

POLK DES MOINES  
**TAXPAYERS**  
ASSOCIATION

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#### IF MAINE CAN DO IT

Officials in Maine are about to embark upon a dramatic shake-up of the state's system of public schools after lawmakers there earlier this month gave final approval to a plan to slash the education bureaucracy, an initiative first proposed by Gov. John Baldacci last January.

The new state law calls for Maine to shrink from 290 school districts to about 80 through mergers and consolidations – a move that state officials project to save tens of millions of dollars each year in administrative costs. There are roughly 195,000 students enrolled in Maine's public schools. Iowa's 2007/08 projection is 468,000.

But whether the state's small school districts actually merge will ultimately be up to voters in local communities. About half of Maine voters seem to be more interested in keeping local schools – and paying more in local property taxes.

The head of the Maine Education Association, Mark Grey, said that teachers and students would see obvious benefits from the merger, and he hopes that local voters can also be convinced of the advantages of creating larger school districts.

“In our rural areas, we have great difficulty in hiring foreign language and special education teachers,” he said. “Those schools often don't have the ability to provide Advanced Placement courses, either. With more resources to provide those things, the quality of education is going to improve for our student's.

#### OPEN MEETINGS

Shortly after a Polk County Supervisor's meeting, County Auditor Jamie Fitzgerald has the audio of the meeting available online. 21<sup>st</sup> century technology keeps creating new opportunities for transparent government.

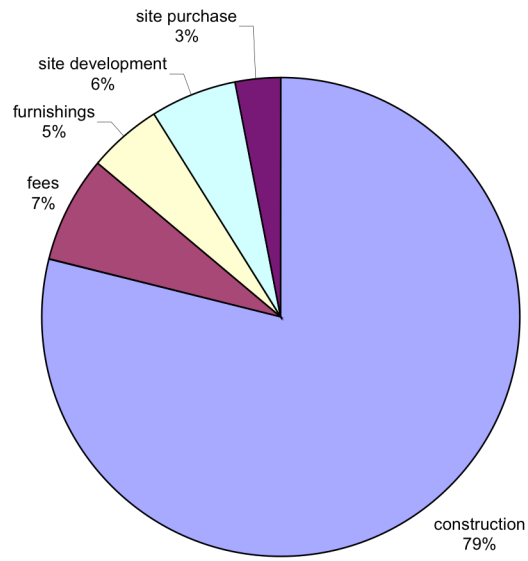
But there are opportunities for evasion as well. E-mail can be used as a way to meet without technically “meeting”. And as text messaging becomes more widely used by more than Generation X & Y, can a text-message exchange be considered a meeting?

Its inevitable that technology will continue to provide greater openness AND new ways to dodge Iowa's sunshine legislation. Jane Kirtley, a media ethics professor at the University of Minnesota says, “Government officials and government employees should be starting from the presumption that everything that they do is public information.”

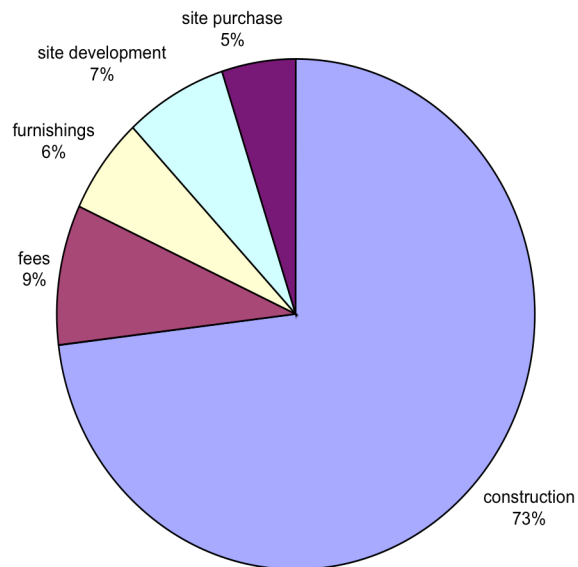
#### HERE'S A THOUGHT

“Most education budgets in the world today are managed by inertia; that is, allocations in a given year are roughly equal to last year's allocations, adjusted for inflation. This is tantamount to the absence of any policy to serve society's efficiency and equity objectives. As we determine the most effective ways to improve social welfare by education, we should fine-tune our policies to reflect the most effective methods of public funding for education.”  
George Psacharopoulos, U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

