth in Niagara County (\$10.3 million).

Figure VIII-5 Distribution of Niagara County School District Revenue Growth by Source, 2001-‘02 to 2005-‘06



In comparison, as shown in Figure VIII-6, local sources also accounted for almost two-thirds of total statewide revenue growth (65.9 percent). State sources accounted for less than a quarter of the statewide revenue growth (24.6 percent), and Federal sources represented the smallest proportion at 9.6 percent.

Figure VIII-6 Distribution of New York State School District Revenue Growth by Source, 2001-'02 to 2005-'06

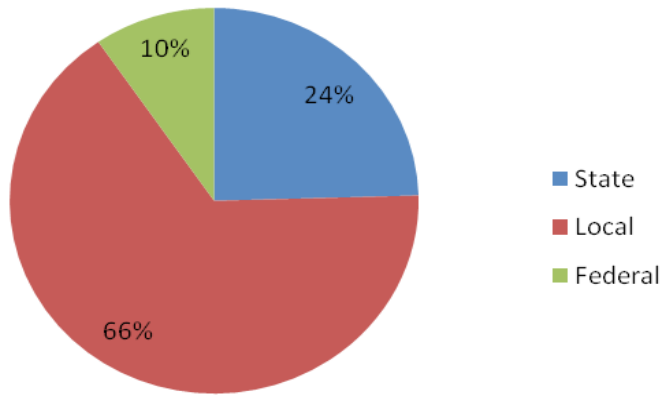


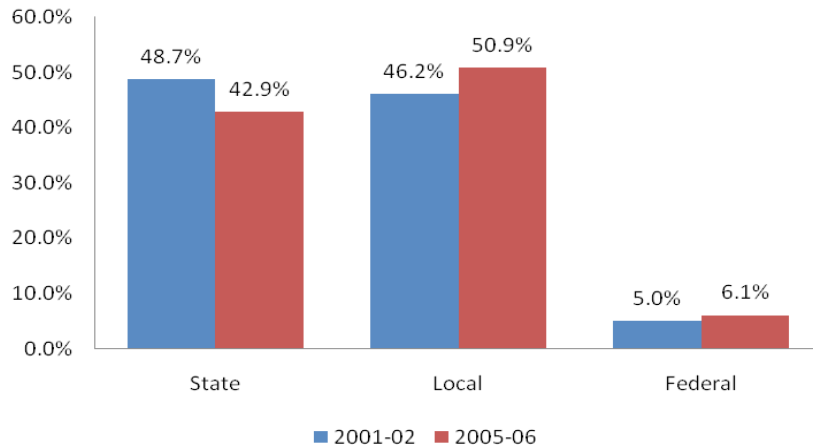
Figure VIII-7 Change in Share of Total Revenue – Niagara County School Districts, 2001-02 to 2005-06



As shown in Figure VIII-7, the respective share represented by the three main sources did not vary greatly for the Niagara County school districts from the 2001-02 to the 2005-06 school year. The share represented by State sources decreased slightly from 62.1 percent of total revenues to 59.1 percent. The proportion of total revenue from local sources increased slightly from 33.6 percent to 35.1 percent. Likewise, the proportion from Federal sources increased slightly, from 4.2 percent to 5.8 percent.

Statewide, changes in revenue sources' representative shares were slightly larger than at the local level in this four-year period as shown in Figure VIII-8. The most notable change was the decrease in State revenues as a proportion of all revenues, from 48.7 to 42.9 percent. Local sources became more prominent as a result, increasing to 50.9 percent of revenues, from 46.2 percent in 2001-02. Federal sources' share increased slightly from 5 percent to 6.1 percent.

