

Public schools comprise the lion's share of our local tax bills. Antiquated facilities, changes in State requirements and a growing school age population have fueled the need for expansion and construction of new schools. High tax bills have generated increasing concern about the cost of living in Hunterdon County and the impact that housing has on municipal services—particularly school impacts.

County Profile—Public Schools

There are 42 public elementary schools in Hunterdon County within 25 elementary school districts. Municipal boundaries define each district with one exception - Glen Gardener Borough. This borough busses elementary school students to Clinton Town Public School on a per student tuition basis.

Plans call for the construction of four new schools, one in each of the following districts: Flemington - Raritan, Tewksbury, Union, and Readington. One existing school, Sawmill School in Tewksbury, will be closed upon completion of the proposed new school in that district.

There are five regional high schools in Hunterdon County receiving students from five separate sending districts. The five high schools are divided into four regional high school districts with North Hunterdon and Voorhees combined into one district. There are currently no plans for redistricting (Map 1).

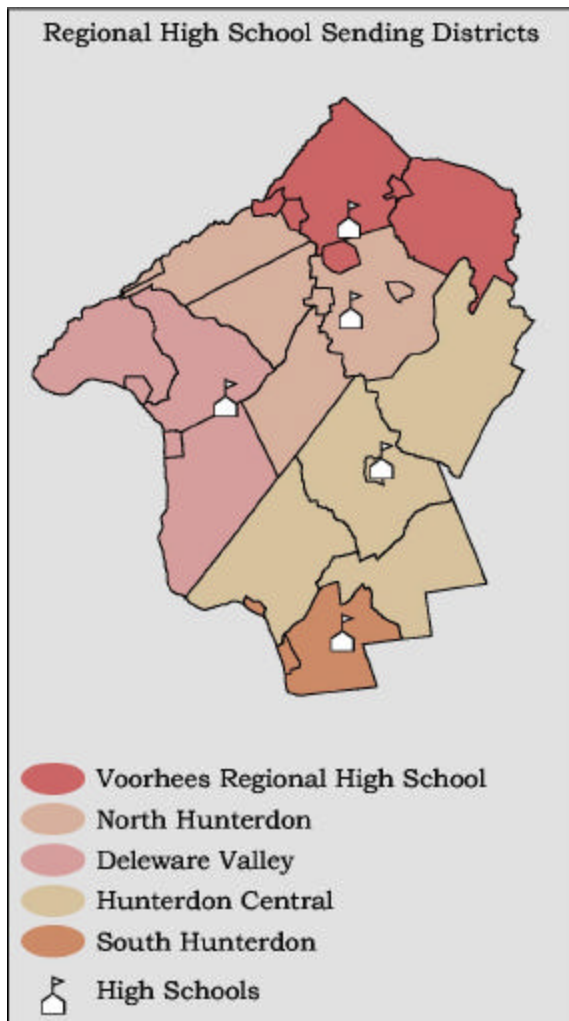
Current Enrollment

School enrollment in Hunterdon County has increased significantly over the past decade, with all high school districts and 20 out of 25 elementary school districts showing enrollment increases. The largest increase occurred in Raritan Township, which registered a total gain of 1,280 students, a 74% increase from 1990. Raritan Township also registered the largest increase in occupied housing units, 4193 in all, representing a decade long increase of 27%. Readington Township and Clinton Township showed large increases of 600 and 457 additional students, representing 41% and 37% gains respectively (Table 1). Hunterdon Central Regional High School saw the largest increase in high school student enrollment with 581 additional students, a 33% increase since 1990 (Table 2).

The number of school age children per household in Hunterdon County (0.56) in 2000 was nearly half that in 1970 (0.93). The addition of households to the County, however, has brought the total number of school age children in the County to 24,524 – an all time high.

Taxes

The total school tax rate increased for 19 out of 26 Hunterdon County municipalities between 1990 and 2000. Lebanon Township and Holland Township saw the highest school tax rate increases with 133% and 94% increases respectively. Most of this increase was due to the loss of the gross receipt tax in those municipalities, which contributed to a higher district school tax rate. Six municipalities showed a decrease in the total school tax rate over the same ten-year period with one district, Bloomsbury Borough, staying the same (Table 3). For the County as a whole, there was a school tax rate increase of 38% - the district school



Map 1. High School Districts, Hunterdon County, NJ.
Primary data source: Superintendent of Schools.

