

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Responsible GOVERNMENT

School operating costs: the real story

Earlier this year, the Pottstown School District received a letter from Vahan Gureghian, chief executive officer of Charter School Management Inc., suggesting that if pending state legislation is passed, his firm proposes to take over the education of our elementary school children at less cost than the district is currently spending.

What is the background to this letter?

A series of emails I recently obtained through the state Right-To-Know law shows that Reed Lindley, the superintendent of the Pottstown School District, met with Gureghian and provided information to Charter School Management regarding the costs of operating our schools.

Lindley and other school district administrators then met with Gureghian and members of the Senate Education Committee to discuss changes in state law that would be needed to make it possible for Pottstown public school students to be assigned to a charter school.

These specific discussions were held without the prior knowledge of the school board or the public.

Interestingly, Lindley emailed to Charter School Management the total costs of operating each building in

the school district, including staffing, supplies, utilities, and all direct costs attributed to the building.

This information was not given to either the school board or the President's Task Force.

The information, shown in the chart below, demonstrates that the most expensive elementary school to operate, on a per pupil basis, is Edgewood. Franklin School is the second most expensive school to operate, followed by Rupert, Lincoln and Barth.

Yet the task force has been led to believe that Rupert is the "money pit" of the district. Not so.

The information also shows the high school and the middle school are far more expensive to operate than all the elementary schools combined, even though there are many more students in the elementary schools.

The emails referenced in this commentary have been scanned as pdf files and can be found in chronological order on our website, www.pottstowncitizens.org.

We need facts before we can make intelligent decisions.

Thomas Hylton is a member of the Pottstown School Board. However, the thoughts expressed are his alone and not the board's.



Commentary by
Thomas Hylton

Information provided by Pottstown Superintendent Reed Lindley to Vahan Gureghian, Chief Executive Officer, Charter School Management

The following costs were reported per building. They include staffing, supplies, substitutes, utilities, all direct costs attributed to the building. They do not include indirect costs such as grass cutting, percentage of central office time, etc. Numbers reflect 2009-2010 expenditures.

School	Total operational costs, 2009-2010 school year	Enrollment, 2009-2010 school year	Cost per student enrolled
Barth Elementary	\$2,430,973	408	\$5,958
Edgewood Elementary	\$2,636,403	273	\$9,657
Franklin Elementary	\$2,397,116	296	\$8,098
Lincoln Elementary	\$2,429,172	372	\$6,530
Rupert Elementary	\$2,057,544	280	\$7,348
High School	\$11,759,260	781	\$15,056
Middle School	\$6,977,681	609	\$11,457