

Advocates: NJ should wait on new school aid formula  
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A coalition of advocates for children with autism and other special education needs today became the first group to formally call upon lawmakers to put off considering a new school funding formula until next year.

"We'd prefer that the full plan, with numbers and details, be released, and that the full public be offered a chance to debate them," Brenda Considine, spokeswoman for the New Jersey Coalition for Special Education Funding Reform, said at a press conference in Trenton this afternoon. "We think it will be nearly impossible to get that done in a thoughtful way before the session ends."

Lawmakers are aiming to review and adopt a new formula for distributing more than \$8 billion in state school aid each year before the current legislative session ends Jan. 8.

The Corzine administration has released only broad outlines of a new formula, leaving educators, lobbyists and lawmakers wondering how individual towns will see their allotment of state aid change under the new formula.

Gov. Jon Corzine has said up to two-thirds of the state's 618 school districts will see funding increases next year under the new distribution plan, and has projected the new plan will increase overall state aid to schools by \$450 million.

The governor plans to release a town-by-town breakdown of school aid awards under the new formula next week, meaning lawmakers will have less than a month to consider legislation that would implement the plan.