County Profile— Public Schools

District	1990	2000	Change	% Change	2004
Flemington - Raritan	2117	3396	1279	60%	3511
Readington	1455	2055	600	41%	2456
Clinton Twp	1226	1683	457	37%	***
Alexandria	379	657	278	73%	813
Union	366	596	230	63%	838
Tewksbury	500	713	213	43%	968
Lebanon Twp	631	812	181	29%	919
Bethlehem	402	548	146	36%	833
Clinton Town	470	604	134	29%	584
Kingwood	351	456	105	30%	443
Holland	584	683	99	17%	784
Franklin	268	347	79	29%	395
Califon	119	166	47	39%	151
Lebanon Boro	72	117	45	63%	***
West Amwell	165	188	23	14%	145
Milford	135	148	13	10%	***
East Amwell	491	495	4	1%	513
Bloomsbury	128	130	2	2%	140
Delaware	535	534	-1	0%	543
Stockton	49	42	-7	-14%	64
High Bridge	468	460	-8	-2%	712
Hampton	191	180	-11	-6%	186
Frenchtown	200	169	-31	-16%	***
Lambertville	261	213	-48	-18%	151
Total Elementary School Enrollment	11563	15392	3829	33%	15149*

Table 1. Elementary School Enrollment by District

Source: Hunterdon County Superintendent of Schools
Calculations by the Hunterdon County Planning Board

* Total does not include districts marked with ***

District	1990	2000	Change	% Change	2004
Hunterdon Central	1,745	2,326	581	33%	***
North Hunterdon	2,050	2,250	200	10%	2,895
Delaware Valley	655	813	158	24%	970
South Hunterdon	320	382	62	19%	525
Total High School Enrollment	4,770	5,771	1,001	21%	4,390*

Table 2. High School Enrollment by District

Source: Hunterdon County Superintendent of Schools
Calculations by the Hunterdon County Planning Board

* Total does not include districts marked with ***

County Profile—Public Schools

Municipality	1990 DS Tax Rate	2000 DS Tax Rate	% Change DS Tax Rate	1990 HS Tax Rate	2000 HS Tax Rate	% Change HS Tax Rate	School Tax Rate 1990	School Tax Rate 2000
Lebanon Twp	0.39	1.21	214%	0.42	0.67	59%	0.80	1.88
Holland	0.17	0.86	414%	0.54	0.51	-6%	0.71	1.38
High Bridge	0.88	1.73	97%	0.37	0.62	65%	1.25	2.34
Raritan	0.70	1.29	84%	0.37	0.57	56%	1.07	1.87
East Amwell	0.72	1.08	50%	0.32	0.67	111%	1.03	1.74
Readington	0.58	1.03	77%	0.38	0.59	56%	0.96	1.62
Union	0.63	1.19	88%	0.40	0.55	38%	1.03	1.74
Stockton	0.55	0.81	45%	0.45	0.86	90%	1.01	1.67
Lambertville	0.43	0.64	48%	0.49	0.87	79%	0.92	1.52
Franklin	0.58	1.08	85%	0.49	0.64	30%	1.07	1.72
Kingwood	0.67	1.12	67%	0.38	0.56	47%	1.05	1.67
Hampton	1.06	1.85	73%	0.50	0.65	29%	1.57	2.50
Delaware	0.69	0.90	30%	0.38	0.77	102%	1.07	1.67
Glen Gardner	0.89	1.39	57%	0.38	0.56	48%	1.26	1.94
Clinton Twp	0.65	1.09	67%	0.47	0.57	22%	1.12	1.66
West Amwell	0.53	0.83	57%	0.55	0.73	33%	1.08	1.56
Milford	0.86	1.51	76%	0.62	0.57	-9%	1.48	2.07
Flemington	1.09	1.18	8%	0.55	0.68	24%	1.63	1.85
Clinton Town	0.78	1.16	49%	0.69	0.41	-41%	1.47	1.56
Bloomsbury	1.09	1.69	55%	0.00	0.00	0%	1.09	1.69
Tewksbury	0.84	0.79	-7%	0.78	0.46	-41%	1.62	1.25
Frenchtown	1.77	1.25	-30%	0.82	0.62	-24%	2.58	1.86
Alexandria	1.49	1.28	-14%	0.96	0.48	-50%	2.45	1.76
Lebanon Boro	1.99	1.29	-35%	0.76	0.61	-20%	2.74	1.90
Bethlehem	1.88	1.16	-39%	0.99	0.62	-38%	2.87	1.77
Califon	2.06	1.33	-35%	1.07	0.55	-49%	3.14	1.88
County Average	0.92	1.18	61%	0.54	0.59	24%	1.46	1.77

Source: U.S. Census of Population and Housing, New Jersey State Data Center
 Hunterdon County 1990-2001 Synopsis, Hunterdon County Board of Taxation
 Calculations by the Hunterdon County Planning Board

Table 3. Hunterdon County District and High School Tax Rates by Municipality.

tax rate increased by 61% and the regional high school tax rate increased by 24%. In 2001, the total school tax levy for Hunterdon County was approximately \$203,000,000, representing 69% of the total tax levy for the County (Figure 1). In addition, the County received a total of \$43,800,000 in school funding from the State.

Long Range Facility Plans

Many of Hunterdon County's public schools are in need of renovation and/or enlargement in order to accommodate a projected influx of students. Some of these schools are in need of additional computer facilities, educational spaces, recreational spaces, and administrative spaces.