Figure VIII-8 Change in Share of Total Revenue – New York State School Districts, 2001-02 to 2005-06

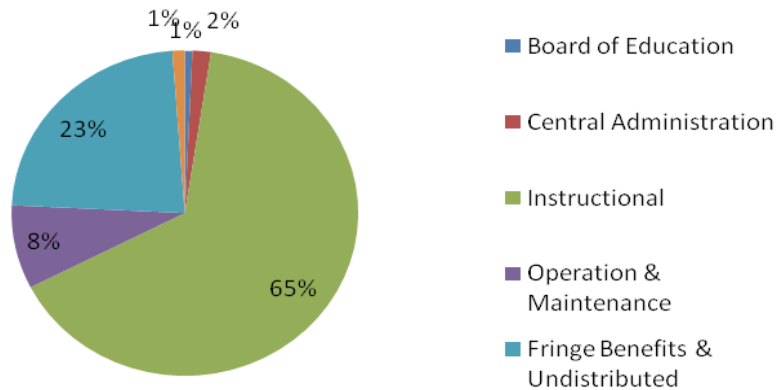


Total Expenditures

Expenditures for the Niagara County school districts totaled \$413.2 million for the 2005-06 school year. This total represented just over one percent of the total expenditures for school districts statewide, which was \$40.5 billion. This corresponds closely to Niagara County’s proportion of statewide public school enrollment: 1.2 percent of the State’s 2.7 million students are enrolled in Niagara County’s districts.

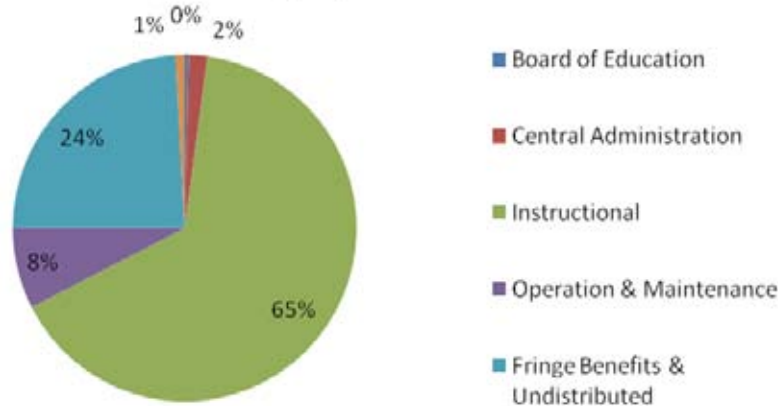
Instructional expenditures made up the largest portion of expenditures for school districts in Niagara County in 2005-06 as shown in Figure VIII-9, representing 65 percent of the total or \$268.7 million. Fringe benefits (and other undistributed funds) accounted for the second largest portion of total expenditures, making up 23.1 percent of the total or \$95.4 million. The next largest portion was operation and maintenance expenses, accounting for 8.3 percent of total expenditures, or \$34.4 million.

Figure VIII-9 Niagara County School District Expenditures by Category, 2005-06



Statewide, instructional expenditures (65.4 percent) accounted for the vast majority of total expenditures for the 2005-06 school year as shown in Figure VIII-10. Fringe benefits were the second highest expenditure, making up 24.1 percent of all expenses. Operations and maintenance expenses were the third highest component of total statewide expenditures, representing 7.5 percent of the total.

Figure VIII-10 New York State School District Expenditures by Category, 2005-06



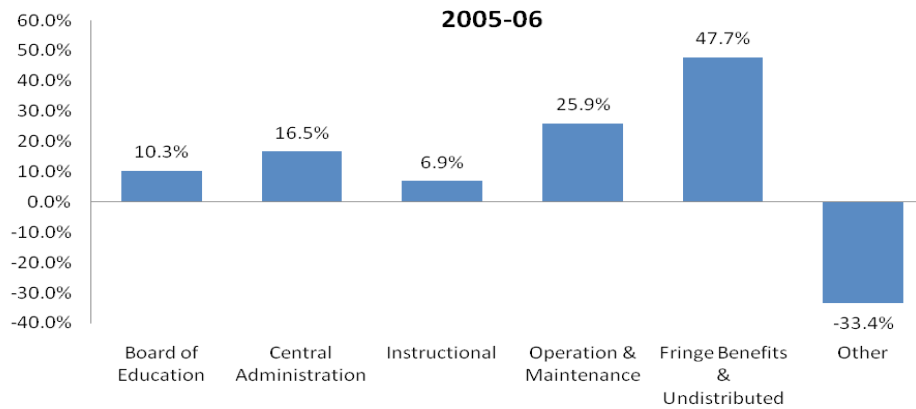
Expenditure Growth Trends 2001-02 to 2005-06

Total expenditures in the Niagara County school districts increased 15 percent from \$359.1 million in the 2001-02 school year to \$413.2 million in the 2005-06 school year (a \$54 million increase). By comparison, statewide school district expenditures increased by 27.1 percent.

