BGR Outlook on
Jefferson

October 1999

The Jefferson Parish School Board's Budget

Overview

The Jefferson Parish Public School (JPPS) system faces tough economic and educational challenges, and its funding structure and changing school demographics are at the core of the problems confronting the district. They portend a continuing annual struggle, even in these good economic times, in order for the Jefferson Parish School Board (JPSB) to achieve a break-even budget, improve classroom performance, and maintain what is now only a marginal four-percent "rainy day" or year-end fund balance.

The JPSB's reliance on sales tax revenue has nearly doubled over the past ten years, and sales taxes now account for 42% of all General Fund revenue and 83% of the board's locally-generated revenue. The board's property tax levy of 13.91 mills is the third lowest among Louisiana's sixty-six school districts and provides only about seven percent of the school district's annual operating budget. Because sales tax revenue fluctuates with a changing economy, the International City Management Association recommends a one-to-one ratio between sales and property tax revenue, but the Jefferson Parish School Board's budget is based on a five-to-one ratio

BGR last published a report on the JPSB in July 1998. The purpose of this issue is to provide an update on the fiscal status of the JPPS with a focus on the revised FY1999 and the adopted FY2000 operating budgets. (The school board's fiscal year runs July 1 through June 30. FY 1999 is the year ending June 30, 1999.)

The JPSB expects to receive 89 percent of its operating revenue from local sales taxes and the state Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) in FY 2000. The strong economy has produced steadily increasing sales tax income over the past few years. However, even in relatively good economic times, the JPSB has had three successive deficit budgets. The future economic downturns will translate quickly into declining tax revenue and even greater deficits. And barring favorable changes in the state's MFP formula, the projected continuing decline in student enrollment will mean decreasing state revenue at least through FY2003. The JPPS student population dropped by eight percent between FY1990 and FY1999, from 57,479 to 53,038 students.

The FY2000 adopted budget assumed a projected loss of 800 students. However, the JPPS lost 1,617 students in FY2000, a 3.2% drop over

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the prior year and a loss of 800 more than expected. The decline in enrollment of 1,600 students would reduce the JPSB's FY2000 MFP allocation by approximately $4.3 million. (MFP funding is based on student enrollment as of October 1.)

Local property taxes, a much more stable source of revenue than sales taxes, provide only about six percent of the district's total annual budget. This is in contrast to the state average of 13% of the state's 66 public school districts' total revenues.

The JPSB ended FY1996 with a “rainy day” fund of $19 million dollars. But deficit spending in fiscal years 1997, 1998, and 1999 reduced the fund balance to about $9.5 million entering FY2000. The JPSB's amended FY1999 budget (January 1999) actually projected a $300,000 surplus; but in June, the State Legislature cut the state's support for the JPPS teacher retirement program, contributing to a $1.5 million year-end deficit. Retirement system cuts were imposed statewide to fully fund the Minimum Foundation Program.

Approval by parish voters of the board's millage conversion proposition (July 1998) added $3 million to the FY1999 general fund. This $3 million combined with partial implementation of spending cuts approved by the Board prevented a much larger year-end deficit that would have further reduced the already marginal “rainy day” fund balance. The adopted FY2000 operating budget is balanced as adopted, but assumes optimistic revenue projections, as well as additional spending cuts yet to be implemented.

The Board did not manage to avoid deficit spending in FY1999 as projected and will have to struggle to avoid a fourth-straight year of deficit spending in FY2000. To achieve longer-term fiscal stability, the Board will either have to reduce expenditures further or find new revenue sources. The board's 50% success rate for new revenue referenda over the past 26 years does not bode particularly well for future efforts. This history suggests that any revenue proposal will have to be crafted carefully to encourage voter approval.

A sales tax increase would require state legislative approval, which, if it were forthcoming at all, is unlikely to be in place before July 2000. Moreover, sales tax already provides over 83% of the system's locally-generated general fund revenues and 42% of all its general fund revenues. Property tax, the other major revenue source the state allows to local governments, is greatly underused in comparison to sales tax in Jefferson Parish, providing only seven percent of all school system general fund revenues for FY 2000 and a declining share of locally-generated general fund revenues. See Figure A.

Stated another way, the school system is already five times as dependent on sales tax as on property tax for both its total general fund revenues and locally-generated general fund revenues. See Figure B . To lessen its reliance on sales tax, which disproportionately impacts poor taxpayers, the Board will need to craft a plan both acceptable to voters and based on a property tax increase.