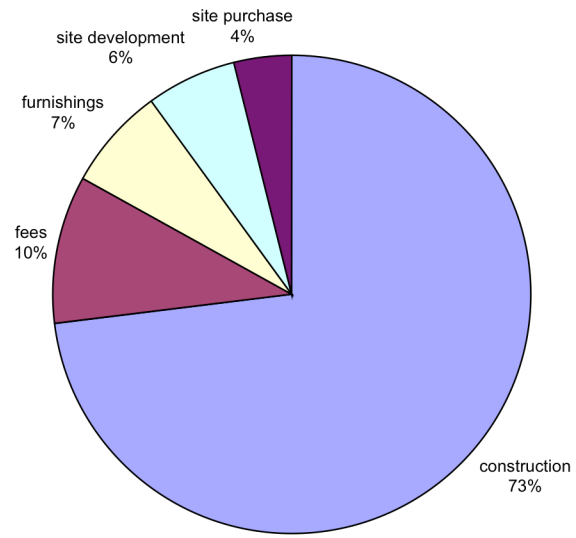
**NATIONWIDE MEDIAN BREAKDOWN OF SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION COSTS**



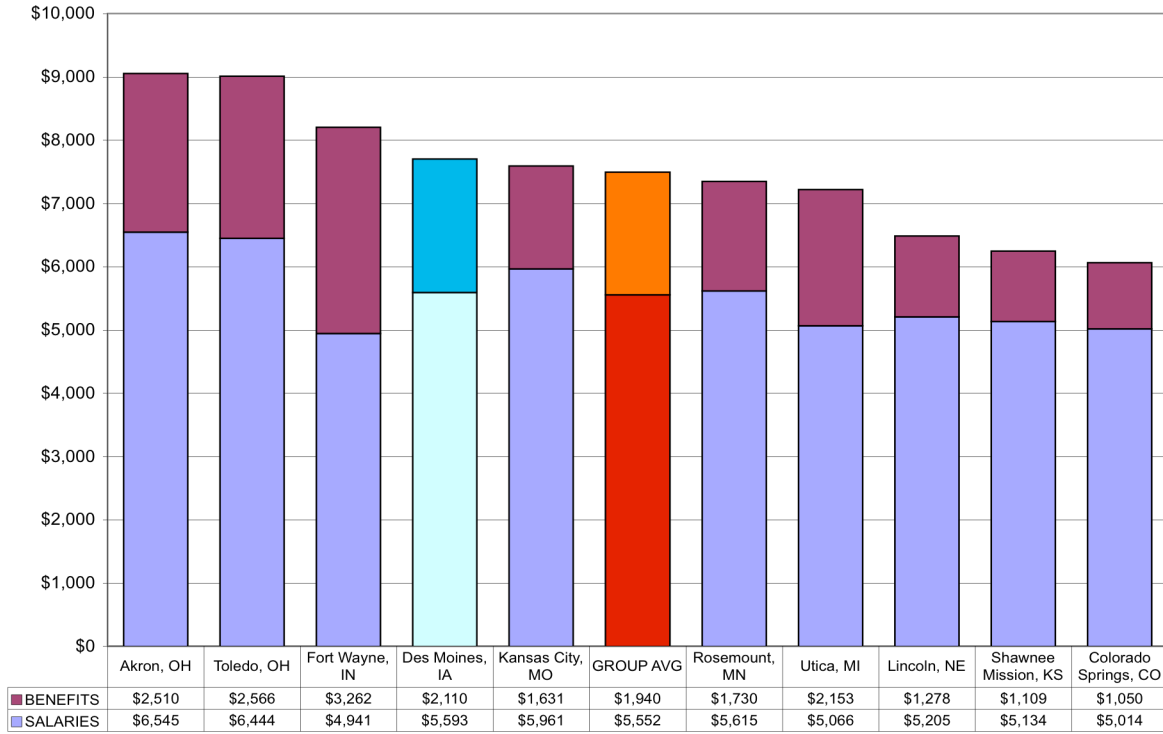
**NATIONWIDE MEDIAN BREAKDOWN OF MIDDLE SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION COSTS**



