



## NORTH WARREN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Brian D. Fogelson, Ed.D., Superintendent  
E-mail: [bfogelson@northwarren.org](mailto:bfogelson@northwarren.org)

10 Noe Road, Blairstown, NJ 07825  
Phone: 908-362-9342 ♦ Fax: 908-362-8744

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The Honorable Chris Christie  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Christie:

First of all, please accept my congratulations on assuming the Office of Governor. I wish you the best as you undertake the difficult task of dealing with the manifold issues facing our State. One of these issues is the funding of education, and that is the reason I write.

The North Warren Regional School District is a small (approximately 1100 students) rural, grade 7-12 school in Warren County. We recently had our QSAC visit and the County Department of Education rated us at 92%. We did not make AYP under the NCLB guidelines because of the ASK and HSPA indicators for Special Education, a problem faced by many other districts, and one we are working hard to correct. Our teachers and administrators are using data to inform instruction, we are establishing a robust Professional Learning Community, and enjoy strong support from our community. In short, we are proud to say that we believe we are a very good school in the process of becoming a great one. Unfortunately, the current budget situation threatens all that we have done over the past few years to improve the school climate, school spirit, and most importantly, academic achievement.

We are a District Factor Group (DFG) "FG" school and our budget this year is approximately 17.2 million dollars. Last year, we cut deeply so as to budget to 2% of allowable cap, and the voters of our four constituent communities passed our budget.

The ARRA Stimulus funding has helped our District's Special Education population and helped move our technology plans forward. That's great. Also, two years ago, our District was deemed to be spending "under adequacy" and was given additional Equalization Aid. However, the former State Department of Education utilized Federal Stimulus ARRA funds to replace Equalization Aid to fill a budget gap. This amounts to \$760,671 (now in the newly created Funds 16 and 17) for North Warren Regional. Frankly, it appears to us that the State broke the "supplement, not supplant" rule in order to help fill the budget gap. It seems to be a shell game, and it's one that will have dire consequences, if, as we are hearing through our business administrators and other superintendents, that the State will not restore these funds to Fund 11 when the ARRA dollars are gone.

It is also being suggested that State funding to schools may be cut as much as 10% from last year's allocations. This is our worst case scenario. If it occurs, we will have \$1.96 million less in revenues, as compared to the budget approved by our taxpayers in 2009.

We are a district that prides itself on providing an excellent education in a fiscally prudent manner. The 2008-2009 Comparative Spending Guide for the 47 Regional School Districts rates North Warren as number 1 (most efficient) in Support Services – Salary and Benefits, and Operations and Maintenance – Plant. We are fourth in Operations and Maintenance – Plant Salary, and sixth in overall Cost per Pupil. I could go on, but I think you've got the picture...we are good stewards of the taxpayer's trust.

A \$1.96 million shortfall in a \$17.2 million budget would be catastrophic for our students. We would most certainly be looking to cut programs such as clubs, athletics, and other extra-curriculars in a school where almost 70% of students participate in these activities. We would most likely be forced to cut both instructional and non-instructional staff in a school where we have worked to get huge class sizes down to a reasonable level.

Governor Christie, I have read the recommendations of the Education Subcommittee of your Transition Team. They are sound. I hope you are able to get them enacted into law as I believe that they make sense.

In the meantime, on behalf of our entire school family, I ask that you take into serious consideration the impact that the financial situation will have on districts like us, who are doing a good job of educating our children at a prudent cost.

I would also invite you to visit our school and walk the halls with me and our Principal. You will be able to observe a quality educational program in a dated, but well-kept facility. You will see a group of dedicated and professional staff working with terrific kids. I would love for you to address our school family and talk to them of your plans to make our schools even better.

Thank you for your time. I hope to welcome you to our school in the very near future.

Sincerely,

Brian D. Fogelson, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

cc: Senator Frank Lautenburg  
Senator Robert Menendez  
Representative Scott Garrett  
State Senator Michael Doherty  
Assemblyman John DiMaio  
Assemblyman Erik Peterson  
NWR School Board Members  
NWR School Website Budget Information