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## NJDOE News

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### **DOE Releases Salary and Benefits Data and “User-Friendly” Budget Summaries**

The salaries and benefits provided to the top administrators in all New Jersey school districts are now available on the New Jersey Department of Education Web site, Education Commissioner Lucille E. Davy announced today.

Commissioner Davy also announced that “user-friendly” plain language summaries of all school district budgets can now be found on the DOE Web site.

The salary and benefit information and plain language budget summaries are available here. <http://www.nj.gov/education/finance/fp/ufb/>

“The public availability of these data bases is another step in the Corzine Administration’s and the department’s renewed focus on accountability and transparency,” Commissioner Davy said. “Citizens have a great deal of interest in knowing how their education tax dollars are being spent, and this new resource gives them a way to access that information quickly and easily.”

Under the School Accountability Act (PL 2007, c. 53), districts are also required to post the salaries and benefits information and budget summaries on their own Web sites (if they have them) or provide other means of making the information available to the public.

The law requires that salary and benefit information be provided for all superintendents, assistant superintendents, school business administrators and any employee whose salary exceeds \$75,000 and who is not a member of a collective bargaining unit.

DOE collected the information for contracts in effect as of January 1, 2008 as part of this year’s budget process. The amounts in the various columns on the spread sheet are reported on an annualized basis and represent the maximum amount that the employee could be paid in the given year. The data is self-reported by the districts.

Commissioner Davy noted that some of the benefits listed in this year’s submission, such as stipends, the buyback of accrued sick and vacation time and separation payments, have either been capped or are no longer permitted to be included in new administrator contracts.

Under the new accountability regulations issued earlier this summer, all new contracts must be reviewed and approved by the Executive County Superintendent in each county.

DOE worked with the New Jersey Association of School Business Officials (NJASBO) to create the format for the “user-friendly” budget summary for 2008-09. Major features of the summary include:

- Appropriation line items aggregated by item type.
- The school tax rate.
- The equalized school tax rate.
- Revenues by major category
- The amount of available surplus.
- A description of unusual revenues or appropriations, with a description of the circumstances of the revenues and appropriations.
- A list of shared services agreements in which the district is participating.

Each district is required to post the summary of its proposed budget on its Web site after the public hearing on the budget and prior to the school elections in April. After the election (and following the municipal review if the budget is defeated) a final plain language summary of the budget must be posted; it must stay on line for a year until it is replaced by the following year’s budget.