

\$171,139,150,195

To teach our kids, that's how much Illinois schools collected in 10 years. Did we get our money's worth?

It's for our schools, our kids. Is \$171 billion too much, or too little? Is the funding system fair?

Are we getting the most bang for our billions?

The debate roars on — and on and on — while the system rolls along without change.

To participate meaningfully, to help shape the debate, we need to be informed. We need to know how much our schools got, where they got it from, where it went and why.

Taking a textbook approach in a series of stories, the Daily Herald drills down through the statistics to the bottom line.

Welcome to School Finance 101. Class is in session.

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Schools' revenue growth outpaces rate of inflation

BY EMILY KRONE

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You're a stakeholder in a multibillion-dollar enterprise.

Every year, you cut a check.

Every year, you give more.

Some years, you give much more — even if you live in the same house, work the same job, pull down the same pay.

Like it or not, you're a contributor to big business — the big business of Illinois public schools.

This multi-part Daily Herald series will help you understand the financial side of your investment.

Other people do — people with a stake in the dollars and cents of public schools.

Teachers. Unions.

Superintendents.

Lobbyists and lawyers.

Consultants of all sorts.

In short, people with a lot to gain from maximizing revenue for public schools.

Most of these stakeholders have a plan to tweak, update or completely overhaul the way Illinois funds its schools.

The Illinois Education Association has called for a constitutional amendment to increase the state contribution to public schools.

The Illinois Federation of Teachers has called for “comprehensive changes in the state's fiscal system.”

The Illinois Association of School Administrators wants to increase state funding and amend or repeal laws that limit the amount schools can collect from taxpayers.

Three recent school finance reform plans — one by more than 200 Illinois mayors, one by civil leaders and education professionals, and one by the Metropolitan Planning Commission — have called for billions more dollars for Illinois schools.

This year, lawmakers battled over but did not pass two school funding reform bills.

The plan supported by Gov. Rod Blagojevich would have imposed a new tax on business and generated an estimated \$7.7 billion extra for health care and schools.

Recent rumbles over school funding are part of a long-roiling debate that never seems to reach a conclusion.

Thus, reliably, a funding debate flares every few years.

And just as reliably, passions flare, because billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of young minds are at stake.

Your dollars.

Your child's mind.

For decades, the debate over school finance has been the purview of professionals.

This series aims to provide you with the information and ammunition necessary to participate in and help shape that debate in a sensible and comprehensible manner.

The weekly series, based on 10 years' worth of state data, will strip away the terms that compartmentalize and complicate school finance.

Using a chapter-by-chapter, textbook-style approach, the series will

show how revenue was raised in your district, how revenue was distributed to your district, and how revenue was allocated in your district.

The Illinois Education Association says those three aspects of the school finance system — the revenue stream, the distribution system and the allocation system — are deeply flawed.

You decide.

The starting point

We'll begin with numbers almost too big to understand.

In the past 10 school years, the 1996-97 year to the 2005-06 year, Illinois schools collected more than \$171 billion.

That's \$171 billion for teachers, administrators, supplies, transportation, new construction and day-to-day maintenance.

The \$171 billion came from local sources, including property taxes and school fees; from the state; and from the federal government.

That \$171 billion does not include bond loans taken out to build new schools.

In the Daily Herald coverage area — from Gurnee down to Bolingbrook, from Des Plaines west to Huntley — 10 districts each took in more than \$1 billion over the past decade.

Elgin Area School District U-46, the state's second largest district, collected the most of area districts: \$2.91 billion.

Several factors determine how much money schools collect. Chief among them is student enrollment.

Over the 10-year span, U-46 averaged 32,906 students.

The second most populous suburban district during that period was Naperville Unit District 203, with an average of 17,324 students.

Yet, while Naperville 203 was second in average number of students, it was fifth in amount of money taken in.

In fact, District 203 received millions less than school districts with smaller populations.

Take Northwest Suburban High School District 214, which averaged 11,087 students annually — 6,000 fewer students than Naperville 203.

District 214, based in Arlington Heights, collected \$1.78 billion over the 10 years.

Naperville 203 took in \$1.55 billion.

That's a difference of \$230 million — \$23 million a year — and District 203 had on average 6,000 more students each and every year.

In addition to average attendance figures, property values determine how much money a district receives.

Later, we'll delve into why districts receive the amount they do from federal, state and local sources.

For now, we'll focus more on the "how much" rather than the "why."

It's all about growth

"How much" has increased exponentially, and much faster than the rate of inflation, in most area districts during the past 10 years.

Driving revenue increases were some obvious factors.

The revenue in Huntley Unit District 158, for example, increased by 660 percent.

The McHenry County-based district collected \$8.9 million in the 1996-97 school year — and 10 years later collected \$67.6 million.

Skyrocketing growth in attendance, 404 percent over the 10-year period, drove most of the increase.

Generally, population increases mean bumps in the number of homes, property values and tax revenue.

But many suburban districts tallied revenue spikes that had little or nothing to do with the number of students.

Of the 94 districts the Daily Herald covers, 83 increased per-pupil revenues by more than the rate of inflation over the past decade.

The state tax cap limits how much more school districts can collect in

local taxes from one year to the next. The limit is the lesser of 5 percent or the rate of inflation, excluding revenue from new construction.

But tax caps don't apply to school fees — to register, for driver's ed, for band — and these fees have risen quickly.

Between fees, new homes and tax increases, the revenue in many districts has consistently, overwhelmingly outpaced the rate of inflation over the past decade.

Grass Lake Elementary District 36, for example, increased its per-pupil revenue by 189 percent, to \$15,575, over 10 years.

In that time, the district's total revenue increased by more than 100 percent, even as its student population declined by nearly 30 percent.

In comparison, the rate of inflation over the 10 years was 24 percent. Districts statewide collected, on average, 52 percent more per student in 2005 than in 1996.

That is, average per-pupil revenue increased by more than twice the rate of inflation in Illinois school districts over the past decade.

Total revenue

Here are the total revenue amounts area school districts collected in the 1996-97 school year, the 2005-06 school year, how much that amount changed over the 10-year period, and the total amount of money received over the 10-year period.

Cook County	1996-97 revenue	2005-06 revenue	% change	10-year total
Palatine 15	\$96,967,180	\$132,978,938	37%	\$1,151,278,139
Wheeling 21	\$51,978,368	\$91,093,406	75%	\$629,954,752
Prospect Heights 23	\$13,722,129	\$18,204,456	33%	\$160,337,078
Arlington Heights 25	\$40,555,950	\$65,094,883	61%	\$514,108,903
River Trails 26	\$18,901,275	\$19,998,437	6%	\$205,397,021
Schaumburg 54	\$128,108,986	\$179,181,924	40%	\$1,498,787,288
Mount Prospect 57	\$15,481,968	\$20,461,444	32%	\$176,921,250
Elk Grove 59	\$55,374,889	\$77,807,005	41%	\$687,838,506
Des Plaines 62	\$36,775,861	\$61,864,934	68%	\$442,330,724
East Maine 63	\$27,809,999	\$39,921,642	44%	\$323,870,136
Rosemont 78	\$2,169,250	\$3,205,337	48%	\$26,678,030
Maine 207	\$81,782,195	\$103,825,172	27%	\$967,279,635
Palatine 211	\$140,708,076	\$204,968,612	46%	\$1,619,344,185
Northwest 214	\$154,508,147	\$194,786,682	26%	\$1,775,031,029
DuPage County				
Bensenville 2	\$14,934,397	\$24,999,831	67%	\$179,057,120
Addison 4	\$21,207,959	\$32,207,536	52%	\$268,944,051
Wood Dale 7	\$9,048,871	\$12,018,240	33%	\$108,050,298
Itasca 10	\$7,761,855	\$9,983,056	29%	\$87,696,508
Medinah 11	\$7,258,501	\$8,087,413	11%	\$74,536,260
Roselle 12	\$5,114,347	\$6,765,009	32%	\$59,005,561
Bloomingtondale 13	\$10,491,834	\$14,663,990	40%	\$130,034,896
Glendale Heights 15	\$15,635,838	\$28,020,401	79%	\$204,232,066
Glendale Heights 16	\$11,204,635	\$19,275,972	72%	\$152,509,765
Keeneyville 20	\$12,712,246	\$16,585,873	30%	\$153,021,068
West Chicago 25	\$6,535,837	\$10,034,333	54%	\$81,463,074
West Chicago 33	\$21,798,539	\$38,989,390	79%	\$295,800,827
Winfield 34	\$2,442,652	\$4,337,733	78%	\$34,093,707
Glen Ellyn 41	\$17,630,896	\$38,101,450	116%	\$270,289,476
Lombard 44	\$21,201,521	\$37,173,113	75%	\$277,513,003
Villa Park 45	\$24,426,813	\$35,763,399	46%	\$292,971,488
Salt Creek 48	\$6,315,203	\$8,661,283	37%	\$75,458,096
Butler 53	\$6,142,227	\$8,516,645	39%	\$72,165,522
Woodridge 68	\$19,802,096	\$35,618,395	80%	\$260,120,466
Glenbard 87	\$72,454,817	\$107,071,850	48%	\$905,547,557
DuPage 88	\$37,953,246	\$51,309,049	35%	\$439,858,306
Glen Ellyn 89	\$16,659,180	\$22,987,620	38%	\$202,547,486
Carol Stream 93	\$26,128,992	\$50,257,490	92%	\$366,940,482
West Chicago 94	\$15,840,056	\$26,773,108	69%	\$219,059,157
Fenton 100	\$16,679,321	\$22,721,766	36%	\$197,554,422
Lake Park 108	\$27,935,167	\$42,329,121	52%	\$351,521,619
Wheaton-Warrenville 200	\$91,560,762	\$140,133,936	53%	\$1,168,975,052
Lisle 202	\$15,723,361	\$25,177,429	60%	\$208,148,249
Naperville 203	\$128,147,233	\$202,787,251	58%	\$1,545,464,709
Indian Prairie 204	\$97,543,819	\$259,959,919	167%	\$1,816,001,453
Elmhurst 205	\$58,884,821	\$82,241,790	40%	\$675,611,132
Will County				
Valley View 365-U	\$74,921,562	\$173,108,542	131%	\$1,155,273,998

Total revenue

Here are the total revenue amounts area school districts collected in the 1996-97 school year, the 2005-06 school year, how much that amount changed over the 10-year period, and the total amount of money received over the 10-year period.

	1996-97 revenue	2005-06 revenue	% change	10-year total
Kane County				
Elgin Area U-46	\$200,938,534	\$372,354,964	85%	\$2,905,703,922
Batavia 101	\$27,604,709	\$60,924,464	121%	\$430,571,635
Aurora West 129	\$50,750,684	\$105,896,518	109%	\$755,694,104
Community 300	\$75,719,075	\$166,348,254	120%	\$1,191,687,143
Central 301	\$12,899,601	\$30,514,200	137%	\$202,370,758
Kaneland 302	\$14,376,913	\$41,335,706	188%	\$257,259,081
St. Charles 303	\$63,048,856	\$141,240,674	124%	\$959,669,856
Geneva 304	\$24,997,024	\$66,496,828	166%	\$439,093,861
Lake County				
Millburn 24	\$3,012,579	\$12,002,775	298%	\$81,517,828
Emmons 33	\$1,585,628	\$3,702,388	133%	\$24,399,979
Antioch 34	\$9,473,144	\$26,424,497	179%	\$169,778,534
Grass Lake 36	\$1,374,758	\$2,843,843	107%	\$20,413,037
Gavin 37	\$5,214,301	\$9,205,566	77%	\$71,345,933
Big Hollow 38	\$2,720,482	\$11,963,257	340%	\$61,056,460
Lake Villa 41	\$11,709,832	\$25,769,429	120%	\$207,997,081
Grayslake 46	\$15,660,804	\$36,685,787	134%	\$274,283,937
Woodland 50	\$29,314,436	\$65,838,095	125%	\$512,232,184
Gurnee 56	\$12,792,503	\$22,192,646	73%	\$177,762,225
Oak Grove 68	\$6,035,592	\$11,604,418	92%	\$89,525,092
Libertyville 70	\$18,240,133	\$25,637,687	41%	\$226,570,156
Rondout 72	\$1,919,671	\$3,362,359	75%	\$26,107,047
Hawthorn 73	\$24,644,290	\$41,857,474	70%	\$330,572,826
Mundelein 75	\$10,059,388	\$19,724,486	96%	\$151,847,752
Diamond Lake 76	\$6,109,608	\$12,875,762	111%	\$103,438,345
Fremont 79	\$7,981,096	\$20,081,965	152%	\$141,096,238
Lake Zurich 95	\$35,361,683	\$68,221,273	93%	\$525,334,536
Long Grove 96	\$24,431,146	\$43,625,658	79%	\$336,815,854
Aptakisic-Tripp 102	\$17,899,666	\$29,034,247	62%	\$233,472,937
Lincolnshire 103	\$12,476,552	\$20,691,421	66%	\$170,178,682
Fox Lake 114	\$4,618,187	\$7,471,664	62%	\$64,823,127
Round Lake 116	\$28,091,491	\$58,299,535	108%	\$432,884,547
Antioch-Lake Villa 117	\$14,912,571	\$37,623,128	152%	\$270,792,570
Wauconda 118	\$19,975,934	\$39,170,438	96%	\$287,854,257
Mundelein 120	\$16,416,397	\$31,096,749	89%	\$226,420,366
Warren 121	\$24,091,339	\$45,162,172	87%	\$331,581,988
Grant 124	\$8,100,144	\$21,574,879	166%	\$141,911,361
Stevenson 125	\$38,692,659	\$78,636,170	103%	\$563,877,125
Grayslake 127	\$11,508,858	\$39,312,537	242%	\$235,203,458
Libertyville-V'n Hills 128	\$26,867,217	\$68,260,945	154%	\$477,686,675
Barrington 220	\$57,673,154	\$112,211,765	95%	\$867,776,919
McHenry County				
Fox River Grove 3	\$3,147,741	\$6,346,570	102%	\$49,002,581
Johnsburg 12	\$13,661,509	\$24,947,418	83%	\$185,997,626
McHenry 15	\$22,271,547	\$39,055,232	75%	\$308,438,468
Cary 26	\$15,172,147	\$28,838,231	90%	\$238,239,775
Prairie Grove 46	\$4,297,983	\$11,235,085	161%	\$73,256,809
Crystal Lake 47	\$41,602,359	\$81,238,064	95%	\$602,370,859
Crystal Lake 155	\$41,522,233	\$76,255,604	84%	\$572,333,304
Huntley 158	\$8,896,737	\$67,587,725	660%	\$353,459,522
State	\$12,891,448,376	\$21,218,197,846	65%	\$171,139,150,195

Source: Illinois Local Education Agency Retrieval Network, Illinois State Board of Education

Playing field is not even

BY EMILY KRONE

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The Illinois Constitution assigns the state the primary responsibility for financing public schools.

The state doesn't live up to that responsibility.

Not by a long shot.

In the 10 school years from 1996-97 through 2005-06, the state supplied just 29 percent of the money collected by all Illinois public schools.

With only three sources of funding — state, federal and local government — 29 percent can hardly meet anyone's definition of "primary."

In the property-rich suburbs, the state contribution is particularly paltry.

Over the past decade, the state contributed 16 percent of all the revenue collected by the 94 districts in the Daily Herald coverage area.

And that doesn't count the bond debt local school districts took on.

Critics of the state's funding system key in on the discrepancy between the demands of the state Constitution and what the state actually delivers.

They say the system creates inequalities among poor and wealthy districts.

Some areas generate enough property tax revenue to render the state contribution inconsequential.

Other areas operate with very little revenue beyond the state contribution.

Then there are the middle-class districts, which often fare worse than either.

"The way Illinois funds education is both unfair and inadequate," says a position paper by the bipartisan Chicago-based Center for Tax and Budget Accountability.

"The end result; the state fails to give every school enough money to provide a quality education to all children."

The state does make an effort to level the playing field.

Wealthy areas get less state aid.

Poor areas get more.

Yet, inequalities remain, some exacerbated — rather than eased — by the state's attempt to take from the rich and give to the poor.

How it's figured

Every year, the legislature sets a baseline level considered necessary to educate each student in the state.

Last year, the baseline level was \$5,164 per student.

The baseline figure is not the amount the state provides per student.

Rather, it's the minimum amount the state says all districts should be able to raise for each student.

Once the baseline figure is set, the state uses a complex formula with multiple variables to determine how much each district should be able to contribute and how much of what's left the state will cover.

The primary variable is property value. The greater the property value within a district, the bigger the slice of the whole local taxpayers will have to kick in.

Schools with high concentrations of poor students also receive poverty grants.

A separate calculation determines how much districts should get for specific purposes, such as special education, bilingual education, early childhood programs and transportation.

In theory, then, all districts should be assured of receiving the baseline amount.

Very poor districts and those with high concentrations of special-needs

students should receive supplemental state money, in recognition of the fact that it costs more to educate students with certain challenges.

And very wealthy districts should be able to fend for themselves.

That's the theory.

Here's how it plays out in practice in three districts.

Oak Brook

The state has determined property-rich Butler Elementary District 53 doesn't need much help from outside sources.

In 2005-06, the state equations assigned just \$700 per student to this DuPage County district.

Still, District 53 collected a total of \$18,314 per student, among the highest per-pupil totals in the state, mostly through local property taxes and student fees.

The robust revenue allowed the district to pay average teacher salaries of \$67,256, about \$10,500 more than the state average.

It also allowed the Oak Brook district to employ a teacher for every 14 students. At elementary schools statewide, the average student-to-teacher ratio was 19 to 1.

For District 53, then, the state contribution was incidental.

In fact, District 53 could have refused the state contribution altogether and still raked in more revenue per pupil than all but 32 of the state's 874 school districts.

Ford Heights

In South suburban Ford Heights Elementary District 169, the state contribution was anything but incidental.

Like Oak Brook 53, Ford Heights 169 is an elementary school district.

That's about where the similarities end.

The student body at Ford Heights is 85 percent low-income.

The student body at Oak Brook is zero percent low-income.

Most stark is the difference between the value of property in Oak Brook and the value of property in Ford Heights.

The state calculation shows all the property within the Ford Heights school district was worth \$44 million — about \$62,000 per student.

Oak Brook, home to million-dollar mansions and the upscale Oakbrook Center mall, has about \$761 million worth of property within its borders — or about \$1.6 million per student.

To review: an Oak Brook student is backed by 26 times more property wealth than a student from Ford Heights.

The equalizer

Still, these two districts on very opposite ends of the wealth spectrum aren't so far apart when it comes to per-pupil revenue.

In 2005-06, Ford Heights collected a total of \$17,719 per student, nearly as much as Oak Brook.

As a result, Ford Heights was able to pay its teachers about the state average and maintain significantly smaller class sizes than the average elementary district in Illinois.

State money, which accounted for about 45 percent of revenue in Ford Heights, made these class sizes and teacher salaries possible.

The state chipped in about \$7,369 per kid in Ford Heights, about \$6,699 more than it gave for each kid in Oak Brook 53.

So the state aid formula is a great equalizer.

It rights imbalances by taking into account poverty and property values.

It takes from the rich, gives to the poor, and everything evens out in the end.

Right?

Not quite.

Lake Villa

About 50 miles north of Oak Brook is middle-class Lake Villa Elementary District 41.