In addition to fiscal challenges, the JPSB is confronted with the needs of a both declining and changing student population.

- The number of special education students in the JPPS rose from 6,900 in 1994 to 7,811 in 1999, an increase of 13%. As a proportion of the total school population, special

education students grew from 12% to 15% over the same period. The JPPS has more special education students than any other public school district in Louisiana, including New Orleans.

- The number of JPPS students passing the math portion of the state Graduate Exit Exam steadily declined between 1994 and 1998.
- Both language and math LEAP scores among middle school students steadily declined between 1994 and 1998.
- Preparation for pre-K-aged children is a problem. About 79% of JPPS students entering kindergarten score in the lowest quartile on the developmental skills checklist. (Note: until recently, the Head Start program was operated entirely by the Jefferson Parish government; transfer of this program to the JPSB is occurring incrementally and is expected to be completed over the next few years.)
- The percentage of children qualifying for the free and reduced lunch program increased from 59% of district enrollment in 1997 to 64% in 1998, an indicator of a growing number of children from low-income families entering the school system.
- The percentage of African Americans in the JPPS student population increased from 38% in 1993 to 44% in 1998, while the percentage of African American classroom teachers in the system grew from just 20% to 21% over the same period.
- The percentage of the district's faculty holding advanced degrees declined by over four percent from FY1993 to FY1998.

The JPSB established the Long Range Planning Committee in October 1998 to develop a ten-year plan for the district's fiscal problems and changing student population. The committee convened its first meeting in December 1998, and is expected to complete its report in the fall of 1999. The key element will likely be the committee's recommendation for a substantial millage increase to be put before voters sometime in 2000.

Jefferson Parish Public Schools
Summary of Long Range Planning Committee Goals

- To create a challenging, supportive teaching and learning environment that results in high levels of achievement for all students.
- To create within the community a sense of ownership of the schools and a belief that a quality public school system is an investment in the continued growth and prosperity of the community.
- To hold everyone in the system accountable for contributing to the educational bottom line - student achievement. Achieving this goal encompasses the key elements of decentralization and an accountability program.
- To create a system culture that treats its people as its most valuable resource, invests in their growth and development, and encourages risk-taking and leadership consistent with the system's mission and beliefs.
- To create a system structure wherein decision making occurs as close as possible to the point of implementation.
- To provide a safe, nurturing, healthy school where students receive the support they need to succeed.
- To provide leadership to agencies that serve youth and families to ensure that families have the necessary support to help their children achieve academic success.

As presented to JPSB July 7, 1999

The General Fund Budget

The General Fund (GF) accounts for roughly 80% of total district revenues and expenditures and provides most of the funding for daily school operations, including instructional programs, pupil support services, and administrative services. Federal funds, which are accounted for in the Special Revenue Fund, also directly support instructional programs. The board's FY1999 (revised) and FY2000 (adopted) operating budgets are presented in Table 1.

Figure A shows the relative growth in GF revenues and expenditures from FY1990 to FY2000. In fiscal years 1997 through 1999 expenditures exceeded revenues, leading to over $9 million in deficit spending and a reduction in the year-end GF balance from $19 million in 1996 to approximately $9.5 million entering FY2000. The deficit was driven by the drop in GF revenue between 1995 and 1997 due to reduced state funding in FY1996 and 1997, and a drop in sales tax income in FY1997.

The short-term fiscal challenge confronting the JPSB is to balance operating revenues and expenditures despite the trend in declining state dollars, a growing reliance on volatile sales tax revenue, and only minimum income from more stable property taxes. For the longer-term, the Board must develop a plan that identifies the district's future fiscal requirements to meet the increasing educational needs of a changing school population.

