

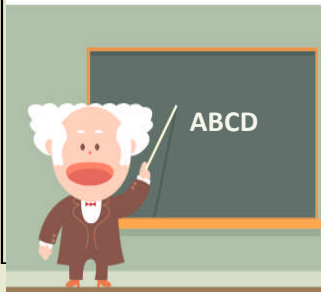


Special Issue Brief #3

NATIONAL EDUCATION STUDY

FUNDING AND EQUITY ISSUES

- A - Advocacy
- B - Budget
- C - Common Core Standards
- D - Don't Be left Behind



Need Larger Print?

If you find this print a little hard to read, you can make this newsletter larger. On the first page, look at the menu bar across the top. In the middle, where it shows - +, click in the % box and increase the size. That should help make it easier on the eyes to read.



Public school funding comes from many sources, federal, state and local taxes as well as grants provided by both governmental and non-governmental agencies. The federal government adds just about 10% to local school budgets but it contributes significantly to the rules for how funding is spent.

Nearly half of the funding for K-12 public schools in the U.S. is intended to come from the states through a mix of income taxes, fees and other taxes. However, some states are much lower, like Illinois, which provides only about 27%. In the south suburban region, it is not unusual for a district to receive as much as 80% or higher from the local prop-

erty tax. This information can be found on the district report cards (*see below*).



States that rely heavily on property taxes to fund their schools tend to have large inequities in school funding, which mirror the inequity of wealth in society at-large.

In 1991, a researcher named Ferguson found that spending levels had an effect which increased as the target of the funding moved closer to teaching students. Accordingly, Ferguson determined that student learning would be most profoundly

affected by investments in teacher quality measured by assessments of skills and knowledge as well as by experience and advanced degrees. In the first years of the ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 1965), two major programs were initiated. Title I (currently administered through the No Child Left Behind Act) and Title VI provided grants for handicapped students. Over time, Title VI grew and eventually became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and set a goal of providing 40% of the average pupil costs for qualifying students. That goal has never been met and covers only about 17% of the costs today. These costs continue to grow for all school districts.

FINDING OUT ABOUT YOUR DISTRICT

To find information about your own local public school district, you can check the Illinois State Board of Education website. The quickest way to get to the right page is to Google **School Report Card, Illinois**. This

should bring you to a page where you can put the name of your school, district or town in a search box and get your district information. You should take a look at the report card, if you have not already done so. It

contains information on your district. Percentage of local property tax, student test scores, average salary, percentage of non-English students, and ratio of students to teachers is just some of the information provided.

EQUITY

Research tells us that wealthy people earn much of their income from investments and inherited income. Poor people earn all of their income from jobs, and must spend it on food, housing, transportation, etc. Poor people



are not able to save much, if at all. Economists are in agreement that wealth inequity in the United States is currently at an historic high. In the U.S., the wealthiest 20% of the population owns 84% of total wealth, the second wealthiest 20% owns 11%, and so on until you get to the poor-

est 40%, which owns less than 1% of the total wealth. Since poorer students tend to live together in the same neighborhood, they are likely to attend a school with fewer highly qualified teachers, who prefer to work in more affluent districts for higher salaries and better working condi-



tions. This is just one example of inequality of educational opportunities. Schools in poorer neighborhoods in general, have fewer resources.

ADEQUACY

Without a good education, students may ultimately wind up in the prison system or on other government support.

Since 1990, school funding lawsuits have focused on adequacy - whether the state was providing local districts enough funding and resources to give all students a basic education as defined by experts at the time. The cost of an

adequate education varies. For instance, more money is needed to educate students from impoverished communities and students with special needs. When schools are not adequately funded, it causes a long-lasting im-

pact. Students without an adequate educational foundation may wind up in the prison system or dependent on government support because employment is hard to find. A correlation has been found between dropping out and prison.

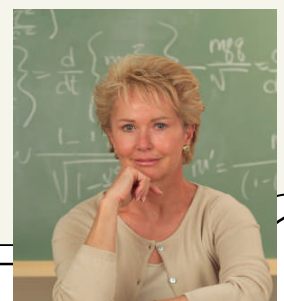
ACCOUNTABILITY

President George Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2001. The intended purpose was to close the achievement gap, particularly for minority students. However, the National Assessment of Educational Progress

found that scores were higher in math and reading for minority students before NCLB. Sanctions imposed by NCLB have the effect of punishing the low performing schools and teachers, sending the message that they are incompetent and

should not be allowed to make decisions about how to educate their students. Schools that do not improve in five years are subject to severe sanctions that could include loss of federal funding. This call for this type of accountability is viewed by many as

more harmful than helpful. The federal government did not have to account for why they did not fund the Act.



