

POLICY BRIEF

Volume 2, Issue 7

April 19, 2005

FACTS ABOUT EDUCATION SPENDING IN KANSAS: ARKANSAS CITY

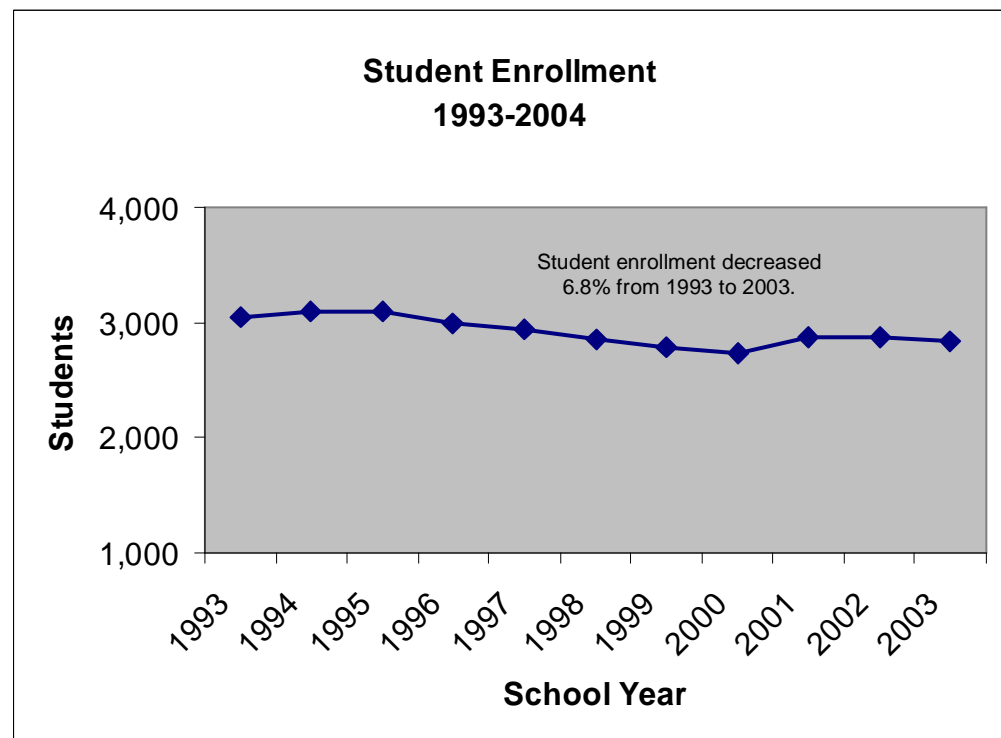
BY JOHN R. LAPLANTE

A report from the Kansas Legislative Research Department reveals that statewide, education funding has gone up 56 percent since 1993.¹ But what has happened to Arkansas City (USD 470) during that time?

Student enrollment has declined 6.8 percent since 1993

The primary factor driving the need for school funding is the number of students. During the 1993-1994 school year, USD 470 enrolled 3,043 students. Since the start of the 1993-1994 school year, enrollment has risen during two years and fallen during eight years. The greatest year-to-year increase was a 5.2 percent rise between the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 school years. The greatest year-to-year decline was 2.9 percent, between the 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 school years.

For the 2003-2004 school year, there were 2,836 students enrolled—a decrease of 6.8 percent from 1993.

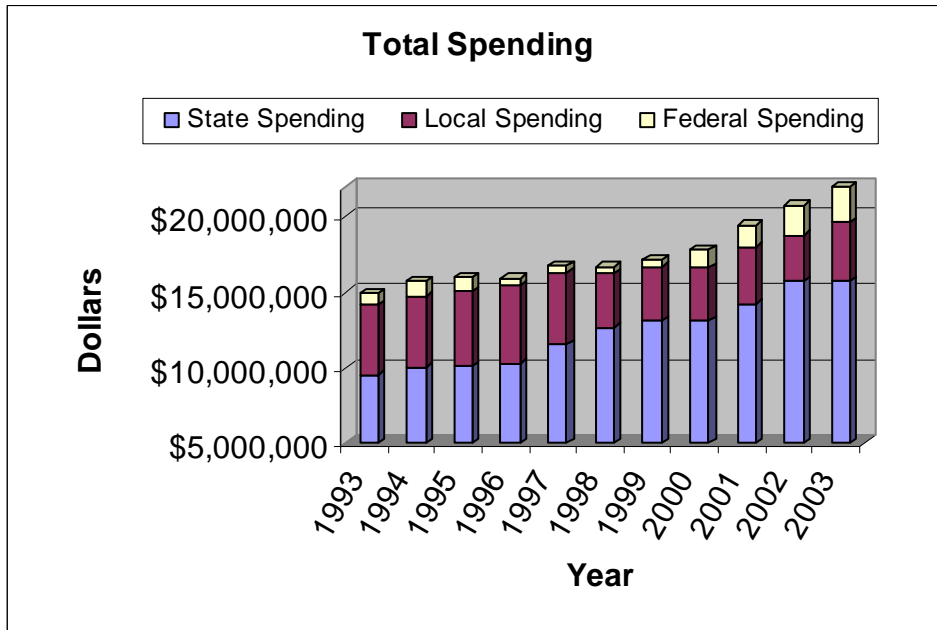


State Funding

Starting from a base of \$9.5 million in 1993-1994, state aid for USD 470 reached \$15.7 million in the 2003-2004 school year—an increase of 65 percent.