Table 1
General Fund Revenues and Expenditures
Jefferson Parish Public Schools
FY1999 and FY2000

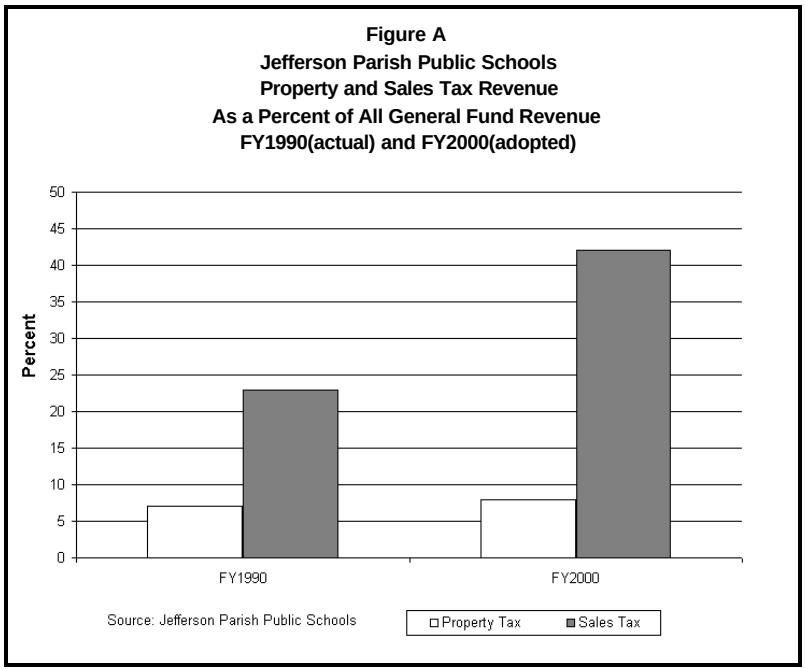
Revenue	**FY1999 (Revised)**	**FY2000 (Adopted)**
Local	**$ 131,027,458**	**$ 134,197,814**
Property Tax	19,471,797	19,507,807
Sales Tax	109,228,661	112,253,607
Other	2,327,000	2,436,400
State	**$ 134,183,965**	**$ 131,925,841**
MFP	125,991,665	124,815,665
Other	8,192,300	7,110,176
Federal	**$ 944,000**	**$ 944,000**
Total	**$ 266,155,423**	**$ 267,067,655**
Expenditures		
Salaries	$ 175,519,806	$ 175,650,943
Benefits	51,386,561	52,073,358
Prof and Technical Services	15,667,138	15,671,531
Purchased Services	8,087,878	8,033,782
Supplies	12,716,597	12,005,959
Equipment	1,030,465	1,030,465
Other Expenditures [a]	2,647,249	2,583,685
Total	**$ 267,055,694**	**$ 267,013,723**

[a] Includes Child Nutrition Program, open purchase orders, charter school program
Source:Jefferson Parish Public Schools FY1999/2000 General Operations Fund Budget

Revenue

General fund revenue, which is derived from local, state, and federal sources, grew from $197 million in FY1990 to a projected $267 million in FY2000 an increase of 35%. Adjusted for inflation, total GF revenue increased by 19% over the past ten years and by 11% over the last five years. Local and state support comprises 99% of all GF revenues.

A substantial shift in the source of the school board's revenue has occurred over the past ten years. Based on the administration's income projections for the FY2000 GF budget, local



funding (50.2%) will for the first time surpass state support (49.4%) as the district's leading source of operating revenue. See Table 2. Declining state dollars caused by falling enrollment, and continued growth in sales tax revenue are the primary reasons for this shift. Federal funding makes up less than one percent of GF revenue and has varied little over the past ten years.

JPPS administrators originally projected revenues for FY2000 to be only slightly under FY1999 levels. The downward trend would have been worse but for a projected 2.7% increase in sales tax revenue amounting to $3 million. But the additional loss of 800 more students than projected will lower state revenue in the current year by about $2.4 million more than expected contributing to a $1.5 million deficit in FY2000.

Local Funding Sources

Local revenue sources are sales taxes, property taxes, and other sources.

Sales Taxes

The JPSB's two-cent share of the parish's 4.75 cent sales and use tax will generate $109 million in FY1999 GF revenue and a projected $112 million in FY2000, a 2.7% increase. Sales tax revenue is dedicated to teacher/employee salaries and benefits, operating expenses, debt service, and capital improvements. The statewide public school district average for sales tax dedicated to the schools is 1.67 cents.

Between FY1990 and FY2000, the school system's sales tax revenue is projected to increase by 145% (115% adjusted for inflation) and is anticipated to grow from 23% of total GF revenue to 42%. See Figure B. Voter approval of a ten-year one-half cent sales tax increase in 1992 in combination with a strong economy led to the rapid growth in sales tax revenue. Sales tax revenue increased from 69% of local revenue in FY1990 to a projected 83% in FY2000.