Lake Villa was not wealthy enough to raise much local money, but too well off to qualify for much state money.

In determining its 2005-06 cut, the state listed the value of property in the Lake Villa district as \$463 million — \$154,000 per student.

Each Lake Villa student, then, is backed by about one-tenth the property value of an Oak Brook student, but nearly 2^{1/2} times more than a Ford Heights student.

Given the extent to which the Illinois funding system relies on property taxes, it would figure that Lake Villa taxpayers had to kick in more than Ford Heights taxpayers but less than Oak Brook taxpayers.

And, given the intricacy of the state equations, it stands to reason that the three districts would wind up with roughly the same amounts per student.

They didn't.

In 2005-06, Lake Villa collected a total of just \$8,468 per student.

That's nearly \$10,000 less than Oak Brook raised.

It's \$9,250 less per student than Ford Heights got.

And it's about a third less than the state average of \$12,675 per pupil.

Ultimately, Lake Villa landed less because it didn't have more — more property wealth to augment the state contribution, or more poor kids with special needs to draw additional state funds.

Lake Villa received \$2,930 per student from the state, \$4,400 less than Ford Heights.

The average teacher in Lake Villa makes \$8,770 less than a Ford Heights teacher and contends with significantly larger classes.

Lake Villa isn't the only suburban districts in this squeeze.

Of the 94 Herald-area districts, 22 have property values per student that are less than \$200,000.

The state contributed, on average, \$2,326 per student to these districts in 2005-06.

Meanwhile, the state contributed \$4,007 per kid to the remaining 603 districts statewide with property values per student under \$200,000.

Suburban districts — districts which generally have the highest cost of living in the state — received half as much state aid as districts in other parts of the state with similar property wealth.

It's these types of inequalities that lead to charges that the state formulas are inherently — and often haphazardly — unjust.

But setting aside questions of fairness, it's indisputable that the way Illinois funds education places a greater burden on suburban property taxpayers.

Federal funding

Three sources of income keep public schools running: local, state and federal funding.

Federal money generally goes to districts with students who are poor or have special learning needs.

Most suburban districts don't have enough of these students to attract a sizable chunk of federal aid.

In the 2005-06 school year, just 12 area districts received more than 5 percent of their revenue from federal sources.

West Chicago District 33 received the most federal money per student, at \$890. The district received 11 times that amount — \$9,812 — from state and local sources.

Oak Brook District 53 received the least federal money, \$48 per student. Its total per student was \$18,314.

— Emily Krone

State funding

This chart shows the total revenue area school districts received in the 2005-06 school year; how much that was on a per pupil basis; the amount of state revenue the district received; the state revenue per pupil; and the share of total revenue that the state supplied.

Cook County	All revenue		State revenue		% of total
	Total	Per pupil	Amount	Per pupil	
Palatine Twp. 15	\$132,978,938	\$11,482	\$15,436,343	\$1,333	12%
Wheeling Twp. 21	\$91,093,406	\$15,365	\$7,651,003	\$1,290	8%
Prospect Hts. 23	\$18,204,456	\$13,100	\$1,574,855	\$1,133	9%
Arlington Hts. 25	\$65,094,883	\$14,527	\$5,032,924	\$1,123	8%
River Trails 26	\$19,998,437	\$12,915	\$2,106,167	\$1,360	11%
Schaumburg 54	\$179,181,924	\$13,830	\$18,803,724	\$1,451	10%
Mount Prospect 57	\$20,461,444	\$10,982	\$1,721,717	\$924	8%
Elk Grove 59	\$77,807,005	\$14,255	\$6,124,760	\$1,122	8%
Des Plaines 62	\$61,864,934	\$14,313	\$4,938,298	\$1,143	8%
East Maine 63	\$39,921,642	\$12,977	\$3,556,136	\$1,156	9%
Rosemont 78	\$3,205,337	\$15,106	\$149,528	\$705	5%
Maine Twp. 207	\$103,825,172	\$16,413	\$7,534,655	\$1,191	7%
Palatine 211	\$204,968,612	\$16,903	\$12,904,224	\$1,064	6%
Northwest 214	\$194,786,682	\$16,401	\$11,922,069	\$1,004	6%
DuPage County					
Bensenville 2	\$24,999,831	\$11,793	\$2,533,637	\$1,195	10%
Addison 4	\$32,207,536	\$8,302	\$4,424,558	\$1,141	14%
Wood Dale 7	\$12,018,240	\$10,456	\$1,320,000	\$1,148	11%
Itasca 10	\$9,983,056	\$13,861	\$580,277	\$806	6%
Medinah 11	\$8,087,413	\$11,519	\$673,775	\$960	8%
Roselle 12	\$6,765,009	\$10,778	\$723,645	\$1,153	11%
Bloomington 13	\$14,663,990	\$11,398	\$1,221,210	\$949	8%
Glendale Heights 15	\$28,020,401	\$12,001	\$3,036,062	\$1,300	11%
Glendale Heights 16	\$19,275,972	\$10,586	\$3,321,228	\$1,824	17%
Keeneyville 20	\$16,585,873	\$11,082	\$3,821,989	\$2,554	23%
West Chicago 25	\$10,034,333	\$12,099	\$1,297,443	\$1,564	13%
West Chicago 33	\$38,989,390	\$10,703	\$7,655,074	\$2,101	20%
Winfield 34	\$4,337,733	\$13,201	\$367,338	\$1,118	8%
Glen Ellyn 41	\$38,101,450	\$12,026	\$2,574,691	\$813	7%
Lombard 44	\$37,173,113	\$13,145	\$2,782,223	\$984	7%
Villa Park 45	\$35,763,399	\$11,167	\$3,903,109	\$1,219	11%
Salt Creek 48	\$8,661,283	\$17,584	\$507,544	\$1,030	6%
Butler 53	\$8,516,645	\$18,314	\$325,052	\$699	4%
Woodridge 68	\$35,618,395	\$13,849	\$5,279,850	\$2,053	15%
Glenbard Twp. 87	\$107,071,850	\$12,819	\$7,701,831	\$922	7%
DuPage 88	\$51,309,049	\$14,406	\$4,043,979	\$1,135	8%
Glen Ellyn 89	\$22,987,620	\$11,327	\$2,155,882	\$1,062	9%
Carol Stream 93	\$50,257,490	\$12,399	\$5,908,510	\$1,458	12%
West Chicago 94	\$26,773,108	\$14,350	\$2,930,706	\$1,571	11%
Fenton 100	\$22,721,766	\$15,896	\$1,170,056	\$819	5%
Lake Park 108	\$42,329,121	\$17,010	\$2,881,811	\$1,158	7%
Wheaton-Wville 200	\$140,133,936	\$10,945	\$21,460,826	\$1,676	15%
Liste 202	\$25,177,429	\$16,402	\$1,803,104	\$1,175	7%
Naperville 203	\$202,787,251	\$11,513	\$18,392,529	\$1,044	9%
Indian Prairie 204	\$259,959,919	\$10,017	\$32,489,314	\$1,252	12%
Elmhurst 205	\$82,241,790	\$11,775	\$6,421,032	\$919	8%
Will County					
Valley View 365-U*	\$170,558,810	\$10,900	\$35,610,950	\$2,276	21%

State funding

This chart shows the total revenue area school districts received in the 2005-06 school year; how much that was on a per pupil basis; the amount of state revenue the district received; the state revenue per pupil; and the share of total revenue that the state supplied.

Kane County	All revenue		State revenue		% of total
	Total	Per pupil	Amount	Per pupil	
Elgin Area U-46*	\$367,056,942	\$10,417	\$103,592,398	\$2,940	28%
Batavia 101	\$60,924,464	\$10,673	\$8,890,290	\$1,557	15%
Aurora West 129*	\$104,718,248	\$9,728	\$34,131,152	\$3,171	33%
Community 300	\$166,348,254	\$10,133	\$36,044,938	\$2,196	22%
Central 301	\$30,514,200	\$12,432	\$2,784,484	\$1,134	9%
Kaneland 302*	\$39,438,650	\$11,154	\$7,519,849	\$2,127	19%
St. Charles 303	\$141,240,674	\$11,590	\$12,209,628	\$1,002	9%
Geneva 304	\$66,496,828	\$12,487	\$4,643,625	\$872	7%
Lake County					
Millburn 24	\$12,002,775	\$9,156	\$2,760,528	\$2,106	23%
Emmons 33	\$3,702,388	\$10,772	\$345,388	\$1,005	9%
Antioch 34	\$26,424,497	\$10,014	\$4,453,749	\$1,688	17%
Grass Lake 36	\$2,843,843	\$15,575	\$318,911	\$1,747	11%
Gavin 37	\$9,205,566	\$11,923	\$2,870,371	\$3,718	31%
Big Hollow 38	\$11,963,257	\$11,305	\$1,734,410	\$1,639	14%
Lake Villa 41	\$25,769,429	\$8,468	\$8,917,396	\$2,930	35%
Grayslake 46	\$36,685,787	\$9,982	\$10,219,040	\$2,781	28%
Woodland 50	\$65,838,095	\$9,916	\$7,958,479	\$1,199	12%
Gurnee 56	\$22,192,646	\$11,578	\$2,349,493	\$1,226	11%
Oak Grove 68	\$11,604,418	\$11,348	\$735,821	\$720	6%
Libertyville 70	\$25,637,687	\$10,539	\$1,876,690	\$771	7%
Rondout 72	\$3,362,359	\$27,312	\$114,319	\$929	3%
Hawthorn 73	\$41,857,474	\$12,695	\$4,203,889	\$1,275	10%
Mundelein 75	\$19,724,486	\$9,794	\$4,765,204	\$2,366	24%
Diamond Lake 76	\$12,875,762	\$11,435	\$2,421,080	\$2,150	19%
Fremont 79	\$20,081,965	\$11,484	\$1,396,129	\$798	7%
Lake Zurich 95	\$68,221,273	\$11,093	\$6,301,023	\$1,025	9%
Buffalo Grove 96	\$43,625,658	\$14,046	\$3,614,920	\$1,164	8%
Aptakisic-Tripp 102	\$29,034,247	\$14,075	\$2,537,610	\$1,230	9%
Lincolnshire 103	\$20,691,421	\$13,381	\$1,946,567	\$1,259	9%
Fox Lake 114	\$7,471,664	\$9,504	\$1,378,979	\$1,754	18%
Round Lake 116	\$58,299,535	\$9,780	\$26,970,985	\$4,524	46%
Antioch-Lk Villa 117	\$37,623,128	\$16,508	\$6,146,468	\$2,697	16%
Wauconda 118	\$39,170,438	\$10,450	\$7,064,121	\$1,885	18%
Mundelein 120	\$31,096,749	\$15,888	\$3,130,424	\$1,599	10%
Warren Twp. 121	\$45,162,172	\$12,593	\$4,078,169	\$1,137	9%
Grant 124	\$21,574,879	\$14,741	\$2,170,490	\$1,483	10%
Stevenson 125	\$78,636,170	\$18,057	\$4,699,040	\$1,079	6%
Grayslake 127*	\$37,813,665	\$17,034	\$2,976,494	\$1,341	8%
Libertyville 128	\$68,260,945	\$22,695	\$2,414,189	\$803	4%
Barrington 220	\$112,211,765	\$13,500	\$8,876,372	\$1,068	8%
McHenry County					
Fox River Grove 3	\$6,346,570	\$11,530	\$1,237,559	\$2,248	19%
Johnsburg 12	\$24,947,418	\$10,427	\$6,418,867	\$2,683	26%
McHenry 15	\$39,055,232	\$8,979	\$6,167,078	\$1,418	16%
Cary 26	\$28,838,231	\$9,008	\$7,651,145	\$2,390	27%
Prairie Grove 46	\$11,235,085	\$11,272	\$1,165,705	\$1,170	10%
Crystal Lake 47	\$81,238,064	\$9,688	\$14,674,267	\$1,750	18%
Crystal Lake 155*	\$72,941,604	\$11,431	\$8,985,432	\$1,408	12%
Huntley 158	\$67,587,725	\$10,436	\$14,968,233	\$2,311	22%
State	\$21,218,197,846	\$11,337	\$5,830,690,099	\$3,115	27%

* These districts received state construction grants not included here.

Source: Illinois Local Education Agency Retrieval Network, Illinois State Board of Education

Suburban taxpayers' heavy share

BY TARA MALONE AND EMILY KRONE

Daily Herald Staff Writers

Your annual property taxes pay for most of the public services associated with suburban living.

They pay for police and firefighters. They pay for parks, libraries, a community college, city or village services, township activities, county roads and courts.

Then comes the big cost: your public school districts.

Two-thirds of the typical suburban tax bill goes to schools. All the other services split the remainder.

That's largely because suburban schools are funded mostly by property taxes.

Over the past decade, suburban schools typically collected 84 percent of their revenue from local sources.

State and federal funds made up the balance.

The arrangement remained stable year after year, even as the amounts schools collected increased at double the rate of inflation.

During the 1996-97 school year, districts in the Daily Herald's circulation area received on average \$7,184 per pupil from local sources.

That per-pupil figure increased to \$10,843 in 2005-06 — a 51 percent jump.

The rate of inflation during the decade was 24 percent.

In this third installment of the Daily Herald series on public school finance, we consider why some taxpayers pay more than others. (Hint: People who live in expensive houses generally, but not always, pay more.)

But first, we'll consider how tax bills could go up so fast despite the protection of the tax cap. (Hint: New construction sometimes, but not always, fueled the increases.)

Skirting the tax cap

The tax cap has safeguarded suburban homes and businesses since the mid-1990s, limiting tax revenue growth to the rate of inflation.

The cap, however, does not immediately apply to new construction.

When cornfields yield to condos, the property's revenue potential shoots up — and the tax cap law makes a one-year exception for that large increase.

System-savvy school districts use a "balloon levy" to fully capture the growth.

That is, when they go to the county with their levy, or annual request for funds, they ask for a lot more property tax money than they actually expect to receive.

The practice ensures that when the county applies the tax cap formula, districts receive every penny allowed by state law, every year, independent of need.

Taxpayers have only themselves to blame, or congratulate, for the second factor driving up revenues.

Since 1995, voters in 56 school districts covered by the Daily Herald have approved tax-rate increases.

Four districts — Buffalo Grove-Long Grove Elementary District 96 and Millburn Elementary District 24 in Lake County, Kaneland Unit District 302 in Kane County, and Round Lake Area District 116 — each passed two tax rate increases during that period.

The low end

Round Lake District Unit 116 taxpayers provided 45 percent of all revenues collected by their Lake County district over the past decade.

It was the lowest local share of any district in the Daily Herald

circulation area.

That isn't to say the load was light.

In 2005-06, Round Lake taxpayers paid the highest tax rate in the suburbs — \$5.59 per \$100 of assessed value.

The average tax rate of the 20 other unit districts in the Herald area was \$4.27.

The Round Lake rate was high for two reasons. The first is low property values.

Property within Round Lake is worth about \$70,000 per student, the lowest per-pupil value in the suburbs.

Property value per pupil is a key measure of a district's ability to raise money from local sources.

"The property values in the district are low and we don't have opportunities to expand," Chief Financial Officer Walter Korpan said. "We don't have the big Targets or Home Depots because you need property for that."

Weak property values, combined with a moderate enrollment growth rate of 29 percent over the 10-year period, created the conditions for the second factor driving the rate.

In the 1996-97 school year, the district ran up a \$2 million deficit, and voters quickly approved a tax rate increase.

It didn't help much.

The district continued to operate in the red year after year. In 2000, voters approved another tax rate hike.

The state seized control of the district in 2002.

The deficits finally stopped — in the 2003-04 school year.

With its high tax rate, District 116 has since emerged from its financial hole.

Still, the district is stuck with the distinction of raising less per pupil from local sources than any other suburban district — \$4,588 in 2005-06.

The high end

Less than 20 miles away, Rondout Elementary District 72 — a one-school district with 22 teachers, two administrators, a bookkeeper and a custodian — collected \$26.1 million in revenue during the past decade.

Of that, 97 percent came from local businesses and homeowners. It was the largest local load carried by a suburban school district.

To understand why, consider the Lake Forest-based district's 5-square-mile footprint, which includes pockets of homes, business parks, small factories and restaurants.

The estimated value of all property within the district is \$224.8 million — or \$1.8 million per student.

About two-thirds of Rondout's \$224.8 million tax base comes from commercial and industrial sources, lightening the load for homeowners.

"Unless you are fortunate to have a strong commercial or industrial base, the burden falls on the homeowners, so it can often be difficult," Superintendent Jennifer Wojcik said.

With its financial seesaw tilted toward commercial sources, Rondout has not sought voter approval for a tax-rate increase.

There wasn't a need.

In 2005-06, Rondout collected \$27,336 per student, tops in the suburbs.

Voting to pay more

Rondout residents and businesses provided nearly six times more revenue per pupil to their local schools than residents in Round Lake District 116.

And Rondout had nearly 26 times more property wealth per pupil than Round Lake.

Generally, more property wealth means more local money to schools.

But not always.

Take the examples of Grayslake High School District 127 and Crystal

Lake High School District 155.

The suburban districts have nearly identical rates of per-pupil property value.

Each Grayslake student is backed by \$422,000 worth of property; each Crystal Lake student by \$427,000.

But Grayslake taxpayers paid \$15,594 per student in 2005-06, while Crystal Lake taxpayers paid \$9,782.

Grayslake voters passed a tax rate increase in 2002 mostly because the district's enrollment had doubled over the past decade.

The Crystal Lake district has not asked for a tax rate hike in the past decade, mostly because its enrollment grew half as fast as Grayslake's.

In both cases, however, revenue grew.

The pace of the revenue growth largely is in the hands of voters. They can't cut it back much, but they can raise a district's revenue.

It's through the election of school board members that residents can exercise some control on the expenditure side of school budgets.

In the next chapter, we'll consider where the money collected from state, federal and local sources goes — and how much actually makes it into the classroom.

Local revenue

Here are the total revenues area school districts received in the 2005-06 school year; how much that was on a per pupil basis; the amount of local revenue the district received; the local revenue per pupil; and the share of total revenue supplied by local sources.

