

Running Head: FUNDING EQUITY: THE EXTREMES

# **Funding Equity in Oklahoma: The Extremes**

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October, 2009

**ABSTRACT**

This report attempts to answer the question of whether or not there are school districts that are perennial to the extremes in the funding of Oklahoma Schools from SY-99 to SY-08. Using data collected from these years, calculations of fiscal neutrality were made and a rank ordering of districts was performed and then collated over the ten year period. The top and bottom 10% of the districts were examined, and it was determined that in percentages of the total number of schools and school children, there was in fact a few small districts that were perennial to the top 10% and fewer still that were perennial to the bottom 10%.

**Table of Contents**

Introduction ..... 4

Hypotheses ..... 6

Definition of Terms ..... 7

Methodology ..... 8

Conclusions ..... 14

Recommendations ..... 16

References... ..... 17

Attachment A: Perennial Top, Bottom, or Either School Districts in Funding ..... 19

Charts:

1. Categorical Range, Correlation, Number, and Percentage of Students ..... 8
2. Statewide Range, Correlation, and Number ..... 9
3. Comparisons of Categorical Correlations ..... 10
4. Correlation of Rank Orders ..... 12
5. Number of Districts and Number of Years in the Extremes ..... 13

Graphs:

1. Percentage of Student Population for Each Funding Level ..... 5
2. Range of Funding For All Categories ..... 5
3. Range of Funding for Middle and Bottom Categories ..... 6
4. Comparison of Funding Categories' Pearson r ..... 9
5. Spearman rho: Year to Year Comparisons ..... 12
6. Number of Districts and Number of Years in the Extremes ..... 13

## **Funding Equity in Oklahoma: The Extremes**

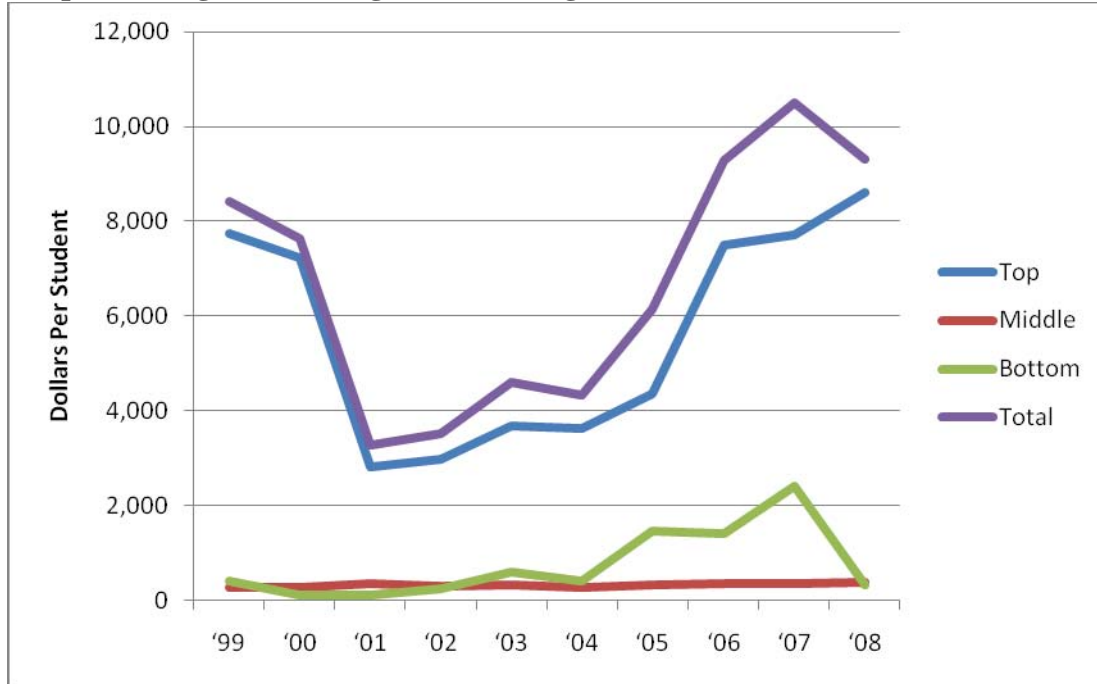
### **Introduction**

Following the November 2008 presentation of *A Choice of Funding Formulas* (Hancock) before the Oklahoma State Senate task force created by SB-925 (2007), an eight member committee comprised of educators and business people appointed by the governor and legislative leaders, several questions concerning the equity of the funding formulas were posed by the members of this committee. One general direction of questioning was centered on the districts that were on the extremes, outside of the middle 80% of school districts that comprise the restricted range used to compare the equity of funding found in Oklahoma Common Schools. Central to the line of questioning was "Are there schools that are perennial to the top and bottom 10% of schools in dollars per student funding?" The immediate answer was, "There seems to be. However, I am not sure, but that information can be ascertained."

