

POLICY BRIEF

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FACTS ABOUT EDUCATION SPENDING IN KANSAS: WICHITA

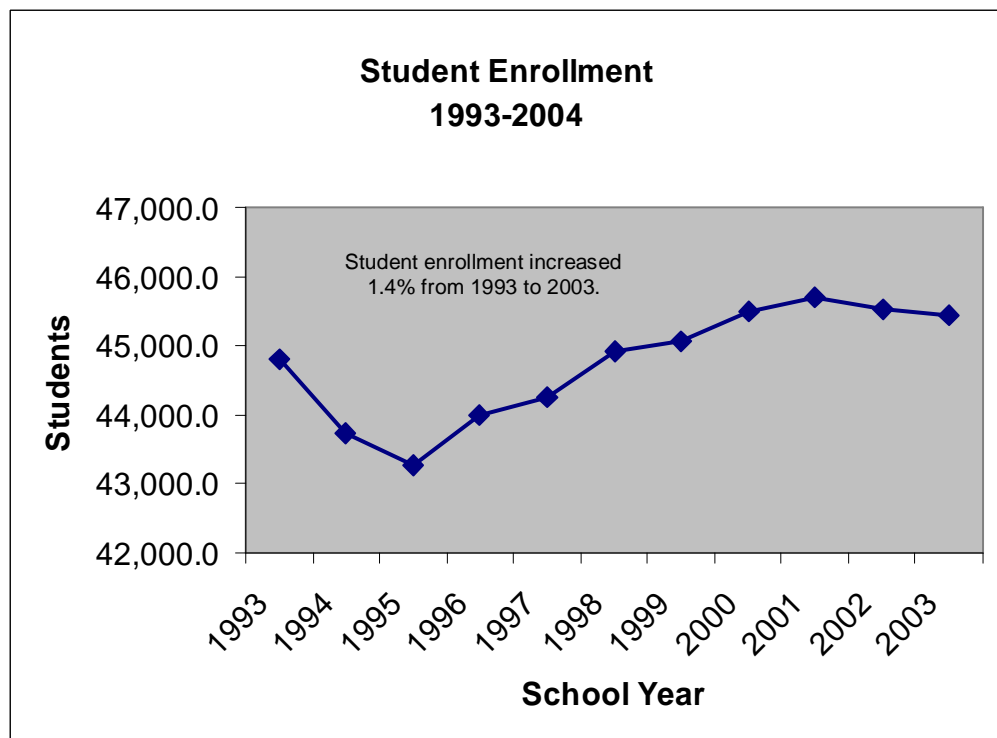
BY JOHN R. LAPLANTE

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 Wichita (USD 259) during that time?

Student enrollment is now 1.4 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 259 enrolled 44,792 students. Since then, enrollment has fluctuated, sometimes increasing and sometimes decreasing. The greatest year-to-year increase was a 1.7 percent rise between the 1995-1996 and 1996-1997 school years. The greatest year-to-year decline was 2.4 percent, between the 1993-1994 and 1994-1995 school years.

For the 2003-2004 school year, there were 45,441 students enrolled—an increase of 1.4 percent from 1993.