Cook County	All revenue		Local revenue		% of total
	Total	Per pupil	Amount	Per pupil	
Palatine Twp. 15	\$132,978,938	\$11,482	\$111,271,060	\$9,608	84%
Wheeling Twp. 21	\$91,093,406	\$15,365	\$81,075,422	\$13,675	89%
Prospect Heights 23	\$18,204,456	\$13,100	\$16,417,193	\$11,814	90%
Arlington Heights 25	\$65,094,883	\$14,527	\$59,028,914	\$13,173	91%
River Trails 26	\$19,998,437	\$12,915	\$17,322,672	\$11,187	87%
Schaumburg 54	\$179,181,924	\$13,830	\$154,425,005	\$11,919	86%
Mount Prospect 57	\$20,461,444	\$10,982	\$18,252,230	\$9,796	89%
Elk Grove Twp. 59	\$77,807,005	\$14,255	\$69,225,988	\$12,683	89%
Des Plaines 62	\$61,864,934	\$14,313	\$53,856,781	\$12,460	87%
East Maine 63	\$39,921,642	\$12,977	\$33,653,481	\$10,940	84%
Rosemont 78	\$3,205,337	\$15,106	\$2,956,036	\$13,931	92%
Maine Twp. 207	\$103,825,172	\$16,413	\$93,388,260	\$14,763	90%
Palatine 211	\$204,968,612	\$16,903	\$189,356,406	\$15,616	92%
Northwest 214	\$194,786,682	\$16,401	\$179,132,014	\$15,083	92%
DuPage County					
Bensenville 2	\$24,999,831	\$11,793	\$21,420,885	\$10,105	86%
Addison 4	\$32,207,536	\$8,302	\$25,123,351	\$6,476	78%
Wood Dale 7	\$12,018,240	\$10,456	\$10,290,734	\$8,953	86%
Itasca 10	\$9,983,056	\$13,861	\$9,252,834	\$12,847	93%
Medinah 11	\$8,087,413	\$11,519	\$7,232,296	\$10,301	89%
Roselle 12	\$6,765,009	\$10,778	\$5,895,179	\$9,392	87%
Bloomington 13	\$14,663,990	\$11,398	\$13,316,439	\$10,350	91%
Glendale Heights 15	\$28,020,401	\$12,001	\$23,940,773	\$10,254	85%
Glendale Heights 16	\$19,275,972	\$10,586	\$15,561,450	\$8,546	81%
Keeneyville 20	\$16,585,873	\$11,082	\$11,807,106	\$7,889	71%
West Chicago 25	\$10,034,333	\$12,099	\$8,496,622	\$10,245	85%
West Chicago 33	\$38,989,390	\$10,703	\$28,091,819	\$7,711	72%
Winfield 34	\$4,337,733	\$13,201	\$3,846,639	\$11,706	89%
Glen Ellyn 41	\$38,101,450	\$12,026	\$35,117,033	\$11,084	92%
Lombard 44	\$37,173,113	\$13,145	\$33,735,103	\$11,930	91%
Villa Park 45	\$35,763,399	\$11,167	\$29,251,339	\$9,133	82%
Salt Creek 48	\$8,661,283	\$17,584	\$7,810,538	\$15,857	90%
Butler 53	\$8,516,645	\$18,314	\$8,169,306	\$17,567	96%
Woodridge 68	\$35,618,395	\$13,849	\$28,855,968	\$11,219	81%
Glenbard Twp. 87	\$107,071,850	\$12,819	\$98,028,902	\$11,736	92%
DuPage 88	\$51,309,049	\$14,406	\$45,157,427	\$12,679	88%
Glen Ellyn 89	\$22,987,620	\$11,327	\$20,519,578	\$10,111	89%
Carol Stream 93	\$50,257,490	\$12,399	\$43,717,677	\$10,786	87%
West Chicago 94	\$26,773,108	\$14,350	\$22,868,633	\$12,257	85%
Fenton 100	\$22,721,766	\$15,896	\$21,196,555	\$14,829	93%
Lake Park 108	\$42,329,121	\$17,010	\$39,013,299	\$15,677	92%
Wheaton-Wville 200	\$140,133,936	\$10,945	\$111,975,537	\$8,746	80%
Lisle 202	\$25,177,429	\$16,402	\$22,553,450	\$14,692	90%
Naperville 203	\$202,787,251	\$11,513	\$177,698,897	\$10,089	88%
Indian Prairie 204	\$259,959,919	\$10,017	\$219,507,684	\$8,459	84%
Elmhurst 205	\$82,241,790	\$11,775	\$73,844,632	\$10,573	90%
Will County					
Valley View 365-U	\$173,108,542	\$11,063	\$127,147,689	\$8,125	73%

Local revenue

Here are the total revenues area school districts received in the 2005-06 school year; how much that was on a per pupil basis; the amount of local revenue the district received; the local revenue per pupil; and the share of total revenue supplied by local sources.

Kane County	All revenue		Local revenue		% of total
	Total	Per pupil	Amount	Per pupil	
Elgin Area U-46	\$372,354,964	\$10,567	\$240,418,667	\$6,823	65%
Batavia 101	\$60,924,464	\$10,673	\$50,550,194	\$8,856	83%
Aurora West 129	\$105,896,518	\$9,838	\$63,252,277	\$5,876	60%
Community 300	\$166,348,254	\$10,133	\$121,715,156	\$7,414	73%
Central 301	\$30,514,200	\$12,432	\$27,156,347	\$11,064	89%
Kaneland 302	\$41,335,706	\$11,691	\$31,098,601	\$8,795	75%
St. Charles 303	\$141,240,674	\$11,590	\$125,108,997	\$10,266	89%
Geneva 304	\$66,496,828	\$12,487	\$60,893,413	\$11,435	92%
Lake County					
Millburn 24	\$12,002,775	\$9,156	\$9,151,692	\$6,981	76%
Emmons 33	\$3,702,388	\$10,772	\$3,326,739	\$9,679	90%
Antioch 34	\$26,424,497	\$10,014	\$21,365,271	\$8,097	81%
Grass Lake 36	\$2,843,843	\$15,575	\$2,477,426	\$13,568	87%
Gavin 37	\$9,205,566	\$11,923	\$6,030,716	\$7,811	66%
Big Hollow 38	\$11,963,257	\$11,305	\$10,136,402	\$9,579	85%
Lake Villa 41	\$25,769,429	\$8,468	\$16,468,264	\$5,411	64%
Grayslake 46	\$36,685,787	\$9,982	\$25,552,581	\$6,953	70%
Woodland 50	\$65,838,095	\$9,916	\$56,636,694	\$8,530	86%
Gurnee 56	\$22,192,646	\$11,578	\$19,227,281	\$10,031	87%
Oak Grove 68	\$11,604,418	\$11,348	\$10,784,142	\$10,546	93%
Libertyville 70	\$25,637,687	\$10,539	\$23,393,592	\$9,616	91%
Rondout 72	\$3,362,359	\$27,312	\$3,239,336	\$26,313	96%
Hawthorn 73	\$41,857,474	\$12,695	\$36,930,400	\$11,200	88%
Mundelein 75	\$19,724,486	\$9,794	\$14,209,849	\$7,056	72%
Diamond Lake 76	\$12,875,762	\$11,435	\$10,112,424	\$8,981	79%
Fremont 79	\$20,081,965	\$11,484	\$18,559,721	\$10,613	92%
Lake Zurich 95	\$68,221,273	\$11,093	\$61,608,288	\$10,018	90%
Long Grove 96	\$43,625,658	\$14,046	\$39,586,555	\$12,746	91%
Aptakisic-Tripp 102	\$29,034,247	\$14,075	\$26,102,301	\$12,653	90%
Lincolnshire 103	\$20,691,421	\$13,381	\$18,546,825	\$11,994	90%
Fox Lake 114	\$7,471,664	\$9,504	\$5,779,039	\$7,351	77%
Round Lake 116	\$58,299,535	\$9,780	\$27,350,570	\$4,588	47%
Antioch-Lk. Villa 117	\$37,623,128	\$16,508	\$30,847,087	\$13,535	82%
Wauconda 118	\$39,170,438	\$10,450	\$31,412,869	\$8,380	80%
Mundelein 120	\$31,096,749	\$15,888	\$27,394,657	\$13,996	88%
Warren Twp. 121	\$45,162,172	\$12,593	\$40,499,347	\$11,293	90%
Grant 124	\$21,574,879	\$14,741	\$19,154,480	\$13,087	89%
Stevenson 125	\$78,636,170	\$18,057	\$73,632,293	\$16,908	94%
Grayslake 127	\$39,312,537	\$17,710	\$34,615,062	\$15,594	88%
Lville-Vernon Hills 128	\$68,260,945	\$22,695	\$65,596,501	\$21,810	96%
Barrington 220	\$112,211,765	\$13,500	\$100,383,347	\$12,077	89%
McHenry County					
Fox River Grove 3	\$6,346,570	\$11,530	\$4,897,506	\$8,897	77%
Johnsburg 12	\$24,947,418	\$10,427	\$17,278,438	\$7,222	69%
McHenry 15	\$39,055,232	\$8,979	\$30,801,769	\$7,082	79%
Cary 26	\$28,838,231	\$9,008	\$20,148,139	\$6,293	70%
Prairie Grove 46	\$11,235,085	\$11,272	\$9,885,089	\$9,917	88%
Crystal Lake 47	\$81,238,064	\$9,688	\$63,698,131	\$7,596	78%
Crystal Lake 155	\$76,255,604	\$11,950	\$62,418,639	\$9,782	82%
Huntley 158	\$67,587,725	\$10,436	\$51,459,244	\$7,946	76%
State	\$21,218,197,846	\$11,337	\$13,751,589,699	\$7,347	65%

Source: Illinois Local Education Agency Retrieval Network, Illinois State Board of Education

1 of 2 education dollars stays in classroom

BY EMILY KRONE

ekrone@dailyherald.com

A typical suburban classroom of 25 students represents \$315,000 in revenue.

That's \$12,600 per kid, the average per-pupil revenue collected in 2005-06 by the 94 school districts in the Daily Herald coverage area.

Some of that \$315,000 goes to teacher salaries and benefits, supplies, textbooks and classroom technology.

The rest — more than half — leaves the classroom.

Over the past decade, the 94 districts spent an average of 48 percent of their revenue on instruction and teacher-pupil activities.

Statewide, districts spent 50.1 percent on instruction, about half of the \$171 billion they collected.

The remainder went to everything else: construction and maintenance; janitors, nurses, social workers and guidance counselors; administrators and principals; consultants and lawyers.

Some states, though not Illinois, now specify a certain percentage of all expenditures that must go toward instruction.

The regulations raise questions about whether such laws improve or hamstring learning — and whether a fair way exists to measure whether classrooms are getting their fair share.

Most people can agree they'd like to see their tax money spent on teachers and textbooks, not bureaucracies and consultants.

But school expenditures cannot easily be grouped into tidy percentages of good spending versus bad.

Define instruction

The first step in analyzing classroom spending is semantic: determining how to define classroom spending.

The Illinois State Board of Education takes a seemingly straightforward approach.

The board defines instruction as anything related to the teaching of pupils, or the interaction between teachers and pupils, including the services of aides of any type.

Simple enough. But there are dilemmas in the details.

First, there are quirks in what does and does not constitute instruction.

In Illinois, contributions to teacher retirement funds count as instruction.

The salary of a speech pathologist does not.

Adult and continuing education classes count as instruction.

Professional development for teachers does not.

Special education counts as instruction.

Payments to outside agencies to teach special ed kids do not.

The measuring stick

Defining instruction is tough enough.

But the pitfalls become even more pronounced when comparing instructional expenditures among districts.

On state report cards, Illinois records the amount spent on instruction — as a percentage of expenditures.

Because certain types of expenditures are more likely to spike and plunge year over year, this method can cause artificially high — or low —

percentages of instructional spending.

For example, if a district is growing quickly, it pays big money to build schools. That ups its expenditures total, which shrinks the instructional percentage, even if the district spends the same on instruction as its peers.

This often is aggravated by the fact that the state does not include construction bond money in revenue — but does count the use of that money as an expenditure.

To neutralize that volatility, we looked at instruction spending as a percentage of total revenue — rather than expenditures.

As a rule, revenue streams are more stable year-to-year than expenditures. Using revenue as the common denominator puts fast-growing and stable districts on more equal footing.

Using this revenue-based approach, let's examine two districts on opposite ends of the instructional spending spectrum. This will better enable us to evaluate the share of revenue any district puts toward instruction.

Rosemont 78

Year after year, Rosemont Elementary District 78 spends most of its revenue on instruction.

In 2005-06, the district spent \$9,784 per student on instruction, second highest among Daily Herald districts.

Rosemont teachers are paid more — and there's more of them.

The average teacher in Rosemont makes \$66,500, about \$10,000 above the state average. The district employs one teacher for every 11 students, compared with the state average of 19.

The one-school district can afford to spend more on teachers, in part because its transportation costs are low — \$250 per kid in 2005-06.

The district saves on other support services as well.

In 2005-06, Rosemont spent just \$41,000 on social workers and \$60,000 on speech and hearing services.

The district spent no money on health, guidance or psychological services.

The district also saved on administrative costs, with just one administrator for its 247 students.

All of these factors — generous compensation packages for teachers, combined with low administrative and transportation costs — combined to swell the share of instructional spending in Rosemont District 78.

Over the past decade, Rosemont spent, on average, 67 percent of its revenue on instruction — the largest portion of any Herald district.

Huntley 158

At the other end of the spectrum, over the past decade fast-growing Huntley Unit District 158 spent just 37 percent of its revenue on instruction.

In 2005-06, the district spent \$4,138 per student on instruction, second lowest among Herald districts, and less than half of what Rosemont spent.

And unlike Rosemont, teacher salaries in Huntley are \$10,000 lower than the state average.

The K-12 district also employs a slew of support staff that Rosemont, an elementary district, does not.

Huntley spent nearly \$1 million in salary and benefits for health service workers and more than \$500,000 for guidance counselors, neither of which fall in the category of instruction.

The starkest difference between Rosemont and Huntley was the amount of tax money they collected to pay off debt.

Huntley in 2005-06 collected \$7.7 million for bond payments, while Rosemont collected only \$170,000.

If bond revenue was removed from the equation, Huntley's percentage of instructional spending in 2005-06 would have been 45 percent of revenue, rather than the 40 percent reported.

There are other complications in making value judgments about how much Huntley — or any other district — spends on instruction.

Take, for example, Huntley's busing costs.

Bus costs in the sprawling, rural district were more than twice as high on a per-pupil basis than in Rosemont.

In 2005-06, Huntley spent nearly \$600 per pupil on transportation.

But while the district did spend \$4.1 million on transportation, it also received \$2.3 million in state grants and local fees earmarked specifically for that purpose.

Less than half the money the district spent on transportation, then, could legally have made it into the classroom in the first place.

A moot point?

Even if there were a fair way to calculate and compare how much districts spend in the classroom, another, more fundamental question remains unanswered.

That is, does the percentage districts spend on instruction even matter?

A Standard and Poor's analysis found no significant correlation between the percentage of money districts spend on instruction and the percentage of students who meet state standards in reading and math.

Still, Standard and Poor's acknowledged that monitoring the percentage districts allocate to instruction can be useful, even if mandating specific levels is not.

Monitoring requires financial transparency and allows the public to evaluate whether they are getting a good return on their investment, the report found.

To that end, the discussion about the percentage districts spend on instruction is instructive in and of itself.

In Chapter 5 we'll continue the dialogue, by examining where the rest of the money goes.

Instruction spending

Here are the total revenue amounts area school districts collected in the 2005-06 school year; how much they spent on instruction; the percent of total revenue that instruction accounted for; the instruction amount on a per student basis; and the average percentage of total revenue that was spent on instruction over the 10-year period 1996-97 through 2005-06.

	Total revenue	Instruction expenditures	% of total	Per pupil	10-yr. avg.
Cook County					
Palatine Twp. 15	\$132,978,938	\$64,036,785	48%	\$5,529	50%
Wheeling Twp. 21	\$91,093,406	\$43,445,572	48%	\$7,328	53%
Prospect Heights 23	\$18,204,456	\$8,146,790	45%	\$5,862	47%
Arlington Heights 25	\$65,094,883	\$26,220,219	40%	\$5,851	41%
River Trails 26	\$19,998,437	\$9,246,175	46%	\$5,971	42%
Schaumburg 54	\$179,181,924	\$86,039,175	48%	\$6,641	51%
Mount Prospect 57	\$20,461,444	\$8,595,977	42%	\$4,613	40%
Elk Grove Twp. 59	\$77,807,005	\$35,373,970	45%	\$6,481	43%
Des Plaines 62	\$61,864,934	\$27,877,811	45%	\$6,450	60%
East Maine 63	\$39,921,642	\$16,576,566	42%	\$5,388	46%
Rosemont 78	\$3,205,337	\$2,076,045	65%	\$9,784	67%
Maine Twp. 207	\$103,825,172	\$57,812,592	56%	\$9,139	48%
Palatine 211	\$204,968,612	\$97,480,312	48%	\$8,039	51%
Northwest 214	\$194,786,682	\$100,844,948	52%	\$8,491	44%
DuPage County					
Bensenville 2	\$24,999,831	\$12,628,922	51%	\$5,957	50%
Addison 4	\$32,207,536	\$16,946,437	53%	\$4,368	53%
Wood Dale 7	\$12,018,240	\$6,634,135	55%	\$5,772	46%
Itasca 10	\$9,983,056	\$4,421,517	44%	\$6,139	45%
Medinah 11	\$8,087,413	\$3,662,597	45%	\$5,217	48%
Roselle 12	\$6,765,009	\$3,312,303	49%	\$5,277	49%
Bloomington 13	\$14,663,990	\$7,293,185	50%	\$5,669	48%
Glendale Heights 15	\$28,020,401	\$13,017,276	46%	\$5,575	52%
Glendale Heights 16	\$19,275,972	\$9,554,019	50%	\$5,247	53%
Keeneyville 20	\$16,585,873	\$8,520,913	51%	\$5,693	46%
West Chicago 25	\$10,034,333	\$4,552,220	45%	\$5,489	47%
West Chicago 33	\$38,989,390	\$20,801,762	53%	\$5,710	57%
Winfield 34	\$4,337,733	\$2,459,191	57%	\$7,484	53%
Glen Ellyn 41	\$38,101,450	\$19,080,148	50%	\$6,022	50%
Lombard 44	\$37,173,113	\$18,052,118	49%	\$6,384	53%
Villa Park 45	\$35,763,399	\$20,698,336	58%	\$6,463	59%
Salt Creek 48	\$8,661,283	\$3,658,266	42%	\$7,427	52%
Butler 53	\$8,516,645	\$3,912,630	46%	\$8,414	54%
Woodridge 68	\$35,618,395	\$14,947,084	42%	\$5,812	52%
Glenbard 87	\$107,071,850	\$59,099,955	55%	\$7,076	54%
DuPage 88	\$51,309,049	\$24,093,097	47%	\$6,764	46%
Glen Ellyn 89	\$22,987,620	\$13,089,798	57%	\$6,450	55%
Carol Stream 93	\$50,257,490	\$24,253,559	48%	\$5,984	49%
West Chicago 94	\$26,773,108	\$12,979,354	48%	\$6,957	49%
Fenton 100	\$22,721,766	\$11,451,385	50%	\$8,011	48%
Lake Park 108	\$42,329,121	\$17,954,593	42%	\$7,215	44%
Wheaton-Wville 200	\$140,133,936	\$75,978,410	54%	\$5,934	54%
Lisle 202	\$25,177,429	\$11,291,038	45%	\$7,355	45%
Naperville 203	\$202,787,251	\$108,839,839	54%	\$6,179	55%
Indian Prairie 204	\$259,959,919	\$146,702,779	56%	\$5,653	52%
Elmhurst 205	\$82,241,790	\$46,557,008	57%	\$6,666	54%
Will County					
Valley View 365-U	\$173,108,542	\$85,462,778	49%	\$5,462	49%

Instruction spending

Here are the total revenue amounts area school districts collected in the 2005-06 school year; how much they spent on instruction; the percent of total revenue that instruction accounted for; the instruction amount on a per student basis; and the average percentage of total revenue that was spent on instruction over the 10-year period 1996-97 through 2005-06.