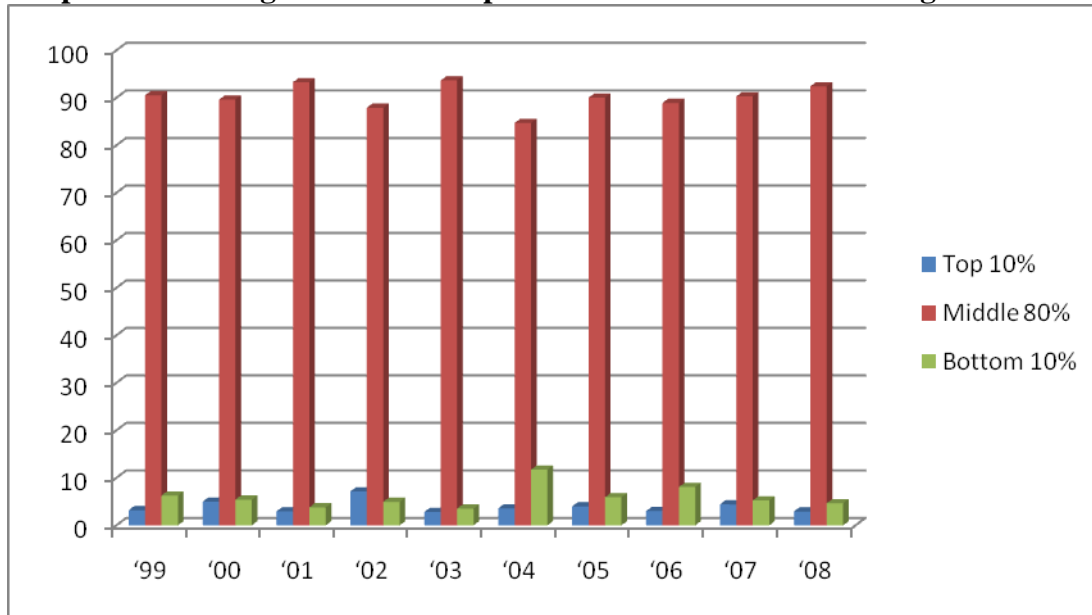
The Oklahoma funding formula has been demonstrated, in several studies (Hancock, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2008), to be equitable at a fairly high level to the vast majority of the students in Oklahoma, regardless of where they may live in the state. The quest of the state senate committee was to determine if there was a simpler formula to fund the schools in the state. One troubling aspect of the funding of Oklahoma's common schools has been the total range of funding. That figure has typically been anywhere from over \$3,000 to slightly above \$10,000 (Graph 2), yet at the same time, the middle 80% of the districts that usually contain around 90% of all students (Graph 1) has hovered around the \$300 to \$350 mark (Graph 3); thus, the reason for that main question of perennial districts. Sadly, the question did not center so much on the

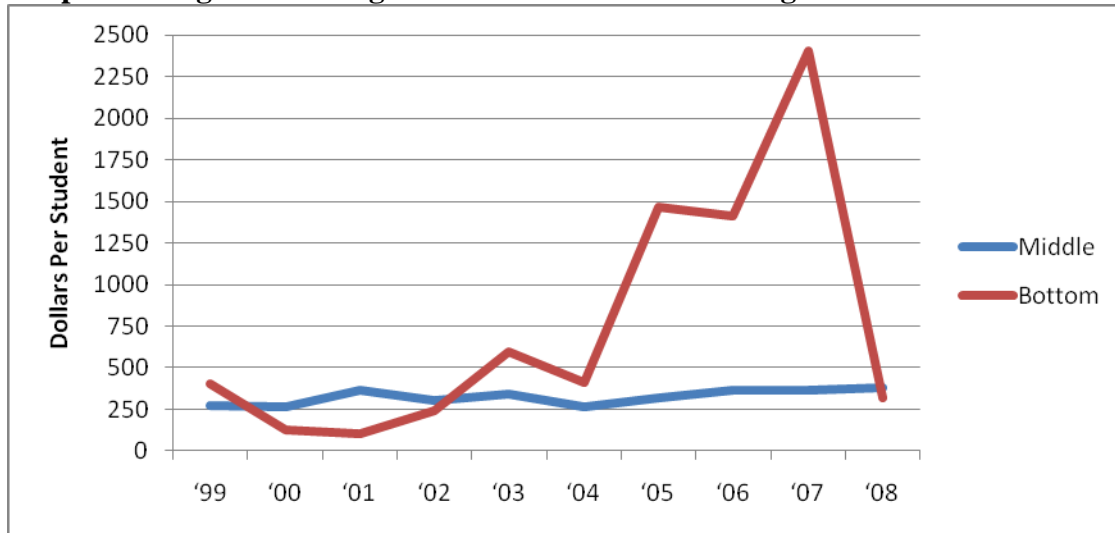
poor districts that may find themselves always at the bottom, but mainly the questions from the committee centered on the districts at the top end of funding.

**Graph 1: Range of Funding For All Categories**



**Graph 2: Percentage of Student Population for each level of funding.**



**Graph 3: Range of Funding for Middle and Bottom Categories**

The main purpose of this paper is to answer the question of whether or not there are school districts in the state of Oklahoma that are perennial to the top or bottom 10% of funding each year. In addition, the methodology used for this quest provided an opportunity to view and compare various other aspects of the 10-80-10 percent split of the school districts. Thus, the following general hypotheses were created:

1. There are school districts that are perennial to the top 10% in funding per student.
2. There are school districts that are perennial to the bottom 10% in funding per student.
3. There is no difference in the fiscal neutrality of funding of the top 10%, bottom 10%, and the middle 80% of the school districts.
4. There is no relationship in the rank ordering of school districts from year to year in the state of Oklahoma according to funding per student.

