New Jersey Charter Schools: A Data-Driven View, Part II
Finances and Staffing

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ABOUT THIS SERIES:

The role of charter schools in New Jersey’s education system is one of the most important and controversial issues facing our state’s policy makers.

To facilitate an honest and positive discussion, New Jersey policy makers, parents, teachers, administrators, taxpayers and students need research that is comprehensive, current, and based on sound methods and appropriate statistical analysis. Such research also must utilize publicly available data that others can replicate or question.

The goal of this series is to provide that research.

Our first report outlined the differences in student populations between charter and district schools. This report, the second in our series, focuses on staffing issues related to charter schools. The third report will examine charter school funding.

It is our hope that this series will foster an evidence-based debate about the future of charter schools in New Jersey.

Mark Weber and Julia Sass Rubin
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Executive Summary

This report examines New Jersey charter school spending and staffing issues. This is the second report in our charter school series. The first report examined demographics and found significant differences in student populations between New Jersey’s charter schools and their hosting school districts.¹

The findings are:

- Charter schools, on average, have smaller budgetary per pupil (BPP) costs than district schools. But they also spend significantly less per pupil on student support services than their host districts. The average large urban school district spends $3,540 per pupil on services that largely help special needs and at-risk students; charter schools, in contrast, spend $424 dollars. It is likely this disparity is a result, at least in part, of the differences in charter and district student populations.

- In contrast, charters spend far more on administrative costs per pupil than hosting school districts. The average charter school per pupil spending on administration is $3,193, compared to $1,463 statewide in school districts.

- Much of the savings in per pupil spending for charter schools comes from paying lower average teacher and staff salaries. Part of this difference is due to experience; charter teachers are also less likely to hold an advanced degree.

- Even accounting for experience, charter school teachers make considerably less than district teachers. A charter school teacher with between 15 and 19 years of experience made an average salary of $64,418 in 2011-12, compared to $84,015 for a district teacher.

- TEAM Academy and North Star Academy of Newark, which are part of the national charter management organizations KIPP and Uncommon, are two exceptions to this trend. Both schools pay their certificated staff more than Newark Public Schools staff, even when accounting for experience. The majority of their staffs, however, have less than 5 years of total education experience; this difference helps to keep these charter schools’ staffing costs low.

Given these findings, I make the following policy recommendations:

- The NJDOE should establish per-pupil spending measures that account for differences in student population characteristics and spending on student support services. It is invalid to attempt to compare spending per pupil without accounting for differences in student characteristics.

- Additional research should investigate the relatively high costs of charter school administration. The differences in administrative costs between charter schools and school districts are quite substantial; taxpayers should have an explanation for the discrepancy.

- Future studies should explore the ramifications of paying charter school staff less than district staff on the future of the teaching profession. While less expensive staffing costs may be good for the short-term fiscal health of charter schools, there may be long-term pernicious effects.
Charter and District Spending: Comparisons

One approach often used to compare spending between charter schools and school districts is to simply take the total revenues for each and divide it by the number of pupils enrolled. This method is used, for example, in Charter School Funding: Inequity Expands, published by the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas.²

I reject this approach. As Baker, Libby, and Wiley (2011)³ explain:

But simple direct comparisons between subsidies for charter schools and public districts can be misleading because public districts may still retain some responsibility for expenditures associated with charters that fall within their district boundaries or that serve students from their district. For example, under many state charter laws, host districts or sending districts retain responsibility for providing transportation services, subsidizing food services, or providing funding for special education services. Revenues provided to host districts to provide these services may show up on host district financial reports, and if the service is financed directly by the host district, the expenditure will also be incurred by the host, not the charter, even though the services are received by charter students.

Drawing simple direct comparisons thus can result in a compounded error: Host districts are credited with an expense on children attending charter schools, but children attending charter schools are not credited to the district enrollment. In a per-pupil spending calculation for the host districts, this may lead to inflating the numerator (district expenditures) while deflating the denominator (pupils served), thus significantly inflating the district’s per pupil spending. Concurrently, the charter expenditure is deflated.

Furthermore, districts have obligations and responsibilities over and above those of the charter schools in their district boundaries: adult education, private school services, Pre-K (which charter schools often do not provide), maintaining facilities for non-school use by the community, etc.

