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[Home](#) > [Newsroom](#) > [Press Releases](#) > 2017

Governor Christie Challenges Legislature To Deliver A New School Funding Formula In The Next 100 Days

Tuesday, February 28, 2017

Tags: [Budget and Spending](#)

"So now I will make one final offer. In fact, I will make a pledge. I pledge to work with the leaders of the legislature to come up with a new funding formula. Everything is on the table. No idea out of bounds for discussion. I am willing to work with you to solve this problem without any pre-conditions on the ideas brought to the table."

- Governor Chris Christie, New Jersey State Budget Address, February 28, 2017

In 2008, the legislature fast tracked a bill that dramatically changed the way schools are funded in New Jersey, promising a more affordable and more effective school funding formula. Not surprisingly, that did not turn out to be the case. School funding still represents more than one-third of the entire state budget while simultaneously crippling many districts and driving people out of the state fleeing the enormous property tax burden.

For most of last year, Governor Christie traveled the state having candid conversations with taxpayers about fairness in the way public schools are funded and shined a light on the failure of the current formula. Finally, after eight years, legislature leaders have acknowledged that this broken system needs to be fixed.

Today, Governor Christie is calling on legislative leaders to work directly with him, challenging them to deliver a new funding formula proposal in the next **100 days**. The Governor's pledge includes no pre-conditions and all options are on the table. It took the legislature 10 days to pass the failed formula of 2008; over the next 100 days, working together with the legislature, New Jersey can have a new formula that will be fair for all students regardless of zip code.

Historic Commitment

For the seventh-consecutive year, Governor Christie's budget proposes the highest amount of school aid supporting Pre-K through Grade 12 education in New Jersey history. The Fiscal Year 2018 budget proposes more than **\$13.8 billion** for education, an increase of **\$523.2 million**. Of the total school aid, almost **\$9.2 billion** represents direct aid to schools, an increase of **\$16.1 million**.

In addition to aid to schools, direct payments to support education, including pension and health benefits payments as well as school construction debt service, will increase in Fiscal Year 2018, providing more support for local school districts. This budget also provides the highest level of funding for School Choice Aid to support a record number of students participating in the program in Fiscal Year 2018. State support for school aid has increased by over 46 percent since Governor Christie took office in 2010.

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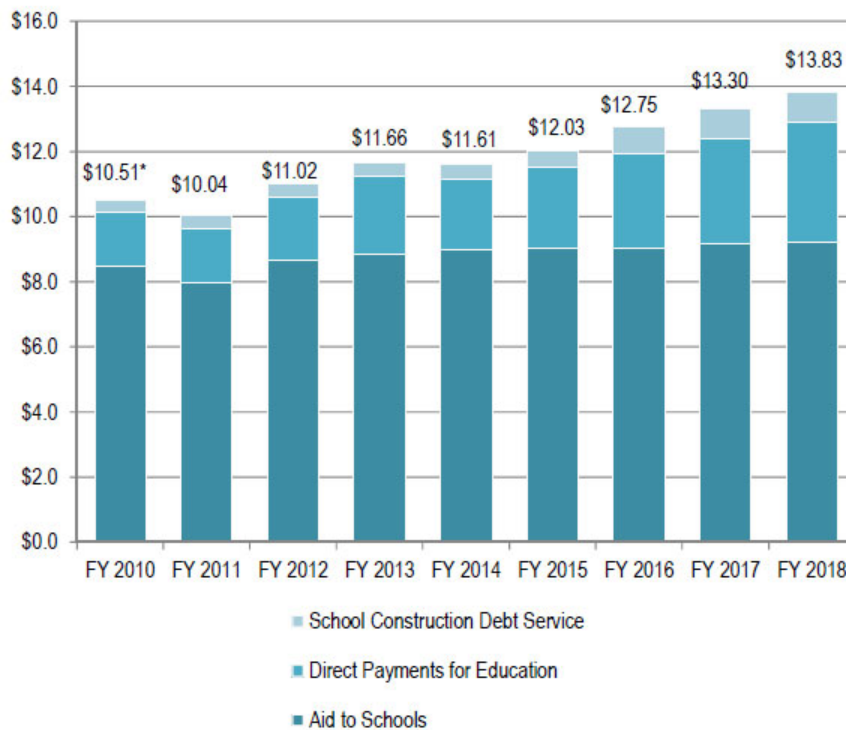
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History of School Aid

State Funding for School Aid Has Increased 46% Since FY 2010
(In Billions)



*FY 2010 includes \$1.06 billion in federal stimulus funding.

Funding also will be provided to support Charter School Aid, as well as Host District Support Aid, to ensure that the funding provided to charter schools in Fiscal Year 2018 is at least equal to current funding, on either a base per-pupil funding or total revenue basis. The Fiscal Year 2018 budget is projected to support more than 55,000 charter school students.

