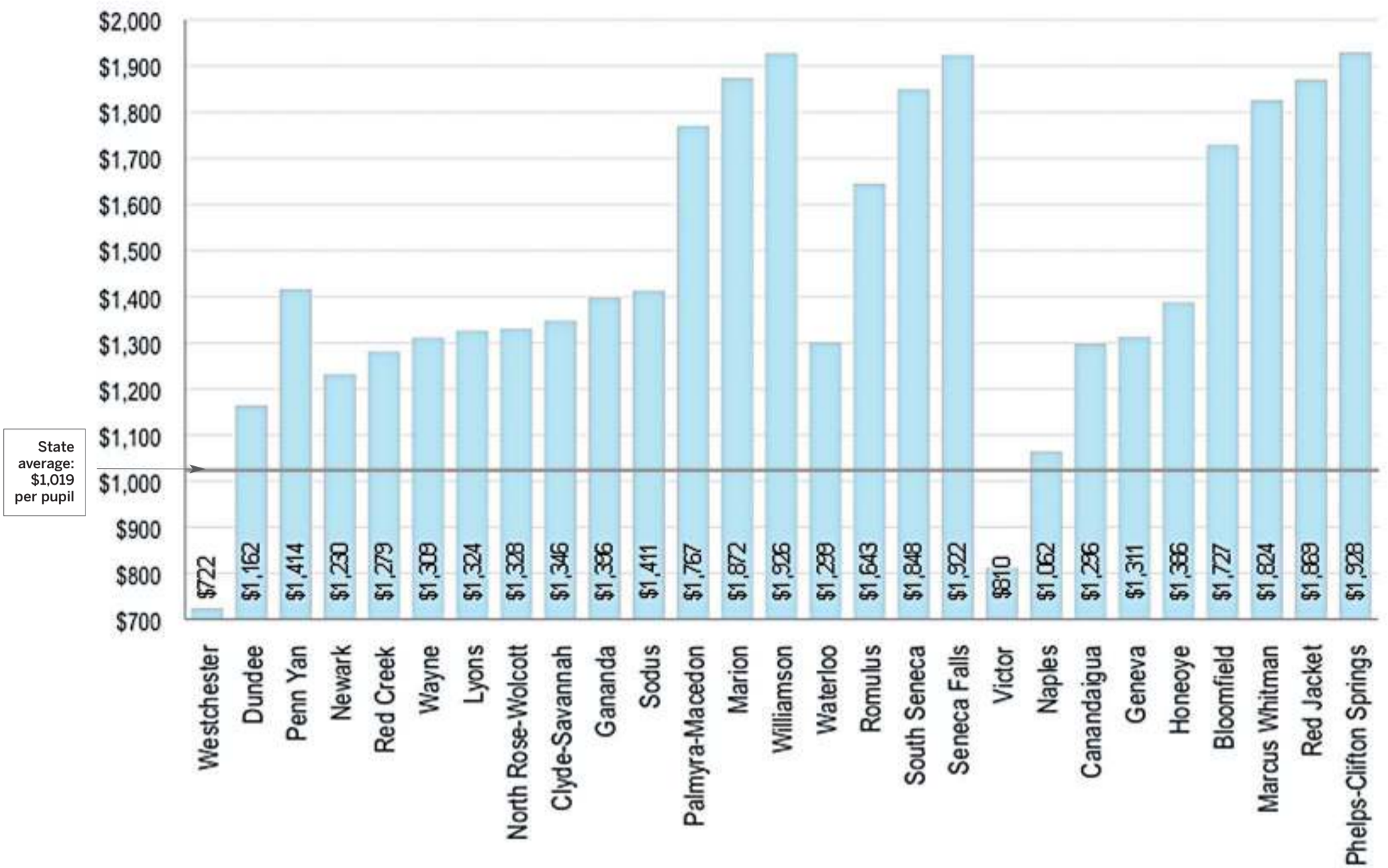


Proposed Aid Cuts Per Pupil



POOREST

School officials say state aid formula flawed

Continued from Page 1A

than their peers come up to against the criminal justice system, he said.

"Poverty contributes to all that," he said, noting that Geneva has established mentor programs and meets regularly with probation officers and courts.

"It's very, very intensive work," he said.



Young

It is a problem common to small cities, according to Young.

Small cities often have higher rates of poverty, crime and truancy, and lower graduation rates, he said.

"One of the things that is said about small cities, if they're not growing, they're declining," he said, adding that Geneva has to struggle against that.

These low rankings are one of the reasons school officials are fighting Gov. Andrew Cuomo's proposed state aid cuts.

Although the state aid formula does take wealth into account, school officials have argued that it is skewed because of a flaw in the formula.

An example of that, according to Midlakes Superintendent Mike Ford, is the Income Wealth Index (IWI).

The IWI has a .65 floor, about two thirds the wealth of an average district. That means districts lower than that are still considered to be .65.

"You don't get credit for that, because they bottom it out at .65, which gives an artificial advantage to the wealthier districts," said Ford, speaking at a recent school board meeting.

Midlakes is 26th on the Business First list.