For this report, I instead use the NJDOE’s Taxpayers Guide to Education Spending; specifically, “Budgetary Per Pupil Cost” (BPP) is our measure for comparing spending across


school districts and charters. I use this measure on the advice of the NJDOE itself:

While these costs do not provide an exhaustive picture of the cost for educating all students, they do allow school administrators and citizens to compare specific measures of school district spending. Generally, the BPP measures the annual costs incurred for students educated within district schools, using local taxes and state aid. These costs are considered to be more comparable among districts, and may be useful for budget considerations.4

A word of caution: as NJDOE notes, these figures “do not provide an exhaustive picture” of budgetary differences between charter schools and school districts. Because spending is reported by large category and there is no way to check how specific spending items are reported, it may well be that different categories of spending are reported differently at charter schools and school districts.

That said, I believe this is the best state-level data available at this time for making these comparisons. Certainly these measures are preferable to the crude practice of simply dividing total spending and/or revenues by the number of students enrolled.

When using BPP costs as a comparison measure, there is a clear pattern: charter schools spend less per pupil than district schools. Figure 1 shows the differences at various levels of analysis.5

**Figure 1**

![Budgetary Costs per Pupil (weighted mean), NJ, 2012-13](image)


5. I use 2012-13 as the comparison year as it the last year with “actual” spending figures reported.
While the statewide comparison of all charters to all districts shows charters spend about $1,000 less per pupil, the difference is even more striking when comparing urban charters to their hosts. Following the analysis presented in the first report in this series, I use the term “Big 7” to refer to the seven school districts that have the largest charter school enrollments: Camden, Hoboken, Jersey City, Newark, Paterson, Plainfield, and Trenton. Together, these seven districts account for 76 percent of all charter school students. The Big 7 districts spend, on average, $4,145 more per pupil than the charter schools in their cities. There is, however, substantial variation among the cities in BPP cost differences. Figure 2 outlines the differences.

**Figure 2**

### Budgetary Costs per Pupil (weighted mean), NJ, 2012-13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Charters</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newark</td>
<td>$18,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jersey City</td>
<td>$15,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paterson</td>
<td>$12,660</td>
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<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>$20,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trenton</td>
<td>$15,546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plainfield</td>
<td>$16,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoboken</td>
<td>$22,831</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


At first glance, it may appear that district schools, particularly in Camden and Hoboken, spend far more per pupil than their neighboring charter schools. It is critically important to understand, however, that differences in student characteristics between charter schools and district schools likely explain at least a substantial portion of the difference in spending per pupil. Figure 3, for example, shows the differences between charter schools and districts in the proportions of students enrolled with special education needs.
On average, charter schools enroll, proportionally, fewer special education pupils than their host districts. According to data from the NJDOE’s Taxpayers’ Guide to Education Spending files\(^6\), charter schools enroll student populations where only 7.2 percent of students are classified as having a special education need, compared to 13.5 percent in district schools statewide. Because special education students require more resources, a district that enrolls more of these pupils would have a greater cost burden than a district – or a charter school – that enrolls fewer.

As detailed in the first report, these differences extend to at-risk and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students as well. Keeping this in mind, I look at a subset of BPP costs: student support services.

**Spending on Student Support Services**

NJDOE describes “Support Services” as follows:

> Attendance, social work, health and guidance services, educational media/school library services and child study team services are student support services under

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6. The special education percentages in Figure 3 differ from those in our previous report because they are based on different sources. The percentages here come from NJDOE budget files; the percentages in the previous report come from special education data in a different year. I use budgetary data here as this report focuses on fiscal matters and charter schools.
the NCES definition. This area also includes the costs associated with physical and mental health services that are not direct instruction, but are nevertheless provided to students, such as supervision of health services, health appraisal (including screening for vision, communicable diseases, and hearing deficiencies), screening for psychiatric services, periodic health examinations, emergency injury and illness care, dental services, nursing services and communications with parents and medical officials. The expenditures of the guidance office includes counseling, record maintenance, and placement services. The costs for the child study team include salaries and benefits for members related to the development and evaluation of student individualized education programs (IEPs). Services provided as a result of IEPs are considered instructional costs and are included in the appropriate classroom instruction indicators.\textsuperscript{7}

While spending on support services is not exclusively in support of special education, LEP, or at-risk students, it is reasonable to expect that schools with larger proportions of these students would spend more on these services. It further follows that, given the differences in student characteristics between charters and districts, we would expect to see less spending on these services in charter schools.