The largest percent increase in Niagara County school district expenditures from 2001-02 to 2005-06 occurred in fringe benefits as shown in Figure VIII-11, which increased 47.7 percent from \$64.6 million to \$95.4 million over the four-year period.

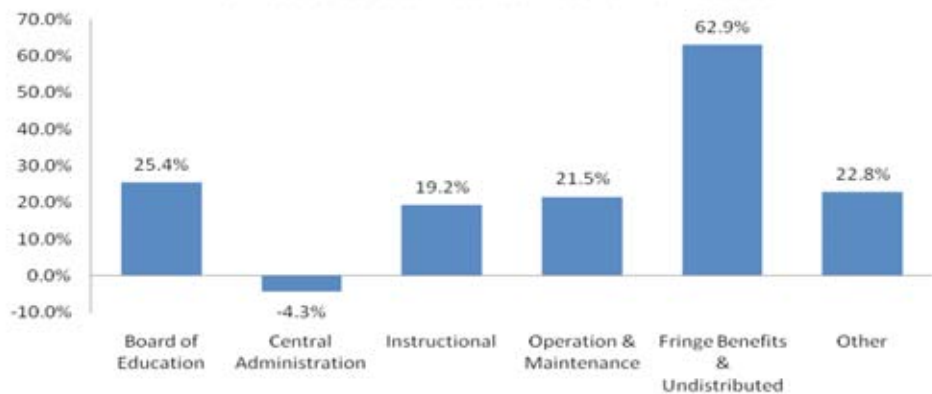
The second largest percent increase was in operation expenses, which increased 25.9 percent from \$27.3 million to \$34.4 million. Other “expenditures” (which primarily include intrafund transfers and community service program expenditures) was the only expense category that declined over the four-year period, decreasing 33.4 percent from \$7.1 million to \$4.7 million.

Figure VIII-11 Percent Change in Expenditures by Category – Niagara County School Districts, 2001-'02 to 2005-'06



Fringe benefit expenditures had the highest growth rate statewide from the 2001-02 to the 2005-06 school year, increasing by 62.9 percent as shown in Figure VIII-12. Board of Education expenditures showed the second highest increase, growing by 25.4 percent. Central administration expenditures decreased on a statewide basis, declining by 4.3 percent.

Figure VIII-12 Percent Change in Expenditures by Category – New York State School Districts, 2001-'02 to 2005-'06



Expenditure Per Pupil for the 2005-06 School Year

Analyzing the expenditure (or cost) and revenue per pupil is a common way of looking at the amount that a school district invests in each of its student's education. Overall, the Niagara County school districts invested less money per pupil than the State average in the 2005-06 school year. The Niagara County districts averaged a cost of \$12,555 per pupil, which was 77.4 percent of the average State cost per pupil.

Table VIII-6 summarizes per pupil expenditures by school district during the 2005 – 2006 school year. Within the County, the Barker Central School District exhibited the highest cost per pupil, \$14,383, which was 14.6 percent higher than the County average but 11.3 percent less than the State average. The Niagara Falls School District had the second highest cost per pupil at \$14,339. Starpoint School District had the lowest cost per pupil in the County, spending \$11,243 per student. This was 10.5 percent lower than the County average and 30.7 percent lower than the State average. Lockport School District exhibited the second lowest cost per pupil at \$11,335. The expenditure cost per pupil and percent of the State expenditure cost per pupil is provided below for each of the ten school districts in Niagara County.

