

School Funding: Past, Present, Future

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Past

- Term thorough and efficient education (T&E) was adopted in the NJ Constitution in 1875.
- School funding was debated since then with landmark court cases determining how schools would be funded for a T&E.
- In 2008, New Jersey adopted the School Funding Reform Act along with a formula to determine the calculation of school aid.
 - This current formula has been previously challenged and determined to meet Constitutional muster.

Past

- Governor Christie implemented a hold harmless provision (adjustment aid) -- districts would not lose money under this new formula.
- S-2 (2018)
 - Funding formula should run as intended
 - Underfunded and overfunded districts would see adjustments in aid based on enrollment
 - Re-distributed money according to current enrollment
 - Marked the first year that Jefferson's aid was negatively impacted
- Jefferson's enrollment has been declining since 2008
 - 3,625 students in 2008
 - 2,705 students in 2024

Past

The district has made adjustments to align with the decline in enrollment and state aid

- Cut staff: Directors of Curriculum (2), Assistant Business Administrator, District Supervisor, Middle School Assistant Principal; Teaching Staff; Support Personnel
- Closed Drummond and Milton Schools (Minimum of \$550,000 annual savings)
- Changed health insurance providers multiple times
- Eliminated large expenditures other than those absolutely necessary
- Completed referendum work in lieu of utilizing general operating funds
- Applied for all available grants (High-Impact Tutoring, Computer Science, Climate Change, etc.) and funding (Extraordinary Aid)
- Fought for and implemented Preschool Education Aid Grant funds

Present

SFRA of 2008 has several components that determine a district's adequacy budget (what it would cost to provide a T&E)

- Base per pupil amount
 - Free and Reduced Lunch
 - Multiple Language Learners
- Categorical aid
 - Transportation
 - Security
 - Special Education

Present

- Local Fair Share Drives Equalization Aid
 - Property Values
 - Income
- Concerns around State Aid:
 - How equalization aid is calculated is unknown despite numerous requests to the NJDOE for information
 - Special education aid is calculated by using the average number of special education students across the state, not actual local enrollment
 - Extraordinary aid is not fully funded

Present

Where does that leave us?

- Decline in enrollment since 2008
- State aid reduction is not proportional to the decline in enrollment (29% less students, 60% less state aid)
 - Increase in property values
 - Increase in residents' income
 - SY11-12: 9.19% students were economically disadvantaged
 - SY23-24: 10.39% students are economically disadvantaged
- We continue to provide “more” than required for a T&E based on the State definition.

Suggestions offered to balance budget include:

- Reduce electives and enriching opportunities for our students (art, media, world languages, technology education, music, athletics)
- Reduce services (nursing, guidance, technology, security)
- Increase class size

Present

Advocacy Efforts

- Testimony provided at multiple Assembly and Senate budget hearings
- Meetings with local legislators
- Wrote letters to all legislators across the State
- Joined with Save our Students
- Met with Governor Murphy's Chief of Staff to share concerns
- Met with Chair of Education Committee
- PTAs hosted letter-writing campaign

How has the State Aid Adjustment Impacted JTPS?

Based on 2024-2025 State Aid Notice

BUDGET YEAR	GENERAL FUND STATE AID	CURRENT YEAR INCREMENTAL LOSS	CURRENT YEAR LOSS VS. 17-18 SY
18-19	15,508,649	-554,620	-554,620
19-20	14,315,347	-1,193,302	-1,747,922
20-21	12,063,605	-2,251,742	-3,999,664
21-22	9,272,081	-2,791,524	-6,791,188
22-23	6,631,798	-2,640,283	-9,431,471
23-24	5,105,647	-1,526,151	-10,957,622
24-25	4,849,657	-25,990	-11,213,612

7 YEAR CUMULATIVE LOSSES = -44,696,099

Future

