3 area schools show ‘fiscal stress’

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ALBANY - Three Rochester-area schools were noted for having fiscal strain, a report Thursday said.

Overall, 82 school districts were designated as fiscally stressed under Comptroller Thomas Di-Napoli’s “Fiscal Stress Monitoring System.”

In the region, Holley in Orleans County scored the highest for fiscal stress with a score of 48.3 percent. No Monroe County schools were listed in the report for financial troubles.

Two other area schools — Alexander in Genesee County and Wayne Central in Wayne County — were deemed to be “susceptible to fiscal stress.”

“The overall number of school districts in fiscal stress has essentially remained steady the past three years,” DiNapoli said in a statement.

Four districts had their fiscal stress soar over the past year, including two districts in rural Fulton County and Rhinebeck in Dutchess County. The districts had their score jump more than 40 percentage points over the past year.

The eight school districts were found to have “significant fiscal stress”; there were 24 in “moderate fiscal stress” and 50 that were “susceptible to fiscal stress.”

But the report had some positive news for school districts, which are struggling with limited revenue, higher costs and a tax cap limit that will be near zero for the fiscal year that starts July 1.

About 77 percent of school districts statewide were not in a fiscal stress category in any of the three years that the calculations have been made.

DiNapoli’s report found that regions with the highest number of stressed school districts last year were Long Island (25), central New York (nine) and the Mohawk Valley (seven).

DiNapoli said the goal is to show that districts can take steps to improve their finances, and the annual report helps them gauge their standing among their peers.

“The fact that there’s movement and there is change, it shows that it’s not a static picture,” Di-Napoli told Gannett’s Albany Bureau. He said some districts “have gotten worse,” some “have gotten better” and some show little change.