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Money Matters to All Students

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Abstract

The question whether money matters in education strikes at the foundation of America's democracy—an educated electorate. Despite decades of evidence that money does matter, the question still remains unanswered among many and even answered to the contrary of the evidence. It is important to fully understand that money does matter in American education, American lives, and America's future and to increase awareness of political and social factors that undermine that money matters for all students to learn.

Keywords: funding, education, politics, equity

Introduction

The relationship between school funding and student achievement in American public education is a complex and hotly debated issue. Research consistently points to a positive association between increased funding and improved student outcomes, particularly in schools serving economically disadvantaged students (Rothstein et al., 2016). Adequate funding is crucial for schools to attract and retain high-quality teachers, provide essential resources for effective instruction, and offer support services tailored to diverse student needs (Martin et al., 2018). Moreover, higher funding levels have been linked to lower dropout rates, higher graduation rates, and improved test scores (Barnum, 2018).

In 1916, John Dewey highlighted the intrinsic relationship between education and society, asserting that the quality of education is a reflection of the vitality of community life. As we grapple with the complexities of contemporary education, Dewey's insights prompt us to question: Can financial resources truly shape educational outcomes? The current educational landscape is marked by significant changes, such as the introduction of vouchers for schools (Hinh, 2023). However, underlying these changes are concerns about issues like student segregation and reduced funding for public schools (Hinh, 2023). Moreover, the involvement of politicians in determining school curricula adds another layer of complexity (Bridges, 2023; Schwartz, 2021). Given these challenges, it is imperative to examine the impact of financial allocations on student success. This

article endeavors to explore the intricate interplay between school finance, educational equity, and the overarching goal of providing all students with a brighter future.

School Funding: Does Money Matter?

During a Senate Appropriations subcommittee hearing on June 6, 2017, then Education Secretary Betsy DeVos stated: "The notion that spending more money is going to bring about different results is ill-placed and ill-advised" (Lattimore, 2017, para. 2). This incited heightened attention to a decades-old question in education, "Does money matter?" In fact, Baker (2019) described a "wide-spread political effort to argue that improving the quality of schools has little or nothing to do with the amount of money spent on public education . . . money simply doesn't matter" (p. 1). First, let's put things into perspective, "Does education matter for the United States?"

Democratic nations demand civic engagement, for without, they are no longer democratic. Higher education increases civic engagement (Martin et al., 2018). As a democracy, the United States requires a well-educated citizenry to function and, as any other democracy, to protect it from possible coups (Glaeser et al., 2007). In 1787, Thomas Jefferson understood the high value of education in a democracy when he wrote: "Educate and inform the whole mass of the people. . . . They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty" (Founders Online, 2021, para. 3). So, education matters in the U.S. democracy.

Next, let's ask "Does education matter to U.S. citizens?" In 2019, persons 25 to 64 years old who attained a bachelor's degree or higher had an 87.3 labor force participation rate compared to a 61.2 rate for those who did not complete high school (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2023a). From 1995 to 2021, among U.S. full-time year-round workers 25 to 34 years old who attained a bachelor's degree or higher earned almost twice as much as those who did not complete high school, and exactly twice as much in 2021. Within the bachelor's degree or more group, earning disparities exist between genders with males earning almost one-fourth more than females, and among races with Whites earning one-fourth more than Blacks and one-fifth more than Hispanics (NCES, 2023b). Hinojosa (2018) reported a 2007 cost analysis that showed a student who does not graduate from high school costs the American economy $240,000 over his/her lifetime due to lower tax contributions, higher reliance on Medicaid, higher rates of criminality, and higher dependence on welfare. Additionally, a high school graduate earned about $630,000 more over a lifetime versus a student who dropped out.

In the United States, educational attainment demonstrates racial disparities. In 2021, among persons 25 and over, 95.1% of White, 90.8% of Black, and 74.2% of Hispanic complete high school. Similarly, 41.9% of White, 28.3% of Black, and 20.6% of Hispanic attain a bachelor's degree or higher. Noteworthy, while the United States raised its high school completion or higher rate for persons 25 and over from 13.5% in 1910 to 41.1% in 1960, 87.1% in 2010, and 90.9% in 2020, the rates for Black and Hispanic students were much less than White students across all those years, although some progress has been made (NCES, 2023c).

