

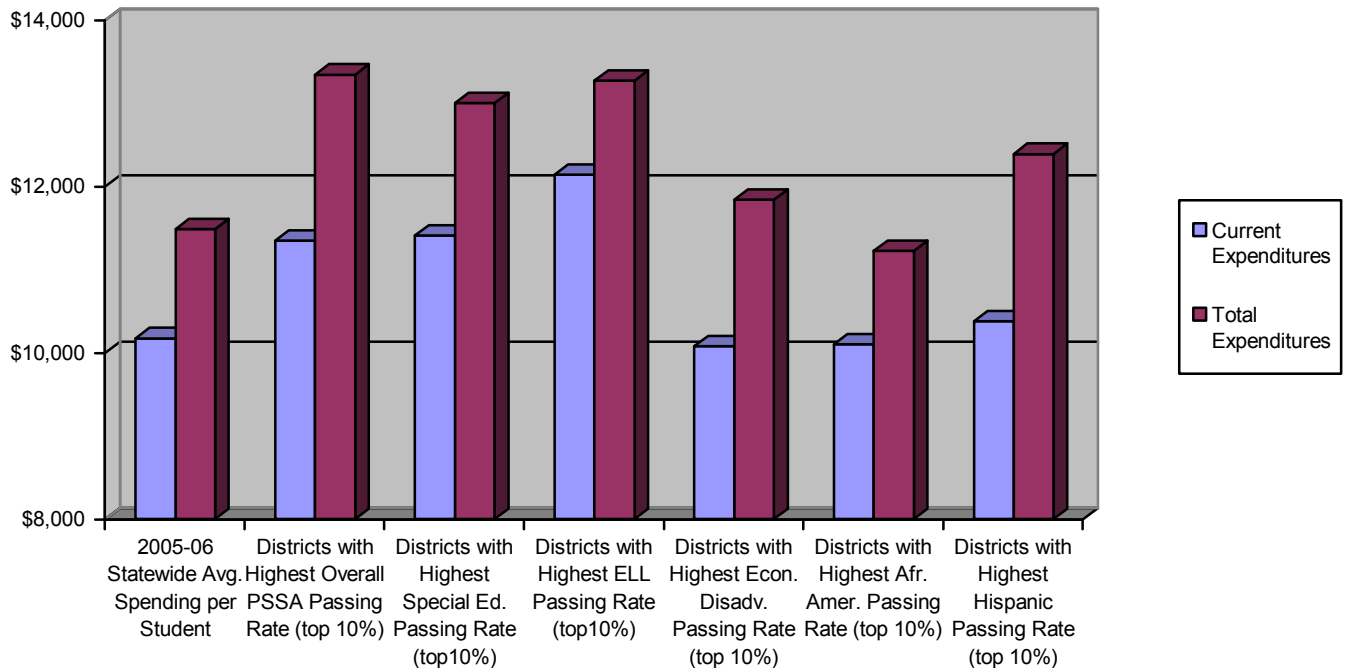
The Importance of Public School Funding to Students, Schools, and Communities

Introduction: Many studies show that the amount of funding has a direct impact on the quality of public education as well as students' academic success and educational outcomes. Although there are other factors that affect student performance, the direct impact of money on education cannot be ignored.

Impact of Funding on Students

- Academic achievement improves when students have access to challenging courses, skilled teachers, safe facilities, small class sizes, and up-to-date technology, libraries, and science labs. Struggling or disadvantaged students need extra help and costly support services.
- Many Pennsylvania public schools cannot afford these things. As a result, students in different communities often do not have an equal opportunity to receive a quality education and learn the information and skills required for success in life.
- On average, the highest test scores in Pennsylvania come from the schools spending the most --

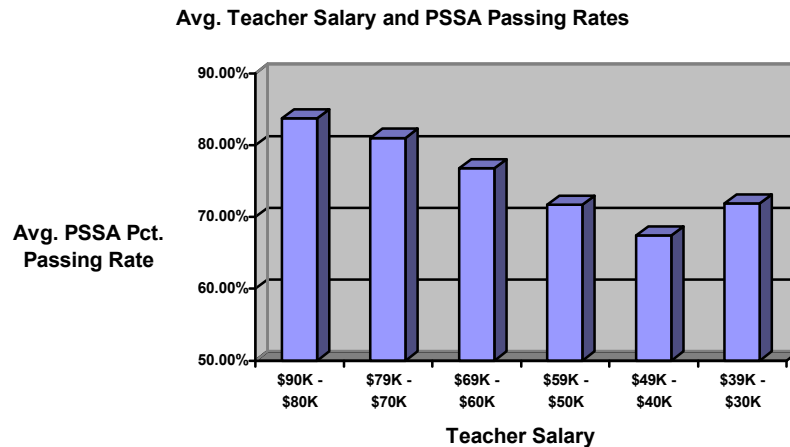
Public School Funding and Achievement in Pennsylvania
(2005-06 Funding Data. 2006-07 PSSA data, math and reading averaged)



- This chart shows that there is a significant relationship between school funding levels and closing the achievement gap in Pennsylvania. And throughout the state, 318 out of 501 school districts spend less than the state average per pupil. Almost 1 million children attend these districts and may not get a fair chance to learn in school or do well in life.

Impact of Funding on Schools

- Studies since 1985 show that public schools with better teachers, funding, and academic programs can help all students to reach higher levels of achievement.
- Quality public schools have also played an important part in closing the achievement gap between wealthy and poor students and between white students and students of color.
- There is a strong connection between teacher salaries and successful student outcomes in Pennsylvania. Average annual teacher salaries in school districts throughout the state range from \$34,935 to \$83,047. Districts with high average teacher salaries also have high PSSA scores --



- The average teacher salary varies by at least \$15,000 between neighboring school districts located within 10 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties, varies by at least \$10,000 in 15 additional counties, and varies by \$5,000 in nearly all other counties.

Impact of Funding on Communities

- All communities in Pennsylvania deserve and need excellent public schools. Quality schools help communities to enjoy a stronger work force, more stable employment, less poverty, improved public health, lower crime rates, and robust civic participation.
- Unfortunately, the success of local public schools often depends on whether enough local funding can be raised through property taxes and other revenue. In 2005-06, the 50 Pennsylvania school districts with the highest overall PSSA passing rates spent an average of nearly \$2,000 more per student than the statewide average. This adds up to \$50,000 more per classroom of 25 students and \$1.5 million more per school enrolling 750 students. The overall PSSA passing rate in these high-spending districts is 86.2%, compared to 51.3% in the 50 lowest performing districts.
- Local wealth often determines whether communities can afford strong public schools. Communities with higher property values and family income can tax themselves at a lower rate and still generate more revenue than low-wealth areas.
- In 2005-06, the 50 districts with the highest overall PSSA passing rates were able to tax themselves at a lower rate than the 50 districts with the lowest overall PSSA passing rates. Local taxes in the high-performing districts average about 21 equalized mills, while the lower-performing districts average 27 equalized mills.
- This significant tax difference shows that many low-performing school districts are making significant a tax effort in order to close achievement gaps. Local taxes in these struggling school districts often cannot be raised any further without creating hardships for families and businesses.
- This demonstrates the need for reform of the state funding system for public education.