Table VIII-6 – Per Pupil Expenditures by School District, 2005-‘06

School District	Total Enrollment	Expenditure Cost/Pupil	Percent of State Average
Lewiston-Porter Central School District	2,429	\$13,320	82.2%
Lockport City School District	5,543	\$11,335	69.9%
Newfane Central School District	2,120	\$12,071	74.5%
Niagara-Wheatfield Central School District	4,036	\$12,306	75.9%
Niagara Falls City School District	8,491	\$14,339	88.4%
North Tonawanda City School District	4,467	\$11,576	71.4%
Starpoint Central School District	2,859	\$11,243	69.4%
Royalton-Hartland Central School District	1,614	\$11,780	72.7%
Barker Central School District	1,082	\$14,383	88.7%
Wilson Central School District	1,487	\$11,894	73.4%
TOTAL ENROLLMENT/AVERAGE	34,128	\$12,555	77.4%
State of New York		\$16,212	100.0%

Issues and Opportunities

A variety of issues and opportunities were identified by stakeholders during the planning process, most importantly as part of scheduled meetings that took place during June 2008 that focused on education and related topics. The following information is summarized from that meeting and categorized according to the five planning subregions of the County. Notes of that and all stakeholder meetings are also provided in the Appendix of this Plan.

Eastern Communities Subregion

Town of Hartland, Town of Royalton, & Village of Middleport

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- Classes and job training programs are missing key components of the working population (e.g., there is no Future Farmers of America type programs), and there is not enough training in the latest technologies.
- Taxes are increasing as population is decreasing.
- There is a need for an additional computer (Wi-Fi)/ library/resource center.
- There is a need for a Niagara County Community College satellite school or satellite classroom facility.

Key assets and opportunities that should be considered by the County include:

- Royalton-Hartland School District has plenty of room for expansion without the need for additional construction.
- The school district's grounds and facilities are environmentally clean.

Central Communities Subregion

Town of Cambria, Town of Lockport, City of Lockport, Town of Pendleton

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- School consolidation may be a way to increase efficiency is a major issue.
- Teacher salaries should be uniform; there should be a level playing field among districts.
- There should be other funding sources than taxes.

Key assets and opportunities that should be considered by the County include:

- There are more than enough school buildings in this part of the County.
- Link education and job training programs to tourism, Erie Canal, and wine trails.
- Educational programs, especially at the Community College level, can be tied to the County's marketing/business development (e.g., if you want to attract employers in a specialized industry, take time to discuss how NCCC can help develop a workforce in that industry).

Lakefront Communities Subregion

Town of Somerset, Village of Barker, Town of Newfane, Town of Wilson, Village of Wilson

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- The school districts' issues are similar to those of a private business: there is a need to innovate and to balance revenues and expenditures, etc.
- High fuel costs are a major issue, because of the dispersed nature of the population in this area.
- School districts need more diverse sources of revenue.
- Schools and job training programs need to stay ahead of workforce needs and keep up with changes in technology (e.g., agricultural industry trends).

Key assets and opportunities that should be considered by the County include:

- The quality of the education is good and/or improving: Nearly all districts in Niagara County have earned improved scores in math and science.
- Consolidation of administrative/business functions may be possible for some districts.

- Schools are community centers of activity.
- School facilities promote and provide quality-of-life activities – they are safe and clean.
- Each student can get personalized attention in a rural school district.

Lower River Communities Subregion

Town of Lewiston, Town of Porter, Village of Lewiston, Village of Youngstown

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- There seems to be a “disconnect” between career guidance and local economic development programs.
- Tax levies and budget approval are major political issues every year.
- Schools need up-to-date technology and infrastructure (hardware, software, etc.).
- Need coordinated business partnerships with academia.
- School facilities need to be maintained.
- Schools need to be community centers for sports and athletic activities.
- Boards of Education should be policy makers and understand that they impact enrollment and the degree to which people want to move into their school districts.

Key assets and opportunities that should be considered by the County include:

- There are two institutions of higher education in the community, offering a variety of programs and degrees.
- Good schools and higher education “fuel” the intellectual desires of the community and can make an area more attractive as a place to live.
- There is good support within the County for the providers of educational services: The BOCES system facilitates individual districts in equipment purchasing and staff development, and Niagara University offers teacher training.
- Schools are major employers in the County.
- Educational institutions give back to their communities (service learning, volunteerism, etc.).
- The Nioga Library System (shared by Niagara, Orleans and Genesee Counties) provides dispersed opportunities for learning and enrichment.
- School test scores are reasonably good and consistent.
- The area has an abundance of professional educators (good workforce to draw from)

Upper River Communities Subregion

City of Niagara Falls, Town of Niagara, Town of Wheatfield,
City of North Tonawanda

Primary issues and challenges identified include:

- This part of the County is home to an economically disadvantaged student population and enrollment has been dropping. Over the last two years, the district has lost 2,000 students and compressed its facilities.
- School district buildings are being closed/re-used/sold for other uses in Niagara Falls.
- Improve the economic base to retain current generation of students.
- Student population has many needs and requires guidance; guidance counselors are available for students starting at kindergarten level.