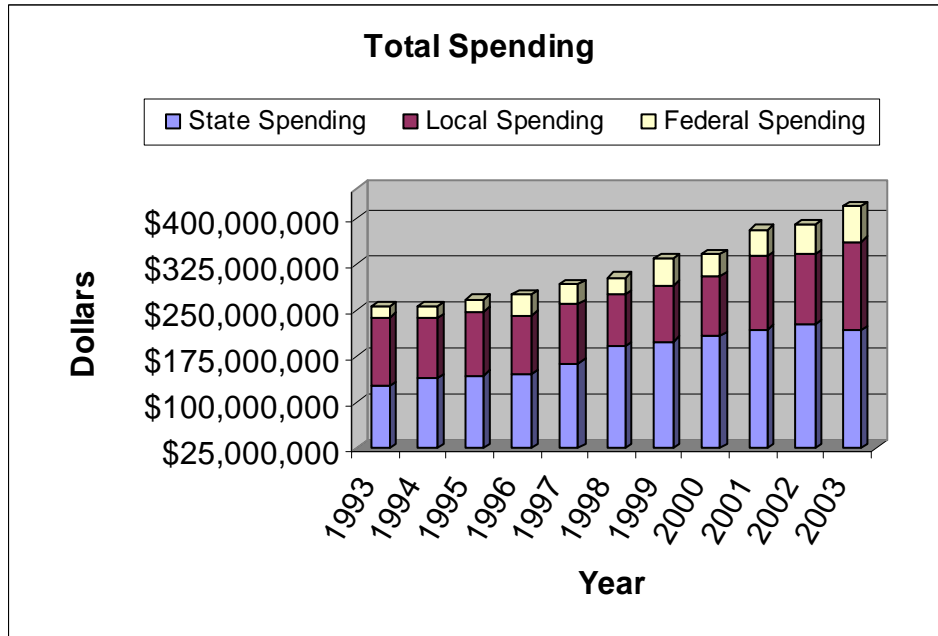


State Funding

Starting from a base of \$125.4 million in 1993-1994, state aid for USD 259 reached \$217.7 million in the 2003-2004 school year—an increase of 74 percent.

Local Funding

Local funding for USD 259 has also grown significantly. From a base of \$114.3 million in 1993, school aid rose to \$146.5 million in 2004—an increase of 28 percent.

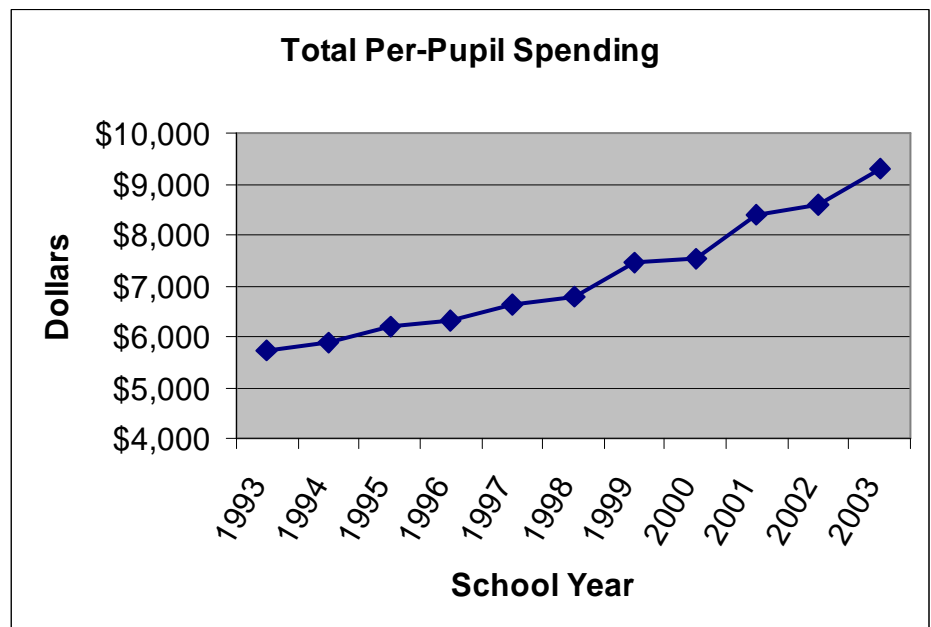


Total Funding

Combined with federal funding, total spending on K-12 education in USD 259 rose from \$257.2 million in 1993 to \$421.7 million in 2004—an increase of 64 percent.

Per-Pupil Spending Nears \$10,000

Though enrollment has gone up in USD 259, taxpayer funding has gone up even more, leading to a 62 percent increase in per-pupil spending. In the 2003-2004 school year, per-pupil spending was \$9,278. Even after accounting for the modest growth in enrollment, per-pupil funding increased 28 percent in inflation-adjusted terms.



Summary

While student enrollment in USD 259 grew slightly 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 28 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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