The proposed Fiscal Year 2018 budget also includes **\$1 million** to support a pilot demonstration of the Opportunity Scholarship Act program. This funding will provide scholarships to allow certain students in chronically failing schools to attend another public or nonpublic school within New Jersey. Through this program, children from families of limited means will have greater educational opportunities and more success.

Governor Christie has fought for and won sweeping reforms to give every New Jersey child the education he or she deserves.

- **Tenure Reform.** Marking the first extensive reform of New Jersey's tenure law in over 100 years, Governor Christie signed into law the Teacher Effectiveness and Accountability for the Children of New Jersey (TEACHNJ) Act, a sweeping, bipartisan overhaul of the oldest tenure law in the nation. TEACHNJ provides powerful tools to identify effective and ineffective teachers and strengthens the supports available to help all teachers improve their craft. The Fiscal Year 2018 budget maintains funding for arbitrators under this law.
- **Charters and School Choice.** The Christie Administration has increased the overall number of charter schools in New Jersey to 88 in the current fiscal year, while relentlessly focusing on quality and holding all schools accountable for results as 17 low-performing charter schools have closed during the past seven years. In addition, the Interdistrict Public School Choice Program is increasing educational opportunities for students and their families by providing students with the option of attending a public school outside their district of residence without cost to their parents. The Fiscal Year 2018 budget is projected to support more than 55,000 charter school students and more than 5,200 choice students in 129 choice districts.

Higher Education

Among Governor Christie's highest priorities has been strengthening New Jersey's higher education community. The Fiscal Year 2018 budget continues the Governor's commitment to higher education in New Jersey. Overall, higher education funding is maintained at a total of **\$2.2 billion** in Fiscal Year 2018.

- **Tuition Aid Grant Program (TAG).** To ensure an affordable in-state college education is available to all, TAG grants are available at 56 public and private institutions across New Jersey. Funding for the State's flagship student aid program, Tuition Aid Grants, will increase **\$15.7 million**, to a total of **\$419.4 million**. Average awards at all levels of need will increase by 2 percent over current year award levels, and the program will support more than 68,000 New Jersey students. Since taking office, Governor Christie has increased State funding for the TAG program by 68 percent.

- **Urban Scholarship Program.** The Governor's Urban Scholarship program will add a sixth class, and will now support an estimated 600 scholars from targeted school districts.
- **College Readiness Now.** Funding is continued for College Readiness Now in the amount of \$1 million in fiscal 2018 to help students prepare for college level course work before they graduate high school. Partnerships between county colleges and high schools throughout the State have more than doubled during the first year of state funding for this program, increasing from approximately 60 to 135.
- **Building Our Future.** In November 2012, voters approved the issuance of \$750 million in bonds to provide matching grants to colleges and universities to build, equip and expand higher education by investing in capital projects. This funding, in conjunction with the reauthorization of four other higher education funding programs, provided \$1.3 billion for 176 projects spanning 46 institutions in 2013. In June 2016, an additional \$180 million for 35 projects at 32 institutions was announced.

NEW JERSEY'S HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATE AT HIGHEST LEVEL SINCE USE OF NEW FEDERAL CALCULATION

New Jersey's high school graduation rate rose again in 2016, to 90.1 percent in 2016 from 89.7 percent in 2015. This marks the fifth straight year that the statewide high school graduation rate has increased.

The Class of 2011 was the first graduating class to begin using the federally mandated methodology for calculating the graduation rate, and since then, the State's high school graduation rate has increased by 7.1 percentage points from 83 percent in 2011. Below is a summary of 2016 graduation rates by student subgroups compared to the 2011 results:

- African American students graduated at a rate of 82.1 percent in 2016, an increase of 13.1 percentage points from 2011 when it was 69 percent.
- 83.4 percent of Hispanic students graduated in 2016, a 10.4 percentage point increase from 2011 when it was 73 percent.
- 94.2 percent of white students graduated in 2016, an increase from 90 percent in 2011.
- 96.7 percent of Asian students graduated in 2016, an increase from 93 percent in 2011.
- Economically disadvantaged students graduated at a rate of 82.7 percent in 2016, an increase of 11.7 percentage points from 2011 when it was 71 percent.
- 74.7 percent of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students graduated in 2016, an increase of 16.7 percentage points from 68 percent in 2011.
- Students with disabilities graduated at a rate of 78.8 percent in 2016, an increase from 73 percent in 2011.

The Department also calculated the five-year graduation rate for students that began high school in 2011. While the four-year graduation rate last year was 89.7 percent for the class of 2015, the graduation rate that included students who continued on for a fifth year was 91.3 percent.

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