- Key assets and opportunities that should be considered by the County include:
- Infrastructure and buildings are very well maintained as a result of State funding: The Niagara Falls City School District has not raised its tax levy in several years. State funding has allowed the budget to remain steady in the \$20 to \$25 million range, despite falling population and enrollment.
 - The residency rule for teachers in the Niagara Falls City School District maintains a pool of well-paid professionals looking for upscale City housing.
 - School facilities contribute to quality of life in the City: School libraries are open to the community; buildings are open for adult education, etc.
 - BOCES classes are a major asset: they provide education oriented around job opportunities.
 - The Niagara Falls City School District's "Pride Program" provides after-hours (3-5 pm) classes focused on earning a GED.

Strategies

It is clear from discussions during the comprehensive planning process that many stakeholders, including local residents as well as educators and related service providers acknowledge that there are some significant issues related to the provision of educational services in Niagara County. Many, but not all, issues center around commonly expressed themes including:

- The continually increasing school taxes on property owners at a time of decreasing population in the County;
- The need to identify additional funding sources for education;
- The perception, and perhaps a reality, that there are redundancies and inefficiencies in service within and among school districts;
- Concerns over the escalating cost of fuel, especially in transporting students to and from dispersed rural locations;
- The possible time lag between the needs of employers for particular skill sets in the workforce and job training programs to meet those needs; and
- The need for improved educational facilities, resources and infrastructure, such as high-tech computer software and hardware.

These issues are complex and will not be resolved quickly or easily by any single action on the County's part or by other stakeholders. It is important to remember that this Comprehensive Plan is intended to prompt discussion on these issues, and possible ways to resolve them, among multiple school districts, educators, and residents. It is critical that these stakeholders create and sustain an ongoing dialogue, perhaps through a joint action committee involving all school districts and educators in the County including administrators, teachers, transportation officials, institutions of higher learning such as NCCC, and student representatives.

A countywide dialogue needs to focus on cost reduction initiatives by identifying where efficiencies and cost cutting measures can be established without adversely affecting the quality of services from a district and countywide perspectives. For example, such a committee would be well suited to look at possible partnerships among school districts and between the public school systems and the private sector. This committee could investigate the feasibility of inter-district sharing of staff, resources, training programs, equipment, transportation services, etc.

Gri-Budget

*Create
Opportunities
for Dialogue*

It is also important to consider that land use and development decisions can have significant effects on the need for public services and infrastructure, including educational facilities and related services. Sprawling development patterns that result in dispersed populations particularly in rural areas tend to translate into higher transportation costs on districts and consequently a need to site school facilities in multiple locations according to residential development patterns.

The land use and development principles recommended throughout this Plan provide opportunities to manage costs to taxpayers and school districts by encouraging redevelopment in areas where school facilities already exist. Managed growth and concentrated forms of development can control the cost of providing services and related infrastructure at dispersed locations and result in smaller taxpayer burdens by directing resident and student populations back to the traditional urban and developed centers of the County.

Goals, Objectives & Recommendations

Goal – The Countywide Availability of High Quality Education

To make available to all County residents the highest quality educational services, facilities, experiences and attainment opportunities possible.

Objective

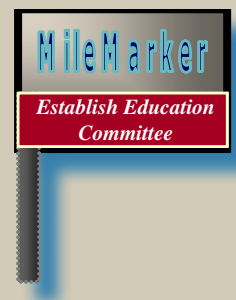
- Identify deficiencies and inefficiencies in the educational system countywide by involving all school districts in dialogue, focusing on the need to provide cost-effective services, appropriate job training programs, additional library facilities, technical resource needs, before- and after-school programs, and sports, music and art programs.