This shift in sources of total GF revenue is important because it means a near doubling of the district's reliance over the period on relatively volatile sales tax revenue to support school operations, as more stable state and local sources decline or remain flat.

Table 2
Jefferson Parish Public Schools
General Fund Revenues by Source
FY1990 and FY2000

	FY1990 (actual)	Percent Budget	FY2000 (adopted)	Percent Budget	Percent Change
Local	$ 75,059,655	38.0	$ 134,197,814	50.2	78.7
State	122,030,811	61.8	131,925,841	49.4	8.1
Federal	378,944	0.2	944,000	0.4	150.0
Total Revenue	**$ 197,469,410**	**100**	**$ 267,067,655**	**100**	**35.2**

FY1990 (actual) and FY2000 (adopted)
Source:Jefferson Parish Public Schools General Operations Fund Budgets

Property Tax

The JPSB imposes a 13.91 mill levy subject to the homestead exemption on all taxable property in the parish. In July 1998, voters approved continuation of an existing four-mill tax for ten years, converting the use of the revenue from debt service to operating revenue (2 mills) and capital projects (2 mills). The remaining 9.91 mills are dedicated to school system maintenance and operations.

Property tax revenue has decreased significantly as a percentage of local school system revenue, falling from 19% of local revenue in FY 1990 to14% in FY2000. Adjusted for inflation, property tax revenue decreased by 19% from FY1990 to FY1995, but increased sharply over the most recent five years. The primary reason for the increase between FY1995 and FY2000 is the two mills converted in 1998 to operating uses. That shift added roughly $3 million in property tax revenue to the General Fund in FY1999.

Other sources of local funding include interest income and summer school revenue.

State Funding

State funding as a percentage of the district's GF declined from 62% in FY1990 to a projected 48% in FY2000. See Figure D. According to the Annual Survey of Government Finances (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1996), the State of Louisiana provides local school districts with 51% of their total annual funding, slightly above the nationwide average of 48%.

Minimum Foundation Program

The state provides 95% of its support for the JPPS through the Minimum Foundation Program (MFP). This funding increased by 12%, from $111.8 million in FY1990 to $124.8 million (projected) in FY2000 in actual dollars, but decreased by two percent when adjusted for inflation.

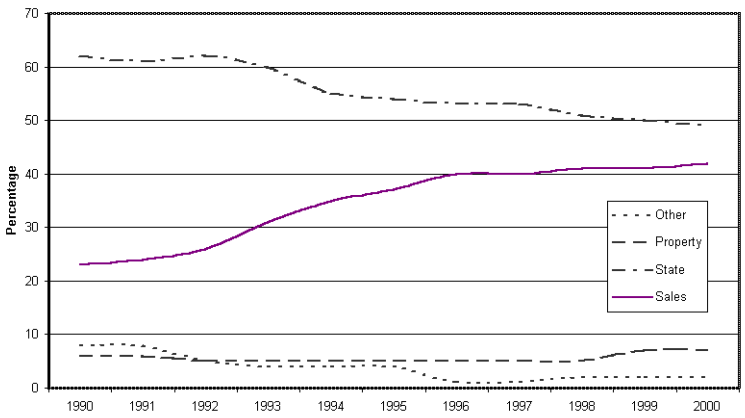
Jefferson Parish Public Schools student enrollment continues a steady decline that began in 1978, dropping by 803 students in FY1999. This decline is of great significance because each school district's MFP allocation is tied to student enrollment. The JPPS administration predicted the loss of about 800 students in FY2000, but the actual loss was twice as large as projected.

An enrollment decline this large would cut over $4 million from the JPSB in the coming fiscal year. Additional spending cuts of about $1.5 million beyond those reductions already adopted by the Board in the FY2000 budget would have to be made to avert a fourth consecutive year of deficit spending. The decline in student population is expected to continue at

least through 2003, based on school administration projections.

The MFP formula for determining each school district's state allocation is based in part on the district's "local wealth factor" (LWF), essentially its property and sales tax capacity. The LWF along with incentives for increasing local spending were added to the MFP formula as part of major program revisions adopted in 1992. Coupled with declining revenue, these changes have resulted in no real growth in the state's annual allocation to the Jefferson district. For example (but for the "hold harmless" rule noted below), in FY1999 under the revised formula, the JPPS would have suffered a $20 million cut in its FY1999 MFP allocation.

