

to the EDITOR

Weston benefits from superior schools

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Comparing this year's budget with previous year's is less illuminating and less important than looking at how we compare with other towns in the area.

At \$17,613 per student, we spend more than Wilton (\$16,446), Westport (\$16,648), Fairfield (\$14,228) and Norwalk (\$14,227), but we are still topped by New Canaan (\$17,701).

School systems clearly benefit from economies of scale. It's no accident that with populations of 57,000 and 83,000 Fairfield and Norwalk can spend \$3,000 per student less than Weston, with its population of 10,000.

Our school system is the lifeblood of Weston. People move here because of the schools. Weston has budgeted for 2,545 students — more than a quarter of the people living here are children in the school system. In Norwalk, only one in eight town residents are in the school system, in Fairfield it's one in six, in New Canaan and Westport one in five. Wilton is the only town that comes close to Weston's one in four ratio.

The high per pupil expenditure combined with the high ratio of student-citizens gives us the distinction of having the highest education costs per resident. Every man, woman and child in Weston pays \$4,466 in

taxes toward our schools. In Wilton, it's \$4,052, and it keeps on dropping down to Norwalk's \$1,867 per resident.

Keep in mind, however, with their small size, terrific faculty and facilities Weston schools rival local private day schools in quality, and we compare favorably to private school tuitions now approaching \$30,000.

Costs and budgets are important, but value is most important of all. It may cost more to run Weston schools, but Weston students and Weston residents reap great benefits from a superior school system.

John Armstrong

Beaverbrook Road, April 9