

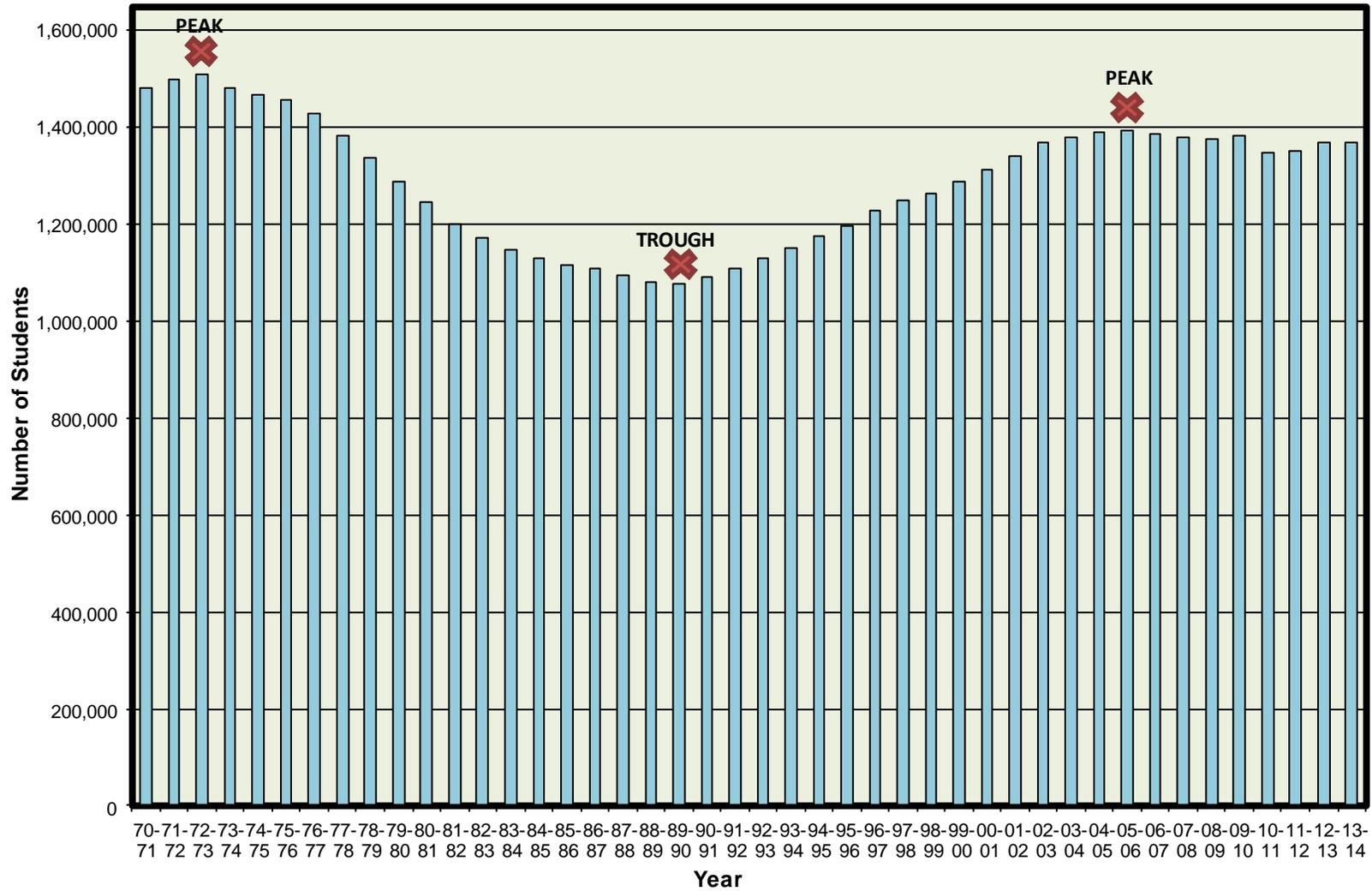
Welcome to our quarterly newsletter, which aims to inform and educate school administrators on the process of performing enrollment projections and other topics related to school demography.

Declining enrollment..... school closures..... re-districting. These are words that I am hearing from many of my clients these days. In about 9 out of every 10 school districts that I have worked with in the last year or so, their enrollment is declining.... and sharply. Is this representative of most districts in New Jersey? Is this a short-term phenomenon, or is this something that may continue for a while?

Enrollment trends are cyclical and do not always follow the population patterns of a community. To see what is going on, let's take a look back in history. The Baby Boomers that were born from 1946 to 1964 led to increasing enrollment, peaking in the early 1970s. The "baby boomette", which are children of the Boomers, led to increasing enrollment in the 1990s. The figure below shows New Jersey's historical enrollment since 1970-71, a 43-year period. Enrollment peaked in 1972-73 before declining for 17 years and bottoming out in 1989-90. Enrollment then increased for 16 years, peaking in 2005-06.

This mirrors what I am seeing at many of the local districts - it takes about 15-17 years for a peak-to-trough or trough-to-peak to occur. A reversal in the enrollment trend takes a long time, which we don't have the time or space to discuss here. If you look at the state data in the most recent decline, the drop in enrollment has not been significant. Since 2005-06, enrollment has declined by about 25,000 students. If historical patterns are any indication, enrollment may decline into the early 2020s and start increasing again when the **grandchildren** of the Boomers are born.

New Jersey Historical Enrollment 1970-71 to 2013-14



Apparently, the districts that I have worked with are not representative of the enrollment trends in the state as a whole. It turns out that the districts having the greatest losses are the District Factor Group I and J districts, many of which have been declining for the last 8-10 years. These districts, which are at the upper end of the socio-economic spectrum, are difficult for younger people in their 20s and 30s to move into due to high-priced homes and taxes. Subsequently, they are older communities (40s and 50s) with a sharply declining birth rate. While many of these districts can offset some of the decline due to families moving in from other communities with school-aged children, it has not been enough to stem the enrollment losses.

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