Figure B
Jefferson Parish Public Schools
General Fund Revenue
Percent Total Revenue by Source
FY1990(actual) through FY2000(adopted)



Note: Does not include Federal Funds which are about 1% of General Fund Revenue.
Source: Jefferson Parish Public Schools General Operations Fund Budget FY1998-99

The district was saved from this devastating cut by a "hold harmless" rule. To prevent major funding reductions to districts with a high local wealth factor but relatively low local tax efforts, the "hold harmless" provision was added to the 1992 formula; it provides that no district will receive less funding than received in the prior fiscal year. However, the "hold harmless" provision does not prevent the loss of MFP revenue due to a decline in student enrollment.

Of the state's 66 school districts in 1998/99, Jefferson Parish was the sixth wealthiest in property and sales taxing capacity, but forty-fifth in the state's local tax "effort index." The JPSB's millage rate of 13.91 is the third lowest among the state's 66 school districts and ranks at the bottom among the state's seven largest school districts. The average millage rate for school districts in Louisiana in FY1999 was 40.96 mills.

Jefferson receives the fourth lowest level of per pupil funding through the MFP among the 66 school districts ($2,399), 17% below the state district average of $2,901 per pupil. The JPPS share of the total MFP allocation dropped from six percent in FY1998 to 5.8% in FY1999.

On the other hand, the JPPS helps make up for the parish's relatively low property tax effort through the provision in the MFP formula that provides for "weighted add-on students." This part of the formula effectively increases a district's enrollment based on the

numbers of its students who are at-risk (low income), in vocational education, gifted / talented, or who have "other exceptionalities." The actual JPPS FY1999 enrollment was 53,124, but the weighted membership was 73,321, the official figures used by the State in calculating its base allocation to the district. The JPPS student add-on rate of 38% is the highest among the state's seven largest districts, which have an average enrollment add-on rate of 29%.

The other state funds category includes revenue sharing, "8-G" oil and gas settlement funds for text books and technology improvements, the Professional Improvement Program, and state pass-through funds for non-public school transportation and text books.

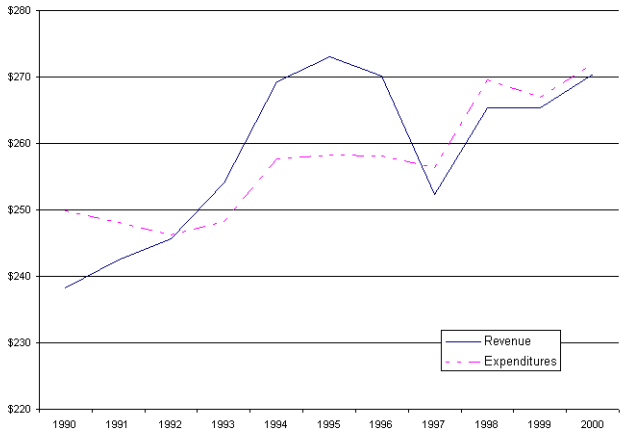
Expenditures

As shown in Figure C, general fund inflation-adjusted expenditures grew from $250 million in 1990 to a projected $273 million in FY2000, a nine percent increase. Each year between 1990 and 1996, revenues exceeded expenditures, and the GF balance during this period grew from an all-time low $2.7 million deficit in 1990 to an all-time high of $19 million in FY1996, driven by large increases in sales tax proceeds. But decreasing growth in sales tax revenue and rising expenditures led to three consecutive years of deficit spending (FY1997 through FY1999) that reduced the year-end fund balance from $19 million in FY1996 to under $10 million entering FY2000.

A more drastic reduction of the district's dwindling year-end fund balance was avoided through spending cuts contained in the FY1999 revised budget (January 1999). The major cuts implemented in FY1999 were as follows:

- $2,000,000 reduction in GF subsidy to the district's Child Nutrition Program,
- $1,000,000 reduction in teacher salaries,
- $110,499 reduction in salaries for central office positions,
- $600,000 reduction in outlays for maintenance,
- $800,000 reduction in substitute teacher pay, and
- $400,000 reduction in expenditures for utilities (electrical).