The aid formula "mutes the impact of students who are on free and reduced

Western NY rankings

Finger Lakes school district rankings (of 67 districts) in the Buffalo Business First study of socioeconomic climate:

- 4 — Victor
- 11 — Wayne
- 12 — Canandaigua
- 13 — Honeoye
- 15 — Bloomfield
- 16 — Naples
- 17 — Gananda
- 26 — Phelps-Clifton Springs
- 27 — Williamson
- 28 — Manchester-Shortsville
- 31 — Marcus Whitman
- 32 — Palmyra-Macedon
- 33 — Seneca Falls
- 34 — Romulus
- 40 — Marion
- 41 — Penn Yan
- 44 — North Rose-Wolcott
- 46 — South Seneca
- 47 — Waterloo
- 53 — Newark
- 62 — Red Creek
- 51 — Sodus
- 56 — Geneva
- 60 — Dundee
- 61 — Lyons
- 63 — Clyde-Savannah

lunch, which are kids who come from poverty. Every research on poverty shows that students that come from poverty may take more resources to get into a comparable level of kids who come from wealth," Ford said.

"One out of three students in our district are eligible for free and reduced lunch, and so we don't gain the benefit of that number because that is muted in the formula," he said.



Michelle Bixby photos / Finger Lakes Times

A long line of concerned Midlakes school district residents waited in a hallway prior to Wednesday's board meeting — and then filled the Intermediate gym.

Percentage of students on free or reduced-price lunch program

ONTARIO

- Victor: 9%
- Canandaigua: 21%
- Bloomfield: 23%
- Phelps-Clifton Springs: 29%
- Naples: 31%
- Honeoye: 32%
- Red Jacket: 34%
- Marcus Whitman: 39%
- Geneva: 58%

SENECA

- Romulus: 29%
- Seneca Falls: 29%
- Waterloo: 42%
- South Seneca: 55%

WAYNE

- Gananda: 19%
- Wayne: 24%
- Williamson: 29%
- Palmyra-Macedon: 30%
- Sodus: 41%
- Marion: 42%
- Red Creek: 45%
- Newark: 49%
- North Rose-Wolcott: 50%
- Clyde-Savannah: 56%
- Lyons: 62%

YATES

- Dundee: 48%
- Penn Yan: 49%

WESTCHESTER

** Range of 0 percent (six school districts in the county) to 61 percent (the Peekskill school district). Nine of Westchester County's 39 school districts had percentages exceeding 25 percent.

Information from the Statewide School Finance Consortium.

What the budget challenges are in ... Clyde-Savannah

There are few topics about which people are more passionate than education, money, and politics.

This year, again, we are seeing the intersection of these hot topics debated in the media, in our school board meetings, and throughout our communities.

An essential conflict between two competing realities has set us on a path with far reaching implications, many of which have potentially devastating consequences for low wealth, rural schools such as Clyde-Savannah.

The first compelling interest is clearly the dire financial condition of our state.

The loss of jobs and investment revenues has translated into significant cuts in the state aid upon which we rely heavily to run our programs.

Coupled with the increases in unfunded mandates and fixed costs, our district will again be



SUPERINTENDENT
THERESA PULOS

dealing with a budget gap in excess of \$2 million.

In the context of these cuts and program reductions, we are gearing up to meet the requirements of the Regents' Reform Agenda which mandates comprehensive reform efforts designed to increase the college and career readiness of our graduates.

The professional development and program changes that arise from these mandates put a fur-

ther strain on our limited resources.

While the financial crisis is undeniable, and the need to better prepare students to be competitive in the 21st century is equally compelling, the ability of low-wealth districts to accomplish the needed growth with staggering cuts to our aid is severely compromised.

Much has been written recently about the inequity in aid distribution between low-wealth districts, especially those in upstate and western New York, and more affluent schools in Putnam and Westchester counties, and Long Island.

Without belaboring the statistics, please consider this one fact.

The average per pupil reduction in aid for students in Wayne County is \$1,456.

The average for all districts in the state is \$ 1,019.

While that discrepancy is alarming, it pales in comparison to the discrepancy when Wayne County is compared to the per pupil reductions in Putnam (\$877), Nassau (\$733) and Westchester (\$722) counties.

The governor is essentially saying students in Wayne County are worth half as much as those who live in more affluent suburbs downstate.

This fundamental inequity is an injustice that must not go unchallenged.

The inequities between our school and those in more affluent districts go far beyond dollars.

The loss of aid in Clyde-Savannah will mean further reductions in opportunities for students.

While we aim to make reductions as far away from core program as possible, our programs do not have layers of electives, extra staff, and enrichments to

buffer the impact.

Our students have the same right to the rigorous and relevant education that will prepare them to compete with students throughout the state.

However, without access to enhancements other students enjoy, they enter the post-high school arena at a disadvantage.

Clyde-Savannah continues to work diligently to build a budget designed to create a smaller but stronger system that is financially sustainable and educationally vital.

The allocation of resources is focused on improving instruction and student achievement.

At Clyde-Savannah, we believe in the unlimited potential of our students. We ask the governor and the state Legislature to give us their commitment to support us in this most worthy endeavor by adopting a budget that reflects equity for all children in the state.