Recommendations

- Establish an ongoing coordinating committee of school district administrators, private industry representatives, parents, teachers and students to serve as a clearinghouse for issues, opportunities and ideas that can continuously monitor how well the education system is serving the community from a unified, countywide perspective involving all school districts.
- Identify alternative funding sources and opportunities for coordination and sharing of services and facilities among school districts to help offset some costs, including securing public or private sector foundation grants or corporate sponsors, as possible additional funding mechanisms for improving educational opportunities, facilities and resources in the County.

Goal – Meet Existing and Future Workforce Needs

To utilize a comprehensive and coordinated Education & Training Program to meet the existing and future workforce needs of local communities and area employers, based on existing countywide priorities such as agricultural preservation, tourism and high technology businesses.





Objective

- Coordinate districtwide and inter-district educational policies and programs in schools to train and provide for local employment opportunities specific to the County's urban, suburban and rural businesses and industry needs.

Recommendations

- Continue to develop, provide and enhance job training programs offering long-term skilled employment and career opportunities which can provide on-the-job training possibilities, particularly in agriculture and agri-tourism based sectors of the economy.
- Support job shadowing programs countywide in partnership with local governments, school districts, and businesses, as well as NCCC and BOCES.
- Coordinate County and local economic development efforts with the countywide educational system and local school districts, including enhanced programs offered through Niagara County Community College and Niagara University.
- Coordinate the County's economic development programs, outreach and marketing to prospective employers with input and assistance from local educators, including capitalizing on staff knowledge, resources, expertise and experience of NCCC and Niagara University in County efforts to attract and retain businesses and industry.

Goal – Fully Utilize Existing Educational Resources

To utilize the existing educational resources provided in the County to their fullest potential.

Objective

- Encourage new private and public sector development and redevelopment opportunities through County and local initiatives in areas where a surplus or anticipated surplus of school buildings and other education-related facilities exist, including buildings, libraries and athletic facilities, consistent with an emphasis on upgrading existing facilities and infrastructure over construction of new facilities, unless otherwise warranted.

Recommendations

- In areas of potentially expanding student enrollment, the County and local school districts in coordination with local communities must consider the goals and objectives contained throughout this Comprehensive Plan and in local plans in all siting decisions for new school/educational facilities and satellite locations for facilities related to higher education.
- Support school districts' efforts to find suitable adaptive reuses for surplus facilities and coordinate marketing the availability of sites and facilities through County Economic Development.
- In cooperation with cities, towns and villages, and as part of an overall assessment of parks and recreation needs in the County (see Chapter VII), develop



joint-use agreements with public school districts for the use of their grounds as possible “after hours” recreation areas and community centers.

- Encourage, support and facilitate increased coordination among schools and school districts to share staff, resources, equipment and facilities as appropriate, including efforts to pursue and secure funding for shared services.

Goal – Retain Youth in the County

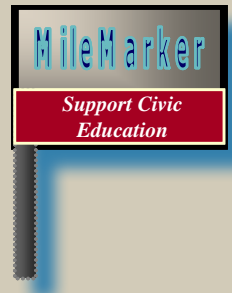
To encourage educational programs, job and career growth opportunities and related quality-of-life efforts like affordable housing to prevent the outmigration of the County’s youth.

Objectives

- Support local and countywide efforts and marketing campaigns to project a positive image of the County and promote local communities as places that provide diverse lifestyles, employment opportunities, job training and career opportunities.
- Develop programs and opportunities for middle school and high school students to become more interested and better educated about the history and unique character of local communities by participating in local government, attending meetings, participating in civic activities and through volunteer organizations.

Recommendations

- Create internships and job-shadowing programs within various County departments for students at the high school and college level to provide job-training experience and career guidance.
- Support a greater emphasis on civics in school curricula including local community and County history as well as opportunities for participating in the day-to-day operations of local governments to foster an increased awareness in students about issues that affect quality of life in Niagara County.
- Work with the Youth Bureau to develop a mock County Legislature for high school-aged students as a means of engaging students, encouraging their participation in local decision making and giving them a larger stake in the future of their communities.
- Encourage and include school age children to participate in community planning exercises and initiatives by holding youth summits that focus on future needs and issues of young adults in communities, including seeking input on upgrades to facilities for athletics and recreation programming.
- When developing educational materials for County departments and services, consider child-friendly versions for distribution at elementary and middle schools.



