

Huntington Bank's Annual Backpack Index Finds Double-Digit Cost Increases for Families Sending K-12 Students to School This Fall

Increases Dramatically Outpace U.S. Wage Hikes and Inflation as Cash-Strapped Schools Pass More Costs to Students

COLUMBUS, Ohio--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- The cost of equipping K-12 public school students for the 2014-2015 school year has jumped as much as 20 percent, one of the largest year-over-year increases in the eight-year history of the annual Huntington Backpack Index. While the cost for supplies and school activities continues to climb for families, average hourly nonfarm payroll earnings rose just 2.05 percent between May 2013 and May 2014, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The increases in back-to-school costs also far outpaced the Consumer Price Index, which rose 2.1 percent for the same time period.

According to the Huntington Backpack Index, parents can expect to pay:

- \$642 for elementary school children, an 11 percent increase compared to 2013
- \$918 for middle school children, a 20 percent jump compared to 2013
- \$1,284 for high school students, a 5 percent increase compared to 2013

"Huntington Bank issues its annual Backpack Index each year to help families budget and save for the upcoming school year," said George Mokrzan, director of economics for Huntington Bank. "With the slow growth in wages, it is difficult for many families to meet the rising costs of sending children to school. We recommend that parents begin to take advantage of sales for classroom supplies and activities from now until September in order to save money. They also might use the Huntington Backpack Index to teach children about budgeting and shopping wisely."

Increases in the Backpack Index this year were mostly the result of hikes in fees for standardized testing as well as school fees including field trip and pay to play fees. More schools are also requiring students to purchase a gym uniform. Finally, middle school students will see a hike because some districts are requiring graphing calculators with Algebra now taught earlier in many middle schools.

Parents of high school and middle school students may also face the costs of buying their children computer tablets because more schools are now using tablets in the classroom.

Since Huntington first introduced the Backpack Index in 2007, costs have cumulatively increased 83 percent for elementary school students, 73 percent for middle school students and 44 percent for high school students.

Huntington completed its own comparison shopping for the coming school year and found ways for families to save an average of \$130. Saving tips include:

- Start Now: The sooner you begin to comparison shop, the better. The school lists for most schools are currently available. Sales have already begun at discount and office supply stores.
- Recycle: Take an inventory of the supplies you already have. Determine what you can reuse.
- Check your local newspaper: Local papers carry circulars from major stores as well as discounters. Look at those ads that may offer two-for-one sales, discounts on particular items and coupons.
- Shop around: Go online, compare prices and decide who offers the best deals. Don't be afraid to buy generic items. Some retailers also will provide free shipping. So you can avoid the cost of going from store to store.
- Involve the kids: Help your child create a budget and stick to it. Developing a budget and following it is the basis for all good financial education.
- Source creatively: Talk to neighbors, friends and other parents to see if they have an instrument or sports equipment their children are no longer using.
- Check with your school: Determine whether your school offers help in obtaining supplies for low- to moderate-income families.

Huntington Backpack Index Methodology

Huntington annually obtains classroom-supply lists from a cross-section of schools throughout the six states it serves and compiles a representative list of required supplies and fees. Costs are determined by selecting moderately priced items at online retailers. Huntington also gives 15,000 backpacks to low- to moderate-income children within its markets. Backpacks are donated this year by Meijer, Guy Brown Management, OfficeMax and Standard Register.

About Huntington

Huntington Bancshares Incorporated is a \$64 billion asset regional bank holding company headquartered in Columbus, Ohio. The Huntington National Bank, founded in 1866, and its affiliates provide full-service commercial, small business, and consumer banking services; mortgage banking services; treasury management and foreign exchange services; equipment leasing; wealth and investment management services; trust services; brokerage services; customized insurance brokerage and service programs; and other financial products and services. The principal markets for these services are Huntington's six-state retail banking franchise: Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Indiana, West Virginia, and Kentucky. The primary distribution channels include a banking network of more than 700 traditional branches and convenience branches located in grocery stores and retirement centers, and through an array of alternative distribution channels including internet and mobile banking, telephone banking, and more than 1,500 ATMs. Through automotive dealership relationships within its six-state retail banking franchise area and selected other Midwest and New England states, Huntington also provides commercial banking services to

the automotive dealers and retail automobile financing for dealer customers.

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Source: Huntington