	Total revenue	Instruction expenditures	% of total	Per pupil	10-yr. avg.
Kane County					
Elgin Area U-46	\$372,354,964	\$181,734,594	49%	\$5,157	54%
Batavia 101	\$60,924,464	\$30,980,491	51%	\$5,427	55%
Aurora West 129	\$105,896,518	\$57,499,505	54%	\$5,342	52%
Community 300	\$166,348,254	\$85,268,626	51%	\$5,194	55%
Central 301	\$30,514,200	\$13,352,035	44%	\$5,440	46%
Kaneland 302	\$41,335,706	\$18,366,525	44%	\$5,194	45%
St. Charles 303	\$141,240,674	\$60,360,974	43%	\$4,953	46%
Geneva 304	\$66,496,828	\$26,489,239	40%	\$4,974	46%
Lake County					
Millburn 24	\$12,002,775	\$7,452,095	62%	\$5,684	46%
Emmons 33	\$3,702,388	\$2,144,886	58%	\$6,241	59%
Antioch 34	\$26,424,497	\$11,407,816	43%	\$4,323	46%
Grass Lake 36	\$2,843,843	\$950,191	33%	\$5,204	45%
Gavin 37	\$9,205,566	\$3,489,182	38%	\$4,519	47%
Big Hollow 38	\$11,963,257	\$3,866,924	32%	\$3,654	42%
Lake Villa 41	\$25,769,429	\$12,843,738	50%	\$4,220	47%
Grayslake 46	\$36,685,787	\$15,724,778	43%	\$4,279	39%
Woodland 50	\$65,838,095	\$32,042,630	49%	\$4,826	42%
Gurnee 56	\$22,192,646	\$9,735,595	44%	\$5,079	44%
Oak Grove 68	\$11,604,418	\$6,390,014	55%	\$6,249	53%
Libertyville 70	\$25,637,687	\$12,970,223	51%	\$5,332	53%
Rondout 72	\$3,362,359	\$1,553,323	46%	\$12,617	45%
Hawthorn 73	\$41,857,474	\$19,336,338	46%	\$5,864	45%
Mundelein 75	\$19,724,486	\$8,967,491	45%	\$4,453	45%
Diamond Lake 76	\$12,875,762	\$5,747,700	45%	\$5,104	47%
Fremont 79	\$20,081,965	\$7,975,778	40%	\$4,561	40%
Lake Zurich 95	\$68,221,273	\$34,799,012	51%	\$5,658	48%
Buffalo Grove 96	\$43,625,658	\$19,298,147	44%	\$6,213	45%
Aptakisic-Tripp 102	\$29,034,247	\$13,452,624	46%	\$6,521	45%
Lincolnshire 103	\$20,691,421	\$11,024,353	53%	\$7,129	52%
Fox Lake 114	\$7,471,664	\$3,871,998	52%	\$4,925	50%
Round Lake Area 116	\$58,299,535	\$25,228,805	43%	\$4,232	48%
Antioch-Lake Villa 117	\$37,623,128	\$17,263,369	46%	\$7,575	42%
Wauconda 118	\$39,170,438	\$16,518,240	42%	\$4,407	44%
Mundelein 120	\$31,096,749	\$11,706,530	38%	\$5,981	48%
Warren Twp. 121	\$45,162,172	\$19,943,337	44%	\$5,561	43%
Grant 124	\$21,574,879	\$7,381,750	34%	\$5,044	40%
Stevenson 125	\$78,636,170	\$36,160,378	46%	\$8,303	46%
Grayslake 127	\$39,312,537	\$12,392,927	32%	\$5,583	32%
Lib'ville-V'n Hills 128	\$68,260,945	\$26,659,267	39%	\$8,864	38%
Barrington 220	\$112,211,765	\$54,112,309	48%	\$6,510	50%
McHenry County					
Fox River Grove 3	\$6,346,570	\$2,805,732	44%	\$5,097	49%
Johnsburg 12	\$24,947,418	\$14,167,954	57%	\$5,922	57%
McHenry 15	\$39,055,232	\$18,769,436	48%	\$4,315	49%
Cary 26	\$28,838,231	\$15,469,924	54%	\$4,832	49%
Prairie Ridge 46	\$11,235,085	\$4,886,170	43%	\$4,902	49%
Crystal Lake 47	\$81,238,064	\$39,202,263	48%	\$4,675	56%
Crystal Lake 155	\$76,255,604	\$42,177,973	55%	\$6,610	37%
Huntley 158	\$67,587,725	\$26,799,532	40%	\$4,138	49%
State	\$21,218,197,846	\$10,419,348,855	49%	\$5,567	50%

Source: Illinois Local Education Agency Retrieval Network, Illinois State Board of Education

Non-class costs weigh heavy on schools

BY JAMEEL NAQVI

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It's a common refrain among education critics: More money needs to stay in the classroom and less spent outside.

And they have the numbers to point to.

Over a decade, most of the 94 districts in the Daily Herald coverage area consistently spent more money outside the classroom than they did on instruction.

From the 1996-97 school year through 2005-06, the imbalance was worse in some districts than others:

- 82 area districts spent more than half their revenue outside their classrooms.
- 20 districts spent more than two-thirds of their total revenues outside the class.
- Two districts spent all of their revenue outside the classroom.

Actually, Huntley Unit District 158 and Big Hollow Elementary District 38 both spent more on busing and building, heating and cooling, lawyers, a laundry list of support staff and other costs than they collected from local, state and federal sources.

Then they had to worry about paying teachers and buying textbooks.

Technically, the districts borrowed money to build and covered their instruction costs with annual revenue, but the effect is the same — the schools spent more outside classrooms than inside.

The twist is that the money they borrowed is not counted as revenue by the state. If it were, the percentage of what they spent outside the classroom would not seem so dramatic.

But even if bond proceeds were counted as revenue, Huntley and Big Hollow still would have spent less on teaching than they did outside the classroom.

The state as a whole in 2005-06 did the same.

Illinois' 873 districts collectively spent 49.1 percent of all revenue in the classroom, and 53.7 percent outside.

That adds up to more than 100 percent mostly because sometimes the districts spent more money than they took in. Again, bond funds were not counted as revenue.

Still, education officials say a flat comparison of instructional versus non-instructional spending doesn't always factually determine whether a district needs to change how much it devotes to its classrooms.

There's a wide range of needs — from transportation to building schools — that make instruction possible, and they vary from district to district and year to year.

Let's look at those needs and where school districts spend their money.

The big four

The state divides school expenditures into four large categories: instruction, support services, general administration and other.

Last week, we tackled instruction. This week, we focus on the other three areas.

General administration may be the most popular target for critics who say districts should spend more on their students.

This category includes salaries and benefits for top administrators, including superintendents, associate superintendents, principals and assistant principals.

Support services, just as it sounds, includes all of the specialized staff that handles student and school needs outside the classroom — guidance counselors, social workers, school psychologists and financial officials, to name just a few.

This category also includes transportation — the cost of buying or leasing buses, bus driver salaries, fuel and fleet maintenance.

Lastly, there's the vaguely named "other" category. The biggest chunk of these dollars goes toward capital expenses — buying land and building new schools.

Other expenses

In 2005-06, Big Hollow District 38 spent more than twice as much as it took in.

The Lake County elementary district had collected \$11.9 million from local, state and federal sources.

Big Hollow then paid out \$27 million. Why? Not because of instruction costs. The district spent less on instruction per student than any other area district.

Which means the root of its spending imbalance had to be non-instructional.

Of the three categories that go into this pot, District 38 actually spent below average on administration and support services.

Where it made up the difference, and where it ranked first among all suburban districts, was its spending in the "other" category. The district spent 166 percent of its revenue in this category alone.

This is a dramatic increase from the previous nine years, when Big Hollow spent only a third of its revenue, on average, in the "other" category.

During the same time, however, District 38 was one of only three suburban districts that more than doubled its student population, from fewer than 500 students in the first year to more than 1,000 students in 2005-06.

To accommodate this triple-digit growth, Big Hollow built a new elementary school and middle school in 2006, using money from a bond issue voters approved the previous year.

District 38 spent more than \$16 million on construction in 2005-06 — \$4 million more than the total it brought in.

If the construction costs weren't counted, as the bond proceeds aren't counted, Big Hollow's numbers wouldn't seem so out of kilter.

Remove the \$16 million tab paid by bond funds, and Big Hollow winds up with a surplus. And instead of reporting that it spent 194 percent of its revenue on non-instructional costs, they would have reported spending 58 percent outside the classroom.

Administrative costs

The percentage of revenue suburban districts spent on general administration also varied widely during the 10-year period.

At the top of the list was Rondout School District 72, which spent 8.3 percent of its revenue on administration from 1996-07 to 2005-06, a higher percentage than any other district in the suburbs.

Rondout also was the smallest district in the suburbs, with only 123 students in 2005-06.

What's the connection?

Small districts like Rondout have to spread out their administrative expenses over a small student population.

In 1996-97, District 72 spent \$263,508 on administration, less than all but 17 other districts.

But with only 88 students that year, administration gobbled up nearly 14 percent of the district's revenue.

While Prospect Heights Elementary District 23 spent a comparable dollar amount on administrators, this represented only 2 percent of its

revenue in 1996-97.

But Prospect Heights had more than 1,500 students that year — and nearly seven times Rondout's revenue.

Even though small districts have fewer students, they may not have a correspondingly smaller group of administrators.

Prospect Heights has 11 administrators. Rondout has two. So it isn't that Rondout pays its administrators more or has too many top-level officials.

It's just that Rondout has fewer students, so even with only four administrators, their salaries and benefits make up a much larger slice of the district's revenue.

Support services

Each year, districts pay thousands of vendors and contractors for everything ranging from school pictures to pizza.

The number of vendors who were paid at least \$2,500 in 2005-06 by any suburban district ranged from 54 in Grass Lake Elementary District 36, one of the smallest districts, to almost 650 in Indian Prairie School District 204, one of the largest.

Among the highest payments went to First Student, formerly Laidlaw, a company that transports students and leases buses. First Student received more than \$31.4 million from suburban school districts in 2005-06.

Suburban taxi companies, which transport special education students, took more than \$5 million to the bank in 2005-06.

Even the Daily Herald got in on the action. All districts are required to publish certain legal notices in the local paper. Payments to Paddock Publications, the Daily Herald's publisher, totaled at least \$122,575 in 2005-06.

Most districts publish a list of vendors and payments made each month, and annually report a summary to the state.

Among the biggest payments reported are those made to health insurance companies and pension funds — only part of any district's most substantial costs.

65-percent solution gains traction

BY EMILY KRONE

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Educators love trends.

Teachers debate the hot new method while superintendents strive to develop the next national model.

The education movement now gripping legislators and tax reformers — though not most educators — would mandate that 65 percent of school spending reach the classroom.

The push is led by the Washington-based advocacy group First Class Education.

Three states — Texas, Georgia and Kansas — have enacted versions of the plan. At least 18 states, including Illinois, at some point considered similar legislation.

The National Education Association condemns the 65-percent solution as a "one-size-fits-all budget yoke."

Still, the national teachers union acknowledges, "the problem is ... that it sounds like such a good idea."

The 65-percent solution focuses on instructional spending as a percentage of "operating" expenditures.

Operating expenditures generally describe the day-to-day costs of running a district, and exclude payments related to legal fees, construction, bonds and, here, the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund.

Distinguishing between operating and non-operating expenditures eliminates some of the variables districts can't control.

But the operating designation also can obscure school finances by creating the illusion that only operating money is "real" money, and the rest shouldn't be taken into account when evaluating a district's ledgers.

Still, the traction that the 65-percent solution has gained suggests a widespread concern about how much money is spent in the classroom.

And Illinois considers the issue crucial enough to include on state report cards.

In 2005-06, the state as a whole put 59 percent of its operating expenditures toward instruction.

Only 98 of the state's 874 districts surpassed the 65 percent threshold.

If Illinois did adopt the 65-percent solution, an additional \$1.1 billion would have had to flow into the classroom in 2005-06.

Or, schools could reach the mark by restraint. The state would have spent 65 percent on instruction in 2005-06 if districts had cut operating expenses by \$1.7 billion and kept instructional expenditures steady.

The rest of the pie

Here are the total revenue amounts area school districts collected in the 2005-06 school year; how much they spent on general administration; administration costs as a percent of revenue; support services expenditures and its percent of revenue; and other expenditures and its percent of revenue.

Cook County	2005-06		General		Support		Other	
	Total revenue	admin.	%	services	%	expenses	%	
Palatine Twp. 15	\$132,978,938	\$4,526,786	3%	\$39,058,100	29%	\$18,843,008	14%	
Wheeling Twp. 21	\$91,093,406	\$1,481,775	2%	\$26,633,568	29%	\$10,024,529	11%	
Prospect Heights 23	\$18,204,456	\$396,215	2%	\$5,498,076	30%	\$4,413,775	24%	
Arlington Heights 25	\$65,094,883	\$1,307,564	2%	\$17,812,220	27%	\$10,859,386	17%	
River Trails 26	\$19,998,437	\$790,838	4%	\$6,551,193	33%	\$2,145,972	11%	
Schaumburg Twp. 54	\$179,181,924	\$1,548,304	1%	\$52,821,064	29%	\$23,614,376	13%	
Mount Prospect 57	\$20,461,444	\$641,229	3%	\$7,042,609	34%	\$3,808,546	19%	
Elk Grove Twp. 59	\$77,807,005	\$1,677,072	2%	\$26,465,298	34%	\$12,394,914	16%	
Des Plaines 62	\$61,864,934	\$1,749,562	3%	\$13,610,858	22%	\$4,307,649	7%	
East Maine 63	\$39,921,642	\$907,781	2%	\$11,328,964	28%	\$6,710,583	17%	
Rosemont 78	\$3,205,337	\$179,412	6%	\$693,722	22%	\$423,766	13%	
Maine Twp. 207	\$103,825,172	\$3,599,261	3%	\$33,614,057	32%	\$9,535,590	9%	
Palatine-Schaumburg 211	\$204,968,612	\$1,978,327	1%	\$67,600,850	33%	\$24,598,131	12%	
Northwest Suburban 214	\$194,786,682	\$1,900,016	1%	\$81,560,402	42%	\$14,672,960	8%	
DuPage County								
Bensenville 2	\$24,999,831	\$759,503	3%	\$6,535,527	26%	\$3,345,676	13%	
Addison 4	\$32,207,536	\$994,505	3%	\$12,316,759	38%	\$15,996,422	50%	
Wood Dale 7	\$12,018,240	\$475,392	4%	\$3,849,274	32%	\$2,453,491	20%	
Itasca 10	\$9,983,056	\$403,745	4%	\$3,204,084	32%	\$1,774,349	18%	
Medinah 11	\$8,087,413	\$536,051	7%	\$2,621,779	32%	\$1,088,901	13%	
Roselle 12	\$6,765,009	\$216,650	3%	\$1,999,860	30%	\$1,334,840	20%	
Bloomington 13	\$14,663,990	\$417,034	3%	\$4,533,517	31%	\$2,014,378	14%	
Glendale Heights 15	\$28,020,401	\$1,259,501	4%	\$7,641,063	27%	\$11,749,229	42%	
Glendale Heights 16	\$19,275,972	\$988,221	5%	\$5,625,939	29%	\$3,654,770	19%	
Keeneyville 20	\$16,585,873	\$723,298	4%	\$6,318,190	38%	\$1,454,579	9%	
West Chicago 25	\$10,034,333	\$453,913	5%	\$2,701,395	27%	\$1,599,569	16%	
West Chicago 33	\$38,989,390	\$818,625	2%	\$10,404,063	27%	\$4,566,808	12%	
Winfield 34	\$4,337,733	\$373,364	9%	\$1,051,641	24%	\$646,187	15%	
Glen Ellyn 41	\$38,101,450	\$1,449,039	4%	\$11,748,684	31%	\$5,921,027	16%	
Lombard 44	\$37,173,113	\$1,113,513	3%	\$11,427,093	31%	\$4,266,406	11%	
Villa Park 45	\$35,763,399	\$1,388,614	4%	\$10,360,968	29%	\$4,635,959	13%	
Salt Creek 48	\$8,661,283	\$656,452	8%	\$2,474,421	29%	\$4,379,062	51%	
Butler 53	\$8,516,645	\$476,310	6%	\$2,621,941	31%	\$956,484	11%	
Woodridge 68	\$35,618,395	\$1,124,998	3%	\$8,977,640	25%	\$3,161,075	9%	
Glenbard Twp. 87	\$107,071,850	\$2,254,310	2%	\$30,319,048	28%	\$11,405,468	11%	
DuPage 88	\$51,309,049	\$872,035	2%	\$20,928,174	41%	\$4,549,857	9%	
Glen Ellyn 89	\$22,987,620	\$615,716	3%	\$6,753,840	29%	\$2,301,872	10%	
Carol Stream 93	\$50,257,490	\$509,771	1%	\$15,531,499	31%	\$3,750,452	7%	
West Chicago 94	\$26,773,108	\$681,551	3%	\$8,492,894	32%	\$6,210,927	23%	
Fenton 100	\$22,721,766	\$1,025,059	5%	\$8,453,244	37%	\$1,907,779	8%	
Lake Park 108	\$42,329,121	\$995,105	2%	\$15,751,802	37%	\$11,592,883	27%	
Wheaton-Warrenville 200	\$140,133,936	\$2,154,595	2%	\$47,421,746	34%	\$29,591,449	21%	
Lisle 202	\$25,177,429	\$971,889	4%	\$8,141,409	32%	\$3,253,369	13%	
Naperville 203	\$202,787,251	\$3,997,264	2%	\$62,257,359	31%	\$12,752,611	6%	
Indian Prairie 204	\$259,959,919	\$2,199,399	1%	\$68,957,282	27%	\$40,352,065	16%	
Elmhurst 205	\$82,241,790	\$1,829,691	2%	\$26,013,295	32%	\$8,840,908	11%	
Will County								
Valley View 365-U	\$173,108,542	\$1,902,314	1%	\$53,967,929	31%	\$55,293,307	32%	

The rest of the pie

Here are the total revenue amounts area school districts collected in the 2005-06 school year; how much they spent on general administration; administration costs as a percent of revenue; support services expenditures and its percent of revenue; and other expenditures and its percent of revenue.