Additionally, and very importantly, education attainment has been connected to life expectancy. Several researchers note that Americans experience up to a 30-year difference in life expectancy depending on their race, ethnicity, education, and place of residence (Roy et al., 2020; Meara & Culter, 2008; Olshansky et al., 2012; Casea & Deatona, 2021, Kaplan et al., 2014; Montez et al., 2012; Montez & Berkman, 2014; Murtin, 2021; Llera-Muney, 2005). Moreover, a study by Roy and others (2020, p. 535) found educational attainment is a "strong determinant of morbidity and mortality" or "the best predictor" of life expectancy (Hathaway, 2020, para. 10). With each additional level of education, a person receives 1.37 fewer years of potential life loss (Roy et al., 2020). Montez et al. (2009) and Rogers et al. (2010) found that people with a doctoral degree live longer than those with a master's degree, and those with a master's degree lived longer than those with a bachelor's degree. Montez and Hayward (2014) contend that people with less than a high school education will live from 10 to 12 years less than people with an advanced degree. Roy and other's (2020) research has shown race or ethnicity was not independently associated with years of potential life lost. Casea and Deatona (2021) note the biggest difference in life expectancy within educational attainment occurs between some college and a four-year college degree, and less than a high school degree is associated with the shortest life expectancy (Montez et al., 2012). The association between education and life expectancy is not just a U.S. phenomenon. A study across Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries between 1990 and 2013 by James and others (2017) found education had the largest effect on life expectancy. Murtin and others (2021) also found the impact education has on a person's longevity across OECD countries. Their analyses across countries noted the United States gaps between high- and low-educated men (10.0 years) and women (7.0 years) were both greater than the averages of the other countries (7.6 years and 4.8 years, respectively). Rakshit and others (2022) noted that the United States had the lowest life expectancy among large wealthy countries, although it outspends these same countries on healthcare. Thus, the association between education and a longer life is a world phenomenon and not just in the United States. The association between higher education and a longer life is strong but complex (Roy et al., 2020; Kaplan et al., 2014). Although several hypotheses have been produced to explain this association (Kaplan et al., 2015), it is not currently fully understood. Due to past research, researchers suggest improving equality in educational attainment to eliminate disparities in longevity (Roy et al., 2020; Olshansky et al., 2012). Kaplan et al. (2014) suggest remediating the health disparity associated with educational attainment may improve life expectancy up to a decade for U.S. citizens. Roy states: "improving equity in access to and quality of education is something tangible that can help reverse this troubling trend in reduction of life expectancy among middle-aged adults" (as quoted in Hathaway, 2020, para. 11). Unquestionably, education matters to U.S. citizens because it impacts their future earnings, socio-economic status, and life expectancy. So, education matters if you wish to live a fuller and longer life.

Does Money Matter to U.S. Citizens for Education?

More specifically, "Does money matter to U.S. citizens for education?" What do they have to say about it? The Phi Delta Kapan (PDK) poll of the public's attitudes toward public schools has surveyed U.S. citizens yearly since 1969. From 2002 through 2020, the PDK poll found that U.S.

citizens perceived the biggest problem public schools in their community face was funding (PDK, 2019, 2020). Phi Delta Kapan (2020) also noted 60% of Americans linked funding to school quality, up from 50% in 1998. In the 2019 PDK poll, teachers also identified "lack of money/financial support as the biggest problem facing public schools in their communities." PDK strongly supports that the question "Does money matter in education?" looms heavily in the minds of Americans.

Let's be more scientific about the question: "Does money matter in education according to research?" In 2018, Jackson (2020) reviewed research findings related to this question. He noted reviews of research prior to 1995 concluded there was a strong association between school funding and student outcomes. He added, "To put it bluntly, any claim that there is little evidence of a statistical link between school spending and student outcome is demonstrably false" (p. 2). However, he cautioned that this older research was correlational and not causal because research did not control for other factors that may have affected student outcomes. He added that research after 1995 became more "credibly causal by current standards" (Jackson, 2018, p. 4) and provided "compelling evidence of a real positive causal relationship between increased school spending and student outcomes on average" (pp. 13–14). He did caution that single-state studies support money matters but not necessarily in all settings or contexts. Specifically, he cited studies focused on Title I spending and capital spending in individual states may yield "null impacts" (p. 14). He summarized that research does not reveal the context in which more school funding improves student outcomes. He concluded:

> By and large, the question of whether money matters is essentially settled. Researchers should now focus on understanding what kinds of spending increases matter the most, and also in what contexts school spending increases are most likely to improve student outcomes. (Jackson, 2018, p. 14)

Baker and his colleagues (2021) answered the question "Does money matter?" succinctly, "The research is clear: Money matters. Period" (p. 1). They further added, "The idea that 'money doesn't matter' is no longer defensible" (2021, p. 36). In fact, many authors and their research have concluded that money does matter in education (Baker et al., 2021; Darling-Hammond, 2019; Baker, 2017; Hyman, 2017; Jackson, 2018; Baker et al., 2018; Leachman et al., 2017). Does money matter in education according to research? Indubitably, it does.

