



NJDOE News

For More Information Contact the Public Information Office:
Richard Vespucci
Kathryn Forsyth, Director
609-292-1126

For Release: March 17, 2005

Commissioner Librera Releases 2005 Comparative Spending Guide

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera today released the 2005 *Comparative Spending Guide*. The guide is a statistical report that details how local public school districts in New Jersey allocate their financial resources.

"Since its inception 10 years ago, the *Comparative Spending Guide* has been used by the general public and for educators to identify how they allocate resources to operate our public schools," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "In light of the extraordinary fiscal hardships faced by government at all levels this year, the guide can be especially useful.

"It is clear to me that in this difficult time we have a shared responsibility to tighten our belts wherever we can," Commissioner Librera said.

The *Comparative Spending Guide*, found online at:

<http://www.nj.gov/njded/guide/2005/>,

provides local educators and citizens with information about a school district's annual budget. It ranks similar school districts in 14 of 15 spending categories, such as total administrative costs or total classroom instruction, and in four staffing indicators, such as student-teacher ratios and faculty-administrative staff ratios.

Each indicator presents costs on a per pupil basis, with three years of data presented; the four staffing indicators contain two years of data. The total per pupil cost indicator reflects all spending common to school districts and includes total current expense and spending for early childhood education programs, demonstrably effective programs, special education, bilingual education, supplemental instruction, county vocational schools, and adult and post-secondary education

Spending areas not included in the guide are pensions, transportation, and tuition expenditures because they vary widely from district to district.

According to the new guide released today, total budgeted comparative costs statewide average \$11,106 in the current school year, up \$574, or 5.4 percent from the previous year. Classroom instruction makes up the majority of these expenditures at \$6,559 per pupil, representing 59.1 percent of the total budgeted comparative cost per pupil and up \$325, or 5.2 percent, from the previous year.

A further breakdown of the total comparative cost indicates that support services, such as guidance and nursing services, account for \$1,805, or 16.3 percent of the total comparative cost per pupil, up \$189, or 11.7 percent from the previous year. Administrative costs, at \$1,262, or 11.4 percent of the total comparative cost per pupil, represent an increase of \$55 per pupil, or 4.6 percent from the previous year.

Expenditures in New Jersey's 31 Abbott districts were, on average, higher than non-Abbott districts. Total comparative costs in Abbott districts (\$13,857) exceeded the average expenditure in non-Abbott districts (\$10,385) by 33.4 percent.

The *Comparative Spending Guide* compares school districts of similar size with each other. The groups are K-6; K-8 (with subgroupings of enrollments from 0-399, 400-750 and more than 750); K-12 (with subgroupings of enrollments from 0-1,800; 1,801 to 3,500; and more than 3,500); grades 7-12 and 9-12; county special services; county vocational schools; and charter schools.

Districts are listed alphabetically and are ranked low to high in spending for each of three years, within their groups. All local school districts were given an opportunity to review the information in the guide prior to its release.

Commissioner Librera noted that the guide is a statistical document. Parents and taxpayers should use other

resources for a complete perspective on how their schools invest in education, he said. In addition, the Commissioner encouraged citizens to learn how their local school spending patterns relate to the goals of their districts.

Commissioner Librera urged citizens to participate in the school budget development process and to cast informed votes in the annual school election, scheduled for April 19.