Cook County	2005-06		General		Support		Other	
	Total revenue	admin.	%	services	%	expenses	%	
Elgin Area U-46	\$372,354,964	\$5,877,931	2%	\$130,010,301	35%	\$68,167,403	18%	
Batavia 101	\$60,924,464	\$981,238	2%	\$14,128,436	23%	\$9,695,741	16%	
Aurora West 129	\$105,896,518	\$2,325,917	2%	\$31,611,410	30%	\$23,739,659	22%	
Community 300	\$166,348,254	\$2,602,677	2%	\$55,233,919	33%	\$26,534,385	16%	
Central 301	\$30,514,200	\$666,897	2%	\$10,407,171	34%	\$12,898,957	42%	
Kaneland 302	\$41,335,706	\$339,253	1%	\$12,634,605	31%	\$12,698,029	31%	
St. Charles 303	\$141,240,674	\$1,851,910	1%	\$45,834,081	32%	\$26,289,028	19%	
Geneva 304	\$66,496,828	\$1,732,943	3%	\$22,377,046	34%	\$38,708,012	58%	
Lake County								
Millburn 24	\$12,002,775	\$394,642	3%	\$3,902,284	33%	\$7,479,567	62%	
Emmons 33	\$3,702,388	\$188,155	5%	\$1,041,983	28%	\$4,491,809	121%	
Antioch 34	\$26,424,497	\$576,754	2%	\$7,900,447	30%	\$4,648,865	18%	
Grass Lake 36	\$2,843,843	\$123,883	4%	\$702,873	25%	\$286,163	10%	
Gavin 37	\$9,205,566	\$774,864	8%	\$2,509,731	27%	\$1,852,136	20%	
Big Hollow 38	\$11,963,257	\$260,082	2%	\$3,056,812	26%	\$19,841,788	166%	
Lake Villa 41	\$25,769,429	\$883,479	3%	\$6,841,730	27%	\$8,713,027	34%	
Grayslake 46	\$36,685,787	\$549,565	1%	\$13,293,497	36%	\$16,731,761	46%	
Woodland 50	\$65,838,095	\$1,960,484	3%	\$24,612,567	37%	\$11,281,568	17%	
Gurnee 56	\$22,192,646	\$1,151,947	5%	\$7,064,336	32%	\$5,169,991	23%	
Oak Grove 68	\$11,604,418	\$203,668	2%	\$3,430,890	30%	\$1,770,459	15%	
Libertyville 70	\$25,637,687	\$825,350	3%	\$8,050,972	31%	\$3,078,291	12%	
Rondout 72	\$3,362,359	\$227,137	7%	\$862,051	26%	\$536,824	16%	
Hawthorn 73	\$41,857,474	\$1,206,312	3%	\$12,233,391	29%	\$18,030,617	43%	
Mundelein 75	\$19,724,486	\$354,452	2%	\$6,283,184	32%	\$3,491,631	18%	
Diamond Lake 76	\$12,875,762	\$416,174	3%	\$3,605,261	28%	\$2,670,170	21%	
Fremont 79	\$20,081,965	\$698,430	3%	\$6,460,170	32%	\$2,906,601	14%	
Lake Zurich 95	\$68,221,273	\$1,238,328	2%	\$22,377,165	33%	\$14,563,312	21%	
Long Grove 96	\$43,625,658	\$1,125,256	3%	\$11,416,361	26%	\$13,863,364	32%	
Aptakisic-Tripp 102	\$29,034,247	\$1,211,021	4%	\$9,291,102	32%	\$3,874,294	13%	
Lincolnshire 103	\$20,691,421	\$677,462	3%	\$7,754,040	37%	\$3,672,741	18%	
Fox Lake 114	\$7,471,664	\$316,570	4%	\$2,650,454	35%	\$1,313,885	18%	
Round Lake 116	\$58,299,535	\$1,853,295	3%	\$16,026,834	27%	\$8,912,895	15%	
Antioch-Lk. Villa 117	\$37,623,128	\$304,130	1%	\$14,300,001	38%	\$17,259,878	46%	
Wauconda 118	\$39,170,438	\$1,154,083	3%	\$19,765,228	50%	\$6,638,922	17%	
Mundelein 120	\$31,096,749	\$769,111	2%	\$7,552,677	24%	\$8,700,181	28%	
Warren Twp. 121	\$45,162,172	\$1,113,637	2%	\$14,921,860	33%	\$15,990,474	35%	
Grant 124	\$21,574,879	\$475,541	2%	\$5,557,041	26%	\$7,526,361	35%	
Stevenson 125	\$78,636,170	\$449,902	1%	\$21,742,570	28%	\$17,869,835	23%	
Grayslake 127	\$39,312,537	\$825,261	2%	\$12,603,161	32%	\$18,344,248	47%	
Lib'ville-Vernon Hills 128	\$68,260,945	\$868,030	1%	\$20,105,965	29%	\$13,913,057	20%	
Barrington 220	\$112,211,765	\$1,047,075	1%	\$34,234,810	31%	\$19,018,349	17%	
McHenry County								
Fox River Grove 3	\$6,346,570	\$509,949	8%	\$1,567,961	25%	\$628,753	10%	
Johnsburg 12	\$24,947,418	\$595,857	2%	\$6,834,824	27%	\$6,572,156	26%	
McHenry 15	\$39,055,232	\$623,829	2%	\$10,524,482	27%	\$8,420,197	22%	
Cary 26	\$28,838,231	\$1,179,846	4%	\$9,068,701	31%	\$5,070,824	18%	
Prairie Ridge 46	\$11,235,085	\$522,177	5%	\$3,270,056	29%	\$1,305,721	12%	
Crystal Lake 47	\$81,238,064	\$1,074,999	1%	\$24,904,555	31%	\$12,112,387	15%	
Crystal Lake 155	\$76,255,604	\$1,349,192	2%	\$17,616,098	23%	\$7,853,351	10%	
Huntley 158	\$67,587,725	\$2,293,502	3%	\$22,836,013	34%	\$27,172,468	40%	
State	\$21,218,197,846	\$569,354,071	3%	\$7,124,644,236	34%	\$3,697,433,386	17%	

Source: Illinois Local Education Agency Retrieval Network, Illinois State Board of Education

Administrator, teacher pay

BY EMILY KRONE

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Teachers get fewer apples from students these days, but their paychecks now more than compensate for the loss.

Between 1998 and 2006, the average teacher pay in 94 suburban school districts grew from \$46,883 to \$59,986, an increase of 28 percent.

During that period, the rate of inflation grew 22 percent.

Administrators make out much better than teachers, and their salaries have increased at a faster clip.

In 2006, the average administrator in the 94 Herald districts made \$110,747, compared with \$81,023 in 1998, a 37 percent bump.

The typical teacher works nine months a year. Administrators generally work year-round.

When reporting average pay, the Illinois State Board of Education cites statistics reported to the state retirement system, not just base pay.

The retirement figures include salary plus summer school and coaching stipends, reimbursements for unused sick and vacation days and pension contributions.

They do not include health, life, dental or disability insurance; tuition reimbursements; car and housing allowances; or moving expenses. Teachers rarely receive cash for housing, cars or moving, but some top-paid administrators do.

In this chapter, we'll provide context to the average salary figures published by the state. Like most data on public schools, the numbers tell only part of the story.

Teacher pay varies

In the suburbs, teacher salaries vary greatly.

In 2005-06, the average salary for a teacher in Illinois was \$56,691. Again, that figure includes more than just base salary but excludes some costly benefits.

The average teacher in the 94 suburban Herald districts made \$60,000.

That same year, the average teacher in Palatine-Schaumburg High School District 211 made \$84,000, the highest average in the suburbs.

The District 211 teacher made twice what the average teacher made in Emmons Elementary District 33, which reported the lowest average salary in the suburbs at \$42,455.

Teachers in elementary districts historically make less than high school teachers.

In 2005-06, the average suburban elementary teacher made \$56,532.

The average pay for a teacher in a unit district, one covering kindergarten through high school, was \$58,657.

The average high school teacher made \$73,540.

That same year, five of the 94 districts registered average teacher salaries greater than \$80,000. Eleven had average salaries less than \$50,000.

Top-dollar slots

Administrator pay also varies widely.

In 2005-06, the average salary of an administrator in Illinois was \$100,570.

In the 94 suburban Herald districts, the typical administrator made \$110,765 — \$50,000 more than the average teacher.

That same year, the average administrator in Lincolnshire-Prairie Elementary District 103 made \$151,145, the highest average in the suburbs.

The Lincolnshire administrator made almost twice what the average

administrator made in Aurora West Unit District 129, which reported the lowest average administrator pay in the suburbs, at \$80,035.

As with teachers, administrators at elementary districts historically make less than those at high school districts.

In 2005-06, the average suburban elementary administrator made \$111,078.

The average pay for an administrator in a unit district was less — coming in at \$100,270.

The average high school administrator made \$122,046.

Some large gulfs

In some districts, the difference between administrator and teacher pay is particularly prominent.

In Grass Lake 36, for example, the average administrator made \$136,000 in 2006 — \$90,000 more than the average teacher in the district. Administrator pay in that district rose 119 percent between 1998 and 2006, while teacher pay increased by just 28 percent.

The state recently has passed laws to discourage districts from paying administrators like corporate CEOs, while paying teachers like public employees.

The laws are designed to keep administrative pay in line with — though not identical to — teacher pay.

For example, districts now pay a penalty if they grant superintendents sick days in excess of what teachers receive. The law was introduced after districts began giving administrators dozens — or hundreds — of extra sick days, which could be cashed in for pension credits.

The per-hour rate

Teachers often complain that other professionals out-earn them.

It depends on what measure you use.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the average teacher works 36.5 hours a week. That includes paid lunch and rest periods, as well as prep and grading time during the school day.

About three-quarters of teachers work nine or 10 months a year, with almost all of the rest working eight months, according to the labor statistics.

Most white-collar workers, excluding teachers, work year-round, at least 40 hours a week.

If calculated at an hourly rate, then, teacher pay ranks above many white-collar professions.

Factoring in summer holiday and the length of the school day, the typical full-time public elementary teacher makes \$34.36 per hour and the typical full-time public secondary teacher makes \$33.38 an hour, according to the labor department.

Though high school teachers typically make more than elementary teachers, they also work more hours, lowering their hourly rate, according to labor officials.

To compare, the average white-collar worker who does managerial, executive or administrative work makes \$33.69 an hour.

Here's how teacher pay, according to the department of labor, stacks up to other common white-collar occupations:

- Doctors, \$62.52 an hour.
- Physicists and astronomers, \$35.12 an hour.
- Public elementary school teacher, \$34.36 an hour.
- Economists, \$33.85 an hour.
- Public high school teacher, \$33.38 an hour
- Mechanical engineers, \$31.88 an hour.
- Psychologists, \$30.27 an hour.
- Architects, \$30.23 an hour.
- Registered nurses, \$28.15 an hour.
- Editors and reporters, \$25.68 an hour.

Beyond paychecks

In previous chapters, we've established that classroom costs generally account for about half of all money schools collect.

Still, payments to teachers make up a large chunk of those costs — and encompass far more than just teachers' base salary.

About two-thirds of districts across the state pick up at least a portion of teachers' state-mandated contribution to their own pension. The contribution can tack an additional 10 percent onto teacher earnings.

In Elgin Area School District U-46, for example, the district paid about \$8,500 per teacher in 2007 to the state retirement fund.

Escalating, generous employee health benefits —identified in a nationwide survey of school business officials as the most pressing financial concern facing schools — also balloon payments to teachers.

Statewide, about 85 percent of districts pay for some or all of teachers' hospitalization insurance; 52 percent pay all or part of prescription drug coverage; and 72 percent pay all or part of life insurance.

On average, those districts paid about 90 percent of the premium on the insurance plans.

Administrators also receive generous health benefits. But superintendents, as we'll see next week, really can cook up some creative perks.

Teacher & administrator pay

Here are average pay for teachers and administrators in area school districts as reported on the 1998 and 2006 school report cards, with the amount of change over the 8-year period.

E = elementary district H = high school district U = Unit district

Cook County	Teachers			Administrators		
	1998	2006	chnge	1998	2006	chnge
E Palatine Twp. 15	49,231	69,295	41%	82,354	105,271	28%
E Wheeling Twp. 21	47,835	68,958	44%	81,727	140,562	72%
E Prospect Heights 23	44,348	55,080	24%	85,896	105,331	23%
E Arlington Heights 25	48,538	60,844	25%	82,477	115,115	40%
E River Trails 26	49,848	59,301	19%	87,085	103,502	19%
E Schaumburg 54	54,177	63,015	16%	80,000	115,534	44%
E Mount Prospect 57	47,753	54,109	13%	85,020	136,479	61%
E Elk Grove 59	50,565	65,564	30%	84,327	104,428	24%
E Des Plaines 62	50,772	62,813	24%	81,530	101,012	24%
E East Maine 63	47,173	51,838	10%	78,719	111,328	41%
E Rosemont 78	52,294	66,553	27%	80,490	124,969	55%
H Maine Twp. 207	63,824	79,095	24%	95,507	123,675	29%
H Palatine 211	74,503	84,185	13%	95,865	118,547	24%
H Northwest 214	73,875	82,210	11%	106,172	128,046	21%
DuPage County						
E Bensenville 2	43,231	53,528	24%	84,571	112,105	33%
E Addison 4	44,010	55,724	27%	76,612	102,172	33%
E Wood Dale 7	43,175	57,697	34%	93,876	112,085	19%
E Itasca 10	46,453	55,236	19%	84,193	117,691	40%
E Medinah 11	44,039	57,484	31%	80,648	108,740	35%
E Roselle 12	47,170	61,091	30%	76,830	119,670	56%
E Bloomingdale 13	42,768	56,154	31%	78,790	102,285	30%
E Glendale Heights 15	47,069	57,336	22%	86,241	121,834	41%
E Glendale Heights 16	40,296	54,410	35%	80,184	104,501	30%
E Keeneyville 20	43,716	54,372	24%	67,178	98,472	47%
E West Chicago 25	40,886	59,603	46%	73,488	103,924	41%
E West Chicago 33	43,652	58,596	34%	71,107	92,985	31%
E Winfield 34	35,671	54,690	53%	76,393	101,561	33%
E Glen Ellyn 41	52,778	60,936	15%	86,339	112,509	30%
E Lombard 44	50,617	63,046	25%	89,564	125,641	40%
E Villa Park 45	41,968	56,473	35%	76,010	102,703	35%
E Salt Creek 48	54,563	63,409	16%	94,552	115,256	22%
E Butler 53	58,374	67,256	15%	93,292	143,277	54%
E Woodridge 68	41,422	58,036	40%	85,755	126,711	48%
H Glenbard Twp. 87	63,950	81,629	28%	84,451	117,545	39%
H DuPage 88	62,769	75,832	21%	95,737	126,621	32%
E Glen Ellyn 89	49,605	62,248	25%	84,599	128,368	52%
E Carol Stream 93	39,080	56,447	44%	75,576	103,131	36%
H West Chicago 94	51,410	65,074	27%	81,988	106,669	30%
H Fenton 100	65,512	82,196	25%	97,118	134,694	39%
H Lake Park 108	64,638	79,663	23%	97,009	125,385	29%
U Wheaton-W'ville 200	49,732	61,922	25%	75,103	110,523	47%
U Lisle 202	52,428	63,900	22%	88,959	129,167	45%
U Naperville 203	53,075	69,770	31%	76,869	106,295	38%
U Indian Prairie 204	37,070	60,450	63%	84,135	98,541	17%
U Elmhurst 205	50,590	68,217	35%	81,589	111,042	36%
Will County						
U Valley View 365-U	46,850	54,010	15%	73,158	102,911	41%

Teacher & administrator pay

Here are average pay for teachers and administrators in area school districts as reported on the 1998 and 2006 school report cards, with the amount of change over the 8-year period.

E = elementary district H = high school district U = Unit district

	Teachers			Administrators		
	1998	2006	chnge	1998	2006	chnge
Kane County						
U Elgin Area U-46	46,552	59,675	28%	75,071	105,063	40%
U Batavia 101	44,063	58,711	33%	70,792	91,436	29%
U Aurora West 129	45,475	52,474	15%	66,754	80,035	20%
U Community 300	42,791	59,541	39%	68,202	97,339	43%
U Central 301	42,185	58,162	38%	76,802	95,712	25%
U Kaneland 302	43,611	52,226	20%	66,394	94,492	42%
U St. Charles 303	46,370	55,943	21%	78,923	97,117	23%
U Geneva 304	45,831	60,668	32%	73,840	101,283	37%
Lake County						
E Millburn 24	35,072	43,857	25%	72,700	104,404	44%
E Emmons 33	32,059	42,455	32%	61,614	106,005	72%
E Antioch 34	37,938	43,814	15%	80,398	101,067	26%
E Grass Lake 36	35,230	45,062	28%	62,100	135,843	119%
E Gavin 37	40,141	47,409	18%	71,231	88,571	24%
E Big Hollow 38	37,306	45,783	23%	102,334	93,379	-9%
E Lake Villa 41	37,419	42,588	14%	65,047	101,950	57%
E Grayslake 46	36,496	51,317	41%	85,101	96,894	14%
E Woodland 50	35,104	50,088	43%	76,528	107,776	41%
E Gurnee 56	41,906	53,650	28%	93,574	108,332	16%
E Oak Grove 68	44,837	59,642	33%	76,150	105,169	38%
E Libertyville 70	51,553	54,785	6%	83,469	113,359	36%
E Rondout 72	53,421	74,931	40%	81,701	122,779	50%
E Hawthorn 73	49,405	57,125	16%	85,924	123,713	44%
E Mundelein 75	33,358	44,769	34%	76,875	105,337	37%
E Diamond Lake 76	39,141	45,231	16%	67,060	97,744	46%
E Fremont 79	44,548	54,294	22%	76,564	109,088	42%
U Lake Zurich 95	43,867	61,552	40%	73,358	83,159	13%
E Long Grove 96	49,071	65,479	33%	87,411	124,154	42%
E Aptakisic-Tripp 102	41,408	63,851	54%	86,283	128,948	49%
E Lincolnshire 103	47,171	64,172	36%	90,017	151,145	68%
E Fox Lake 114	43,388	53,095	22%	71,362	106,427	49%
U Round Lake Area 116	43,511	54,370	25%	61,573	80,896	31%
H Antioch-Lake Villa 117	50,994	58,425	15%	77,975	105,563	35%
U Wauconda 118	45,968	59,992	31%	83,985	106,224	26%
H Mundelein 120	53,163	77,100	45%	88,039	117,884	34%
H Warren Twp. 121	51,460	60,174	17%	84,601	113,429	34%
H Grant 124	51,881	63,398	22%	81,591	112,598	38%
H Stevenson 125	61,060	80,482	32%	94,355	145,853	55%
H Grayslake 127	45,430	60,386	33%	86,900	128,878	48%
H L'ville-Vernon Hills 128	61,877	76,561	24%	93,853	127,755	36%
U Barrington 220	56,019	63,293	13%	90,137	116,384	29%
McHenry County						
E Fox River Grove 3	32,708	55,679	70%	74,511	101,545	36%
U Johnsburg 12	44,558	56,951	28%	80,649	111,953	39%
E McHenry 15	34,199	49,704	45%	61,882	95,057	54%
E Cary 26	38,112	64,183	68%	75,752	101,847	34%
E Prairie Grove 46	38,290	53,159	39%	71,698	95,918	34%
E Crystal Lake 47	36,468	51,601	41%	73,019	96,901	33%
H Crystal Lake 155	60,046	75,560	26%	105,868	130,603	23%
U Huntley 158	31,276	46,080	47%	67,155	84,409	26%
State	43,806	56,691	29%	73,423	100,570	37%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Super pay for superintendents

BY CATHERINE EDMAN

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In Elgin Area School District U-46, for example, the district paid about \$8,500 per teacher in 2007 to the state retirement fund.

Running a public school system pays well.

Compensation for suburban school chiefs in the 2005-06 school year ranged from \$121,565 to \$394,995.

Among the 94 suburban districts surveyed by the Daily Herald, the average superintendent pay package was \$198,732.

Besides base salary, the pay packages included some combination of bonuses, stipends, annuities, auto allowance, reimbursement for unused sick and vacation days, and payments to post-retirement health and pension plans.

And that doesn't include what the districts pay for their leaders' health, dental and life insurance coverage.

