

# Explanation of Operating Expenditures and Cost Differences between School Districts

## BACKGROUND

The operating expenditures attached are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Each state submits the data on an annual basis. Each function is defined by the National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES) handbook entitled “Financial Accounting for Local and State School Systems, 2003 Edition.” The expenditure reports to the U.S. Census Bureau are completed by each state using the guidance of the NCES handbook.

## POSSIBLE COST DIFFERENCES IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Comparing expenditures between school districts must be done with caution. Listed below are some of the reasons that may cause school districts’ expenditures to vary.

- **Transportation Costs** – The size of Kansas School Districts vary from 10 square miles to nearly 1,000 square miles. In addition, the number of children transported also varies from just a few students to over 18,000.
- **Number of Buildings** – Because of the size of districts, some boards choose to operate more buildings, which result in additional operating costs.
- **Age of Buildings** – The age of buildings also may require more upkeep and be less efficient than new buildings.
- **Program Offerings Vary** – Some schools operate programs such as all-day kindergarten, Parents As Teachers, Summer School, and extended learning time for students.
- **Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR)** – The size of a district in most cases will have an impact of ratios. Smaller districts may offer similar core courses as larger districts, but have fewer students which results in a lower PTR.
- **Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Price Meals** – Districts with a high concentration of students on free and/or reduced price meals pose a special challenge for those districts, such as the need for additional social workers or guidance counselors.
- **Bilingual/Migrant Students** – Schools with bilingual and/or migrant students have a greater cost due to the needs of those students.
- **Special Needs Students** – Some schools have a high number of special needs students which result in additional teachers, paraprofessionals, and transportation costs.

## DISTRICTS LOCALLY GOVERNED

All Kansas School Districts are governed by local boards of education that decide locally how they want to operate their district. Some communities may prefer all-day kindergarten, while others may determine they want a smaller number of students for each teacher. Thus the percentage of expenditures reflects both the local decisions and the geographic makeup of the district.