

DOLLARS AND DATA: A LOOK AT K-12 EDUCATION FUNDING IN COLORADO

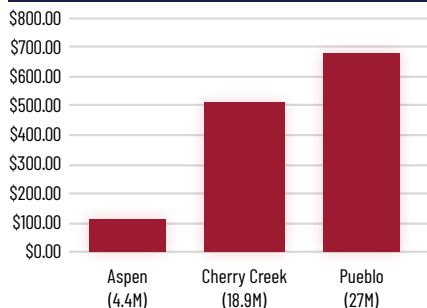
If Colorado is to have a substantive public discourse about how to improve educational outcomes, there needs to be a common understanding of how K-12 public education is funded in the state. This study analyzes trends in K-12 revenues and spending at the state, region and district level.

KEY FINDINGS:

Funding for K-12 education is at an all-time high. K-12 education funding has been steadily increasing since 2013 when the state's economy began rebounding from the Great Recession. It is now at the highest level it has been at in the state's history with total program funding at \$8,480 per student.



Local Property Tax Contribution to K-12 Total Program Spending
on a \$348,900 (state median value) Home in 2019



Structural flaws in the K-12 education funding system create inequities for local taxpayers and schools through both the collection and distribution of revenues. There is significant variation in the proportional amount taxpayers are contributing to public education through property taxes.

In some instances, localities such as Aspen School District are receiving more state dollars than less affluent school districts, such as its neighbor, Lake County.

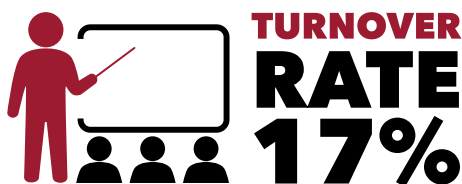
Downward trend in the share of dollars going to instructional staff.

- ↓ The share of spending allocated to instructional salaries declined 3.5 percentage points.
- ↑ Benefits spending increased by 1.5 percentage points, largely due to the doubling of annual PERA payments needed to cover the growing unfunded liability.
- ↑ Spending on non-instructional support and administrative functions increased from 41.1% to 44.7%.

Per Pupil Revenue

	LOCAL	STATE	TOTAL
Lake County	\$8,062	\$3,469	\$13,687
Aspen	\$21,422	\$3,663	\$25,567

Teacher salaries vary dramatically around the state and within the Metro Denver region. The average salary for the Metro region in 2017 was \$56,621, for example, which is 39 percent greater than the Southeast region's average salary of \$38,157.



TEACHERS



ALL OTHER JOBS

Teacher turnover is low in comparison to other jobs. The average turnover rate for Colorado employees in all other industries is nearly three times the turnover rate for teachers. Only 2.3 percent of teachers responding to a statewide survey in 2017 stated they planned to leave the field of education that year.

Policy Implications: These findings indicate that careful thought should be given to any policies or ballot initiatives focused on K-12 education funding. The current funding system has several serious flaws to its structure and increasing revenues without addressing those flaws is unlikely to improve student outcomes.