### Definition of Terms

***Fiscal neutrality:*** The wealth of the state, as a whole, must be behind every student (Monk, 1990). Such a situation occurs when there is little or no correlation between the ability of a

district to raise revenue for education and the total amount of revenue raised from all sources.

For this study, two measures of fiscal neutrality will be used.

First, fiscal neutrality is defined as an inverse relationship between district wealth and the amount of money that can be appropriated by the state to fund a district's educational program (Berne, 1984). A perfect inverse relationship would be a correlation of a negative one (-1) which means that the state sends more money to the poorer districts than to the rich districts based upon the ability of a district to support its public schools.

Second, fiscal neutrality is defined as the difference in total generated dollar amounts per pupil between the highest and lowest funded districts after the top 10% and the bottom 10% of the districts have been removed (Restricted Range) from a rank ordered list of districts based on dollar amounts per pupil (Berne, 1984).

***Per-pupil revenue:*** The total dollars available divided by the Weighted Average Daily Attendance of a school district.

***WADM or Weighted Average Daily Membership:*** Weights given to students whose special circumstances require greater number of dollars to educate as well as weights given to districts based on specific criteria which require a district to expend more money to operate its educational program.

***District Wealth:*** The product of the total net assessed valuation of a school district time 35 mills plus a district's total State Dedicated funds per WADM.

**Methodology**

This study was conducted with data gathered from a ten (10) year period from the *Annual Report* provided by the State Department of Oklahoma for each school year from SY-99 to SY-08. Spreadsheets were constructed that contained the names of the district and county, tax base level, student counts, and revenue amounts from the various sources.

The data from each year was placed in rank order according to the dollar amount per student. A calculation of range from the top and bottom was performed and recorded. A Pearson r correlation coefficient was calculated for all of the districts using the following formula:

$$r = \frac{\sum xy}{\sqrt{(\sum x^2 * \sum y^2)}} \text{ (Horowitz, 1974) to determine fiscal neutrality.}$$

For each year, the districts were separated according to the top 10%, middle 80%, and bottom 10% of funding per student. The top and bottom 10% for each year was a total of 54 school districts in each of the extreme categories for a total of 108 school districts. The middle 80% of the districts total varied in a slow declining manner during the 10 year period.

Once the districts were separated into the three categories of top 10%, middle 80%, and bottom 10%, the calculations of range and Pearson r correlation coefficients were performed within each group. The range calculation within the middle 80% of the districts is classified as a Restricted Range and is a measure of fiscal neutrality (Berne, 1984). These calculations are presented in the following charts along with the number of districts and the percentage of the student population for each category.

**Chart 1: Categorical Range, Correlation, Number, and Percent of Student**

<b>Top 10%</b>	<b>'99</b>	<b>'00</b>	<b>'01</b>	<b>'02</b>	<b>'03</b>	<b>'04</b>	<b>'05</b>	<b>'06</b>	<b>'07</b>	<b>'08</b>
<i>Range</i>	7,738	7,231	2,814	2,981	3,676	3,634	4,358	7,507	7,710	8,613
<i>r</i>	-0.74	-0.79	-0.89	-0.87	-0.86	-0.85	-0.76	-0.76	-0.77	-0.72
<i>n</i>	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
<i>% of Stud. Pop.</i>	3.18	4.97	2.93	7.15	2.81	3.57	3.99	3.00	4.41	2.92



