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## NJDOE News

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### **Commissioner Davy Announces Release of 2007 Comparative Spending Guide; Annual Document Produced to Guide Public Discussion about School Budgets**

Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy today released the Department of Education's 2007 *Comparative Spending Guide*, a statistical report that profiles spending patterns in the public schools.

"Since 1997, the Comparative Spending Guide has provided the public with detailed statistics about school spending," Commissioner Davy said. "It serves as a tool for citizens to use now, to guide discussions about school spending during the local school budget development process.

"The public and the local school boards that represent them should refer to the guide as one way to ensure that their fiscal priorities match their shared goals to improve teaching and learning," Davy said.

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

<http://www.nj.gov/njded/guide/2007/>

It provides school officials 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 ratios of faculty to administrative staff.

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 spending for early childhood education programs, demonstrably effective programs, special education, bilingual education, supplemental instruction, county vocational schools and adult and post-secondary education.

Some areas of spending are significantly different from one district to another and are not included in the guide. For example, statistics are not provided for transportation and tuition expenses.

The following are highlights from the new guide released today:

- Total budgeted comparative costs statewide average \$12,098 in the current school year, up 3.1 percent from the previous year.
- Classroom instruction costs are \$7,132 per pupil representing 59.0 percent of the total budgeted comparative cost per pupil and up \$229, or 3.3 percent, from the previous year.
- Support services, such as guidance and nursing services, account for \$1,847, or 15.3 percent of the total comparative cost per pupil, an increase of 4.5 percent from the previous year.
- Administrative costs, at \$1,323, or 10.9 percent of the total comparative cost per pupil, represent an increase of 1.0 percent from the previous year.

Trend information for this decade shows that spending in key areas has been proportionately stable since 1999-2000. In that year:

- 59.6 percent of the comparative cost per pupil was for instruction, compared with 59.0 percent currently.
- 11.4 percent of the comparative cost per pupil was for administration, compared with 10.9 percent currently.
- 13.8 percent of the comparative cost per pupil was for student support services, compared with 15.3 percent currently.

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 subgroups.