How much a superintendent makes depends on a variety of factors, from experience, to the size of the district, to the elected officials who make up school boards.

When announcing a new hire or a contract extension, boards often point to prevailing market conditions. It takes top dollar to get the best people, they argue.

A competitive market requires a competitive salary, they say, and children's futures are the leverage.

Our analysis finds, however, job experience isn't the biggest factor in determining compensation. Neither is size of the district.

The biggest factor in determining the big-ticket salaries that drive up the average? Retirement.

Many superintendents have included in their contracts clauses that bump their salaries by as much as 20 percent in each of the final three years before retirement.

Though the state legislature changed the pension law that allowed for those hikes, contracts in place at the time were grandfathered in. And those folks still are working their way through the system.

The remainder pick from a panoply of perks to compensate for the change.

Retirement boost

Gary Catalani walked away from his job in the public sector at the top of the heap. In 2005-06, a year before he retired from Wheaton Warrenville Unit District 200, his pay package was \$394,995.

That included his \$306,000 salary, a \$12,000 annuity, \$26,485 for unused vacation days, an auto allowance and payments into the state's pension system on his behalf.

On top of the \$394,995 came more taxpayer-borne costs — for health, dental, life and disability insurance.

Just two years earlier, his annual compensation was \$232,511, according to data supplied to the Teachers Retirement System. The \$150,000-plus jump was part of the preretirement pay padding aimed at boosting pension payments.

The day he left his job, Catalani, then 56, was eligible to collect a pension that would pay \$214,248 in the first year, and increase at least 3 percent each year until the day he dies.

Close on his heels was Mary Curley, whose \$334,708 package in Hinsdale Elementary District 181 included a \$249,600 base salary, \$21,761 annuity, \$10,000 bonus, \$9,600 in unused vacation pay, auto allowance and payments to the state's pension system.

When she retired at 55, she began collecting a pension that started at

\$185,187. That's more than she made in a year three years before she retired, when her compensation was \$178,261.

The superintendent who perhaps has drawn the most fire recently, though, is Elgin Area School District U-46 Superintendent Connie Neale, who in January received a controversial \$60,000 pay hike and bonus.

In 2005-06, Neale had the third-highest pay package in the region at \$323,288, which included a \$44,688 annuity and \$21,000 additional payment to the retirement system.

January's increase pushed Neale's compensation package for 2006-07 past \$410,000.

Citing health issues, Neale last month submitted her resignation, which will take effect in February.

Extra padding

Superintendents draw extra compensation from a wide range of sources.

Two out of three area superintendents received some kind of vehicle allowance in 2005-06, with Aurora West District 129 and Arlington Heights District 25, both elementary districts, forking out \$12,000 for their top administrator.

At least 17 superintendents received a bonus. Maine Township High School District 207 led the way with a reported \$20,000 bonus.

Forty districts reported compensating their leader for unused vacation days, with Hawthorne Elementary 73 in Lake County listing the highest figure at \$28,857.

Only three districts reported paying the boss for unused sick days. Glendale Heights Elementary 16 furnished its chief \$23,510 in this category. Superintendent James White is on the brink of retirement and cashing in sick days accumulated over many years. The payments will help boost his pension.

Those that he and others don't turn in for cash can be credited for years of service with the Teachers Retirement System.

Generally, payments to postretirement health and pension plans were the most costly items after salary.

Both the Teacher Health Insurance System and the Teacher Retirement System require districts to make employer contributions for each employee, based on a percentage of compensation. Employee members also must pay a percentage.

Two-thirds of area districts also chose to cover their superintendent's contribution to the health fund — a small expense, as the most costly submission reported was \$3,175.51 by Lake Villa District 41.

A total of 76 districts reported covering some or all of the superintendent's contribution to the pension fund. The largest payment reported by a district paying its superintendent's pension contribution for him was \$35,741.34 by District 200.

Payments made on the superintendent's behalf to at least one post-retirement fund were reported by 85 of the 94 area districts, with U-46 reporting the largest total, \$43,837.62, paid to the health and pension funds.

At least one-third of area districts went beyond pension funds, and contributed to an annuity on their super's behalf, with the largest payment being \$44,688 in U-46.

Three-tiered system

Let's take a look at the numbers another way.

There are three types of school systems: elementary, high school and unit districts.

We already know Catalani topped the charts for the unit districts, but did he have the most experience at the job among his peers?

No, that was Joel Morris in Elmhurst Unit District 205, who spent 34 years as a superintendent and was paid \$179,110 in his seventh year in

the district. He oversaw 13 schools, an average enrollment of 7,571 and was paid the equivalent of \$24 per student.

The average pay package for a unit district leader was \$217,786.

What about the high school districts?

Steve Humphrey in the two-school DuPage District 88 led the way among his peers with a package totaling \$249,864. His 15 years as a superintendent, six of them with District 88, translate into \$62 per student.

But he's not the most experienced high school superintendent. That title goes to Lee Reick, the top administrator in West Chicago's Community High School District 94, whose 29 years convert into a far more conservative deal at \$185,524.

It is, however, a one-school district, so when you take into account the daily attendance of 2,132, Reick was paid \$87 per student.

High school district leaders came in with an average pay package of \$210,000.

The retiring Curley far surpassed her fellow elementary school administrators on the pay scale in 2005-06 at \$334,708, but fell right in the middle of the pack with experience, eight years.

The veteran of the group among elementary school superintendents, Robert McKanna in Palatine Township Elementary District 15, who has announced his retirement in June 2008, had a total package of \$227,746 in 2005-06.

Among the three groups, elementary district superintendents have the widest variation in per-pupil salary.

The leader of Rondout Elementary District 72 made \$132,945, one of the lowest salaries among the districts surveyed. But the district has only one school and 139 students. That pay is equivalent to \$956 per child, the highest ratio among any school chief.

The average pay package for an elementary district leader was \$188,738.

Superintendent compensation

Here are the compensation packages provided to area school superintendents in 2005-06, according to a survey of the districts. Extras includes all bonuses, annuities, stipends, payments for unused sick and vacation days, and auto/travel allowances. Pension costs include all payments made by the district on the super's behalf to the Teachers Health Insurance System and the Teachers Retirement System. ADA is average daily attendance. Health insurance not included.

Cook County	Salary	Extras	Pension costs	Total pay package	ADA
E Palatine 15	\$181,892	\$20,614	\$25,241	\$227,746	12,606
E Wheeling 21	\$219,509	\$8,345	\$27,572	\$255,426	6,725
E Prospect Hts. 23	\$139,725	\$0	\$17,813	\$157,538	1,482
E Arlington Hts. 25	\$171,800	\$37,783	\$24,452	\$234,035	4,970
E River Trails 26	\$150,000	\$0	\$18,530	\$168,530	1,636
E Schaumburg 54	\$168,000	\$22,460	\$34,400	\$224,860	14,471
E Mount Prospect 57	\$148,420	\$14,361	\$21,891	\$184,672	2,064
E Elk Grove 59	\$165,360	\$0	\$20,771	\$186,131	6,065
E Des Plaines 62	\$150,500	\$5,092	\$20,247	\$175,839	4,771
E East Maine 63	\$180,255	\$30,617	\$22,811	\$233,683	3,498
E Rosemont 78	\$110,000	\$7,628	\$11,760	\$129,388	247
H Maine 207	\$190,684	\$31,700	\$27,244	\$249,628	6,951
H Palatine 211	\$180,500	\$7,800	\$20,502	\$208,802	12,952
H Northwest 214	\$175,000	\$4,200	\$21,114	\$200,314	12,217
DuPage County					
E Bensenville 2	\$191,570	\$3,600	\$21,594	\$216,764	2,404
E Addison 4	\$154,482	\$4,482	\$19,776	\$178,740	3,968
E Wood Dale 7				\$164,845*	1,155
E Itasca 10	\$146,503	\$7,533	\$19,122	\$173,158	863
E Medinah 11	\$143,000	\$3,540	\$17,962	\$164,502	736
E Roselle 12	\$149,048	\$0	\$18,721	\$167,769	688
E Bloomingdale 13				\$168,817*	1,412
E Glendale Hts. 15				\$244,153*	2,622
E Glendale Hts. 16	\$142,214	\$76,729	\$26,604	\$245,547	2,053
E Keeneyville 20	\$135,200	\$2,400	\$16,752	\$154,352	1,708
E West Chicago 25	\$136,080	\$16,711	\$16,152	\$168,943	919
E West Chicago 33	\$135,000	\$4,200	\$16,957	\$156,157	3,944
E Winfield 34	\$135,000	\$3,600	\$15,363	\$153,963	380
E Glen Ellyn 41	\$156,452	\$26,002	\$19,651	\$202,105	3,549
E Lombard 44	\$158,000	\$21,300	\$19,210	\$198,510	3,144
E Villa Park 45	\$199,437	\$8,910	\$24,331	\$232,678	3,595
E Salt Creek 48	\$146,759	\$11,276	\$18,517	\$176,552	536
E Butler 53	\$178,080	\$11,023	\$23,365	\$212,468	488
E Woodridge 68				\$208,781*	2,854
H Glenbard 87*	\$191,290	\$0	\$22,081	\$213,371	8,353
H DuPage 88	\$208,565	\$19,233	\$22,066	\$249,864	4,057
E Glen Ellyn 89	\$175,000	\$15,664	\$23,213	\$213,877	2,250
E Carol Stream 93	\$179,688	\$31,221	\$27,936	\$238,845	4,517
H West Chicago 94	\$137,194	\$31,300	\$17,030	\$185,524	2,132
H Fenton 100	\$163,323	\$18,870	\$20,512	\$202,705	1,563
H Lake Park 108	\$157,837	\$15,998	\$19,177	\$191,931	3,026
U Wheaton-W'ville 200	\$306,000	\$45,686	\$43,270	\$394,955	13,845
U Lisle 202				\$216,435*	1,713
U Naperville 203	\$181,668	\$17,800	\$42,734	\$223,543	18,697
U Indian Prairie 204	\$180,250	\$0	\$0	\$180,250	27,813
U Elmhurst 205	\$155,732	\$6,557	\$17,421	\$179,710	7,571
Will County					
U Valley View 365-U	\$192,937	\$6,000	\$23,280	\$222,217	17,396

Notes

E = elementary district
H = high school district
U = unit district

* district did not respond to survey. Pay package figure reflects earnings total reported to the Teachers Retirement System.

Superintendent compensation

Here are the compensation packages provided to area school superintendents in 2005-06, according to a survey of the districts. Extras includes all bonuses, annuities, stipends, payments for unused sick and vacation days, and auto/travel allowances. Pension costs include all payments made by the district on the super's behalf to the Teachers Health Insurance System and the Teachers Retirement System. ADA is average daily attendance. Health insurance not included.

	Salary	Extras	Pension costs	Total pay package	ADA
Kane County					
U Elgin Area U-46	\$228,762	\$50,689	\$43,838	\$323,288	39,117
U Batavia 101	\$184,773	\$68,921	\$19,189	\$272,883	6,235
U Aurora West 129	\$165,440	\$30,000	\$23,041	\$218,481	10,665
U Community 300	\$170,147	\$20,411	\$21,372	\$211,931	18,157
U Central 301	\$141,934	\$8,600	\$17,536	\$168,070	2,594
U Kaneland 302	\$137,893	\$19,000	\$19,772	\$176,665	3,994
U St. Charles 303	\$195,000	\$43,350	\$24,983	\$263,333	13,443
U Geneva 304	\$171,970	\$0	\$1,857	\$173,827	5,768
Lake County					
E Millburn 24	\$138,075	\$2,400	\$22,693	\$163,168	1,537
E Emmons 33	\$121,570	\$4,000	\$12,881	\$138,451	393
E Antioch 34	\$150,694	\$0	\$19,896	\$170,590	2,934
E Grass Lake 36				DNR	221
E Gavin 37	\$106,515	\$7,977	\$14,381	\$128,873	905
E Big Hollow 38	\$132,820	\$0	\$16,409	\$149,229	1,235
E Lake Villa 41	\$196,894	\$8,636	\$25,866	\$231,395	3,362
E Grayslake 46	\$145,000	\$11,692	\$18,663	\$175,355	4,108
E Woodland 50	\$155,000	\$1,800	\$20,432	\$177,232	7,084
E Gurnee 56	\$140,048	\$19,554	\$21,174	\$180,776	2,071
E Oak Grove 68	\$132,924	\$0	\$15,522	\$148,446	1,052
E Libertyville 70	\$177,086	\$17,200	\$21,289	\$215,575	2,641
E Rondout 72	\$118,000	\$0	\$14,945	\$132,945	139
E Hawthorne 73	\$154,380	\$51,047	\$15,184	\$220,611	3,697
E Mundelein 75	\$140,000	\$13,400	\$17,297	\$170,697	2,089
E Diamond Lake 76	\$159,507	\$5,668	\$1,937	\$167,112	1,241
E Fremont 79	\$177,100	\$16,906	\$22,245	\$216,251	1,877
U Lake Zurich 95	\$175,025	\$6,000	\$21,980	\$203,005	6,557
E Long Grove 96	\$170,595	\$23,801	\$18,814	\$213,210	3,432
E Aptakisic-Tripp 102	\$184,625	\$4,800	\$24,310	\$213,735	2,166
E Prairie View 103	\$184,080	\$32,130	\$26,675	\$242,885	1,688
E Fox Lake 114	\$121,335	\$6,399	\$14,552	\$142,286	918
U Round Lake 116	\$137,116	\$13,547	\$15,602	\$166,265	6,687
H Antioch-Lk. Villa 117	\$168,450	\$9,274	\$18,830	\$196,554	2,497
U Wauconda 118	\$137,862	\$6,000	\$18,744	\$162,606	4,198
H Mundelein 120				\$205,627*	1,957
H Warren 121				\$198,494*	3,828
H Grant 124	\$137,717	\$12,053	\$19,525	\$169,295	1,578
H Stevenson 125	\$176,537	\$35,894	\$35,223	\$247,654	4,510
H Grayslake 127	\$175,000	\$4,200	\$21,981	\$201,181	2,475
H L'ville-Vernon Hills 128	\$190,013	\$14,505	\$23,898	\$228,416	3,214
U Barrington 220	\$186,143	\$35,900	\$24,725	\$246,768	8,985
McHenry County					
E Fox River Grove 3	\$108,000	\$0	\$13,565	\$121,565	588
U Johnsburg 12	\$146,819	\$25,157	\$14,946	\$186,922	2,639
E McHenry 15	\$147,939	\$10,500	\$1,184	\$159,622	4,846
E Cary 26	\$142,000	\$2,731	\$18,179	\$162,910	3,632
E Prairie Grove 46				\$149,051*	997
E Crystal Lake 47	\$172,210	\$18,460	\$2,032	\$192,702	9,266
H Crystal Lake 155	\$160,000	\$14,000	\$21,856	\$195,856	6,939
U Huntley 158	\$145,000	\$0	\$18,213	\$163,213	6,476

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Notes

E = elementary district
H = high school district
U = unit district

* district did not respond to survey. Pay package figure reflects earnings total reported to the Teachers Retirement System.

Unit districts get by on less

BY EMILY KRONE

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When Elgin Area School District U-46 Superintendent Connie Neale received a \$60,000 raise to bring her total pay package to more than \$400,000, taxpayers called it highway robbery.

By some measures, though, Neale's January deal was a steal.

Neale ran a district with 40,000 students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Nearly 20 miles to the east, Northwest Suburban High School District 214 and its six feeder elementary districts claim 36,000 children K-12 — and seven superintendents.

Together, the seven superintendents were compensated a total of \$1.39 million in 2005-06.

That's nearly four times what Neale made.

The difference — nearly \$1 million — would easily pay the salaries and benefits for at least 10 teachers.

The Daily Herald combined the statistics of nine suburban high school districts and their respective feeder districts to create composite districts comparable to unit systems, where K-12 schools all are grouped under one administration.

A total of 34 elementary districts feed into these nine high school districts.

These nine composite districts employed a total of 43 superintendents, who received compensation equal to \$52 for each student.

Suburban unit districts paid their superintendents \$22 per student.

Superintendent pay is not the only area in which elementary and high school districts spend more money than unit districts.

Overall, our nine composite districts collected \$13,231 per student in 2005-06, compared with the \$10,871 our 21 unit districts collected for each student.

To illustrate the difference, take Naperville Unit District 203 and a composite of Maine Township High School District 207 and its three feeder districts, 62, 63 and 64.

Naperville has 17,613 students.

The Maine composite has 17,896 students.

In 2005-06, Naperville received a total of \$202.8 million, or \$11,513 per student.

In 2005-06, Maine 207 and its three feeders collected a total of \$253.0 million, or \$14,138 per student.

If Maine 207 and its feeders had collected at the Naperville rate, they would have collected 47 million fewer taxpayer dollars.

In all, Illinois high school and elementary districts together spent \$5,883 per student on instruction.

Statewide, unit districts spent \$5,373 per student on instruction in 2005-06, a difference of \$510 per student.

Separate elementary and high school districts together spent \$3,450 per student for support services.

Unit districts spent \$3,080 per pupil on support services.

The real difference, however, came in administration.

In 2005-06, unit districts spent \$427 per student on administration, compared with \$585 for elementary and high school districts, a 37 percent spread.

Administration gap

The apparent efficiency of cost in unit districts filters down into staffing.

When looking at administrators who work on a districtwide basis — above the level of principal — unit districts have an edge.

A unit district would have one administrator in charge of curriculum.

A high school district would have the same, as would its feeder districts.

In 2004, for example, Northwest Suburban District 214 and its six elementary districts had 69 district-level administrators for their 36,000 students, according to the U.S. Dept. of Education's National Center for Education Statistics.

Palatine-Schaumburg District 211 and its two feeder districts had 73 administrators serving 37,000 students.

U-46, a unit district, had 25 administrators and 35,000 students.

Districts 214 and 211 and their feeder-schools, then, had three times as many administrators as U-46 but served nearly the same number of students.

The same duplication of services occurred in Crystal Lake High School District 155 and its four feeder elementary districts. Together, the five schools had 27 administrators for 21,000 students.

Community Unit District 300 in Dundee Township had 11 for 18,000 students.

Feeder districts tend to have more administrators — and pay them more.

In 2005-06, the average suburban high school district administrator made \$122,000, while the average elementary district administrator made \$111,000.

Though unit districts generally have more students, the average unit district administrator made \$100,000 — 11 percent less than elementary administrators and 22 percent less than high school administrators.

Revenue difference

In 2005-06, suburban elementary and high school feeder districts collected \$13,231 per student.

Suburban unit districts collected \$10,871.

Local funding was particularly unequal.

Our nine composite districts collected \$11,553 per pupil in local funding.

Suburban unit districts collected \$6,648 per pupil from local sources.

In all, taxpayers in the composite districts paid a much larger share of the total school bill in 2005-06.

Their local taxes and school fees accounted for 87 percent of all the revenue the nine high school districts collected.

On the unit district side, local funds accounted for 61 percent of the total.

Taxpayers in our composite districts pay more, in part, because their property is worth more.

The average composite district has \$218,875 worth of property per student, compared with \$171,031 in unit districts.

By that measure, our composite districts are 28 percent richer than suburban unit districts.

The big picture

Illinois has 2,096 students per district.