Simply, education does not happen without teachers, classrooms, students in the classrooms, or learning resources, and all require money. Without money, education would be pre-historic with children learning in their homes with their parents teaching whatever they could—mostly homemaking and a trade. Research does raise two bigger questions: Does the money provided matter sufficiently to provide high-quality schooling to all children, and how should money matters be managed in education? Before addressing these questions regarding U.S. education funding, it is critical to understand America's governmental structure related to education.

Federal Government and School Money

America's founding fathers, despite thinkers like Thomas Jefferson, did not support the idea that the federal government should be involved in education matters. Thus, the U.S. Constitution does not include the word education or school, thereby placing responsibility of schools in the hands of the states (Applied Research Center, 2006; Sass, 2021). Additionally, the United States' first Congress passed the Bill of Rights, and it did not include education in its text (Sass, 2021). However, the Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people" (U.S. Const. amend. X). Thus, through the U.S. Constitution and the Tenth Amendment, individual states hold responsibility for the governance of schools since they are best positioned to recognize and meet the needs of their students (Chen, 2021). Nevertheless, there is compelling national interest in quality education, so the federal government, through the legislative process, aids states and schools by supplementing state efforts (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2005, p. 1). The U.S. DOE oversees the federal role in education and, in its department overview, recognizes state responsibility: "Education is primarily a State and local responsibility in the United States" (USDOE, 2021a, para. 1). It recognizes its official mission as "So, constitutionally and officially, the U.S. does not take responsibility for the education of its people but supports it by targeting federal school funding to achieve its official mission: to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access" (USDOE, 2021a, para. 10). Thus, there is not one U.S. education system but many state education systems. This arrangement creates structural diversity rather than uniformity in U.S. education funding. This diversity transfers into state educational funding (Baker et al., 2021).

How Much School Funding

Under this governmental structure, public schools receive funding from federal, state, and local sources (Ellerson, n.d.; Gartner, 2021, Chen, 2021). States may choose not to participate or accept funds from any federal education program. If they choose not to participate in any program, then they do not have to abide by the requirements set by the program (USDOE, 2005). National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) provides numerous data tables related to school funding. Table 235.10 includes "Revenues for public elementary and secondary schools, by source of funds: Selected years, 1919–20 through 2017–18" (NCES, 2023d). Table 1 presents school revenue from 2000–01 to 2017–18 in constant dollars which reflects dollar value adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

Table 1: Yearly School Revenues in 2021–22 Constant Dollars by Source of Funds from 2000–01 to 2019–20

School Year	Total	Federal	State	Local
2000–01	646,475,998,000	46,872,512,000	321,474,311,000	278,129,175,000
2001–02	663,948,836,000	52,458,252,000	326,895,201,000	284,595,383,000
2002–03	681,586,596,000	58,099,668,000	331,844,448,000	291,642,480,000
2003–04	700,208,819,000	63,535,715,000	*329,449,630,000	307,223,474,000
2004–05	717,604,537,000	65,925,763,000	336,258,124,000	315,420,650,000
2005–06	737,862,506,000	67,396,622,000	343,193,858,000	327,272,027,000
2006–07	767,738,464,000	*65,140,605,000	364,186,882,000	338,410,976,000
2007–08	778,903,519,000	*63,662,807,000	376,503,882,000	338,736,830,000
2008–09	*778,345,864,000	74,455,474,000	*363,309,512,000	340,580,878,000
2009–10	*776,049,837,000	98,891,765,000	*336,845,220,000	*340,312,852,000
2010–11	*770,771,639,000	*96,373,113,000	340,320,530,000	*334,077,995,000
2011–12	*740,970,198,000	*75,501,107,000	*333,430,117,000	*332,038,975,000
2012–13	*736,013,160,000	*68,096,053,000	*333,057,654,000	334,859,452,000
2013–14	748,555,261,000	*65,422,523,000	346,445,806,000	336,686,933,000
2014–15	771,778,374,000	65,541,733,000	359,304,607,000	346,932,034,000
2015–16	801,569,587,000	66,253,269,000	375,989,301,000	359,327,017,000
2016–17	819,194,757,000	66,606,495,000	385,073,195,000	367,515,067,000
2017–18	835,061,246,000	*65,194,730,000	391,404,193,000	378,462,323,000
2018–19	858,438,703,000	67,190,060,000	404,330,031,000	386,918,612,000
2019–20	871,158,368,000	*66,213,138,000	413,713,866,000	391,231,365,000
Average	760,111,813,450	72,261,712,846	355,651,518,400	336,518,724,900

