

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about the CSBA Resolution Calling for Full and Fair Funding of California's Public Schools

Q. *What do you mean by "Full and Fair Funding" for California's public schools?*

A. Full and Fair Funding is funding that provides the access, resources and supports needed to provide a high-quality education for all public school students. Our vision for education is one in which all students have the opportunity to graduate from high school with a meaningful diploma — one that means they are prepared for success in college, career and civic life.

Q. *Doesn't California already spend more on public schools than other states?*

A. No. In fact, California spends significantly less per pupil than almost every other state. California ranks 41st nationally in per-pupil funding at nearly \$2,000 per student below the national average and nearly \$7,000 per student below the average of the top 10 states.

Q. *Has California always been so far behind the pack in school funding?*

A. No, there was a time when California ranked at the very top in student funding. In 1969–70, California's per-pupil funding exceeded the national average by \$400, or \$2,567 in today's money.

Q. *How does California's public school funding impact students?*

A. In the words of Julie Maxwell-Jolly, senior director of policy and programs for the California School Boards Association, "California doesn't fund schools at a level that allows them to provide the range of strategies and supports required to ensure that each and every student has the opportunities necessary to succeed. Many of the resources that were standard in previous decades — like school counselors, librarians, nurses and music programs — have been reduced or eliminated due to funding issues. In addition, many districts lack the means to offer essential student services, provide appropriate professional development for staff, engage families in student learning, or implement well-rounded, relevant curriculum and the 21st-century infrastructure and technology needed to support it. All of this has a detrimental impact on student experience which has contributed to lower performance over time as well as persistent opportunity and achievement gaps."

Q. *I thought the additional money for public schools provided by Gov. Brown's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) fixed public education funding?*

A. No, for most districts, LCFF simply restored funding to the pre-recession levels of 2007 — it did little to close the funding gap between California and other states. LCFF provided additional money for California schools, but that was only after the Great Recession led to some of the deepest public school funding cuts in the state's history. Adjusting for inflation, California's funding for K-12 education has not significantly increased in more than decade. During this same period, school costs related to transportation, utilities, special education and employee benefits have increased at a rate that is, in many cases, greater than the additional revenues from LCFF.

Q. Why would an increase in public school funding benefit students?

A. Substantial research points to a positive relationship between education funding and improved student outcomes, particularly for economically disadvantaged students — and the body of evidence is growing. Multiple studies have shown that economically disadvantaged students who attend well-resourced schools demonstrate greater academic achievement than similar peers in schools with scant resources.^{1,2} In a rigorous 2016 study, researchers found that increased funding for school districts with a large concentration of economically disadvantaged students resulted in increased student test scores. Their evidence supported the conclusion that the benefits of these investments to future student earnings far outweighed the cost.³

For detailed information on the relationship between investment in education and student outcomes, as well as strategies boards can use to support student achievement, please see CSBA's report *Meeting California's Challenge: Access, Opportunity, and Achievement: Key Ingredients for Student Success* (5/2017).

Q. How should school boards use any additional monies to boost student achievement?

A. No two school districts or county offices of education are exactly alike. Local school boards, working in conjunction with their constituents, are best positioned to set goals and find solutions that meet the specific needs of their individual communities. At the same time, we can identify common factors that lead to student achievement, including a rigorous, well-rounded and relevant curriculum; staff with the skills, knowledge and competencies to promote student success; education and assistance for families to support and guide learning; 21st-century infrastructure and technology; academic supports to improve achievement; early childhood education supports and services; physical, mental and environmental health supports; and services for students with specific needs.

Q. Isn't a sizable portion of the state budget devoted to public education?

A. K-14 education, which includes community colleges, accounts for roughly 40 percent of the state budget. This is a significant amount, but less, on a percentage basis, than what the rest of the country spends for public schools. California ranks just 45th nationally in the amount of taxable income spent on public schools, so nearly every other state places a higher value on public education. Why? Because they know that the answers to our most pressing concerns — economic vitality, social cohesion, public health, and strong, sustainable communities — are rooted in an educated populace prepared to tackle the problems of today and create a better tomorrow.

Q. Does California have the money for this?

A. California has the world's sixth largest economy and the highest Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of any state. Yet, four out of every five states provide more funding for schools on a per-pupil basis than California. Overall, California ranks 45th in the percentage of taxable income spent on K-12 education. California prides itself on being the home of American innovation. If other poorer states can find a way to prioritize education, we can, too.

Q. What should we do after we approve the resolution?

A. Upon approving the resolution, please send it to the California School Boards Association (CSBA) by emailing Senior Director of Communications Troy Flint at: tflint@csba.org. Also, please let your community know that your district or COE supports full and fair funding so all California students can graduate prepared for success in college, career and civic life.

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1. Card, D., & Payne, A. A. (2002). School finance reform, the distribution of school spending, and the distribution of student test scores. *Journal of Public Economics*, 83 (1), 49-82. Retrieved from <http://davidcard.berkeley.edu/papers/school-finance-reform.pdf>
 2. Greenwald, R., Hedges, L.V., & Laine, R. D. (1996). The effect of school resources on student achievement. *Review of Educational Research*, 66 (3), 361-396. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/00346543066003361>
 3. Lafortune, J., Rothstein, J., & Schanzenbach, D. W. (2016). *School finance reform and the distribution of student achievement* (No. w22011). National Bureau of Economic Research.