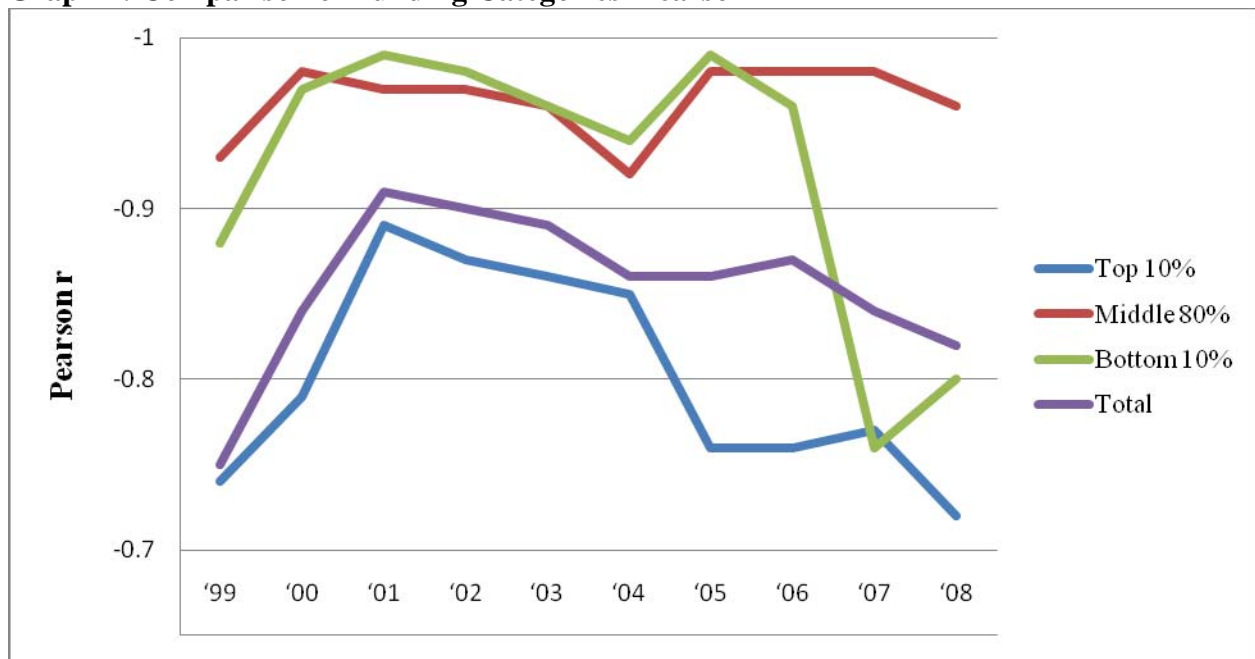
<b>Middle 80%</b>	<b>'99</b>	<b>'00</b>	<b>'01</b>	<b>'02</b>	<b>'03</b>	<b>'04</b>	<b>'05</b>	<b>'06</b>	<b>'07</b>	<b>'08</b>
<i>Range</i>	272	264	364	306	343	267	318	363	366	380
<i>r</i>	-0.93	-0.98	-0.97	-0.97	-0.96	-0.92	-0.98	-0.98	-0.98	-0.96
<i>n</i>	436	436	435	434	433	433	432	432	432	431
<i>% of Stud. Pop.</i>	90.54	89.62	93.28	87.91	93.66	84.70	90.03	88.92	90.33	92.42
<b>Bottom 10%</b>	<b>'99</b>	<b>'00</b>	<b>'01</b>	<b>'02</b>	<b>'03</b>	<b>'04</b>	<b>'05</b>	<b>'06</b>	<b>'07</b>	<b>'08</b>
<i>Range</i>	405	126	105	239	596	415	1,463	1,411	2,408	317
<i>r</i>	-0.88	-0.97	-0.99	-0.98	-0.96	-0.94	-0.99	-0.96	-0.76	-0.80
<i>n</i>	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54	54
<i>% of Stud. Pop.</i>	6.28	5.41	3.79	4.94	3.53	11.73	5.9	8.07	5.26	4.66

In addition to the calculations in the three divisions, calculations for the entire state were performed for range, Pearson r correlation coefficient, and number. The following chart and graph illustrates these results.

**Chart 2: State Wide Range, Correlation, and Number**

<b>Total</b>	<b>'99</b>	<b>'00</b>	<b>'01</b>	<b>'02</b>	<b>'03</b>	<b>'04</b>	<b>'05</b>	<b>'06</b>	<b>'07</b>	<b>'08</b>
<i>Range</i>	8,420	7,623	3,284	3,531	4,617	4,321	6,144	9,287	10,489	9,316
<i>r</i>	-0.75	-0.84	-0.91	-0.90	-0.89	-0.86	-0.86	-0.87	-0.84	-0.82
<i>n</i>	544	544	543	542	541	541	540	540	540	539

**Graph 4: Comparison of Funding Categories' Pearson r**



A test of the difference of the r's between the top 10% and middle 80%, the middle 80% and the bottom 10%, and the top 10% and the bottom 10% was performed. The Z score was determined by taking the differences of the Fisher's z's,  $z^* = \frac{1}{2} [\log e (1+r) - \log e(1-r)]$  (Edwards, 1954), and dividing it by the Standard Error,  $SE = \text{SQRT}(1/n_1-3 + 1/n_2-3)$  (Horowitz, 1974).

The following chart contains the results of the calculations:

