



NJDOE News

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### **DOE Releases 2010 Comparative Spending Guide**

Education Commissioner Bret Schundler today released the *2010 Comparative Spending Guide*, an annual statistical report that details local school spending and ranks school districts in 14 spending categories.

“The Department makes this guide available every year so that citizens can make informed decisions as school budgets are created, debated and voted upon at the local level,” Commissioner Schundler said. “In this year of very limited resources, it is imperative that district officials and citizens closely examine the use of every education dollar.

“The guide allows people to compare districts’ efficiency, but it is important to note that the guide is about spending patterns, not academic achievement. It does not attempt to make any correlation between expenditures and academic achievement,” the Commissioner said.

Commissioner Schundler noted that the calculations in the guide do not include types of spending that are not common to all districts, such as transportation, tuition and capital expenditures.

“It also does not include dollars expended by the state on behalf of districts, such as pension and FICA payments, extraordinary education spending and debt service,” the Commissioner said.

The *Comparative Spending Guide* can be found online at:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/guide/2010/>

In the document, school districts of similar size are compared 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 0-1,799, 1,800 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 subgroups.

Each category, or indicator, shows cost data for three years on a per pupil basis. Each staffing indicator contains two years of data.

The total per pupil cost indicator reflects all spending common to school districts and includes total current expense spending for early childhood education programs, special education, bilingual education, supplemental instruction, county vocational schools and adult and post-secondary education.

As noted earlier, statistics on certain types of spending that can differ significantly from one district to the next – such as transportation, tuition and capital expenditures – are not included in the guide. Please refer to the Introduction and Description section in the guide for a discussion of the specific costs included.

The CSG comparative average cost per pupil is \$13,835 for the 2009-2010 school year, up 4.3 percent from the average cost in the previous year. This is slightly more than the average increase in the previous year, which was 3.4%.

“It is important to note that this is the cost per pupil based on the CSG elements, not the total cost per pupil,” Commissioner Schundler said. (Actual cost-per-pupil numbers can be found in the State Report Card for each district.)

Classroom instructional costs average \$8,113 per pupil this year, for an increase of 3.6%. Instructional costs make up about 59% of districts’ average per pupil costs.

Support services, such as guidance and nursing services, average \$2,169 per pupil this year, an increase of about 6% since last year. This category showed the greatest increase, but still accounts for about 15.5% of the districts' total cost per pupil.

Administrative costs showed the slowest rate of increase at 2.4%. On average, administrative costs are about \$1,453 per pupil, making up about 2.5% of districts' total costs per pupil.