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**New Taxpayers' Guide to Education Spending Provides, for the First Time, Complete Total Per-Pupil Cost; Outlines Actual Cost of Educating Students for Greater Accountability**

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**Trenton, NJ** - Keeping Governor Chris Christie's commitment to provide taxpayers and parents with complete transparency about spending and performance in New Jersey public education, the Department of Education today released, for the first time, the 2011 Taxpayers' Guide to Education Spending.

The guide, formerly known as the Comparative Spending Guide, outlines the cost of educating students for the 2009-2010 school year. The Taxpayers' Guide now includes a per-pupil spending figure that reflects the total amount spent on PreK-12 education in New Jersey. The former per-pupil cost in the Comparative Spending Guide did not include many categories of spending, and, therefore, reflected an artificially low per-pupil cost.

According to the more complete Taxpayers' Guide, average total spending per pupil for the 2009-2010 school year is reported as \$17,836. Furthermore, total spending per pupil in the 31 former Abbott districts averages \$20,859 compared to average total spending per pupil of \$17,051 in the other 500-plus school districts in New Jersey.

"The Taxpayers' Guide now includes the total amount that is actually spent for students in preschool through grade 12," said Governor Christie. "If we are going to reform a system that is failing tens of thousands of children, we need real accountability for academic performance that considers the total dollars being spent. Parents, students and taxpayers deserve nothing less than a complete reporting of all the facts."

Previous calculations of the total per-pupil cost in the former Comparative Spending Guide did not include costs such as transportation, debt service, federal funds, and state payments on behalf of the districts for pension, social security, and post-retirement medical costs. The previous guide also omitted the costs of tuition and students sent out of district. The new Taxpayers' Guide to Education Spending will include these numbers, as they are very real parts to the whole spending picture.

Acting Education Commissioner Chris Cerf said the Taxpayers' Guide provides important new information.

"One of the first commitments I made as Commissioner was to improve our data reporting systems and provide more complete financial information," said acting Commissioner Cerf. "Today's report is a necessary first step to serve our children better. All the facts should be available to the public, and with today's report, the Christie Administration releases more financial information about our public schools than has ever been released before."

The total per-pupil cost is calculated by dividing districts' total expenditures, and state payments on behalf of the district, by total students, excluding those attending charter schools. Charter school students and expenditures are listed in a separate section.

The *2011 Taxpayers' Guide to Education Spending* can be found online at:

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/guide/2011/>

Districts are listed by county and district and then alphabetically.