Figure C
Jefferson Parish Public School
General Fund Operating Revenues and Expenditures
FY 1990 (actual) and FY 2000 (adopted)
(in millions of dollars)*



*Figures adjusted for inflation
Source: Jefferson Parish Public Schools General Operations Fund Budget FY1999-2000

The Board adopted a reduction of 65 teaching positions in the FY1999 operating budget at projected cost savings of $1.8 million. But based on data provided by the JPPS Finance Department, the actual number of teacher positions was reduced by 36, from 3,372 in FY1998 to 3,336 in FY1999, reducing expenditures by only about $1 million.

The cuts in central office staff are projected to result in total cost savings of $1 million over two years. The $110,499 figure above represents the projected amount of the reduction to be achieved in FY1999, the rest to accrue in FY2000. Some positions were eliminated, while other positions will be funded from non-GF sources.

A major cut proposed for FY1999 by the JPPS administration but not adopted by the JPSB was the elimination of 112 non-mandated special education teachers' assistant positions at a cost savings of $1.3 million. This expenditure reduction will likely be revisited if significant new revenue sources are not found.

Major increases on the expenditure side in FY2000 include an additional $1.8 million to fund a teacher pay increase under the 1997 union bargaining agreement, and $1.5 million to fund annual salary step increases. These increases will be offset by proposed cuts that include:

- an additional $1,000,000 reduction in the CNP subsidy,
- $838,000 reduction in teacher salaries (30),
- $900,000 reduction in allocation for stipends and substitute-teacher pay, and
- $900,000 reduction in allocation for central office staff salaries.

According to JPPS officials, reductions in the CNP will result in reduced staff and fewer meal choices for students, but budget cuts will not reduce the number of meals served.

Educational Expenditures by Object and Function

The U.S. Department of Education (DOE) requires that states and local school districts report their expenditures on public education by “object” and by “function”. This reporting requirement provides for a uniform means of comparing spending among the states and local school districts.

Expenditures by object include outlays for employee salaries, employee benefits, purchased services, equipment, and other expenses.

Expenditures by function are classified as instructional costs and support services. Instructional costs include expenditures for regular classroom programs, special education programs, vocational education, special programs, pupil support services, instructional staff services, and other instructional programs. Support services include costs for general administration, school administration, business services, operations and maintenance, and pupil transportation expenses.

Expenditures by Object

In FY1999, 65.7% of the revised JPSB GF budget was expended on employee salaries, and 19.2% of the revised budget provided for employee benefits. Teacher salaries make up 65% of total salaries and 42% of total operating expenditures.

The salary costs for JPPS closely track the national public school average for total salaries (65%), while the district's expenditures for employee benefits are somewhat higher than the national average of 17.5%. Remaining GF dollars were allotted to purchased services

(8.9%), other expenses (1%), and equipment. National expenditure data (1997) are from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

According to the MFP Audit and Evaluation Book (FY1997-98) prepared by the DOE Division of Education and Finance, the average salary in 1998 for JPPS classroom teachers was $32,468 (excluding benefits), compared with $34,046 for New Orleans Public School teachers and the statewide average of $30,090. According to NCES data, the average salary nationally for public school teachers in 1998 was $39,347.

The decline in student enrollment led to a reduction in the number of classroom teachers, which as noted dropped from 3,372 in FY1998 to 3,336 in FY1999. School system administrators predict the elimination of another 30 teacher positions in FY2000. Based on data provided by the school district, the percentage of teachers in the district holding a Master's Degree continues to decline, falling from 41.2% of the faculty in FY1993 to 36.7% in FY1998.

Expenditures by Function

Two different budget categories, one based on total expenditures and the other on current expenditure, are used by the NCES in computing and comparing state and local expenditures on education. Total expenditures include revenue from all sources including federal funds, debt service funds, and capital programs (facility acquisition and construction) in addition to GF revenue. Current expenditures exclude capital programs and debt service funds.

According to the State DOE's Annual Financial and Statistical Report, in FY1998 52% of JPPS total expenditures went to instruction and 48% to support services, non-instructional programs, and facility acquisition/construction, and debt service. Nationally, based on 1995 NCES data, local public school districts on average expend 54% of their revenue on instruction and 46% on support services and non-instructional programs.

Regarding current expenditures, in FY1998 the JPPS spent 61% of its revenues on instruction and 39% on support and non-instructional services. According to NCES spending data (1995), the national public school spending average for instruction and support services (including non-instruction services) were 60% and 40% respectively.