Only 16 states have fewer students per district, and most of those states are primarily rural.

Over the past decade, the number of school districts in Illinois has decreased modestly, from 905 in 1996-97 to 873 in 2005-06.

The number has held relatively steady despite significant financial incentives meant to spur district consolidation.

For districts that combine, Illinois will:

- Erase a portion of their operating deficit.
- Make four years of supplementary payments so that staff at the new district make what staff at the highest paid old district made.
- Make four years of supplementary payments in state aid, if state aid would decrease due to the reorganization.

- Contribute \$4,000 to the new district for each certified employee.

Illinois is willing to pay big cash to achieve the big savings of unit districts.

There's only one category in which unit districts post bigger numbers than their elementary and high school counterparts, and it's nothing to boast about.

Unit districts owe twice as much in long-term debt as their educational colleagues.

Unit versus feeder districts

The Daily Herald combined 2005-06 statistics for area high schools and their feeder elementary districts. These are presented here with unit districts (single K-12 districts) for comparison. With each high school district are its feeder districts in parentheses. Listed is the total revenue for each unit and combined high school/feeder district, the total number of students, total revenue per student, revenue from local sources (mostly property taxes and school fees) per student, the administrative expenditures per student, superintendent compensation (excluding health insurance costs) and superintendent compensation per student.

District	Total revenue	Total students	Total revenue per pupil	Local revenue per pupil	Admin. costs per pupil	Super pay package	Super pay per pupil
H Crystal Lake 155 (3/26/46/47)	\$203,913,554	19,515	\$10,449	\$8,252	\$238	\$822,084	\$42
H DuPage 88 (4/45/48)	\$127,941,267	11,136	\$11,489	\$9,639	\$351	\$818,229	\$73
H Fenton 100 (2/7)	\$59,739,837	4,699	\$12,714	\$11,260	\$481	\$584,314	\$124
H Glenbard 87 (15/16/41/44/89/93)	\$302,887,896	24,587	\$12,319	\$11,007	\$333	\$1,556,408	\$63
H Lake Park 108 (10/11/12/13/20)	\$98,414,462	7,322	\$13,441	\$11,816	\$450	\$1,020,529	\$139
H Maine Township 207 (62/63/64)	\$253,016,075	17,896	\$14,138	\$12,472	\$378	\$866,148	\$48
H Northwest 214 (21/23/25/26/57/59)	\$487,446,313	32,545	\$14,977	\$13,534	\$252	\$1,386,646	\$43
H Palatine 211 (15/54)	\$517,129,474	36,664	\$14,105	\$12,411	\$220	\$661,409	\$18
H West Chicago 94 (25/33/34)	\$80,134,564	6,667	\$12,020	\$9,495	\$349	\$664,587	\$100
U Barrington 220	\$112,211,765	8,312	\$13,500	\$12,077	\$126	\$246,768	\$30
U Batavia101	\$60,924,464	5,708	\$10,673	\$8,856	\$172	\$272,883	\$48
U Central 301	\$30,514,200	2,455	\$12,432	\$11,064	\$272	\$168,070	\$68
U Community 300	\$166,348,254	16,416	\$10,133	\$7,414	\$159	\$211,931	\$13
U Elgin Area U-46	\$372,354,964	35,238	\$10,567	\$6,823	\$167	\$323,288	\$9
U Elmhurst 205	\$82,241,790	6,985	\$11,775	\$10,573	\$262	\$179,710	\$26
U Geneva 304	\$66,496,828	5,325	\$12,487	\$11,435	\$325	\$173,827	\$33
U Huntley 158	\$67,587,725	6,476	\$10,436	\$7,946	\$354	\$163,213	\$25
U Indian Prairie 204	\$259,959,919	25,951	\$10,017	\$8,459	\$85	\$180,250	\$7
U Johnsburg 12	\$24,947,418	2,392	\$10,427	\$7,222	\$249	\$186,922	\$78
U Kaneland 302	\$41,335,706	3,536	\$11,691	\$8,795	\$96	\$176,665	\$50
U Lake Zurich 95	\$68,221,273	6,150	\$11,093	\$10,018	\$201	\$203,005	\$33
U Lisle 202*	\$25,177,429	1,535	\$16,402	\$14,692	\$633	\$216,435	\$141
U McHenry 15	\$39,055,232	4,350	\$8,979	\$7,082	\$143	\$159,622	\$37
U Naperville 203	\$202,787,251	17,613	\$11,513	\$10,089	\$227	\$223,543	\$13
U North Aurora 129	\$105,896,518	10,764	\$9,838	\$5,876	\$216	\$218,481	\$20
U Round Lake 116	\$58,299,535	5,961	\$9,780	\$4,588	\$311	\$166,265	\$28
U St. Charles 303	\$141,240,674	12,187	\$11,590	\$10,266	\$152	\$263,333	\$22
U Valley View 365-U	\$173,108,542	15,648	\$11,063	\$8,125	\$122	\$222,217	\$14
U Wauconda 118	\$39,170,438	3,748	\$10,450	\$8,380	\$308	\$162,606	\$43
U Wheaton-Warrenville 200	\$140,133,936	12,803	\$10,945	\$8,746	\$168	\$394,955	\$31

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Schools fall further into debt

BY JAMEEL NAQVI

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Illinois schools spend a lot of money every month.

They're also spending a lot of tomorrow's dollars today.

Illinois schools owed a total of \$16 billion in bond loans at the end of the 2005-06 year.

That's \$8,555 of long-term debt for each student in the state.

At the end of the 1996-97 school year, Illinois schools only owed \$6.6 billion.

That was \$3,728 per kid in the system.

The debt rose 144 percent over the 10-year period.

That's more than twice the pace at which public school revenue climbed.

And it's more than five times the rate of inflation, or 26 percent, over the 10 years.

Illinois schools borrowed money at more than twice the rate the U.S. racked up public debt — a 64 percent clip over the same time period, according to the U.S. Treasury Department.

School officials cite enrollment growth when explaining their long-term debt.

"The primary reason you issue debt is to build buildings," said Luke Glowiak, a past director of the Illinois Association of School Business Officials and now assistant superintendent for business services in Sycamore School District 427.

Yet Illinois' average daily attendance grew only 8 percent over the 10 years.

Experts cite other reasons the rate of school district borrowing grew 18 times faster than enrollment.

Construction costs have risen 10 percent to 12 percent each year, much faster than the rate of inflation, says Harris Bank bond consultant Eric Anderson.

Districts with older buildings and static enrollment face the task of upgrading, renovating and improving facilities — costly steps in their own rights.

While growing districts issue more bonds, older districts "could end up with a larger amount of debt than you might expect," Glowiak said.

Forty-year lows in interest rates also encouraged schools to borrow or refinance, Anderson said.

Some point to Chicago's extensive rehab work as another driving force. But the city school system's bond debt grew more slowly than the state as a whole, from \$2 billion in 1997 to \$4.7 billion in 2006, an increase of 134 percent.

Without Chicago's numbers, the long-term debt carried by the rest of the schools in Illinois rose 148 percent over the period.

In the suburbs, the debt details are as varied as the districts.

Big debtors

In 2006, Big Hollow Elementary District 38 had more debt per student — \$32,739 — than any district in the Daily Herald's coverage area.

The Lake County district appeared in Chapter 5 of this series, in which we noted that it spent a greater percentage of its revenue outside the classroom than any other district in 2005-06.

Enrollment was the culprit then, as now.

In 2005-06, payments for new construction stretched its "other" spending category.

Big Hollow is one of only three suburban districts where student population more than doubled in our 10-year period.

Still, Big Hollow's enrollment is small — only 1,000 kids. When this district borrows \$33 million, its per student number is much higher than a district with 6,000 children that borrows a lot more.

A district like Huntley Unit District 158, which more than tripled in size, has a 250 percent debt growth.

Huntley has almost four times as much total debt as Big Hollow — \$121 million to \$33 million — but with six times more children, its per-student debt load seems a lot lighter.

In fact, Huntley's \$18,825 debt per child is almost half as light as Big Hollow's \$32,739.

Huntley also built schools only to keep up with enrollment growth.

Big Hollow built schools that accommodated new growth at the same time it replaced existing buildings.

The much higher cost of building schools for the district's entire student population, as in Big Hollow, versus simply building new schools for new students, as in Huntley, resulted in the much larger debt per student in Big Hollow.

Few patterns

At the other end of the spectrum was Johnsborg Unit District 12, which had zero debt in 2006.

Johnsborg was the only district in the Daily Herald circulation area that had no debt in 2006.

The McHenry County district didn't always have such low debt. In 1999, it had \$5,103 in debt per student, putting it in the middle of the pack.

But from 1998-99 to 2005-06, enrollment increased by only 3 percent, or roughly 70 students. And the district ran one less school in 2005-06 than it did 10 years earlier.

By 2006, Johnsborg had paid off the \$11 million it had owed in 1999.

Oak Grove Elementary District 68 very nearly wiped out its bond debt.

The Lake County district reduced its long-term debt from \$6 million in 1999 to a paltry \$72,504 in 2006 — a 99 percent drop.

And Oak Grove accomplished that while its enrollment grew 28 percent.

But as we learned with Big Hollow, enrollment tells only part of the story.

In fact, 34 suburban districts had less enrollment growth than Johnsborg — and most of these actually saw their student body shrink from 1998-99 to 2005-06.

These districts generally had less debt per student than high-growth districts.

But five districts with shrinking enrollments bucked the trend.

Chief among them was Winfield Elementary District 34, where enrollment dropped off more sharply than at any other suburban district — from 475 to 329, or 31 percent.

Yet with \$6.5 million in new bond debt, the district became one of only nine suburban districts with more than \$20,000 in debt per student in 2006.

Winfield borrowed to pay for \$8 million in extensive renovations to its outdated middle school and elementary school.

That makes the district a good example of Glowiak's contention that older districts with no growth still "could end up with a larger amount of debt than you might expect."

Bond debt

Here is the total amount of long-term bond debt for area school districts and how much that equals on a per-student basis.

Cook County	Total bond debt			Bond debt per student		
	1998-99	2005-06	% chg.	1998-99	2005-06	% chg.
Palatine 15	\$82,905,000	\$67,900,091	-18%	\$7,331	\$5,863	-20%
Wheeling 21	\$8,305,674	\$54,963,493	562%	\$1,330	\$9,271	597%
Prospect Hts. 23	\$10,235,000	\$4,366,378	-57%	\$6,666	\$3,142	-53%
Arlington Hts. 25	\$49,255,000	\$42,523,514	-14%	\$11,665	\$9,490	-19%
River Trails 26	\$8,108,570	\$6,620,000	-18%	\$4,564	\$4,275	-6%
Schaumburg 54	\$103,190,000	\$42,375,699	-59%	\$7,217	\$3,271	-55%
Mount Prospect 57	\$15,328,988	\$12,723,891	-17%	\$9,211	\$6,829	-26%
Elk Grove 59	\$19,740,000	\$31,254,135	58%	\$3,349	\$5,726	71%
East Maine 63	\$20,370,000	\$21,752,892	7%	\$6,252	\$7,071	13%
Rosemont 78	\$1,465,000	\$1,520,000	4%	\$5,174	\$7,163	38%
Des Plaines 62	0	\$2,630,771	N/A	0	\$609	N/A
Maine 207	0	\$18,298,047	N/A	0	\$2,893	N/A
Palatine 211	\$32,005,000	\$22,929,873	-28%	\$2,881	\$1,891	-34%
Northwest 214	\$30,922,507	\$21,908,395	-29%	\$2,994	\$1,845	-38%
DuPage County						
Bensenville 2	\$3,195,000	\$14,521,108	354%	\$1,693	\$6,850	305%
Addison 4	0	\$28,538,370	N/A	0	\$7,356	N/A
Wood Dale 7	\$4,250,000	\$3,360,000	-21%	\$4,069	\$2,923	-28%
Itasca 10	\$3,910,000	\$2,949,378	-25%	\$5,539	\$4,095	-26%
Medinah 11	\$1,830,000	\$2,404,774	31%	\$2,698	\$3,425	27%
Roselle 12	\$675,000	\$4,250,000	530%	\$1,033	\$6,771	555%
Bloomington 13	\$6,405,000	\$4,550,000	-29%	\$4,665	\$3,537	-24%
Glendale Hts. 15	\$7,267,509	\$10,971,263	51%	\$3,048	\$4,699	54%
Glendale Hts. 16	\$9,416,726	\$14,019,219	49%	\$4,922	\$7,699	56%
Keeneyville 20	\$5,490,000	\$9,420,000	72%	\$3,632	\$6,294	73%
West Chicago 25	\$8,253,696	\$10,630,000	29%	\$8,255	\$12,817	55%
West Chicago 33	\$21,907,638	\$14,064,287	-36%	\$6,589	\$3,861	-41%
Winfield 34	\$330,800	\$6,580,212	1889%	\$697	\$20,025	2774%
Glen Ellyn 41	\$27,999,904	\$24,163,423	-14%	\$9,730	\$7,627	-22%
Lombard 44	\$20,340,000	\$22,543,036	11%	\$7,058	\$7,972	13%
Villa Park 45	\$19,712,983	\$26,123,481	33%	\$5,746	\$8,157	42%
Salt Creek 48	0	\$4,546,696	N/A	0	\$9,231	N/A
Butler 53	\$997,000	\$2,033,000	104%	\$2,171	\$4,372	101%
Woodridge 68	\$10,280,000	\$12,847,331	25%	\$3,271	\$4,995	53%
Glen Ellyn 89	\$10,145,000	\$6,952,322	-31%	\$4,384	\$3,426	-22%
Carol Stream 93	\$24,260,000	\$21,485,000	-11%	\$5,236	\$5,301	1%
DuPage 88	\$5,545,000	\$16,743,832	202%	\$1,722	\$4,701	173%
West Chicago 94	\$29,800,000	\$25,715,000	-14%	\$19,496	\$13,783	-29%
Fenton 100	0	\$715,000	N/A	0	\$500	N/A
Lake Park 108	\$4,428,149	\$55,110,823	1145%	\$1,655	\$22,146	1238%
Glenbard 87	\$37,050,000	\$44,671,398	21%	\$4,957	\$5,348	8%
Wheaton-W'ville 200	\$74,560,000	\$147,550,000	98%	\$5,885	\$11,524	96%
Lisle 202	\$7,630,000	\$15,474,427	103%	\$4,682	\$10,081	115%
Naperville 203	\$2,450,000	\$4,867,087	99%	\$144	\$276	92%
Indian Prairie 204	0	\$253,405,000	N/A	0	\$9,765	N/A
Elmhurst 205	\$2,886,700	\$126,444,287	4280%	\$474	\$18,103	3719%
Will County						
Valley View 365-U	\$90,012,445	\$256,747,152	185%	\$7,935	\$16,408	107%

Bond debt

Here is the total amount of long-term bond debt for area school districts and how much that equals on a per-student basis.

Kane County	Total bond debt			Bond debt per student		
	1998-99	2005-06	% chg.	1998-99	2005-06	% chg.
Elgin Area U-46	\$192,848,695	\$391,018,782	103%	\$6,319	\$11,097	76%
Batavia 101	\$35,250,000	\$47,676,511	35%	\$7,577	\$8,352	10%
Aurora West 129	\$63,817,000	\$135,337,445	112%	\$7,455	\$12,573	69%
Community 300	\$36,026,745	\$208,150,228	478%	\$2,567	\$12,680	394%
Central 301	\$27,946,775	\$60,012,469	115%	\$14,464	\$24,450	69%
Kaneland 302	\$21,396,444	\$62,947,045	194%	\$9,597	\$17,803	85%
St. Charles 303	\$128,485,000	\$186,594,108	45%	\$13,996	\$15,311	9%
Geneva 304	\$63,808,998	\$112,866,705	77%	\$15,972	\$21,194	33%
Lake County						
Millburn 24	\$12,496,981	\$26,082,987	109%	\$20,153	\$19,896	-1%
Emmons 33	\$1,578,807	\$8,042,314	409%	\$5,350	\$23,399	337%
Antioch 34	\$10,637,051	\$16,456,870	55%	\$5,808	\$6,237	7%
Grass Lake 36	\$270,000	\$905,616	235%	\$1,032	\$4,960	381%
Gavin 37	\$8,039,522	\$14,207,182	77%	\$9,051	\$18,401	103%
Big Hollow 38	\$6,575,839	\$34,645,391	427%	\$13,485	\$32,739	143%
Lake Villa 41	\$17,338,150	\$26,526,761	53%	\$7,179	\$8,717	21%
Grayslake 46	\$18,598,594	\$65,317,779	251%	\$7,116	\$17,773	150%
Woodland 50	\$44,935,000	\$94,909,681	111%	\$8,614	\$14,295	66%
Gurnee 56	\$21,300,000	\$22,498,223	6%	\$13,163	\$11,737	-11%
Oak Grove 68	\$6,040,000	\$72,504	-99%	\$7,531	\$71	-99%
Libertyville 70	\$9,033,286	\$10,556,189	17%	\$3,977	\$4,339	9%
Rondout 72	\$2,036,445	\$2,570,000	26%	\$19,585	\$20,876	7%
Hawthorn 73	\$23,320,000	\$42,279,704	81%	\$8,046	\$12,823	59%
Mundelein 75	\$14,933,398	\$9,260,094	-38%	\$7,411	\$4,598	-38%
Diamond Lake 76	\$4,711,609	\$9,361,371	99%	\$4,208	\$8,314	98%
Fremont 79	\$15,365,000	\$10,454,571	-32%	\$12,512	\$5,978	-52%
Long Grove 96	\$34,545,000	\$26,036,633	-25%	\$10,490	\$8,383	-20%
Aptakisic-Tripp 102	\$21,050,000	\$8,840,000	-58%	\$8,563	\$4,285	-50%
Lincolnshire 103	\$8,505,976	\$10,819,379	27%	\$5,698	\$6,997	23%
Fox Lake 114	\$1,929,412	\$13,204,463	584%	\$2,710	\$16,796	520%
Antioch-Lk. Villa 117	\$8,833,788	\$40,598,690	360%	\$5,466	\$17,813	226%
Mundelein 120	\$19,446,023	\$15,025,332	-23%	\$13,619	\$7,677	-44%
Grant 124	\$4,448,494	\$12,737,863	186%	\$4,956	\$8,703	76%
Stevenson 125	\$46,813,272	\$39,251,010	-16%	\$14,391	\$9,013	-37%
Grayslake 127	\$31,770,133	\$68,007,588	114%	\$24,462	\$30,636	25%
L'ville-V'non Hills 128	\$48,500,000	\$43,160,000	-11%	\$21,857	\$14,350	-34%
Warren 121	\$41,880,000	\$59,049,448	41%	\$15,426	\$16,466	7%
Lake Zurich 95	\$22,479,489	\$74,746,324	233%	\$4,169	\$12,154	192%
Round Lake 116	\$27,735,041	\$54,357,036	96%	\$5,800	\$9,118	57%
Wauconda 118	\$30,440,438	\$83,301,026	174%	\$9,594	\$22,223	132%
Barrington 220	\$112,970,000	\$116,236,538	3%	\$15,823	\$13,984	-12%
McHenry County						
Fox River Grove 3	\$1,717,007	\$4,209,881	145%	\$2,839	\$7,648	169%
Johnsburg 12	\$11,845,157	0	-100%	\$5,103	0	-100%
McHenry 15	\$29,610,000	\$23,763,111	-20%	\$7,247	\$5,463	-25%
Cary 26	\$15,364,866	\$30,316,652	97%	\$5,190	\$9,470	82%
Prairie Grove 46	\$7,129,354	\$7,269,793	2%	\$8,494	\$7,294	-14%
Crystal Lake 47	\$16,050,000	\$31,235,000	95%	\$2,202	\$3,725	69%
Crystal Lake 155	\$27,704,912	\$32,115,956	16%	\$5,876	\$5,033	-14%
Huntley 158	\$24,395,000	\$121,917,863	400%	\$13,200	\$18,825	43%
State	\$6.57 billion	\$16.01 billion	144%	\$3,728	\$8,555	129%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

Only 1 in 5 high school grads are ready for college

BY EMILY KRONE

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High school seniors throughout Illinois are half a year from graduation and college, the culmination of 13 years of public schooling.

