



NJDOE News

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**Commissioner Davy Releases *2009 Comparative Spending Guide*;
Annual Statistical Report On School District Spending Patterns**

Commissioner of Education Lucille E. Davy today released the *2009 Comparative Spending Guide*, an annual statistical report that details local school spending and ranks school districts in 14 spending categories.

"In his budget address last week, Governor Corzine made clear the unprecedented severity of the fiscal crisis we all face," said Commissioner Davy. "Many of our citizens are out of work and struggling to pay their bills. This year, it is more imperative than ever for us to look closely at how we spend each and every education dollar. We must all ensure that this money is used for expenditures deemed necessary to help our students obtain the knowledge and skills they need in order to have a productive career and successful life."

While the comparative spending guide does not track the growth in tax levy for school districts each year, it should be noted that there has been a decrease in the growth in the school tax levy in recent years.

For the 2008-09 school year, the increase in the school tax levy statewide was 2.65% compared to 4.45% in 2007-08 and 6.6% in the 2006-07. This decrease in levy growth is attributable to the increases in state aid for 2008-09 and 2007-08, as well as the tax levy cap.

Commissioner Davy encouraged the members of the public and local school boards to review their district rankings in the CSG and to challenge themselves to improve upon last year's spending plans. "If it is true that we can always do better, then we should all be mindful that this is one year that we all *must* do better," the Commissioner said.

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

<http://www.nj.gov/education/guide/2009/>

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.

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.

While the state average total cost per pupil increased at a slightly faster rate than in each of the last two years, the increases and spending patterns are in line with the changes over the last several years. This year's increase in total cost per pupil was about 6%, compared with 5% from last year and 4% from the year before, indicating that spending has been increasing with the recent increases in state aid. The state average annual increase in the total cost per pupil for the last 10 years is 5.2%.

The following are additional highlights from the new guide:

- The state average total cost per pupil is \$13,539 this year, up 5.9% from the actual average cost in the previous year. This is greater than the average increase in the previous two years – 5.0% for FY 2008 and 3.8% for FY 2007.
- Total classroom instructional costs average \$7,968 per pupil this year, for an increase of 6.1%. While the rate of increase was higher than in the previous year at only 4.7%, instructional expenditures remain about 59% of the total cost per pupil.
- Support services, such as guidance and nursing services, are \$2,091 per pupil this year on average, an increase of 6.5% since last year. This increase is consistent with the previous year. Support services currently comprise 15.4% of the total cost per pupil.
- Administrative costs this year average \$1,430 per pupil, a one-year increase of 3.3% (compared with the previous year's increase of 3.1%). On average, administrative costs make up 10.6% of the total cost per pupil.