**Chart 3: Comparisons of Categories Correlations**

	<b>r</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>z*</b>	<b>Top &amp; Middle</b>	<b>Bottom &amp; Middle</b>	<b>Top &amp; Bottom</b>	<b>1999</b>
<b>Top</b>	-0.739	54	-0.948	0.188	0.043	0.145	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Middle</b>	-0.927	436	-1.637	0.148	0.148	0.198	<b>Standard Error</b>
<b>Bottom</b>	-0.884	54	-1.394	1.270	0.290	0.732	<b>Z score</b>
							<b>2000</b>
<b>Top</b>	-0.789	54	-1.069	0.192	0.010	0.182	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Middle</b>	-0.981	436	-2.323	0.148	0.148	0.198	<b>Standard Error</b>
<b>Bottom</b>	-0.971	54	-2.110	1.270	0.068	0.919	<b>Z score</b>
							<b>2001</b>
<b>Top</b>	-0.789	54	-1.417	0.081	-0.019	0.100	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Middle</b>	-0.981	435	-2.092	0.148	0.148	0.198	<b>Standard Error</b>
<b>Bottom</b>	-0.971	54	-2.599	0.547	-0.128	0.505	<b>Z score</b>
							<b>2002</b>
<b>Top</b>	-0.789	54	-1.346	0.100	-0.009	0.109	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Middle</b>	-0.981	434	-2.146	0.148	0.148	0.198	<b>Standard Error</b>
<b>Bottom</b>	-0.971	54	-2.351	0.675	-0.061	0.550	<b>Z score</b>
							<b>2003</b>
<b>Top</b>	-0.789	54	-1.305	0.101	0.000	0.101	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Middle</b>	-0.981	433	-2.000	0.148	0.148	0.198	<b>Standard Error</b>
<b>Bottom</b>	-0.971	54	-2.000	0.682	0.000	0.510	<b>Z score</b>
							<b>2004</b>
<b>Top</b>	-0.789	54	-1.271	0.061	-0.020	0.081	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Middle</b>	-0.981	433	-1.557	0.148	0.148	0.198	<b>Standard Error</b>
<b>Bottom</b>	-0.971	54	-1.697	0.412	-0.135	0.409	<b>Z score</b>
							<b>2005</b>
<b>Top</b>	-0.789	54	-0.989	0.227	-0.001	0.228	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Middle</b>	-0.981	432	-2.410	0.148	0.148	0.198	<b>Standard Error</b>
<b>Bottom</b>	-0.971	54	-2.443	1.533	-0.007	1.151	<b>Z score</b>

	<b>r</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>z*</b>	<b>Top &amp; Middle</b>	<b>Bottom &amp; Middle</b>	<b>Top &amp; Bottom</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Top</b>	-0.789	54	-1.011	0.212	0.221	-0.009	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Middle</b>	-0.981	432	-2.249	0.148	0.148	0.198	<b>Standard Error</b>
<b>Bottom</b>	-0.971	54	-0.989	1.431	-0.007	-0.045	<b>Z score</b>
							<b>2007</b>
<b>Top</b>	-0.789	54	-1.011	0.212	0.221	-0.009	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Middle</b>	-0.981	432	-2.249	0.148	0.148	0.198	<b>Standard Error</b>
<b>Bottom</b>	-0.971	54	-0.989	1.431	1.492	-0.045	<b>Z score</b>
							<b>2008</b>
<b>Top</b>	-0.789	54	-0.899	0.245	0.161	0.084	<b>Difference</b>
<b>Middle</b>	-0.981	431	-1.959	0.148	0.148	0.198	<b>Standard Error</b>
<b>Bottom</b>	-0.971	54	-1.099	1.654	1.087	0.424	<b>Z score</b>

(\* , p < .01)

To determine the stability of the rank of the school districts in Oklahoma, a single spreadsheet was created in which every district's rank by dollars per WADM per year was recorded and then aligned according to district. During this process, only those school districts that were in existence during all of the 10 year period were included. Thus, the total number of districts included in this part of the study was 539.

Following this alignment, the following calculations were performed on the data for each district over the 10 year period: the mean rank and the standard deviation for each mean rank. Then, the data was sorted according to the standard deviation of each district. This sort provided a rank order of the stability of the districts over the 10 year period of the study. The range of standard deviations was from 1.23 to 212.46. The standard deviation of the standard deviations was 43.4 with a mean of 102.37. A z score was calculated for every district. Thirteen districts had z scores of 1.96 or higher while 14 districts had z scores -1.96 or lower. No school district fell outside of ±2.58 standard deviations.

A Spearman correlation coefficient was performed to determine if there was a correlation of the rank scores from year to year using the formula  $p = 1 - [(6\sum D^2)/(n(n^2 - 1))]$  (Kachigan,