**Figure 4**

![Support Services Spending per Pupil, NJ Schools, 2012-13](http://www.state.nj.us/education/guide/2014/intro.pdf)

\textsuperscript{7} [http://www.state.nj.us/education/guide/2014/intro.pdf](http://www.state.nj.us/education/guide/2014/intro.pdf)
Figure 4 illustrates these differences. Many charter schools, in fact, report no spending whatsoever on student support services. It is possible these schools have placed this spending into other budget categories; therefore, to be as generous as possible, Figure 4\(^8\) gives the student support spending both for only those charters that reported any spending in this category, and for all charters.

The comparisons are striking: while districts that host charter schools spend, on average, $2,800 on student services, the charter schools in those districts only spend $498. Even eliminating the charter schools that report no spending on student support services, the remaining ones only spend $1,433 on student services, which is about half of what the host districts spend.

These differences between district and charter school spending on support services are even more dramatic in the Big 7 districts. Those districts spend, on average, over $2,000 more per pupil than the charter schools in their cities that spend any amount on support services. Across the state, a good deal of the per-pupil gap in spending between district and charter schools can be explained by the difference in spending on support services. Figure 5 shows the same differences in spending on support services for each of the Big 7 districts.

**Figure 5**

![Support Services Spending per Pupil, NJ Schools, 2012-13](image)


\(^8\) "Feeders" are only those districts that host charter schools within their areas.
In Newark, many charter schools do not report any spending on student support services. Yet even the charter schools that do report spending lag behind, per pupil, by $3,042. Hoboken’s gap is nearly as large at $2,945. Paterson, notably, does not have even one charter school that reports any spending on support services for 2012-13. Every other large urban district in New Jersey shows similar gaps between district and charter school spending on support services.

Baker (2015) finds that in Newark, as in New York City, there is a correlation between a school’s total staff salary per pupil and the percentage of special education and at-risk students at that school. This is consistent with our findings: charter schools have fewer students with special needs and spend less on support services.

**Spending on Classroom Instruction**

As the NJDOE explains, the costs for actually implementing educational programs for special education students may be included in the reported spending on classroom instruction. We might, therefore, expect to see higher per-pupil spending on classroom instruction within charter schools. Yet, even there, charters lag behind their district hosts. Figure 6 and Figure 7 show the differences.

![Figure 6](https://njedpolicy.wordpress.com/2015/01/13/research-note-resource-equity-student-sorting-across-newark-district-charter-schools/)

Large urban districts spend $2,531 more, on average and per pupil, on classroom instruction than the charter schools located in those districts. This difference is largely a function of teacher salaries, which are included in this figure.

**Spending on Administration**

While charter schools spend less per pupil on classroom instruction and student support services, they significantly outspend their district hosts on administration. Administrative costs include salaries for principals and other school leaders. Figure 8 shows the differences in administrative spending between charter schools and their host districts.
Across New Jersey, charter schools spend more than two times what their host districts spend on administration – a difference of $1,695 per pupil. In the seven large urban districts, that difference is $1,571 per pupil. As Figure 9 shows, the differences vary from city to city, but remain quite substantial.

**Figure 9**

![Administrative Costs Per Pupil (weighted means), 2012-13](image)


Both Newark’s and Trenton’s charter schools spend more than twice what their host districts spend on administration. Jersey City, Camden, and Hoboken charter schools outspend their host districts by more than $1,000 per pupil. Plainfield’s and Paterson’s charter vs. district administration cost gaps are smaller but still substantial.

It is possible that there are administrative expenses charter schools incur that are not directly comparable to district expenses, and these expenses may explain some of the discrepancy. For example, if a charter school makes lease payments, or pays fees for contracted services, those payments may be part of these figures.

This said, a large portion of this gap in administrative costs between charters and districts can be attributed to salaries. Figure 10 and Figure 11 show that charter schools in the large urban districts spend, on average, $838 more per pupil on administration salaries than their host districts. While Paterson and Plainfield charter schools have administrative salary costs that are close to their host districts', the gaps are substantial in the other five cities.
In summary: charter schools do, indeed, spend less per student than their district counterparts. But much of the difference is due to charters spending far less on student support services – the services that, while benefitting all students, are especially important for special education, Limited English Proficient, and at-risk students.
As demonstrated in the first report, charter schools enroll fewer of these students, proportionally, than their district hosts. This discrepancy in enrollment likely allows charter schools to spend substantially less on student support services, as the students enrolled in charter schools are less likely to require support services than the higher-need students concentrated in the district schools.

