

POLICY BRIEF

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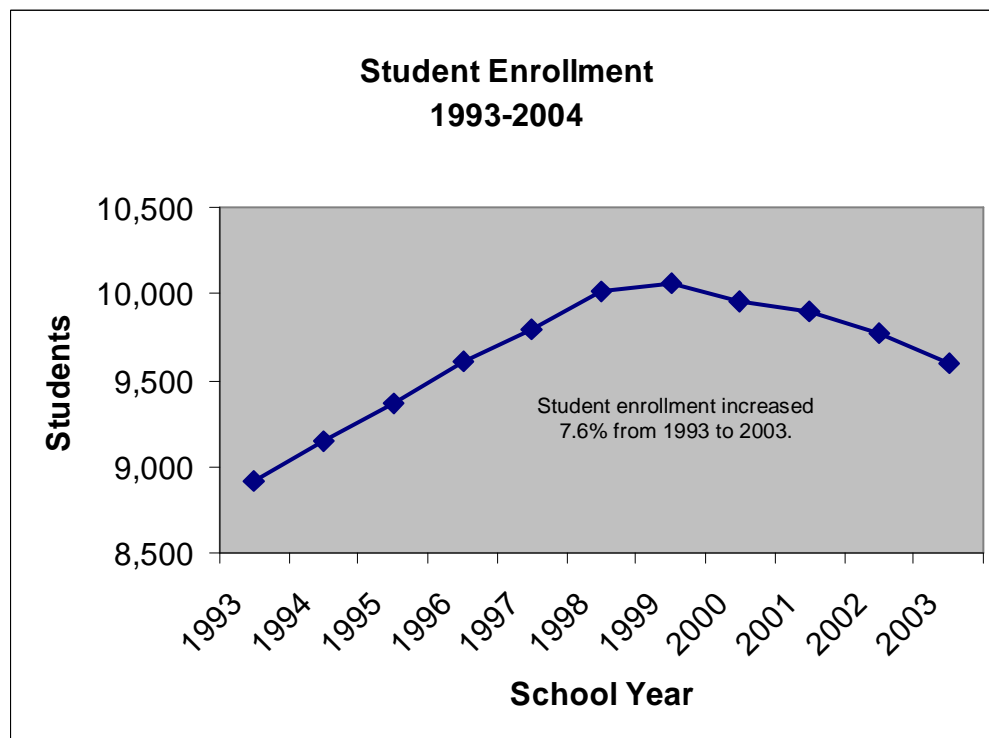
FACTS ABOUT EDUCATION SPENDING IN KANSAS: LAWRENCE

BY JOHN R. LAPLANTE

A report from the Kansas Legislative Research Department reveals that statewide, education funding has gone up 56 percent since 1993, with per-pupil spending now approaching \$10,000 per year.¹ But what has happened to Lawrence (USD 497) during that time?

Student enrollment is now 7.6 percent higher than in 1993

The primary factor driving the need for school funding is the number of students. During the 1993-1994 school year, USD 497 enrolled 8,919 students. Enrollment increased every year until it peaked at 10,066 during the 1999-2000 school year. Since then, enrollment has declined, with 9,596 students enrolled during the 2003-2004 school year, still up 7.6 percent from 1993.

