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Commissioner Librera Releases [2004 Comparative Spending Guide](#)

Commissioner of Education William L. Librera today released the 2004 *Comparative Spending Guide*. The guide is a statistical report that details how local public school districts in New Jersey allocate their financial resources.

"Education has been my priority from the very beginning and we have made tough choices to be able to provide more direct state aid to school districts than ever before," said Governor James E. McGreevey. "The *Comparative Spending Guide* provides the public with a useful tool to determine how those dollars are spent on education. This guide will help all New Jersey's families make sure dollars are making it into the classroom and not into the bureaucracy."

"The data released in this guide continues to demonstrate why we need to take action to reduce administrative costs and make sure every dollar possible goes to preparing our children to compete in the new economy," Gov. McGreevey said.

"We produce the *Comparative Spending Guide* to help parents and taxpayers determine whether their schools are spending according to their needs, goals and priorities," said Commissioner of Education William L. Librera. "Since local school boards are currently developing budgets for the 2004-05 school year, now is the best time for the public to discuss how their schools allocate their resources."

The *Comparative Spending Guide*, found online at <http://www.nj.gov/njded/guide/2004/>, provides local educators and interested citizens with information about a school district's annual budget. It ranks similar school districts in 14 of 15 spending categories, or indicators, as well as in four staffing indicators. 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 can vary widely from district to district.

According to the new guide released today, total budgeted comparative costs statewide average \$10,594 in the current school year. Classroom instruction makes up the majority of these expenditures at \$6,268 per pupil, or 59 percent of the total budgeted comparative cost per pupil.

A further breakdown of the total comparative cost indicates that support services, such as guidance and nursing services, account for \$1,590, or 15 percent, per pupil; and administrative costs, at \$1,221 per pupil, represent 12 percent of the total costs.

The total comparative cost per pupil increased from \$10,077 in 2002-03 to \$10,594 this year, an increase of 5 percent. Administrative expenditures increased by 5.8 percent from the previous year; classroom instruction expenditures increased by 4.9 percent; and expenditures for student support services increased by 4.1 percent.

Expenditures in New Jersey's 30 Abbott districts were, on average, higher than non-Abbott districts. Total comparative costs in Abbott districts (\$13,258) exceeded the average expenditure in non-Abbott districts (\$9,883) by 34 percent. The categories showing the greatest differences between Abbott and non-Abbott school districts are classroom instruction and support services.

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; 1,801-3,500; 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 group. All local school districts were given an opportunity to review the information in the guide.

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

Governor McGreevey and 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 20.

For more information, please contact the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.