In contrast to their lower student support spending, charter schools outspend their host districts, on average and per pupil, on administrative costs, including administrative salaries. Publicly-available data does not allow us to determine the cause of this gap; it is possible that charters are not able to leverage the same economies of scale as their district hosts, or that they are overpaying their administrators relative to district schools.

In any case, this data shows that while New Jersey’s charter schools do, on average, spend less per pupil than their district school counterparts, the amount spent by charter schools on student support is smaller, and the amount spent on administration is greater. These findings are consistent with research on charter school spending in other states.\(^{10}\)

**Charter School Teachers and Staff**

In this section, I explore the differences between the certificated staffs\(^{11}\) of charter and district schools. The data used is for the 2011-12 school year; however, only those charter schools that remained open as of September 2014 are included in this analysis.\(^{12}\)

**Staff Characteristics**

At first glance, the racial profile of the charter sector’s certificated staff matches that of the staffs of district schools. Figure 12 shows that when compared to all district staffs that host charter schools, New Jersey charter school staffs are quite similar in their racial makeup.


\(^{11}\) “Certificated staff” are those holding a New Jersey teaching certificate.

\(^{12}\) While staffing data for 2012-13 was available, previous analysis calls into question the integrity of the data for that year. For further discussion, see the Appendix here: [http://www.edlawcenter.org/assets/files/pdfs/publications/Short-changing%20New%20Jersey%20Students.pdf](http://www.edlawcenter.org/assets/files/pdfs/publications/Short-changing%20New%20Jersey%20Students.pdf)
However, as described in the first report, three-quarters of the students enrolled in charter schools attend schools within the Big 7 urban districts. Comparing the racial composition of those schools’ staffs to the Big 7 staffs yields a markedly different outcome, as shown in Figure 13.
In the aggregate, there is a notable difference between Big 7 charter and district school staffs, with charter schools having higher percentages of White staff (60 percent vs. 48 percent) and lower percentages of Black staff (24 percent vs. 33 percent) than their district hosts.

There is also a difference in the education level of charter staff compared to district staff. Figure 14 shows that considerably more district teachers and staff have earned master’s degrees than charter teachers and staff.

**Figure 14**

![Percentage of Certificated Staff Holding an Advanced Degree, NJ District & Charter Schools, 2011-12](chart.png)

Statewide, 50 percent of teachers at host district schools hold a master degree or higher; 39 percent of charter teachers hold similar degrees. Only in Camden and Hoboken do staff in the charter schools hold more master’s degrees, proportionally, than staff in the district schools.

**Staff Experience**

The most significant difference in staff characteristics, however, is level of experience. Charter school staffs have far less experience on average than district staffs. Figure 15 shows the differences at several levels of analysis.
Statewide, a school district teacher or staff member has, on average, 7.24 years more experience than a charter school teacher or staff member. Within the Big 7, district staff have 8.57 years more of experience than their charter school colleagues.

Looking at the differences in experience more closely, charter school staffs have larger proportions of teachers with less than four years of experience. Figure 16 shows that, on average, 50% of a charter school’s staff has four years or less of total education experience, compared to 17% of a district’s staff.

It may be that charter schools, because they have expanded so quickly, have had to hire less experienced teachers while ramping up. Still, a significant body of evidence suggests teachers continue to gain in effectiveness well into their second decade of teaching. New Jersey’s charter school students may be missing out on the positive effects from these gains, as they are more likely to be taught by teachers with substantially less experience.

Educators have traditionally paid a penalty in compensation for entering the teaching profession.\textsuperscript{14} While there is some evidence that paying higher salaries improves the quality of teachers,\textsuperscript{15} the issue is admittedly complex, requiring consideration of benefits, student characteristics, and working conditions.\textsuperscript{16} It is still important for policy makers to consider any differential in wages between charter and district teachers. Charter schools can exert an influence on the teacher labor market,\textsuperscript{17} impacting teacher recruitment and retention for both charter schools and the district schools that host them.

