

POLICY BRIEF

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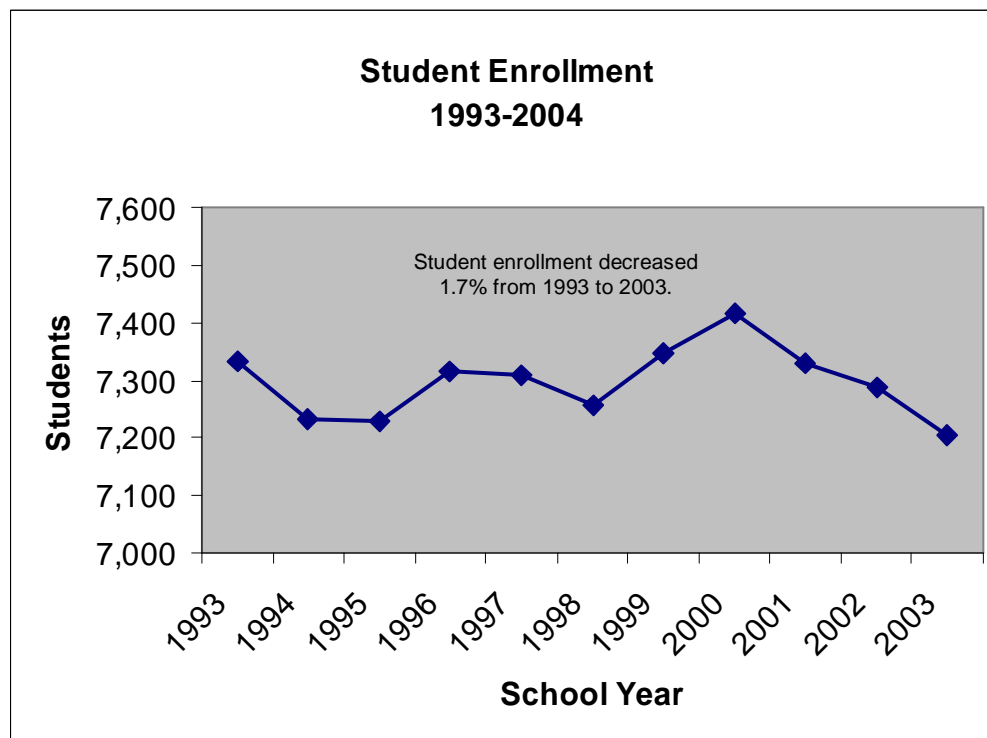
FACTS ABOUT EDUCATION SPENDING IN KANSAS: SALINA

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 Salina Public Schools (USD 305) during that time?

Student enrollment has declined from 1993

The primary factor driving the need for school funding is the number of students. In the 1993-1994 school year, USD 305 enrolled 7,334 students. That number has fluctuated no more than 1.4 percent from year to year. For the 2003-2004 school year, there were 7,203 students enrolled—a decline of 1.7 percent from 1993.

