

## **TOP 25 MOST UNDERFUNDED NJ SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

October 31, 2013

Enacted in 2009, and upheld by the NJ Supreme Court in 2010, New Jersey's landmark school funding formula – the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA) – brought the promise of uniform, equitable, and stable funding for all school children based on need and without regard to zip code.

The promise of the SFRA, however, has been shattered during Governor Chris Christie's first term in office. Starting with a massive \$1.1 billion cut in state formula aid in 2010-11, the Governor's last three budgets have essentially "flat funded" districts, not even covering annual cost of living increases.

Over the last four years, through a combination of aid cuts and minimal increases, Governor Christie has created a cumulative aid deficit of \$5 billion statewide. This deficit is the difference between districts' current funding level and what they should receive under the State's own funding formula.

As a result, districts in every corner of the state, from Bayonne to Brooklawn and from Carteret to Clayton, have been forced to make do with aid that is thousands of dollars less per pupil than what is required by the SFRA formula. Some districts are operating with total budgets that are 20-30% less than they should be because the Governor refuses to follow the formula.

The districts hardest hit by these funding shortfalls are those designed to benefit the most from the SFRA – low-income districts with high numbers of poor and at-risk students that are spending far below what the SFRA deems adequate to meet State academic standards.

Education Law Center has identified the "Top 25 Most Underfunded Districts" in 2013-14. Districts were categorized by calculating the state aid owed to each as a percentage of their total operating budget from the previous year. Woodlynne Township (Camden County), Dover Township (Morris County), and Lindenwold (Camden County) top the list.

## 25 Most Underfunded Districts in 2013-14

District (Co.)	Pct FRL	Pct Black & Hispanic	Pct LEP	State Aid Owed under SFRA	Pct State Aid Received	State Aid Owed as Pct Total Budget	State Aid Owed Per Pupil
Woodlynne Boro	91%	81%	7%	\$2.9M	71%	31%	\$4,595
Dover Town	71%	88%	4%	\$12.7M	63%	30%	\$4,938
Lindenwold Boro	74%	80%	9%	\$9.8M	71%	28%	\$4,076
Salem County Voc.	24%	16%	0%	\$2.0M	70%	27%	\$2,793
East Newark Boro	89%	88%	14%	\$1.4M	71%	27%	\$3,656
Prospect Park Boro	75%	85%	5%	\$3.1M	72%	27%	\$3,726
North Bergen Twp	63%	84%	7%	\$24.3M	70%	23%	\$3,180
Clayton Boro	51%	34%	3%	\$4.2M	70%	23%	\$3,204
Carteret Boro	63%	60%	10%	\$11.3M	70%	22%	\$3,034
Haledon Boro	71%	70%	6%	\$2.8M	71%	22%	\$2,934
Bayonne City	62%	44%	3%	\$23.6M	69%	21%	\$2,612
North Plainfield Boro	65%	80%	6%	\$11.1M	69%	20%	\$3,383
Hillside Twp	58%	88%	9%	\$9.7M	69%	20%	\$3,292
Freehold Boro	70%	80%	16%	\$3.7M	72%	20%	\$2,480
South River Boro	46%	38%	5%	\$5.1M	72%	19%	\$2,163
Brooklawn Boro	60%	29%	0%	\$1.1M	81%	19%	\$2,481
Runnemede Boro	39%	13%	2%	\$2.2M	68%	19%	\$2,661
Belleville Town	52%	70%	6%	\$11.1M	70%	19%	\$2,349
Monroe Twp (Glouc.)	32%	25%	0%	\$15.5M	69%	19%	\$2,520
Pennsauken Twp	68%	73%	4%	\$17.3M	74%	19%	\$3,251
Somerdale Boro	42%	36%	8%	\$1.2M	71%	18%	\$2,491
Riverside Twp	50%	32%	4%	\$3.8M	74%	18%	\$3,094
Woodbury City	62%	55%	2%	\$4.2M	74%	18%	\$2,855
Kearny Town	51%	58%	3%	\$13.7M	69%	17%	\$2,356
South Bound Brook	47%	61%	6%	\$1.6M	68%	17%	\$2,867

### Notes:

Full funding of SFRA state aid based on estimates calculated by NJ's Office of Legislative Services.

FRL = Free/Reduced Lunch Eligible

LEP = Limited English Proficiency

Nearly all of these "Top 25" districts have a majority of low-income students and more than half are majority black and Hispanic. Six have double the number of English language learners than the typical district. Despite these pressing needs, the districts are deeply underfunded, receiving between 63% and 81% of the state aid required under the SFRA formula.

After four years of severe underfunding, many districts are under stress, cutting teachers and staff, increasing class size, eliminating tutoring and interventions for students academically at-risk. Districts are also struggling with new, costly State mandates, including implementing teacher evaluation systems and “Common Core” standards. Districts are also bracing for a new set of expensive State standardized tests.

To maintain high academic performance, New Jersey must get back on track and deliver the fair and predictable school funding required under the SFRA formula. It’s time to renew our commitment to providing the resources that every child, no matter where she or he lives, needs to achieve and succeed.

For a complete list of district underfunding in 2013-14, click [here](#).

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