The Minimum Foundation Program Audit and Evaluation Data Book FY 1997-98, also provides educational expenditure data by function, but the data are based on GF outlays only. According to the report, in FY1998 the JPPS spent 72.3% of its GF revenue for instructional purposes. The state district average for spending on instruction in FY1998 was 73.4%. In 1997, the State Legislature by resolution required school districts to spend at least 70% of their GF monies for instructional purposes by FY2000.

Jefferson Parish Public School per pupil expenditures for FY1998 were $5,643, up from $5,216 in FY1997, a 2.2% increase paralleling the statewide per pupil increase of 2.1%. The JPPS per pupil expenditure rate in FY1998 was nine percent higher than the state public school spending average of $5,178 per pupil. The higher per-student cost for JPPS students is largely attributable to teacher salaries higher than the state average. The1998 national per pupil expenditure average was $6,057 based on NCES data.

Conclusion

The JPPS operating budget has fundamental structural problems that include the district's over-reliance on sales tax revenue, a very low level of property tax revenue, and declining state revenue under the Minimum Foundation Program. These basic problems present the JPSB with significant short- and long-term economic challenges.

The district's reliance on sales tax revenue has almost doubled since 1990, increasing from 23% of GF revenue to a projected 42% in FY2000. Sales tax revenue, however, is very sensitive to changes in the economy; and the inevitable economic downturn will mean a rapid reversal in district income. The International City Management Association recommends that local governments maintain a one-to-one ratio between sales tax and property tax revenues. The JPSB budget rests on a more than five-to-one ratio between sales and property tax revenue.

The $1.2 million cut in the JPSB's MFP allocation contributed to the third-straight year of deficit spending by the district. The Board must adopt additional spending cuts in FY2000 totaling about $1.5 million to balance the FY2000 budget and to protect what is already a less-than-four-percent projected year-end fund balance.

The JPSB can help prevent future deficit spending by implementing additional budget cuts. The system's declining enrollment will make trimming the budget more practical in some respects. Eliminating teacher aide positions and a further reduction in the number of teachers have already been proposed by the JPPS administration.

By itself, a balanced budget will not address the system's heavy (and risky) dependence on sales tax revenue. However, a shift in the source of local revenue from sales tax to property tax would shore up the district's vulnerable budget structure, even without a net increase in revenue. The current 13.91 mill property tax rate is the third lowest among the state's 66 public school districts. The average rate for Louisiana's school districts is 40.96 mills, suggesting that the JPPS has the flexibility to shift revenue sources while remaining in line with practices in the rest of the state.

The changing makeup of the district's student body confronts the JPSB with difficult educational challenges as well.

- The JPPS has more special education students than any district in Louisiana. And while the population of the JPPS dropped by three percent between 1994 and 1999, the percentage of special education students grew to15% over the same period. Moreover, the non-certification rate among special education teachers is over twice that of regular education teachers.
- The percentage of children in the school system from low-income families is increasing, as is the percentage of children who fail the Graduate Exit Exam. Middle-school student LEAP scores are also in decline.
- About 76% of JPPS students entering kindergarten score in the bottom 25% on tests measuring developmental skills.

The ten-year plan now being confected by the JPSB's Long Range Planning Committee can be an important step in addressing both the fiscal and educational issues facing the District. The key component of the plan will likely be a recommendation for a substantial increase in the Board's property tax levy. The greatest challenge facing the Board will be successfully making their case for a property tax increase to the voters of Jefferson Parish.

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Jefferson Parish Public School Budget

Quick View

- Three straight years of deficit spending (FY1997-FY1999) reduced the JPSB's "rainy day" fund balance from $19 million in FY1996 to $10 million entering FY2000.
- The JPSB budget structure is based on an over-reliance on volatile sales tax revenue, which now comprises 83 percent of locally generated funds.
- The JPSB's property tax levy of 13.91 mills is the third lowest among the state's 66 school districts. The average rate for the state's public school districts is 40.96 mills.
- Enrollment in the JPPS continues to decline with an apparent loss of over 1,600 students in the 1999-2000 school year, a three-percent drop over the prior year.
- The decline in enrollment will reduce the school district's state funding by over $5 million in FY2000.
- Over 75 percent of JPPS students entering kindergarten score in the bottom 25 percent on developmental skills tests.
- The JPPS has more special education students than any other public school district in the State.