

# The FISCAL REPORT an informational update

Copyright © 2010 School Services of California, Inc.

Volume 30

For Publication Date: July 30, 2010

No. 15

## By Many Measures, California's K-12 Funding Lags the Nation

In an analysis of national data, some of which spans 40 years, the California Budget Project (CBP) reports that California ranks at or near the bottom with respect to funding for its public schools by almost any measure. California's support of its K-12 public education system falls far behind the funding levels provided by almost all of the other states in the nation. Not only is the state's per-pupil funding level among the lowest (44<sup>th</sup>), California also falls far behind in its contributions when measured against its overall resources (46<sup>th</sup>).

The CBP analyzed data from the National Education Association, the National Center for Education Statistics, and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis to conclude that the state's public schools are suffering an ever-widening gap between their funding levels and that provided to the other public schools across the nation. Among the CBP's major findings are:

- California ranked 44<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states in K-12 spending per student in 2009-10, spending \$2,546 less per student than the national average. The state Legislature would have to appropriate an additional \$15.4 billion for the state to reach the average level of spending per student for the rest of the nation.
- The state ranked 46<sup>th</sup> in education spending as a percentage of personal income, the broadest gauge of a state's economy and the resources available to support public services. In 2008-09, California spent 3.28% of its personal income on K-12 education compared to a national average of 4.25%.
- The state ranked last in the nation with respect to the number of students per teacher, with 21.3 students per teacher compared to a national average of 13.8 students per teacher. We continue to have the largest class sizes in the nation.
- With respect to student support services and administration, California ranked near the bottom as well. The state ranked 49<sup>th</sup> for the number of students per guidance counselor, 50<sup>th</sup> for the number of students per librarian, and 46<sup>th</sup> for the number of administrators per student.

The CBP analysis also examined the state's commitment to K-12 education over the last 40 years and found a significant deterioration in recent years. Between 1969-70 and 1981-82, the state's per-pupil spending level hovered around the national average, both exceeding and falling short within a range of about +/- \$300 per pupil (measured in 2009-10 dollars).

During the 1980s and early 1990s, however, California fell behind the national average, with the gap reaching almost \$2,000 per pupil by 1995-96. During the following ten years, California made some progress in narrowing the gap, but since 2006-07, the gap between California's per pupil spending on K-12 education and the national average has reached its greatest level. In 2009-10, the disparity exceeded \$2,500 per student.

Go to [http://www.cbp.org/pdfs/2010/1006\\_SFF\\_how\\_does\\_ca\\_compare.pdf](http://www.cbp.org/pdfs/2010/1006_SFF_how_does_ca_compare.pdf) for a copy of the CBP report.

*-Robert Miyashiro*

posted 07/21/2010