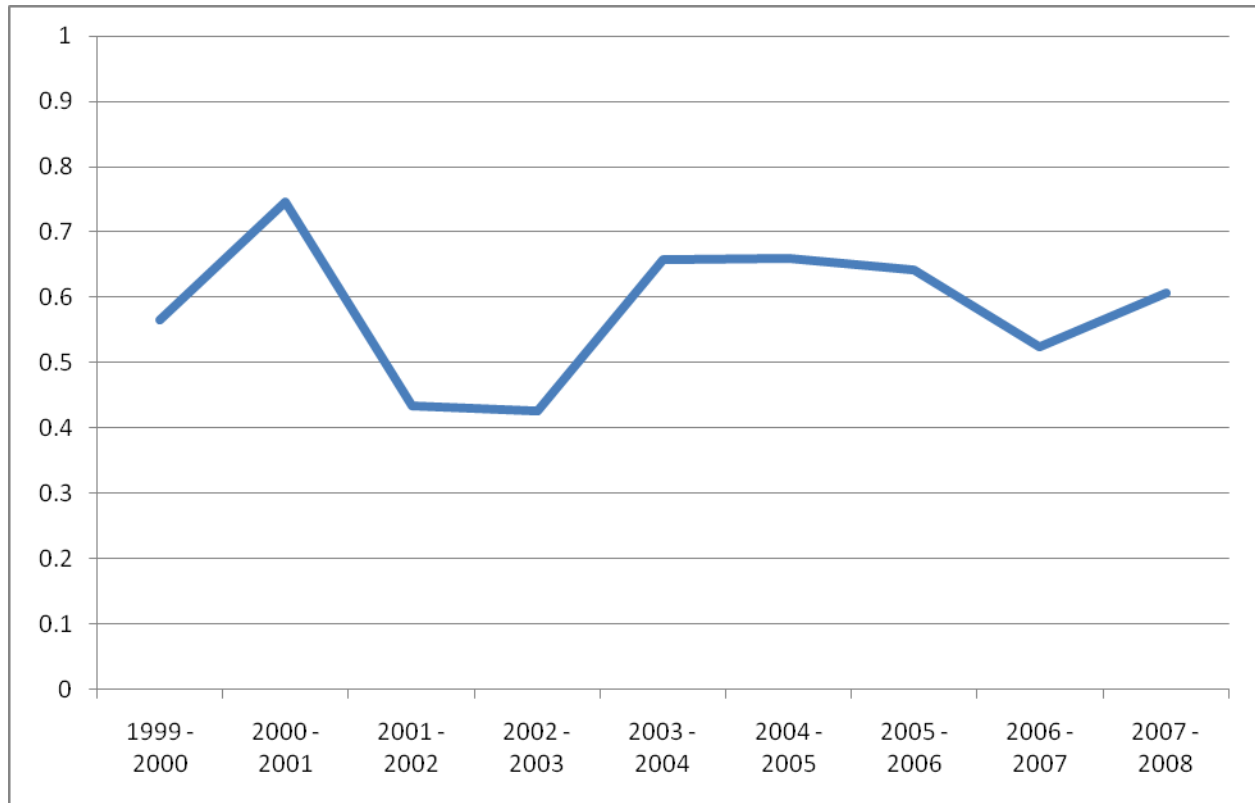
1986). The correlation coefficients were tested for significance from zero by converting the p into a Fisher's z (z\*) (Gravetter and Wallnau, 2000) using the formula  $z^* = \frac{1}{2} [\log e (1+r) - \log e(1-r)]$  (Edwards, 1954) and then dividing the standard error,  $\text{SQRT}[1/(n-3)]$ , into the z\*. The following table illustrates these calculations and indicates importance.

**Chart 4: Correlations of Rank Orders**

Years	Spearman rho	Fisher z*	Z score
1999 - 2000	0.566	0.642	15.26*
2000 - 2001	0.746	0.964	22.93*
2001 - 2002	0.434	0.464	11.03*
2002 - 2003	0.426	0.455	10.82*
2003 - 2004	0.657	0.788	18.74*
2004 - 2005	0.660	0.793	18.86*
2005 - 2006	0.642	0.762	18.12*
2006 - 2007	0.525	0.583	13.88*
2007 - 2008	0.606	0.703	16.71*

(\* , p < .01)