Local Funding

At the same time, local funding for USD 470 has fallen. From a base of \$4.6 million in 1993, local school aid briefly rose to \$5.2 million before falling to \$3.9 million in 2004—a of 14 percent from 1993.

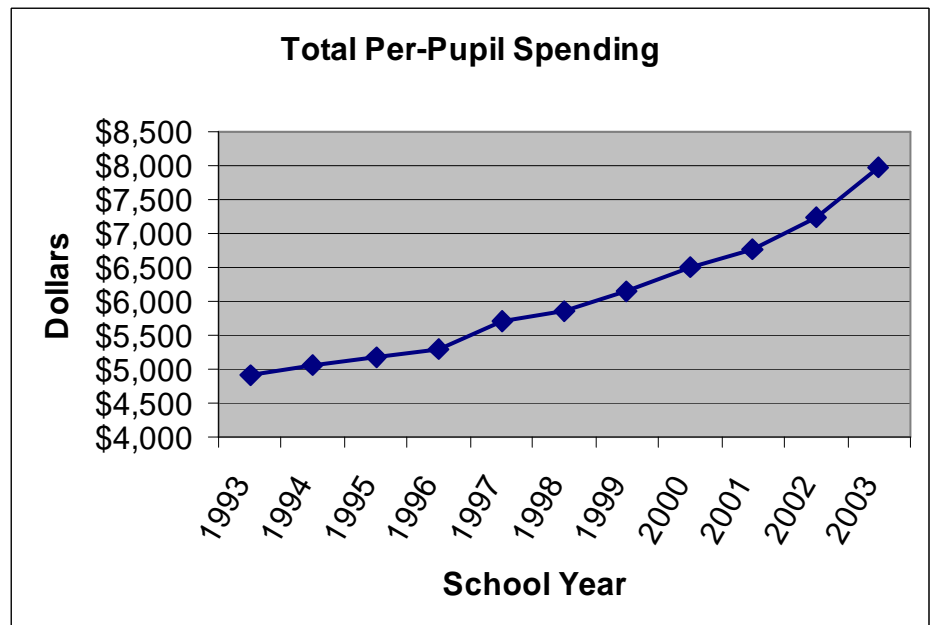


Total Funding

Federal funding rose from \$831,625 in 1993 to just under \$3 million in 2004. Federal and state funding increased more than local funding decreased. The result was that total spending on K-12 education in USD 470 rose from \$15.0 million in 1993 to \$22.6 million in 2004—an increase of 51 percent.

Per-Pupil Spending Up Nearly Two-Thirds

The increase in total spending in USD 470 combined with a smaller student population sent per-pupil spending up 62 percent, or nearly two-thirds, from 1993 to 2004. In the 2003-2004 school year, per-pupil spending was \$7,980. When adjusted for inflation, per-pupil funding increased 28 percent.



Summary

Even though student enrollment in USD 470 has declined between 1993 and 2004, its funding has not. Most of its increased funding has come from state aid. Even so, in the ongoing dispute over school funding, USD 470 filed a friend-of-the-court brief against the State of Kansas. Given an after-inflation, per-pupil funding increase of 28 percent since 1993, it's hard to say that the commitment of new, additional resources to the district has been meager.

Let's not blame the legislators, then, for not wanting to escalate spending levels even more. The problem with education is not that we aren't spending money. We're spending more of it every year. Instead let's improve schools by introducing market forces that produce higher quality and lower prices through increased competition.



John R. LaPlante is a Flint Hills Education Policy Fellow. He holds an M.A. in political science from The Ohio State University.

Notes

¹School District Financing Data by District (School Years 1993-2004) is available online at <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/ksleg/KLRD/Publications/SchoolDistNum.pdf>

MORE ABOUT THE FLINT HILLS CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY

The Flint Hills Center for Public Policy is an independent voice for sound public policy in Kansas. As a non-profit, nonpartisan think tank, the Center provides critical information about policy options to legislators and citizens. For more information, please visit our web site at www.flinthills.org or contact us at inquiries@flinthills.org or (316) 634-0218.

Flint Hills Center for Public Policy

P.O. Box 782317
Wichita, KS 67278-2317
(316) 634-0218
inquiries@flinthills.org
www.flinthills.org