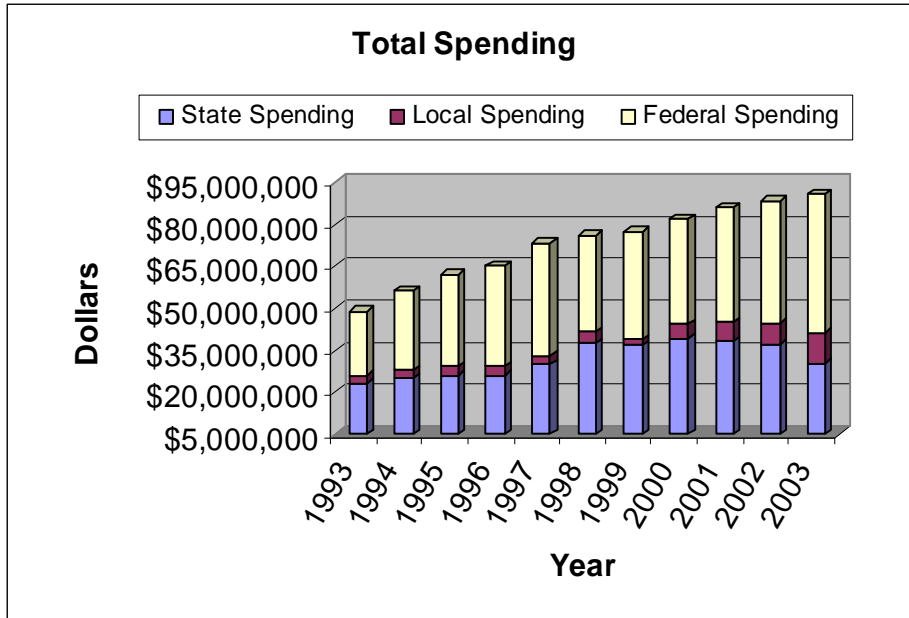


State Funding

Starting from a base of \$23.3 million in 1993-1994, state aid for USD 497 reached \$39.4 million in the 2000-2001 school year, increasing even after enrollment started declining. During the 2002-2004 school year, state aid was \$30.2 million—an increase of 29.8 percent from 1993.

Local Funding

Local funding for USD 497 has also grown significantly. From a base of \$23.0 million in 1993, local school aid rose to \$49.7 million in 2004—an increase of 116 percent.

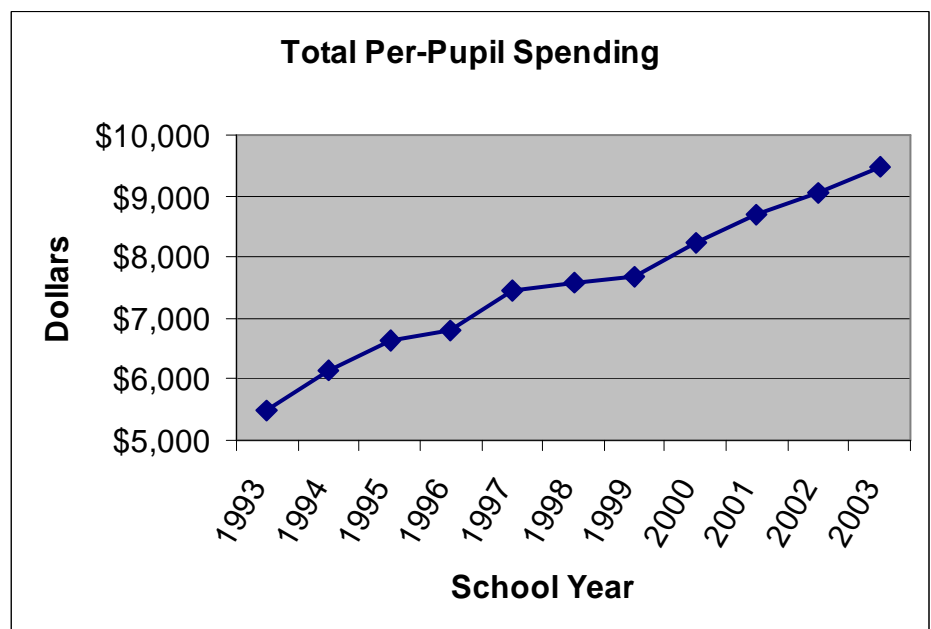


Total Funding

Combined with federal funding, total spending on K-12 education in USD 497 rose from \$49.0 million in 1993 to \$90.9 million in 2004—an increase of 85 percent.

Per-Pupil Spending Nears \$10,000

Though enrollment has gone up in USD 497, taxpayer funding has gone up even more, leading to a 72 percent increase in per-pupil spending. In the 2003-2004 school year, per-pupil spending was \$9,476. Even after accounting for the modest growth in enrollment, per-pupil funding increased 36 percent in inflation-adjusted terms.



Summary

While student enrollment in USD 497 grew somewhat between 1993 and 2004, its funding levels increased, whether adjustments are made for enrollment increases, inflation, or both. An after-inflation, per-pupil funding increase of 36 percent is a substantial commitment of new resources.

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.



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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>

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