

CALIFORNIA SCHOOL FINANCE LITIGATION Robles-Wong v. California

Fact Sheet

Overview

- *Robles-Wong v. California* asks the State of California to fulfill its constitutional obligation to support our public schools and students. This historic lawsuit was brought forth by a broad coalition of students, parents, school districts and educational organizations.
- Education is a fundamental right of every child in California. California's Constitution requires a school system that prepares students to become informed citizens and productive members of society.
- This lawsuit declares that California's unsound, unstable and insufficient school finance system is neither aligned with required educational programs nor with student needs. The amount of funding provided to education is not enough to deliver the required programs to all students so that they meet the State's educational goals, and the funding system causes unequal learning opportunities.
- California has set clear requirements for what schools are expected to teach and what students are expected to learn. The State has failed in its obligation to provide the resources necessary for students to meet the required standards.
- The State's failure to support the required educational program adversely affects all students. Academic achievement measures show California's broken school finance system denies students the opportunity to become proficient in the State's academic standards.
- This lawsuit seeks to remedy the broken school finance system by (1) declaring that it is unconstitutional and (2) requiring state lawmakers to uphold their constitutional duty to design and implement a school finance system that provides all students equal access to the required educational program.

Plaintiffs

- Individuals: Maya Robles-Wong, named plaintiff, with guardians ad litem Michael and Martha Robles-Wong; Milena Robles-Wong, with guardians ad litem Michael and Martha Robles-Wong; and approximately 60 individual students.
- Districts: Alameda USD (Alameda County); Alpine ESD (San Diego County); Del Norte County USD (Del Norte County); Folsom Cordova USD (Sacramento County); Hemet USD (Riverside County); Porterville USD (Tulare County); Riverside USD (Riverside County); San Francisco USD (San Francisco County); Santa Ana USD (Orange County)
- Associations: California School Boards Association; Association of California School Administrators; California State PTA.

California Education Statistics

Staffing ratios

California's ranking:

- 49th among all states in student-teacher ratios. (Digest of Education Statistics [DES], 2007-08)
- 45th in instructional aides. (DES, 2007-08)
- 46th in district officials and administrators. (DES, 2007-08)
- 48th in total school staff. (DES, 2007-08)
- 49th in guidance counselors. (DES, 2007-08)
- 50th in librarians. (DES, 2007-08)

Finances

- California spends \$2,131 less per pupil than the national average, ranking the State 44th in the country. (National Education Association [NEA], 2008-09)
- When adjusted for regional cost differences of providing education services (using a national wage index), California spends \$2,856 less per pupil than the national average, or 47th among all states. (NEA, 2008-09, and National Center for Education Statistics)
- California spends less per pupil than each of the largest 10 states in the nation – almost \$6,000 less per pupil than New York. (NEA, 2008-09)

Student achievement

National Assessment of Education Progress [NAEP]:

- California is tied for 47th among states in fourth-grade reading. (NAEP, 2008-09)
- California is tied for 46th in eighth-grade math. (NAEP, 2008-09)
- California's economically disadvantaged students rank 49th in fourth-grade reading. (NAEP, 2008-09)
- California's economically disadvantaged students rank 48th in eighth-grade math. (NAEP, 2008-09)
- Even for students who are not economically disadvantaged, California is tied for 43rd in fourth-grade reading. (NAEP, 2008-09)
- Even for students who are not economically disadvantaged, California is tied for 41st in eighth-grade math. (NAEP, 2008-09)
- California's achievement gap between those who are economically disadvantaged and those who are not is the third largest in the nation in fourth-grade reading. (NAEP, 2008-09)
- California's achievement gap between those who are economically disadvantaged and those who are not is the second largest in eighth-grade math. (NAEP, 2008-09)

California Standards Tests [CSTs]:

- Only half of all California students are proficient in English-language arts. This percentage drops to 37% for African-American students; 37% for Hispanic students; 36% for economically disadvantaged students; and 20% for English learners. (California Department of Education [CDE], 2008-09)
- Approximately 46% of all California students are proficient in math. This percentage drops to 30% for African-American students, 36% for Hispanic students, 37% for economically disadvantaged students, and 32% for English learners. (CDE, 2008-09)
- In 11th grade, the percentage of African-American students who are proficient in English-language arts is 25%; for Hispanic students and economically disadvantaged students, 26%; for English-learners, 5%. (CDE, 2008-09)
- Fewer than 70% of California students graduate from high school. (National Center for Education Statistics, [NCES], 2005-06)
- The graduation rates are even lower for African-American and Hispanic students, whose rates are both less than 60%. (NCES, 2005-06)

- Less than half of all African-American males graduate from high school. (NCES, 2005-06)
- While almost 40% of white students who graduate from high school are UC/CSU eligible, less than 25% of African-American and Latino students are similarly eligible. (Ed-Data, 2007-08)
- For all entering CSU freshman, 37% are not proficient in math, and 47% are not proficient in English. Yet 64% and 66% of African-American students, respectively, are not proficient in math and English; and 52% and 63% of Latino students, respectively, are not proficient in math and English. (CSU, Fall 2008)

Voter Support for Public Schools

- Most Californians believe there is not enough state funding going to their public schools. (Public Policy Institute of California [PPIC] Poll, April 2010)
- The area that a majority of Californians (63%) most want to protect from spending cuts is K-12 education. (PPIC Poll, April 2010)