



Lakewood Board of Education

200 Ramsey Avenue, Lakewood, NJ 08701

Main Office: (732) 364-2400 Fax: (732) 905-3687

Laura A. Winters, Superintendent of Schools

Regina Robinson, Interim Business Administrator

March 20, 2017

Judee DeStefano-Anen
Interim Executive County Superintendent
212 Washington Street
Toms River, NJ 08753

Dear Dr. DeStefano-Anen:

It is with great sadness that I must inform you that the Lakewood School District is unable to provide its students with a “thorough and efficient” education required by the New Jersey State Constitution. The level of education that will be offered to the students of the Lakewood School District in the 2017-2018 school year, is in my professional opinion, tragically inadequate and inferior compared to the education offered to those students in wealthier towns in Ocean County and across the state.

The District must deal with a number of new expenditures and significantly less revenue, such as, but not limited to, the following;

- The absence of a \$5.6 million State Aid Advance/Revenue
- Repayment installment for the above advance
- Repayment of significant federal and state audit refunds which had been deferred in past years **\$1,099,531**
- The tuition for a newly approved charter school **\$2,128,493**
- The consortium’s busing cost for the increase in mandated nonpublic school students despite flat funding in State Transportation Aid and overall State Aid for the District. **\$1,895,728**
- Increase in Health Benefits **\$2,821,605**
- Increase in Salaries **\$2,561,333**
- Increase in Tuition **\$525,357**
- Increase to School Base Budget to Title 1 Reduction **\$735, 045**
- Transportation Less Salaries and LSTA **\$686,793**
- Net Changes to the Balance of the Budget **\$10,692**



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In order to cover the above, the Lakewood School District will be losing approximately 119 members of its certified teaching staff, creating average class sizes of 50 (K-12). Students throughout the district will no longer have the opportunity to participate in sports programs or after-school clubs and activities.

Summer Bridge programs that have helped our students' transition from Elementary School to Middle School and from Middle School to High School will be eliminated. Lakewood High School's summer school program will be abolished, leaving disadvantaged students unable to make -up course credits, in order to obtain their high school diploma.

In a district with few administrators, and close to 50 students in a class, there will no longer be guidance counselors in the Elementary Schools to assist those students who struggle with behavioral and emotional problems associated with children being raised in poverty. Research shows that poverty in childhood and adolescence is associated with a higher risk for poor cognitive and academic outcomes, lower school attendance, lower reading and math test scores, increased distractibility, and higher rates of grade failure and early high school dropout.

Lakewood School District's Response-to-Intervention Program, (K-2 students) which has greatly improved the reading foundational skills for our struggling students, has been eliminated, along with all of the district's Media Specialists, who have over the last few years enhanced our Content Area and Technology curricula. Mathematics and Literacy Coaching positions have been abolished, leaving our teachers with limited access to professional development and support. As if the staffing issues are not enough, teachers and students will also have to grapple with having to do more with less, as \$500,000 in educational supplies was also cut from the budget.

In my opinion, this level of education does not meet minimum adequacy standards by any means. How can the students of Lakewood be expected to compete in the labor market, with students who have had educational opportunities that have prepared them for the world around them?



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As you can see in the below charts, Lakewood has the highest percentage of people living in poverty, and the lowest per capita income – even when compared to Abbott School Districts.

Lakewood Township Compared to the Three Monmouth County Abbott Districts:

Lakewood Township	Neptune	Long Branch	Asbury Park
Per Capita Income \$11,775 (Lowest per Capita Income!)	Per Capita Income \$31,897	Per Capita Income \$29,478	Per Capita Income \$24,282
Median Household Income \$38,025	Median Household Income \$63,881	Median Household Income \$48,736	Median Household Income \$32,459
Poverty Level 38.8% (Higher than all 3 Monmouth County Abbott Districts!)	Poverty Level 11.3%	Poverty Level 17.8%	Poverty Level 32.0%

* <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/>
(2010-2014)

Lakewood Township Compared to Three Neighboring Townships in Ocean County:

Lakewood Township	Brick Township	Forked River	Barnegat
Per Capita Income \$11,775	Per Capita Income \$34,840	Per Capita Income \$35,023	Per Capita Income \$30,353
Median Household Income \$38,025	Median Household Income \$69,063	Median Household Income \$69,583	Median Household Income \$66,294
Poverty Level 38.8%	Poverty Level 6.1%	Poverty Level 11.7%	Poverty Level 8.1%

* <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/>
(2010-2014)



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Lakewood School District Student Information:

Average Increase in Public School Enrollment each school	2016 - 2017 -1.4% Decrease 2015 – 2016 1.3% Increase 2014 - 2015 3.3% Increase
Average Increase in Nonpublic School Enrollment each school year	2016 –2017 2,500 Student Increase 2015-2016 2,500 Student Increase 2014-2015 2,500 Student Increase
Percentage of students currently enrolled in a K-5 Bilingual/ESL Program.	K- 60% 1 st - 61% 2 nd - 66% 3 rd - 63% 4 th - 43% 5 th - 25%
Percentage of students in the district that are English Language Learners and receiving services.	27%
Total percentage of students in the district that are English Language Learners –27%receiving services and 53% not receiving services.	80%
Percentage of students who enter Kindergarten in the Bilingual Program.	60%

Percentage of students receiving free lunch.	100% Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)
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Percentage of in-district students with IEPs.	15%
Percentage of students placed out of district.	6%

African American	10%
Hispanic	85%
White	5%

Information from Realtime



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Lakewood is clearly a district in which poverty, poor housing, poor nutrition and other conditions affect the educational performance of its students. In fact, the Asbury Park Press published an article; *Schools unaware of lead-poisoned kids* on February 28, 2015, which stated that over 100 children in Lakewood, who were recently tested (at that time), under the age of 6 were detected to have elevated lead levels – the highest in Ocean County.

Although I recognize that no amount of money may be able to reduce the negative socioeconomic factors that cause student disadvantages, one must recognize that a sufficient base budget is needed to provide students with a thorough and efficient education.

The students of the Lakewood School District deserve to maintain the education they have had the past five years. The progress has been steady, and the graduation rate has increased from 69% to 75.3% in 2016. The climate and culture in all of the schools has steadily improved, and Piner Pride in Lakewood has returned!

The 2017-2018 school budget not only promises to decimate the Lakewood School District, it promises to destroy the lives and future of its students. It is imperative that the students of Lakewood are provided with a thorough and efficient education that gives them a fighting chance!

I am hereby requesting that the state fully fund the district in order to have an adequate base budget, and avoid violating the Constitution by not offering students a thorough and efficient education

*I feel it is important to note that courtesy busing is **not** part of the 2017-2018 Lakewood School District budget.

If you would like to discuss this very important matter further, please feel free to call me at 732-905-3633. In the meantime, I cannot certify a budget that does not offer the students of the Lakewood School District a thorough and efficient education.



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Respectfully,

Laura A. Winters

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Superintendent of Schools

cc: Michael Azzara, State Monitor
David Shafter, State Monitor
Teri Sinatra, State Monitor
Regina Robinson, Business Administrator
Board Members
Marc Zitomer, Board Attorney
Glenn Forney, Director, Office of State Monitors

Attachments: Reduction Category as of March 16, 2017



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Reduction Category as of March 16, 2017

REDUCTION CATEGORY

Asphalt Repairs	200,000.00
Athletics All	1,000,633.00
Basic Skills Teachers (ALL)	883,938.00
Before After School	355,600.00
Central Admin Positions reduce 2	208,594.00
Co Curricular All	187,700.00
Guidance Counselors Elementary ALL	297,157.00
LHS Science Tech Supervisor	80,00,000
Libraries no expenditures	409,822.00
Literacy Coaches	296,807.00
NEW VP Position LMS	123,000.00
Nursing Services 1:1	321,843.00
Related Services Non Public	599,666.00
SCHI PRIOR YEAR O/S REFUND	761,998.00
School Admin Supplies	10,000.00
School Supplies	500,000.00
STARS PROGRAM RENT	197,300.00
Summer School LHS	164,251.00
Summer School Oak	105,022.00
TEACHING POSITONS add'l 106	8,024,557.00

14,727,888.00