Considering the difference in experience between charter and district certificated staffs, the average charter school teacher would be expected to make less in wages than her district counterpart. Figure 17 shows, indeed, that the average charter school staff salary is considerably lower than the average district salary.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chart}
\caption{Years of Total Experience, NJ (Statewide) Certificated Staff, District & Charter Schools, 2011-12}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Staff Salaries}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Figlio, D.N. (1997). Teacher Salaries and Teacher Quality. Economics Letters (55), 267-271.
\end{itemize}
In charter school host districts, the average certificated staff member has 13.7 years of experience and makes an annual salary of $73,079. A New Jersey charter school staff member, by contrast, has an average of 6.1 years of experience and makes $55,505 a year. Because charter schools have less experienced staff, they are able to reduce their instructional costs.

But charter schools also spend less on personnel costs by paying lower wages even when accounting for experience. Figure 18 shows the average salary for certificated staff at different experience levels in charter schools and their district hosts. At all experience levels, a teacher in a district school earns more than a teacher at a charter school.

A new teacher in a charter school earned, on average, $45,577 a year in 2011-12; a new teacher in a district host school, however, earned $52,062. With total experience between 15 and 19 years, a charter school teacher earned an average yearly salary of $64,418; a similarly-experienced teacher in a district school would earn, on average, $84,015.
While these gaps vary from city to city, the pattern above is the norm for most districts. With few exceptions, charter school teachers earn less than their district counterparts, even when accounting for experience.

**Newark’s Charter Schools: An Exception On Teacher Salaries**

One important exception to the pattern of charter schools paying staff less is found in Newark, New Jersey’s largest school district and home to the largest population of charter school students. While most charter schools in Newark do pay their teaching staffs less, even accounting for experience, TEAM Academy and North Star Academy do not. Figure 19 shows the differences.

Teachers at TEAM, part of the national charter management organization KIPP, can expect to earn more at every stage of their careers than their counterparts in the Newark Public Schools. In 2011-12, the average TEAM staff member with 5 to 9 years of experience made $77,110, compared to a similarly experienced NPS teacher who made $57,197, a nearly $20,000 advantage.
North Star is a part of the Uncommon CMO, another national network of charter schools. While North Star’s teachers do not earn as much as TEAM’s teachers, they still outpace NPS teachers over a large span of their careers. A North Star staff member with 5 to 9 years of experience earned an average salary of $67,523 in 2011-12, nearly $10,000 more than his NPS counterpart.

The other charter schools in Newark – most of which are unaffiliated with national CMOs – pay their certificated staffs less, on average, than NPS certificated employees with similar levels of experience.

While TEAM and North Star pay their teaching staff comparatively well, they do not spend as much on teaching staff salaries as NPS, largely because their staffs have less experience. Figure 20 shows the distribution of experience for staffs at NPS, TEAM, North Star, and the other Newark charter schools.
Only 11% of TEAM’s certificated staff has more than 10 years of experience; only 9% of North Star’s staff is similarly experienced. In contrast, 61% of NPS’s staff has more than 10 years of experience. 57% of TEAM’s staff and 64% of North Star’s staff have less than 5 years of total education experience; 20% of NPS staffers have a similar level of experience.

Because North Star and TEAM have staffs with less experience, they are able to offer higher salaries than NPS at each level of experience and still keep their overall salary costs relatively low. If either charter school had staff with similar experience as that of NPS teachers, they would most likely not be able to keep salaries as high and/or budgetary costs as low.
Conclusions and Policy Implications

Charter schools do, indeed, have lower per pupil budgetary costs, as measured by the NJDOE in the Taxpayers Guide to Education Spending. However, those lower costs reflect a complex mix of factors:

- Because charter schools enroll a different population of students, they do not have the higher costs that are associated with educating students with special needs. One manifestation of this difference is in spending on student support services. Host districts spend, on average, $2,800 per pupil on support, while charters only spend $498. While these support services benefit all students, they are especially important for students with special educational needs.

- On the other hand, charter schools spend far more on administrative costs per pupil than hosting school districts. The gap between district and charter schools in administrative costs is $2,531 in the “Big 7” urban districts.

- Charter schools pay lower average teacher salaries than district schools, subsequently lowering their overall costs. Part of the difference in salary between charter and district staff is due to experience. In 2011-12, district school staffs had an average of 7.2 more years of experience than charter school staffs. Charter school teachers are also less likely to hold an advanced degree.