**Graph 5: Spearman rho: Year to Year Comparisons**

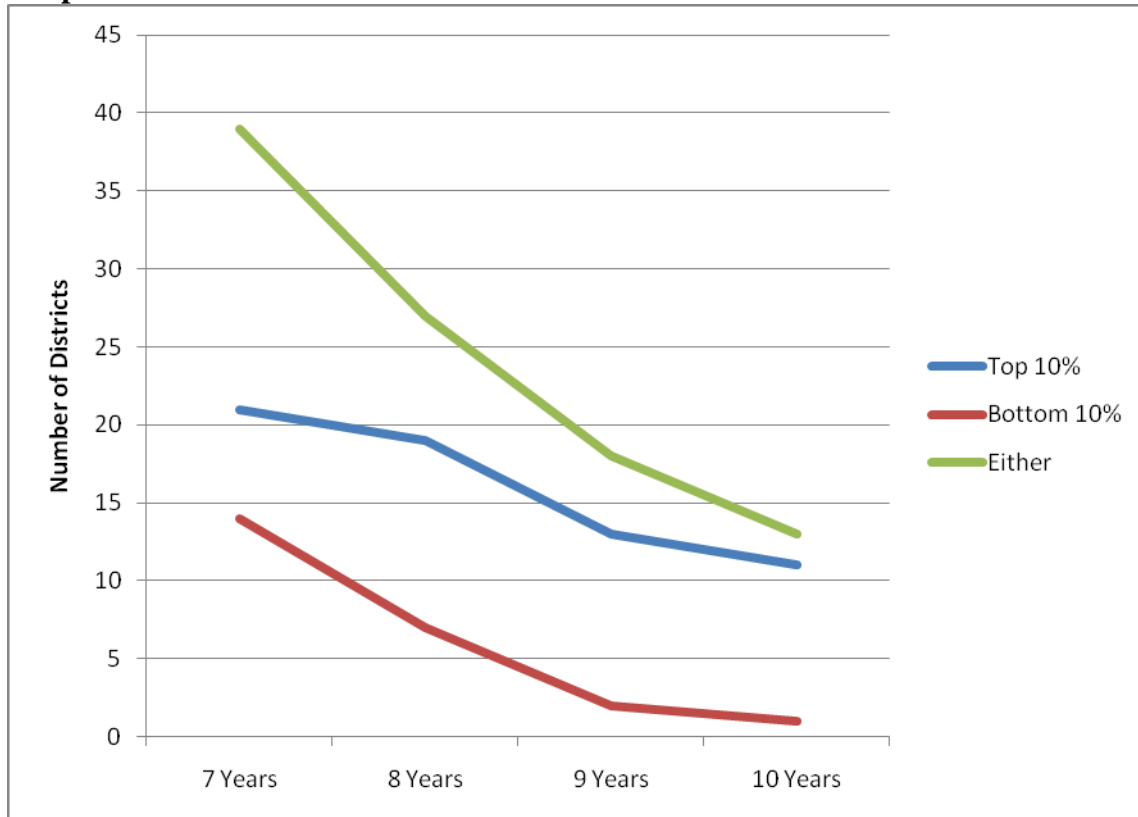


An additional measure of stability was performed that would clarify exactly which districts were, if any, perennial to the top or bottom 10% of funding. A count was taken of how many times a district was in the top 10%, bottom 10%, or both during the 10 year period. An arbitrary number of seven (7) was chosen to indicate a significant number of times that a district was found in any of the classifications. (See Appendix A) The following chart and graph provides the details and a visual of this information.

**Chart 5: Number of Districts and Number of Years in the Extremes**

Number out of 10 Years	Number of Districts in		
	Top 10%	Bottom 10%	Either
7 Years	21	14	39
8 Years	19	7	27
9 Years	13	2	18
10 Years	11	1	13

**Graph 6: Number of Districts and Number of Years in the Extremes**



## Conclusions

### ***1. There are school districts that are perennial to the top 10% in funding per student.***

When looking at Chart 5, it is easy to determine that nearly half of the top 54 school districts in the state of Oklahoma are present nearly every year. While only about 20% have been there for all ten years, seven out of 10 years is a large percentage of the time. Thus, there seems to be at least 11 districts that are perennial to the top 10 percent of funded schools.

### ***2. There are school districts that are perennial to the bottom 10% in funding per student.***

Also looking at Chart 5, there are a few districts that have always been in the bottom of the funding with only one (1) district that has been there every year for the last 10 years.

There seems to be mixed messages coming from the data over this ten year period. Chart 4 tells a story of a degree of stability of funding. There is a correlation, though somewhat mild in degree, but with very important differences from a zero correlation. Yet, the standard deviations of the ranks averaged over 100 places of change. However, with the range of the middle 80% of the districts averaging just under \$325 and the number of districts within the middle being over 400, a move of 100 places may not mean more than about \$150 per student in funding from one year to the next. In addition to that, Chart 5 also demonstrates that there were 39 districts that were in either the top or bottom at least 7 of the 10 years. These data points seem to provide evidence that the funding formula is working as designed in that its function is to adjust the state appropriations according to the ability of a district to support its own educational endeavors.

More study is needed in this area of specific districts as to why these districts at the extremes find themselves in their particular rank from year to year. The speculation is that the districts perennial to the top are "breaking" the funding formula; meaning that they generate

more local money than is needed to support their school system. The geography of these districts seems to be mainly in isolated areas of the state with few students.

Additional attention needs to be paid to the bottom 10% of the districts as to what causes them to be in the bottom, whether it is a tax collection issue due to non-payment, protest, or business closings or moves, to name a few possible causes. However, one point of interest in the bottom group is the range calculations. Four of the 10 years, the range in the bottom was lower than the middle 80%, and the correlation coefficients were very close to the middle 80% if not better. These indicate that the formula is working.

***3. There is no difference in the fiscal neutrality of funding of the top 10%, bottom 10%, and the middle 80% of the school districts.***

This hypothesis is accepted as it relates to the correlation coefficients, but rejected as it relates to the range of actual dollars per child. The wide range of funding affects only a few people in the state, but the differences in the range calculations demonstrate that there is a difference in the ability of some school districts to provide an equal educational opportunity for all the children in the state. Again, the funding formula is working as designed as demonstrated by the correlation coefficient. The wealthier districts are receiving less state dollars per student while the poorer districts are receiving more state dollars per child. In the end, the middle 80% of the districts that have about 90% of the students are on a fairly equitable educational footing.

***4. There is no relationship in the rank ordering of school districts from year to year in the state of Oklahoma according to funding per student.***

This hypothesis is rejected. Chart 4 provides evidence that while the correlation coefficients are mild, the z scores indicate that there is an important difference from a zero correlation in each of the consecutive years. Thus, there is a relationship from year to year in the rankings of the school districts. The correlations being called mild is evidenced by the mean

calculation of the standard deviations of the yearly rankings of the districts being 102.37. This indicates that there is a great deal of movement each year in the rankings of the school districts.

However, with the interpretation of the movement in rank, the few districts being in the bottom 10%, the ever declining number of districts that are found each year in the top and bottom 10%, and the evidence that some districts have been in both extreme categories during the 10 years in the study are indications that the funding formula is providing equity in funding across the state by subtracting a local district's ability from the guarantee provided in the state formula each year.

### **Recommendations**

More study is needed to determine the "Why?" behind the reasons a school district is in one of the extreme categories, and is there something that can be adjusted in the funding formula that would further balance the level of equity the funding formula produces.



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## Appendix A.

