



**State of New Jersey**  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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January 17, 2017

TO: Chief School Administrators  
District School Business Administrators

FROM: Michael Mindlin, Director  
Fiscal Policy and Planning  
Office of School Finance

SUBJECT: 2017-18 Budget Software Application Initial Release

The initial release of the 2017-18 Budget Software Application will be accessible to authorized school district personnel on or about January 18, 2017, through the Department of Education's (Department's) [Homeroom website](#). The budget software in the Homeroom website is named "2017-2018 Budget Statement Software." This release will include the revenue screen, appropriations screen, recapitulation of balances screen, enrollments screen, most of the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) calculations and supporting documentation items.

### **Accessing the Budget Software Application**

Access to the 2017-18 Budget Software Application is restricted to those school district employees or vendors for whom the school district's Homeroom administrator has created a user account granting access to the school district's budget. Users authorized by the school district must work through the school district's Homeroom administrator to create a unique User ID and Password. Instructions for establishing a Homeroom administrator and for establishing authorized users are documented in the "Homeroom Administrator Manual" available through the Homeroom website. Important to Homeroom administrators: Once you have entered into the Homeroom Administration system, the 2017-18 budget software is named "Budget Statement."

### **Guidance Documents**

The Department has prepared formal guidance for completing the 2017-18 budget software. The *2017-2018 Budget Guidelines and Electronic Data Collection Manual* and related appendices will be accessible through the Department's [School Finance webpage](#) on or before January 18, 2017. Authorized users of the Budget Software Application are encouraged to review the manual prior to preparing the school district's budget statement.

Significant revisions and enhancements to the 2017-18 version of the school district budget software are highlighted in the executive summary section of the *2017-2018 Budget Guidelines and Electronic Data Collection Manual* and are elaborated upon throughout that document.

The significant changes currently include:

- Health care cost adjustment SHBP increase of 8.4 percent (therefore, the maximum adjustment is the increase in health care costs that exceeds 2 percent but not greater than 8.4 percent, or a maximum of 6.4 percent); and
- The term “Core Curriculum Content Standards” has been updated to “New Jersey Student Learning Standards” to reflect the action taken by the state Board of Education in May 2016.

A message on the “Home” tab of the “2017-2018 Budget Statement Software” will indicate when an update to the software has been made subsequent to the software’s initial release. As in prior years, updates may include, but are not limited to, the release of software edits and notification of the availability of the following sections of the application: the “prepare newspaper” file selector; the “prepare user-friendly budget document” selector; the “minimum tax levy report” selector; the report of “district status above or below the expected local levy” selector; the “printable PDF” file selector; and the “county office review” page. The Department will also update the software to pre-load state aid upon release of the 2017-18 state aid numbers. Please note the Department’s updates will not overwrite the district’s previously entered data.

### **Budget Planning**

For purposes of developing your district’s preliminary budget, districts should make allowances for the possibility of changes in state aid from 2016-17 amounts. This recommendation is for planning purposes only, and is no indication of the final state aid allocation for 2017-18. In accordance with *N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-5*, state aid numbers will be provided to school districts within two days after the Governor’s budget message.

The 2017 school election and budget procedures calendar is available through the Department’s School Finance webpage at “[Election Calendar](#).” The election calendar includes dates relevant to school budget preparation, as well as the four special elections dates in January, March, September, and December.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) applicable for the 2017-18 budget year is 0.30 percent. The applicable regional administrative cost limits for 2017-18 for the north, central and south are \$2,191, \$2,040, and \$2,032 respectively. Any questions concerning the regional limit calculation should be directed to the Office of School Finance at [staid@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:staid@doe.state.nj.us). For budget questions, please email [budget@doe.state.nj.us](mailto:budget@doe.state.nj.us).

MM/sg:

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