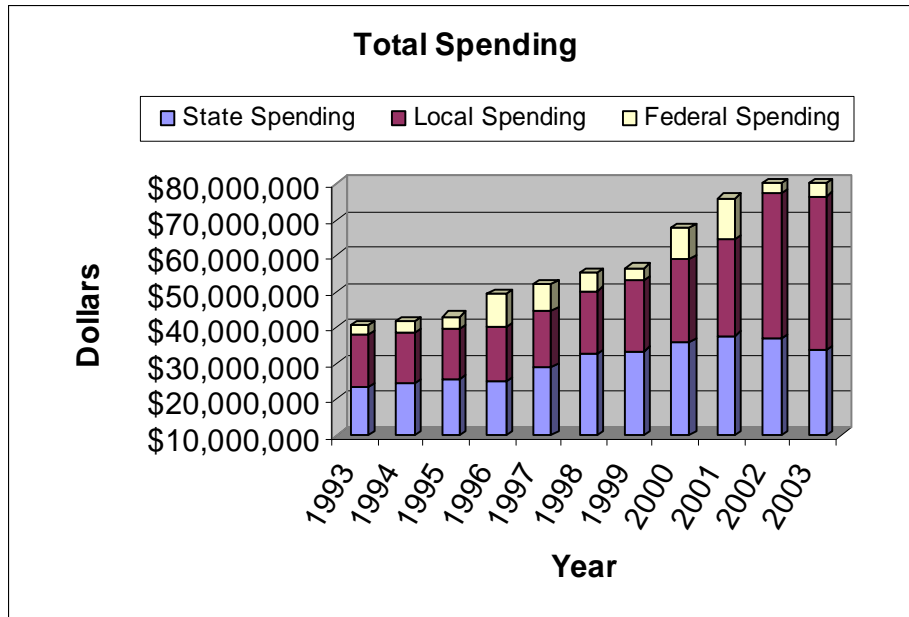


State Funding

Starting from a base of \$23.3 million in 1993-1994, state aid for USD 305 reached \$33.8 million in the 2003-2004 school year—an increase of 45 percent.

Local Funding

Local funding for USD 305 has also grown significantly. From a base of \$14.5 million in 1993, school aid rose to \$48.2 million in 2004—an increase of 195 percent.

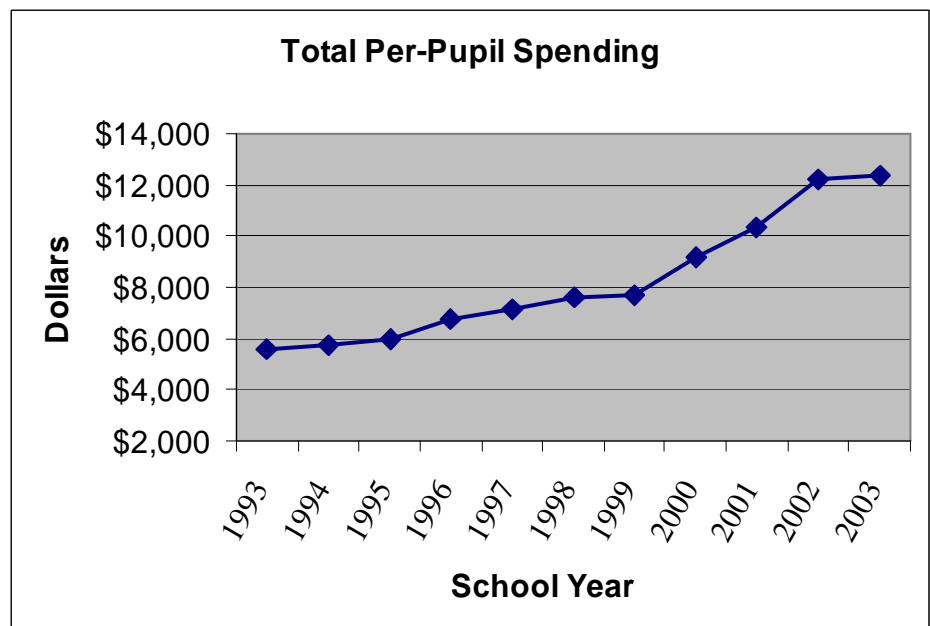


Total Funding

Combined with federal funding, total spending on K-12 education in USD 305 rose from \$40.8 billion in 1993 to \$88.9 million in 2004—an increase of 118 percent.

Per-Pupil Spending Tops \$12,000

Taxpayer funding for USD 305 went up substantially even as student enrollment went down. Between 1993 and 2004, enrollment decreased almost 2 percent. But per-pupil spending more than doubled. In the 2003-2004 school year, per-pupil spending was \$12,348. Even after the effects of inflation are considered, per-pupil funding increased 75 percent from 1993 to 2004.



Summary

While student enrollment in USD 305 declined, its funding increased. Even so, USD 305 was one of the plaintiffs in the recent lawsuit against the State of Kansas. Given an after-inflation, per-pupil increase of 75 percent since 1993, it's hard to say that the commitment of new, additional resources 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.



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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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