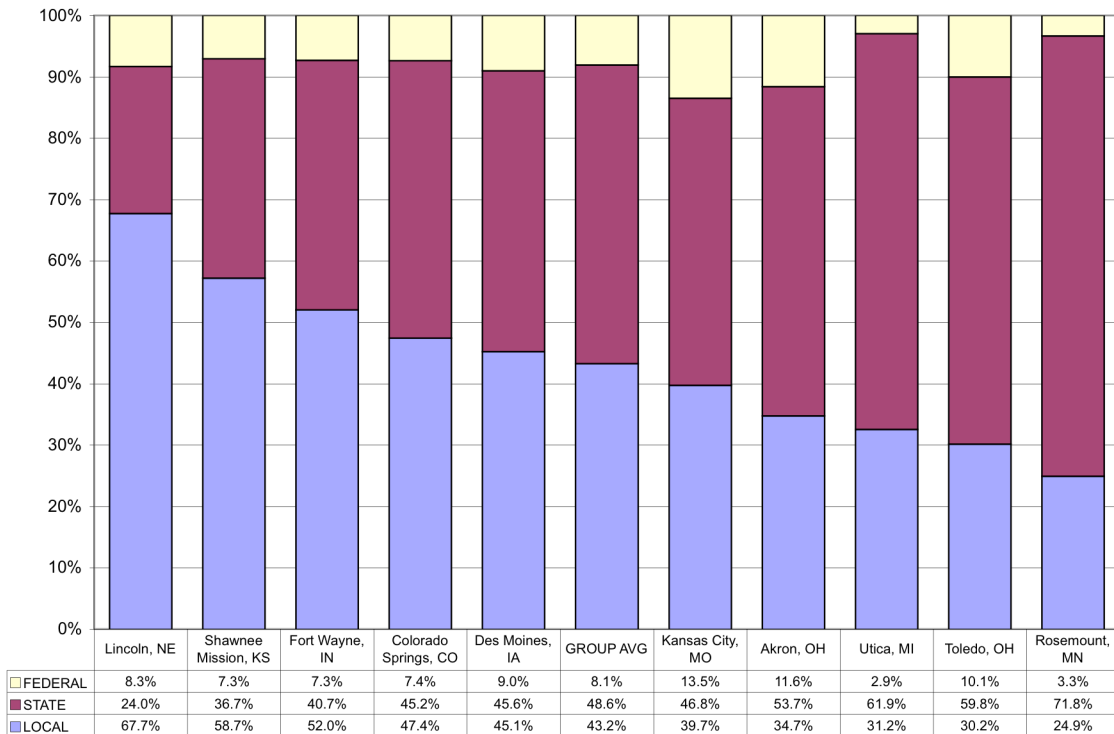
**NATIONWIDE MEDIAN BREAKDOWN OF HIGH SCHOOL COSTS**



### SALARIES & BENEFITS PER PUPIL



### SOURCES OF REVENUE - %



	Elementary	Middle School	High School
Cost per square foot	\$137	\$110	\$169
Cost per student	\$16,010	\$21,684	\$30,000
Square ft. per pupil	117	197	178
Avg. # of pupils	600	800	1000
Total square feet	70,000	157,380	177,500

The source of the pie charts and the above table is the Annual Survey administered by American School and University, published in May 2007.

The source of the data for the two bar charts is the US Census Bureau, Annual Survey of Local Government Spending. The Polk-Des Moines website has the entire report.

[www.polkdesmoines taxpayers.org](http://www.polkdesmoines taxpayers.org). The report compares Revenues and Expenditures of DMPS and nine comparatively sized Midwestern schools. There are 24 charts.

**SOURCES OF REVENUE** – This chart reveals how K-12 schools are funded, including grants, Beginning Balances, received from other districts, ALL amounts of money other than debt. The range for Federal funds is from 3.3% in Rosemount, MN to 13.5% in KC MO. Rosemount, MN also gets the highest percent of its Revenue from state sources (71.8%). Lincoln, NE is most heavily dependent on Local Revenue at 67.7%. DMPS is statically at the Mean.

**SALARIES AND BENEFITS** – This chart shows the breakout of salaries and wages per pupil for the group. Some districts, rather than hiring certain professionals, prefer to contract for them. Since these individual are usually highly paid, contracting them will lower the district average. Still, once the total Salaries & Benefits is divided by the student population, the overall effect is small. The range is from \$5014 in Colorado Springs, to \$6545 in Akron - \$1531. DMPS pays higher than Mean Salaries & Benefits.