Each New Jersey school district is required to submit a long-range facility plan to the New Jersey Department of Education. The Commissioner of Education compares these plans to a set of facilities efficiency standards to determine the amount of state funding to which each district is entitled. The total amount of state funding received by each district is dependant upon statistical enrollment projections and the ability of the district's existing facilities to absorb enrollment increases. In Hunterdon County, the State has agreed to provide a minimum of 40% of facility rehabilitation and construction costs per student. For qualifying districts. (Costs are estimated at \$138 per square foot of additional required space with a range of 125-151 square feet required per student). All proposed rehabilitation and construction projects must be submitted to the municipal planning boards of each respective district for review and comment. Rehabilitation and construction proposals involving regional high schools must be submitted to the planning board of the municipality where the facility is located.

County Profile—Public Schools

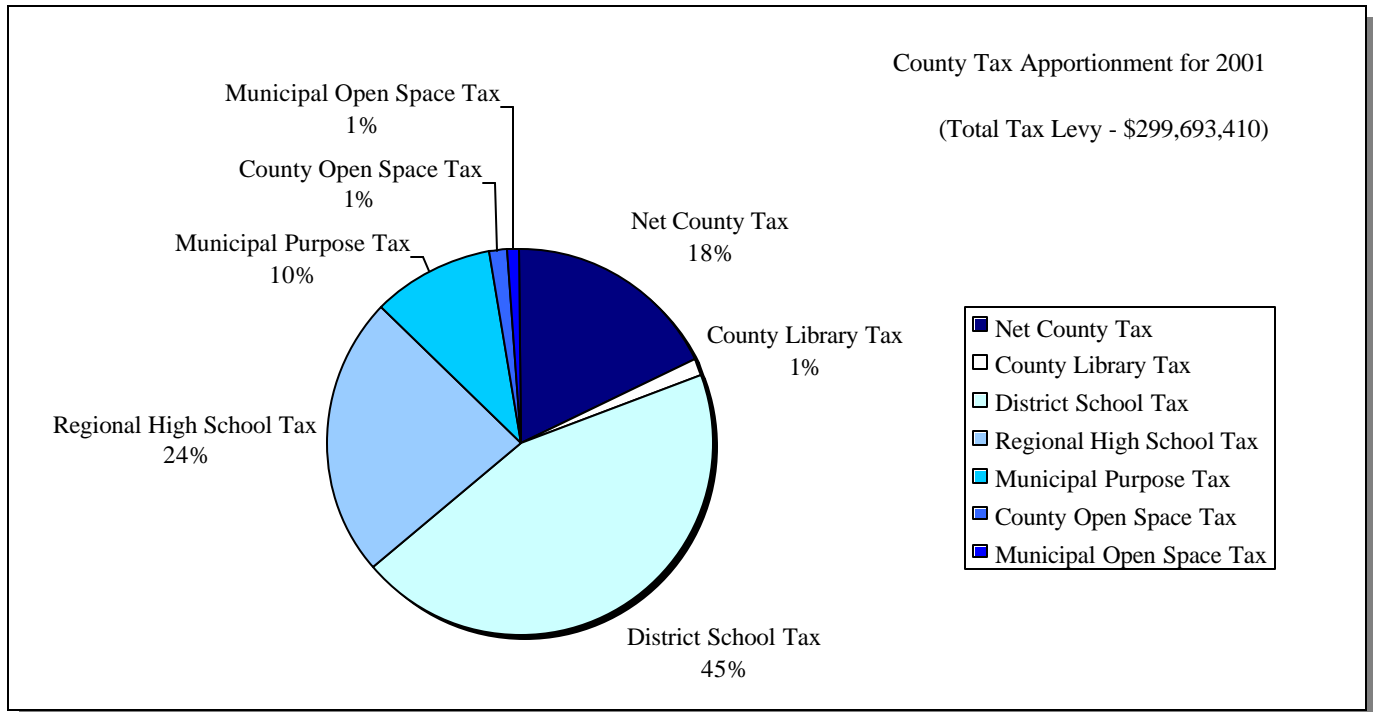


Figure 1. County Tax Apportionment for 2001.

As of March 2002, 22 of 25 elementary school districts and three of four high school districts have submitted long-range facility plans to the NJDOE. Thus far, all have been reviewed and accepted. Elementary school districts in Hunterdon County have qualified for a minimum of \$32,582,447 in state funding with the Readington Township School District and the Flemington-Raritan School District awarded the largest grants. This figure does not include Clinton Township, Frenchtown Borough and Lebanon Borough. High school districts in the County have qualified for a minimum of \$7,461,660. This figure does not include Hunterdon Central, which has yet to submit its long-range facility plan.

In order to accommodate the expected influx of students into the County, 11 schools have proposed grade reconfigurations, 27 schools have proposed facility rehabilitation and 7 schools have proposed the construction of additions to existing facilities.

Bussing

Due to the low-density character of residential development in Hunterdon County, a high proportion of students are bussed to school. The clustering of residential development, while not necessarily increasing the number of students that walk to school, may indeed reduce both the number of busses required and the cost of maintaining the busses that are required.