**Perennial Top 10% School Districts in Funding from SY-99 to SY-08**

	<b>District</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Top 10</b>	<b>Bottom 10</b>	<b>Total in both</b>
65	I015 SWEETWATER	ROGER MILLS	10	0	10
70	C080 STRAIGHT	TEXAS	10	0	10
13	C001 PLAINVIEW	CIMARRON	10	0	10
65	I007 CHEYENNE	ROGER MILLS	10	0	10
65	I003 LEEDEY	ROGER MILLS	10	0	10
65	I056 HAMMON	ROGER MILLS	10	0	10
65	I006 REYDON	ROGER MILLS	10	0	10
71	I008 TIPTON	TILLMAN	10	0	10
52	I004 FRONTIER	NOBLE	10	0	10
21	C014 LEACH	DELAWARE	10	0	10
1	C032 GREASY	ADAIR	10	0	10
48	C024 TOM	McCURTAIN	9	0	9
4	I075 BALKO	BEAVER	9	0	9
30	I001 LAVERNE	HARPER	8	0	8
27	I033 WAKITA	GRANT	8	0	8
23	I039 GAGE	ELLIS	8	0	8
23	I002 FARGO	ELLIS	8	1	9
39	I004 PANOLA	LATIMER	8	1	9
4	I022 BEAVER	BEAVER	8	2	10
51	I008 OKTAHA	MUSKOGEE	7	0	7
4	I128 TURPIN	BEAVER	7	0	7

**Perennial Bottom 10% School Districts in Funding from SY-99 to SY-08**

	<b>District</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Top 10</b>	<b>Bottom 10</b>	<b>Total in both</b>
69	C082 GRANDVIEW	STEPHENS	0	10	10
60	C104 OAK GROVE	PAYNE	0	9	9
48	C072 HOLLY CREEK	McCURTAIN	0	8	8
26	C037 FRIEND	GRADY	0	8	8
51	C009 WAINWRIGHT	MUSKOGEE	0	8	8
40	C004 SHADY POINT	LE FLORE	0	8	8
16	CO49 BISHOP	COMANCHE	0	8	8
34	I014 RINGLING	JEFFERSON	1	7	8
63	C032 S ROCK CREEK	POTTAWATOMIE	0	7	7
63	I003 BETHEL	POTTAWATOMIE	0	7	7
72	C018 LEONARD	TULSA	0	7	7
55	I088 BETHANY	OKLAHOMA	0	7	7
46	C043 OSAGE	MAYES	0	7	7
68	CO56 MOFFETT	SEQUOYAH	0	7	7

**Perennial School Districts in Funding from SY-99 to SY-08  
in Either the Top or Bottom 10%**

	<b>District</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Top 10</b>	<b>Bottom 10</b>	<b>Total in both</b>	
69	C082	GRANDVIEW	STEPHENS	0	10	10
4	I022	BEAVER	BEAVER	8	2	10
65	I015	SWEETWATER	ROGER MILLS	10	0	10
70	C080	STRAIGHT	TEXAS	10	0	10
13	C001	PLAINVIEW	CIMARRON	10	0	10
65	I007	CHEYENNE	ROGER MILLS	10	0	10
65	I003	LEEDEY	ROGER MILLS	10	0	10
65	I056	HAMMON	ROGER MILLS	10	0	10
65	I006	REYDON	ROGER MILLS	10	0	10
71	I008	TIPTON	TILLMAN	10	0	10
52	I004	FRONTIER	NOBLE	10	0	10
21	C014	LEACH	DELAWARE	10	0	10
1	C032	GREASY	ADAIR	10	0	10
60	C104	OAK GROVE	PAYNE	0	9	9
23	I002	FARGO	ELLIS	8	1	9
39	I004	PANOLA	LATIMER	8	1	9
48	C024	TOM	McCURTAIN	9	0	9
4	I075	BALKO	BEAVER	9	0	9
48	C072	HOLLY CREEK	McCURTAIN	0	8	8
26	C037	FRIEND	GRADY	0	8	8
51	C009	WAINWRIGHT	MUSKOGEE	0	8	8
40	C004	SHADY POINT	LE FLORE	0	8	8
16	CO49	BISHOP	COMANCHE	0	8	8
34	I014	RINGLING	JEFFERSON	1	7	8
30	I001	LAVERNE	HARPER	8	0	8
27	I033	WAKITA	GRANT	8	0	8
23	I039	GAGE	ELLIS	8	0	8
63	C032	S ROCK CREEK	POTTAWATOMIE	0	7	7
63	I003	BETHEL	POTTAWATOMIE	0	7	7
72	C018	LEONARD	TULSA	0	7	7
55	I088	BETHANY	OKLAHOMA	0	7	7
46	C043	OSAGE	MAYES	0	7	7
68	CO56	MOFFETT	SEQUOYAH	0	7	7
22	I010	TALOGA	DEWEY	6	1	7
75	I011	CANUTE	WASHITA	6	1	7
39	I003	BUFFALO VALLEY	LATIMER	6	1	7
39	I001	WIBURTON	LATIMER	6	1	7
51	I008	OKTAHA	MUSKOGEE	7	0	7
4	I128	TURPIN	BEAVER	7	0	7