

New Formula Needed to Finance Schools

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Letters to the Editor

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To the Editor:

“Abbott School Districts Among the Top Spenders” (June 10) shows how New Jersey has reversed decades of separate and unequal financing for poor, urban schools. But it didn’t include an important piece of the overall puzzle.

While New Jersey is near the top in school spending and No. 1 in support for poor, urban districts, it is tied for No. 38 in the share of school spending picked up at the state level. The state pays only about 40 percent of school costs, well below the national average of nearly 50 percent. This is why New Jersey’s local property taxes are the highest in the nation and why middle and wealthy suburban districts are pitted in competition with Abbott districts for an inadequate pool of state aid.

The problem is not too much financing for poor schools, but inadequate support for all schools at the state (and federal) levels and the resulting overreliance on local property taxes to pay for education.

This is what needs to be fixed as the state develops a new school financing formula.

We need to sustain the Abbott commitments to poor, urban schoolchildren, and extend that support to all New Jersey’s children, wherever they live.

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