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Research tells us that young children learn very quickly in the early years. Early Childhood education has the ability to save money in later years because special programs may not be needed if the early work is done. This is especially true for children at risk for learning disabilities. Programs like Head Start, Even Start, Pre-K at Risk and components of NCLB have proven to be very successful in getting the small children ready

for Kindergarten. Low income families have also benefited from these special programs. This early work to prepare the small children to enter school with language skills, early reading skills, socialization skills and special pro-



grams for parents when needed helps to set them up for a successful school experience. It is estimated that for every dollar invested in early childhood education, ten cents on the dollar is later returned annually for the life of the child. However, Universal Preschool continues to be elusive as funding has been labeled “too expensive” even though the benefits would provide big returns.

SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS

In 1965, The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed by Congress and was the center of President Johnson’s War on Poverty. This was influenced by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Covered by this new Act were disabled children. An amendment to the original ESEA was for Title IV— aid

to handicapped children. Over the years this act was re-authorized several times finally becoming IDEA and then the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). IDEIA has four sections that cover the Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) of 6.6 million students ages 0 to 21. Funding requires

strict adherence to the federal mandates including the zero-reject policy in which no child is turned away for services. A student must qualify with one or more of 13 disabilities covered by IDEIA. Each child receives a tailored program (IEP) which places him or her in the least restrictive environment.

State and federal funds are provided at the 17% level instead of the 40% promised. The shortfall must then be provided by the local district but districts are so strapped for revenues right now that they are asking for waivers and have been receiving them. This program has high costs for every district.

GETTING TO CONSENSUS

Your local League should be having meetings by now to discuss the components of the study. You should also be reading the background information that is available on the LWVUS website. These Issue Briefs are condensed versions designed to help our members understand the issue. Reading the long form will provide a wider view on each issue and will add more details to your knowledge of the subject. The authors of the background papers, the **LWVUS Education Study Committee**, are listed on page four of this brief. They have done an excellent job of putting together the information needed for a consensus.

Remember that your local League consensus will be just one of many from across the Nation. Be also aware that your consensus may differ from the many opinions of your neighboring Leagues, or Leagues across the country. We are happy that you have participated in this project and hope you have learned about the issue.



League of Women Voters - South Suburban Cluster

LWVUS Education Study Committee - Background Papers

Peggy Hill - Co-Chair - Texas (Historical Perspectives)
 Joanne Leavitt - Co-Chair - California
 Pat Aaron - Illinois (Early Childhood Equity and Funding)
 Sanford Ostroy - Massachusetts
 Carolyn Jefferson Jenkins - Colorado (Role of Fed Gov in Pub Ed)
 Patricia Libutti - New Jersey (Disadvantaged Children)
 Jean Pierce - Illinois (Funding and Equity Issues)
 Janelle Rivers - South Carolina (Common Core Standards)

Outstanding Job! Thank You!



Questions or Comments?

issues@lwvil.org

To check in with the
LWVIL Issues Committee

**To read the long form on
School Funding and Equity:**

[http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?
Section=Home&TEMPLATE=/CM/
ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=17608](http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=17608)

Editor: Chris Slowik
LWV of the Palos-Orland Area



IMPORTANT MEETING DATES PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR



The following meetings are being held for the South Suburban Cluster:

- 1. September 17, 2011, 10AM to Noon** - Park Forest Village Hall, 350 Victory Drive, Park Forest
Jill Liapis from the South Cook Intermediate Service Center will speak on **Common Core Standards**.
**This meeting is open to other Leagues and the Public.*
- 2. October 22, 2011, 10AM to Noon** - Palos Heights Library, 12501 S. 71st Avenue in Palos Heights
Ralph Martire, Executive Director from the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability
will speak about **School Funding and Equity**. **This meeting is open to other Leagues and the Public.*
- 3. November 5, 2011, 10AM to 3PM** - Homewood Library, 17917 Dixie Highway in Homewood
SS Cluster Leagues will hear small group presentations and **conduct their consensus in break-out sessions**.
**Participants are responsible for bringing their own brown bag lunch.*



▶ **ALL CONSENSUS REPORTS ARE DUE TO BE POSTED ONLINE FOR LWVUS BY NOVEMBER 30, 2011**