- Even accounting for experience, charter school teachers make considerably less than district teachers. A new teacher could expect to make $6,485 more on average in a district school than in a charter school in 2011-12. A teacher with between 15 and 19 years of experience could expect to make, on average, $19,597 more in a district school than a charter.

- TEAM Academy (KIPP) and North Star Academy (Uncommon) in Newark defy this trend, paying their teachers more, even when accounting for experience. Their staffs, however, are relatively inexperienced compared to the Newark Public Schools, which helps defray the costs of their higher salaries.

Policy makers and stakeholders have not, until now, studied New Jersey charter school fiscal policies and practices closely enough to provide insight on these issues; consequently, there may be unintended effects from allowing charters to proliferate. This report makes the following policy recommendations, and suggests they be implemented before charter school expansion is allowed to continue:

- The NJDOE should establish per-pupil spending measures that account for differences in student population characteristics and spending on student support
services. The “doing more for less” claim of charter school advocates cannot be accurately evaluated without accounting for the increased spending that comes from enrolling more students with special education needs, more LEP students, and more students in economic disadvantage. The differences in student support spending highlight the financial differences that must be accounted for when making accurate comparisons between district and charter schools.

- Policy makers should investigate the relatively high costs of charter school administration. It is in the interests of New Jersey’s taxpayers to make sure that the far greater spending on administration in charter schools is justified. These differences may be a matter of charters being unable to realize economies of scale compared to larger school districts, or they may reflect inefficiencies within charter schools themselves. It is also possible that the differences are matters of reporting (another argument for establishing more appropriate and consistent standards in fiscal reports). But the substantial differences require a more thorough inquiry into charter school practices.

- Policy makers should explore the ramifications of paying charter school staff less than district staff on teacher recruitment and retention. If charter school proliferation continues in New Jersey, and if these schools continue to pay their teachers less than district school staff, there may be an impact on the teacher labor market in all schools, particularly those in urban districts with high concentrations of charter schools. While that may have short-term benefits for charter schools, the long-term effect on district schools is likely more complex. Given the outstanding relative performance of New Jersey’s statewide public school system, any changes in the teacher labor market should be approached with caution.

- Future studies should consider the long-term viability of TEAM Academy’s and North Star Academy’s strategy of paying teachers more but maintaining relatively inexperienced staffs. As Dr. Bruce Baker has noted, the higher relative salary of these two schools’ teachers may allow the schools to offer extended hours; that, in turn, may help student outcomes. But if this strategy requires relatively inexperienced staffs to remain fiscally viable, the schools may have an incentive to constantly churn their faculties. This would disadvantage students, who would be more likely to have teachers with relatively low levels of experience.


Technical Appendix

All data for this report is from the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). The files used are:

- Enrollment files (Fall Survey Collections), 2004-05 to 2013-14. Downloaded 7/28/14 from: http://www.state.nj.us/education/data/enr/
- New Jersey School Directory. Downloaded 2/13/14 from: http://education.state.nj.us/directory/ (Note: a later download of this file on 7/29/14 did not include several schools that were listed in the 2013-14 enrollment files, so I used an earlier version of the School Directory)
- Taxpayers Guide to Education Spending. Downloaded 7/29/14 from: http://www.nj.gov/education/data/


Staffing data is from the NJDOE, made available to the Education Law Center, Newark, NJ; the authors thank ELC for sharing this data. All staff records were converted into full-time equivalents (FTEs) based on file data; averages were then weighted by the FTEs. I used the 2011-12 file even though the 2012-13 file was available, as previous analysis had called into question the integrity of this file; see Weber (2014) for more information.

All data was imported into Stata statistical software for analysis. Graphics were prepared in Microsoft Excel.

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About the Author

**Mark Weber** is a Ph.D. student at Rutgers-New Brunswick’s Graduate School of Education, pursuing a degree in Education Theory, Organization, and Policy under the advisement of Dr. Bruce Baker. He is also a full-time New Jersey public school teacher, currently working as a music educator in the Warren Township School District in Somerset County.

In addition to articles for peer-reviewed journals, Weber has produced education research for the National Education Policy Center, the Shanker Institute, the Education Law Center, and the NJ Education Policy Forum. He has testified before the NJ Legislature multiple times on state education policy issues.

Weber’s writings on education policy appear regularly in NJ Spotlight and other outlets. He blogs frequently on current issues in education at jerseyjazzman.blogspot.com.