

POLICY BRIEF

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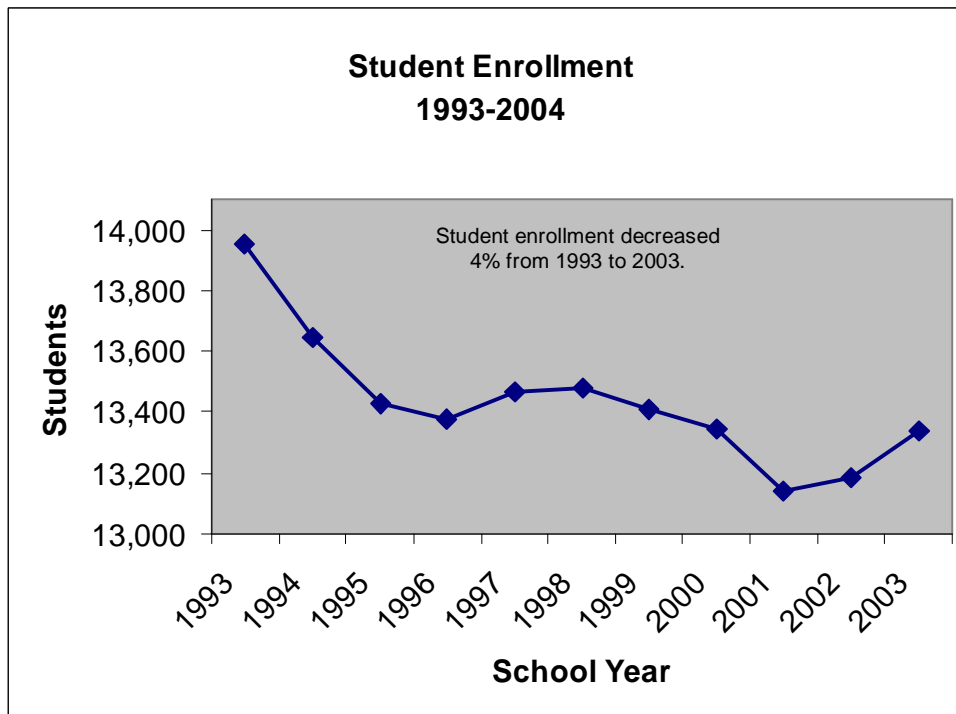
FACTS ABOUT EDUCATION SPENDING IN KANSAS: TOPEKA

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 Topeka Public Schools (USD 501) 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 501 enrolled 13,995 students. Since then, that number has fluctuated up and down over time, but has never exceeded the figure from 1993. For the 2003-2004 school year, there were 13,342 students enrolled—a decline of 4 percent from 1993.

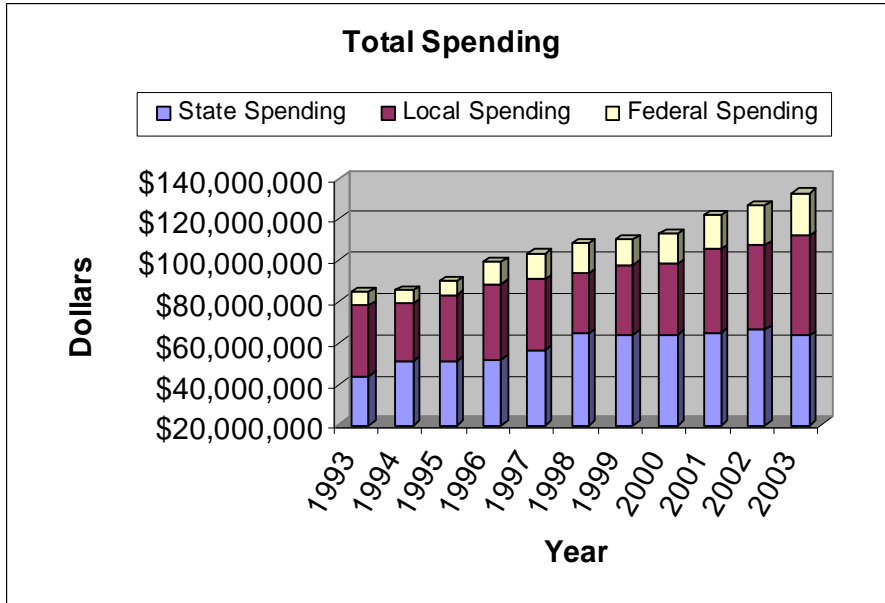


State Funding

Starting from a base of \$43.9 million in 1993-1994, state aid for USD 501 reached \$63.4 million in the 2003-2004 school year—an increase of 44 percent.

Local Funding

Local funding for USD 501 has also grown significantly. From a base of \$34.4 million in 1993, school aid rose to \$48.4 million in 2004—an increase of 41 percent.

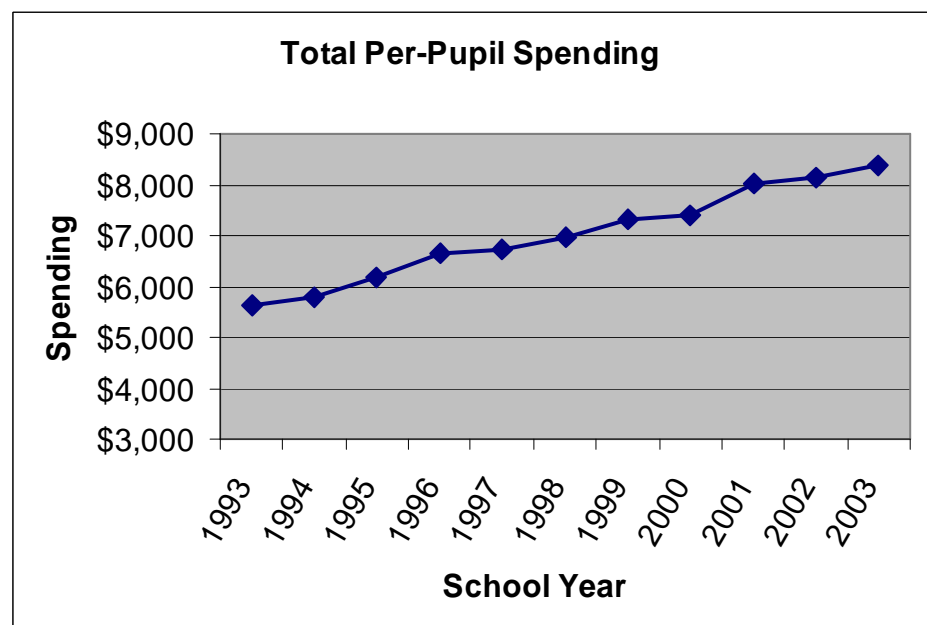


Total Funding

Combined with federal funding, total spending on K-12 education in USD 501 rose from \$84.4 billion in 1993 to \$132.5 million in 2004—an increase of 57 percent.

Per-Pupil Spending Nears \$10,000

Taxpayer funding for USD 501 went up substantially even as student enrollment went down. Between 1993 and 2004, enrollment decreased over 4 percent, and per-pupil spending increased over 65 percent. In the 2003-2004 school year, per-pupil spending was \$9,934. Even after the effects of inflation are considered, per-pupil funding increased 30 percent from 1993 to 2004.



Summary

While student enrollment in USD 501 declined, its funding increased. Even so, USD 501 was one of the plaintiffs in the recent lawsuit against the State of Kansas. Given an after-inflation, per-pupil increase of 30 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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