

The Fairness Formula: School Funding and Property Tax Equity

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The Fairness Formula:

School Funding and Property Tax Equity

Governor Chris Christie is proposing a solution to New Jersey's two most pressing crises that are hurting all New Jerseyans: the failure of urban education and property taxes.

New Jersey property taxes are the highest in the nation, predominantly caused by billions in tax dollars pouring into continually failing urban school districts, due to New Jersey's unaffordable and broken school funding formula created by NJ's Supreme Court.

The Governor's Fairness Formula is an equal per-pupil funding plan that would provide tax fairness for all residents and better public education for every New Jersey student.

Graduation rates prove that educational success cannot be bought with excessive spending by a select few chronically failing school districts, which have received billions more in state taxpayer dollars over the past three decades than hundreds of successful school districts. The statewide graduation rate is 90%, with 27 of the 31 Abbott districts falling below that average.

Continuing the current school funding formula means allowing failing school districts to spend as much as \$33,699 per pupil in tax dollars, while high-performing school districts spend less than half of that per student.

The current formula crushes the majority of property taxpayers and has in the past several years chased millions of residents and employers to more affordable states with balanced tax structures.

Take the school districts that have been enabled by the state Supreme Court and Democrat-led legislature to spend among the highest per pupil, despite historically failing students and taxpayers across the state who foot these bills:

District	Graduation Rate	FY15 Per Pupil Spending	2015 Average Property Tax Bill	School Portion of 2015 Average Property Tax Bill	FY15 State Taxpayer Aid Per Pupil Under Current Funding Formula
Asbury Park	66.04%	\$33,699	\$5,031	25%	\$28,947

East Orange	75.58%	\$25,121	\$8,443	16%	\$22,006
Newark	69.59%	\$22,013	\$5,766	29%	\$18,337
Vineland	75.89%	\$19,769	3,951	23%	\$16,428
Jersey City	73.68%	\$23,466	\$6,773	26%	\$18,491
Trenton	68.63%	\$23,108	\$3,610	20%	\$20,589
New Brunswick	68.50%	\$22,143	\$6,710	39%	\$17,914

On average, 52% of property taxes statewide are spent on the school tax and in many districts it is as high as two-thirds. Consider some of these most-successful school districts that spend exponentially less per pupil, despite their local residents being burdened by higher property taxes and little return from their state taxes:

District	Graduation Rate	FY15 Per Pupil Spending	2015 Average Property Tax Bill	School Portion of 2015 Average Property Tax Bill	FY15 State Taxpayer Aid Per Pupil Under Current Funding Formula
Hillsborough	94.48%	\$17,761	\$8,656	67%	\$5,346
Haddonfield	98.96%	\$15,292	\$12,831	88%	\$2,049
South Plainfield	95.49%	\$17,452	\$6,944	57%	\$4,485
Monroe (Middlesex)	93.39%	\$18,632	\$7,004	60%	\$2,087
Secaucus	97.08%	\$18,389	\$6,321	38%	\$2,133
Somerville	89.4%	\$18,532	\$9,029	57%	\$4,522
Cherry Hill	94.26%	\$17,605	\$8,016	59%	\$2,958

Governor Christie believes that all New Jersey children should be valued equally. Under his Fairness Formula, the state would provide equal funding for all, with each public school district receiving \$6,599 per enrolled student, while continuing aid for special needs students.

This proposal ensures that all students have equal funding to be successful, and this Fairness Formula would also provide hundreds or even thousands of dollars in annual property tax savings for families in many communities.

This initiative takes courageous leadership and strong fiscal management to overcome billion-dollar campaigns by special political interests – but that is exactly what voters deserve from their governor, legislators, school board members, mayors and freeholders.

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