EDUCATION IN FOCUS

Pupil costs way up in some New Trier districts

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NEW TRIER TOWNSHIP — At first glance, some new figures from the State Board of Education would seem to confirm that when it comes to education costs, district size does in fact matter, at least among the six elementary school systems that send graduates on to New Trier High School.

The annual cost of educating a pupil in 2011 ranged from a low of $13,220 in the largest district, Wilmette District 39, to a high of $21,606 in the smallest system, Sunset Ridge District 29.

Though per-student costs in Sunset Ridge dipped a bit in 2011, the two-school district maintained its second-place standing among elementary school systems across the state. The district serves most of Northfield and a smaller portion of Northbrook.

When annual expenses were divided by average daily attendance, the district's per-pupil cost topped spending in neighboring Avoca School District 37 by more than $2,000 and eclipsed per-student outlays in Wilmette by more than $7,000.

The figure also topped per-student costs of $20,807 in New Trier Township High School District 203, which came in eighth among high school districts statewide.

But Kenilworth School District 38 is roughly comparable in size to Sunset Ridge District 29 and pupil spending there rose only 10 percent over the past five years, to $16,769. The Kenilworth district serves pupil between kindergarten and eighth grade at the Joseph Sears School.

Meanwhile, pupils costs in the township's second largest elementary school system, Winnetka School District 36, rose by 45 percent over the same period, the fastest clip among the six New Trier feeder districts. The district's annual per-pupil outlay, $19,027, ranked eighth among elementary school systems in the state.

Per-pupil outlays in mid-sized Glencoe District 35 rose 19 percent, to $15,658.

The six districts vary considerably in the amount of taxable property value supporting each student, though all are among the richest in tax resources when compared to others in the state. Sunset Ridge, Avoca and Winnetka each have more than $1 million in tax wealth backing up each student.

Students listen to a book being read at Joseph Sears School. Kenilworth School District 38 has seen per pupil costs rise slower than other nearby districts. | JERRY DALIEGE-FOR SUN-TIMES MEDIA

Pupil costs on the rise

The annual cost of educating a pupil in 2011 ranged from a low of $13,220 to a high of $21,606 among the six elementary school districts that feed into New Trier Township High School, according to new figures from the State Board of Education.

District	Enrollment	2006 pupil expense	2011 pupil expense	State rank	5-year increase
Sunset Ridge 29	528	$16,056	$21,606	2	+35%
Avoca 37	655	$14,872	$19,285	7	+30%
Winnetka 36	1,919	$13,167	$19,027	8	+45%
Kenilworth 38	544	$15,311	$16,769	17	+10%
Glencoe 35	1,338	$13,210	$15,658	24	+19%
Wilmette 39	3,660	$11,047	$13,220	70	+20%
New Trier High School 203	4,165	$16,856	$20,807	8	+23%

Source: Illinois State Board of Education

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