The state is half a year from completing its constitutional duty to give these seniors a free and efficient education.

Taxpayers know the schools weren't free.

Data show the schools weren't efficient.

Between August 1996 — when today's seniors began first grade — and June, taxpayers funneled nearly \$200 billion into the Illinois public school system.

Yet, just 21 percent of Illinois seniors leaves the billion-dollar system ready for college — or the workplace.

In the suburbs, the results aren't much better.

The Daily Herald reviewed ACT College Readiness reports from the 36 high school districts in our coverage area, from Gurnee down to Bolingbrook, from Des Plaines west to Huntley.

According to the reports, only 27 percent of suburban seniors are prepared to earn a college C or better in all four major subject areas tested by the ACT: science, social science, algebra and English.

Only 52.6 percent met or exceeded standards on the Prairie State exam, the test designed to gauge mastery of the material Illinois educators say all high school juniors should know.

Though nearly half haven't mastered state learning standards, and just one in five tested as college ready, most seniors will leave high school with a diploma.

Illinois reports an 86 percent graduation rate.

"It's pretty horrifying," said Jennifer Presley, who has studied the issue of college readiness for the Illinois Education Research Council at Southern Illinois University. "We've turned graduating from high school into an almost meaningless benchmark for people, and you're seeing that in the data."

Local community colleges say they're seeing it in the number of incoming kids — about half — who must take at least one remedial class before they can take freshman classes.

And employers say they're seeing it on the job, as applicants who aren't ready for college increasingly aren't ready for work either.

The school tab

Current 12th-graders started first grade in 1996, the first year covered by our School Finance 101 series.

Taxpayers have invested heavily in the typical suburban 12th-grader's scholastic career.

In total, during the decade covered by School Finance 101, taxpayers spent \$117,000 on a typical suburban kid.

When that student was in first grade, taxpayers kicked in \$8,312 for his education.

A decade later, when our typical student was a high school sophomore, the figure had climbed to \$12,674 per student, a 52 percent bump, more than twice the rate of inflation during that period.

As the rising cost of educating our student outpaced inflation, suburban taxpayers picked up the majority of the tab, year after year.

Between 1997 and 2006, a combination of local fees and property taxes

accounted for 84 percent of revenue to suburban schools.

Many suburban taxpayers even voted to increase their taxes, reasoning that more money would buy a better education.

Within the Herald coverage area, 56 of 94 districts passed a tax rate increase for schools between 1997 and 2006.

“We’ve seen huge increases in spending,” said Jeff Mayes, president of the Illinois Business Roundtable, an association of Illinois CEOs that is involved in education policy.

“But with all of the money we’ve spent, these scores haven’t gone up,” Mayes said, “and so you have to ask, Does money really count?”

Some school board members are happy to supply an answer.

“We’re spending more money, and it’s not getting us better performance,” said Tim Millar, school board president in Palatine Township Elementary District 15, who campaigned on a taxpayer platform. “The culture is to talk about lack of money rather than return on investment. It’s really frightening.”

The ACT standards

The ACT has established minimum benchmark scores that indicate a 50 percent chance of earning a B or higher and a 75 percent chance of earning a C or higher in individual subject areas during a student’s first year of college.

ACT formulated its benchmarks based on interviews with thousands of middle and high school teachers, guidance counselors, and college professors; and on the first-year college grades of thousands of students who took the ACT.

To be considered college ready, students must score 18 on the English composition portion of the ACT, 21 on social science, 22 on algebra and 24 on biology.

Few in the suburbs hit the mark in all four areas.

Stevenson High School District 125 in Lincolnshire posted the highest percentage of its seniors testing as college ready in all four subjects.

But even at Stevenson, just 53 percent of students made the grade.

Across all Daily Herald high school districts, only two had more than 50 percent of students meeting college readiness benchmarks in all four subjects: Stevenson and Naperville Unit District 203.

Other districts fared much worse.

Just 7 percent of seniors at Round Lake Unit District 116 are considered college ready.

In Elgin Area School District U-46, the state’s second largest school system, 14 percent of this year’s senior class is college ready.

Science scores sunk many schools.

In Northwest Suburban High School District 214, for example, 81 percent of students were college ready in English and 59 percent were college ready in algebra.

But just 41 percent were prepared in biology, slashing the number of college-ready District 214 students to 34 percent.

“It’s not pretty,” said Mayes, “and it’s right at our doorsteps.”

A solid guideline

In an era of modified tests and sliding grading scales, the ACT provides one of the few consistent, unbiased measures of a student’s progress — or lack of progress.

“It’s as good as we’ve got,” Presley said. “It’s very thorough and something to be taken seriously.”

The dismal college readiness scores might surprise parents who have seen their student succeed year-after-year on the Illinois State Assessment Tests, which determine whether a school is considered passing or failing under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Illinois students score much higher on the ISAT, taken by all third- through eighth-graders statewide, than they do on the high school state

test, which includes the ACT.

A study by the Fordham Institute, a Washington-based nonprofit promoting high standards and school choice, recently found the ISATs set some of the lowest standards in the nation.

What's more, the level of difficulty declined between 2003 and 2006 — “dramatically so” in some subjects, according to the Fordham study.

Meanwhile, the ACT has not changed, said Ed Colby, a spokesman for ACT.

“It's used by colleges all over the country to determine whether students are ready to succeed,” Colby said. “There's a direct benefit for students to do their best on the exam.”

Palatine-Schaumburg High School District 211 Superintendent Roger Thornton said the discrepancy is too wide between the ISAT and the ACT, which all Illinois juniors must take.

“The Illinois ISAT is viewed as one of least difficult nationally, while the ACT would be one of the more difficult,” Thornton said.

But some college instructors say even the ACT benchmarks are too low.

At Elgin Community College, for example, students must score a 20 on the English exam, not an 18, to qualify automatically for English 101. Just 42 percent of ECC students who score an 18 pass the college's placement exam to take English 101.

This fall, nearly two-thirds of ECC freshman had to take one or more remedial classes.

Other suburban community colleges grapple with similar statistics.

Half of the high school class of 2005 at College of DuPage and 56 percent at McHenry County College took at least one remedial course last year.

At Harper College in Palatine, the percentage of recent high school graduates who arrive unprepared has held steady for several years. Generally, about 50 percent require remedial math, 20 percent require remedial English and 15 percent require remedial reading.

Nationwide, 42 percent of community college freshman and 20 percent of freshman in public four-year colleges enroll in at least one remedial course, according to the U.S. government's National Center for Education Statistics.

Employers track test

Illinois employers and college officials say the college readiness numbers reflect what they see at the workplace.

St. Charles-based Bison Gear, a manufacturing company with 220 employees, has joined with other manufacturers and educational leaders to form a 12-week work-training program to address the shortage of qualified entry-level workers in manufacturing.

“It's a challenge for us to find workers with the basic skill set we're looking for,” said Sylvia Wetzel, who runs the program. “We spoke with other manufacturers and they had the same concerns.

“We're more than willing to do on-the-job technical training, but we're talking about ground-zero knowledge, like passing an eighth-grade math test,” Wetzel said.

More and more, studies show, the same skills necessary for college readiness are the skills workers need to earn a living wage.

“College and workplace standards are very similar,” said Marilyn McConachie, vice president for university outreach at Northern Illinois University.

“There were always people who thought, especially in the old manufacturing towns, that there were factories you could go to if you weren't ready for college, and that's no longer the case,” McConachie said. “The ACT is appropriate whether you're going to college or not.”

Schools respond

Some Illinois high schools have begun using the ACT college readiness standards to guide and improve instruction.

U-46 recently hired an ACT consultant to identify the areas teachers most needed to emphasize if students are going to meet college readiness benchmarks.

“We’re finding ways to heighten awareness of what students are going to need to be successful in college,” said Tom Donausky, director of secondary education at U-46.

Thornton at District 211 said high schools across the state are trying to increase academic rigor.

But, he said, students begin school with different skills and can’t all stick to the same college readiness timeline.

“If every kid entered high school at grade level, then we could have them ready for college,” Thornton said. “And if every kid came into first grade with requisite level, we’d have them ready for high school. But it’s never been that way and I’ll submit it never will be, and the issue is that we stay at it.”

Some business leaders say they can’t wait.

“My members have the need for talent to stay pre-eminent in their enterprise, and the fact that they have to find the talent elsewhere bothers them,” said Mayes of the Business Roundtable. “They’re committed to trying to grow it here, but they’re frustrated that the system doesn’t sense the urgency.”

Some suburban school board members do sense the urgency.

“The system is not efficient, and it’s anything but high-quality,” said Chris Jenner, a school board member at Cary Elementary District 26.

Jenner is part of an informal group of a dozen suburban school board members who meet occasionally to talk shop, and believe the public school system in Illinois is fundamentally flawed.

“The complete and utter focus is on funding, not on how the money’s spent, but on getting more money,” Jenner said. “People should be outraged.”

The bottom line

Here is the cost of educating a typical student, listed by elementary district with the high school district number in parentheses. These costs are based on annual per-pupil revenue collections since 1996-97 — when today's seniors were in first grade. Then comes the percentage of students who met or exceeded standards on the Prairie State exam in April. After that are ACT subsets, and the percentage of kids who met standards in each category. The final column is the percentage of students who met all four ACT subset standards — and are considered ready for college.

Cook County	11-year student cost	Prairie State	ACT Eng.	ACT Math	Social Sci.	ACT Biol.	ACT all 4
Palatine 15 (211)	\$126,128	69.1%	76	55	59	36	32
Wheeling 21 (214)	\$122,715	73.5%	81	59	62	41	34
Prospect Heights 23 (214)	\$131,958	73.5%	81	59	62	41	34
Arlington Heights 25 (214)	\$139,573	73.5%	81	59	62	41	34
River Trails 26 (214)	\$145,636	73.5%	81	59	62	41	34
Schaumburg 54 (211)	\$128,720	69.1%	76	55	59	36	32
Mount Prospect 57 (214)	\$129,185	73.5%	81	59	62	41	34
Elk Grove 59 (214)	\$139,779	73.5%	81	59	62	41	34
Des Plaines 62 (207)	\$125,624	66.5%	75	53	56	37	31
East Maine 63 (207)	\$126,172	66.5%	75	53	56	37	31
DuPage County							
Bensenville 2 (100)	\$115,517	53.5%	65	43	42	20	17
Addison 4 (88)	\$102,580	60.4%	70	44	49	25	21
Wood Dale 7 (100)	\$127,207	53.5%	65	43	42	20	17
Itasca 10 (108)	\$147,239	61.8%	76	49	53	35	28
Medinah 11 (108)	\$139,535	61.8%	76	49	53	35	28
Roselle 12 (108)	\$121,495	61.8%	76	49	53	35	28
Bloomington 13 (108)	\$126,427	61.8%	76	49	53	35	28
Glendale Heights 15 (87)	\$101,521	64.9%	72	51	56	34	29
Glendale Heights 16 (87)	\$97,985	64.9%	72	51	56	34	29
Keeneyville 20 (108)	\$131,445	61.8%	76	49	53	35	28
West Chicago 25 (94)	\$107,674	58.3%	60	40	44	25	20
West Chicago 33 (94)	\$107,996	58.3%	60	40	44	25	20
Winfield 34 (94)	\$108,854	58.3%	60	40	44	25	20
Glen Ellyn 41 (87)	\$105,132	64.9%	72	51	56	34	29
Lombard 44 (87)	\$108,842	64.9%	72	51	56	34	29
Villa Park 45 (88)	\$107,491	60.4%	70	44	49	25	21
Salt Creek 48 (88)	\$143,284	60.4%	70	44	49	25	21
Glen Ellyn CC 89 (87)	\$108,493	64.9%	72	51	56	34	29
Carol Stream 93 (87)	\$97,891	64.9%	72	51	56	34	29
Wheaton-W'ville 200	\$101,406	75.9%	80	63	65	47	41
Lisle 202	\$146,040	64.1%	74	46	56	32	27
Naperville 203	\$101,057	82.6%	90	72	77	56	51
Indian Prairie 204	\$95,248	72.9%	88	60	68	44	38
Elmhurst 205	\$116,765	71.8%	72	52	59	36	30
Will County							
Valley View 365-U	\$99,596	53.8%	54	30	38	18	13

The bottom line

Here is the cost of educating a typical student, listed by elementary district with the high school district number in parentheses. These costs are based on annual per-pupil revenue collections since 1996-97 — when today's seniors were in first grade. Then comes the percentage of students who met or exceeded standards on the Prairie State exam in April. After that are ACT subsets, and the percentage of kids who met standards in each category. The final column is the percentage of students who met all four ACT subset standards — and are considered ready for college.

	11-year student cost	Prairie State	ACT Eng.	ACT Math	Social Sci.	ACT Biol.	ACT all 4
Kane County							
Elgin Area U-46	\$98,627	49.5%	54	31	38	18	14
Batavia 101	\$94,626	71.9%	74	59	59	36	28
Aurora West 129	\$89,287	51.0%	53	34	37	17	16
Community 300	\$89,028	50.9%	67	34	45	22	17
Central 301	\$108,915	62.0%	72	45	57	36	28
Kaneland 302	\$107,838	61.7%	66	37	47	28	21
St. Charles 303	\$104,048	69.3%	79	55	57	37	30
Geneva 304	\$108,691	70.0%	81	59	67	41	36
Lake County							
Millburn 24 (117)	\$120,401	58.9%	69	42	50	25	21
Emmons 33 (117)	\$103,950	58.9%	69	42	50	25	21
Antioch 34 (117)	\$110,374	58.9%	69	42	50	25	21
Grass Lake 36 (117)	\$112,848	58.9%	69	42	50	25	21
Gavin 37 (124)	\$101,618	57.6%	63	34	40	20	15
Big Hollow 38 (124)	\$107,942	57.6%	63	34	40	20	15
Lake Villa 41 (117)	\$110,648	58.9%	69	42	50	25	21
Grayslake 46 (127)	\$127,220	62.3%	77	48	57	35	28
Woodland 50 (121)	\$104,251	64.6%	75	47	57	33	28
Gurnee 56 (121)	\$115,429	64.6%	75	47	57	33	28
Oak Grove 68 (128)	\$148,457	79.9%	90	71	72	51	44
Libertyville 70 (128)	\$146,203	79.9%	90	71	72	51	44
Rondout 72 (128)	\$255,072	79.9%	90	71	72	51	44
Hawthorn 73 (128)	\$151,139	79.9%	90	71	72	51	44
Mundelein 75 (120)	\$104,446	59.1%	65	43	45	28	23
Diamond Lake 76 (120)	\$115,769	59.1%	65	43	45	28	23
Fremont 79 (120)	\$126,723	59.1%	65	43	45	28	23
Lake Zurich 95	\$103,061	70.3%	81	61	63	39	35
Long Grove 96 (125)	\$132,942	83.4%	92	80	75	57	53
Aptakisic-Tripp 102 (125)	\$130,887	83.4%	92	80	75	57	53
Lincolnshire 103 (125)	\$138,841	83.4%	92	80	75	57	53
Fox Lake 114 (124)	\$110,159	57.6%	63	34	40	20	15
Round Lake 116	\$91,422	34.8%	41	22	21	24	7
Wauconda 118	\$95,929	52.5%	57	33	43	20	14
Barrington 220	\$127,587	75.9%	82	62	67	45	40
McHenry County							
Fox River Grove 3 (155)	\$95,299	72.1%	81	55	60	38	32
Johnsburg 12	\$92,473	51.1%	75	34	51	24	18
McHenry 15 (124)	\$101,223	57.6%	63	34	40	20	15
Cary 26 (155)	\$93,203	72.1%	81	55	60	38	32
Prairie Grove 46 (155)	\$90,772	72.1%	81	55	60	38	32
Crystal Lake 47 (155)	\$94,548	72.1%	81	55	60	38	32
Huntley 158	\$108,341	57.6%	68	39	49	22	19
State	\$105,970	54.3%	65	38	47	25	21

Source: Illinois State Board of Education; area school districts

Bottom line on schools

Armed with the data, taxpayers can help shape debate

BY EMILY KRONE

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In Chapter 1 of School Finance 101, we said we would provide readers with the ammunition and information necessary to help shape the debate over school finance in Illinois.

Here's a recap of some key findings:

- Statewide, school districts collected \$171 billion from 1996-97 through 2005-06.
- During that decade, average per-pupil revenue to Illinois school districts increased by more than twice the rate of inflation.
- During the decade, the state supplied just 29 percent of the money collected by all Illinois public schools.
- During the decade, suburban schools typically collected 84 percent of their revenue from local sources.
- During the decade, suburban districts, which generally have the highest cost of living in the state, received half as much state aid as districts in other parts of the state with similar property wealth.
- Two-thirds of the typical suburban tax bill goes to schools. All other local services split the remainder.
- Over the past decade, suburban districts spent an average of 48 percent of their revenue on instruction and teacher-pupil activities.
- During the decade 20 suburban districts spent more than two-thirds of their total revenues outside the class.
- Between 1998 and 2006, the average teacher pay in 94 suburban school districts grew from \$46,883 to \$59,986, an increase of 28 percent.
- In 2006, the average administrator in the 94 districts covered by the Daily Herald made \$110,747, compared with \$81,023 in 1998, a 37 percent bump.
- Compensation for suburban school chiefs in the 2005-06 school year ranged from \$121,565 to \$394,995.
- Illinois schools owed a total of \$16 billion in bond loans at the end of 2005-06. The debt rose 144 percent in just seven years.
- Just one of five seniors leaves the billion-dollar Illinois school system ready for college — or the workplace — according to ACT test scores.

The Illinois Education Association has called for a constitutional amendment to increase the state contribution to public schools.

The Illinois Federation of Teachers has called for “comprehensive changes in the state’s fiscal system.”

The Illinois Association of School Administrators wants to increase state funding and amend or repeal laws that limit the amount schools can collect from taxpayers.

This year, lawmakers battled over but did not pass two school funding reform bills.

The plan supported by Gov. Rod Blagojevich would have imposed a new tax on business and generated an estimated \$7.7 billion extra for health care and schools.

The plans all draw on a basic premise: The main problem with the public school system is a lack of money.

School Finance 101 was designed to add depth to a debate that too often centers only on whether schools have too much or too little.

As we noted in Chapter 1, a position paper by the Illinois Education Association says the way money is raised by, allocated to and distributed in public schools is fundamentally flawed.

You decide.