Funding Opportunities

Projects and needs identified in this chapter and elsewhere within this Comprehensive Plan, as well as projects that may be identified in other plans and reports, including the annual Niagara County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, require funding assistance to be implemented due to the fiscal constraints, such as budget limitations, of Niagara County and its communities. A variety of funding opportunities exist at local, regional, State and Federal levels of government as well as potential sources of assistance from the private sector. Often the amount of funding needed to implement a project, however may be in excess of what may be available from one source so combinations of funding sources may be needed to finance a project. Funding mechanisms may include earmarks/appropriations/member items, bonding, direct grants, competitive grants, general fund items, foundation monies, corporate assistance and so forth.

Funding opportunities change as economic conditions change, particularly at State and Federal levels. Currently the nation is experiencing a deep economic downturn. Increased funding opportunities exist at this time through the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. This Federal Stimulus Bill is intended to stimulate the economy and employment by providing funding to undertake projects at local levels. In many cases the Federal Stimulus Bill appropriates funding above typical annual Federal spending levels, such as what may be authorized through the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009. Funding will be distributed through existing Federal programs and through new programs or may be passed through existing State programs.

The information provided below identifies Federal Stimulus funding opportunities and projects that have been identified to date at the time of preparing this document. The projects identified below are listed because they relate directly to this chapter and this particular focus area of the Comprehensive Plan. These projects are considered crucial to the health and well being of the communities in Niagara County and for improving the functioning of County government in providing services to the residents and businesses of Niagara County.

The following list of projects may be revised as projects are undertaken and new projects are identified and as local, State and Federal conditions change. Therefore this list of projects should not be considered to be inclusive of all potential projects that may be in need of funding assistance. Also, combined funding assistance for some of these projects may be available from other Federal, State, regional, local and private sector sources.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 includes funding provisions in Education and Training that include, but not limited to:

- \$53.6 billion for the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund
- \$13 billion for Title I
- \$12.2 billion for Special Education/IDEA
- \$15.6 billion to increase the maximum Pell Grant by \$500
- \$3.95 billion for job training
- \$1 billion for NASA
- \$3 billion for the National Science Foundation
- \$2 billion for Science at the Department of Energy
- \$830 million for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association

Niagara County Projects include:

Niagara County Community College:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Replace Outdated Electrical Switching Gear	\$ 500,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reforest Northeast Part of Campus/Replace Screening Trees	\$ 150,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construct Access Road for Service Areas & New Athletic Fields	\$ 1,200,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construct Multi-Use Trail System Throughout Campus	\$ 1,018,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Repair and Reconstruct Existing Roads and Parking Lots	\$ 2,063,200
<input type="checkbox"/>	Correct Health, Safety, and ADA Deficiencies on Campus	\$ 1,615,400
<input type="checkbox"/>	Remediate Drainage Problems on Site	\$ 315,400
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construct Vehicle Maintenance and Equipment Building/	\$ 2,436,200
	 Improve Operations and Maintenance Areas	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Relocate & Renovate Athletic Fields/Construct Support Building	\$ 3,000,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construct New Culinary Institute Facility in Niagara Falls	\$ 13,200,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Replace Floors and Doors in Common Areas	\$ 1,729,000
<input type="checkbox"/>	Improve Energy Efficiency by Installing New Environmental	\$ 1,358,400
	 Controls and Replacing Outdated Equipment	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Renew and Improve Safety of Grounds, Fields, and Playgrounds	\$ 618,200
<input type="checkbox"/>	Replace Elevated Courtyard Membranes and Exterior Seals/	\$ 1,560,700
	 Repair and Repoint Brick	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Update Science Center and Improve Facility Safety	\$ 1,366,800
<input type="checkbox"/>	Repair Metal Mansard Roofs	\$ 339,300
<input type="checkbox"/>	Upgrade Classrooms/Lecture Halls to Educational Standards	\$ 5,835,300
<input type="checkbox"/>	Construct New Learning Commons Facility/Renovate Existing	\$ 20,000,000
	 Facility Expansion and Renovation	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Renovate Pool and Retrofit Squash Court	\$ 1,134,000
	 Education Technology	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Upgrade Scientific and Information Technology in Classrooms	\$ 1,329,000

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