*Indicates equal or loss in revenue compared to prior year

Source: NCES. (2023d, June).

In the 2019–20 school year, over 871 billion constant 2021–22 dollars were invested in U.S. education. Notably, yearly total school revenues experienced slight increases every consecutive year, ranging from 1% to 4%, except for five years, 2008–09, 2009–10, 2010–11, 2011–12, and 2012–13 when the U.S. economy was experiencing a recession (Martin et al., 2018). The decreases ranged from about less than 1% to almost 4%. Similar decreases can be seen within this time frame for federal (seven years), state (five years), and local (three years) revenue sources. One to four percent decreases in total revenue can range from over 500 million to almost 30 billion constant 2021-22 dollars yearly—a large monetary loss.

In Fall 2020, there were about 55.4 million students enrolled in U.S. elementary and secondary schools, with about 56 million projected for 2021 (NCES, 2023e). Because the total number of students change, yearly revenue increases or decreases may not reflect comparative investments.

NCES provides more comparative school revenues based on per pupil (NCES, 2023d, 235.10) as noted in Table 2.

Table 2: Yearly School Revenues Per Pupil by Source of Funds from 2000–01 to 2017–18 in Constant 2019–20 Dollars

School Year	Total	Federal	State	Local
2000–01	13,695	993	6,810	5,892
2001–02	13,927	1,100	6,857	5,970
2002–03	14,146	1,206	6,887	6,053
2003–04	14,425	1,309	*6,787	6,329
2004–05	14,706	1,351	6,891	6,464
2005–06	15,024	1,372	6,988	6,664
2006–07	15,585	*1,322	7,393	6,870
2007–08	15,825	*1,293	7,649	6,882
2008–09	15,809	1,512	*7,379	6,917
2009–10	*15,731	2,005	*6,828	*6,898
2010–11	*15,586	*1,949	6,882	*6,756
2011–12	*14,965	*1,525	*6,734	*6,706
2012–13	*14,795	*1,369	*6,695	6,731
2013–14	14,966	*1,308	6,927	6,732
2014–15	15,352	*1,304	7,147	6,901
2015–16	15,921	1,316	7,468	7,137
2016–17	16,218	1,319	7,623	7,276
2017–18	16,511	*1,289	7,739	7,483
2018–19	16,975	1,329	7,995	7,651
2019–20	17,225	*1,309	8,180	7,736
Average	15,369	1,374	7,193	6,802
*Indicates equal or loss in revenue per pupil compared to prior year				
Source: NCES. (2023d). Table 235.10.				

In reviewing total yearly school revenues per pupil, yearly decreases also reflect the recession time frame. The federal yearly per pupil revenue shows nine decreases compared to five for state and three for local sources. The differences in the number of years that experienced decreases between total revenue and per pupil revenue data demonstrates the critical necessity to use data that reflects wider aspects, such as number of students, than just total current dollars.

NCES (2023d, 235.10) data also provide the percentages of school revenue provided by federal, state, and local sources.

Table 3: Yearly School Revenues Per Pupil Percent Distribution by Source of Funds from 2000–01 to 2017–18			
School Year	Federal	State	Local
2000–01	7.3	49.7	43.0
2001–02	7.9	49.2	42.9
2002–03	8.5	48.7	42.8
2003–04	9.1	47.1	43.9
2004–05	9.2	46.9	44.0
2005–06	9.1	46.5	44.4
2006–07	8.5	47.4	44.1
2007–08	8.2	48.3	43.5
2008–09	9.6	46.7	43.8
2009–10	12.7	43.4	43.9
2010–11	12.5	44.2	43.3
2011–12	10.2	45.0	44.8
2012–13	9.3	45.3	45.5
2013–14	8.7	46.3	45.0
2014–15	8.5	46.6	45.0
2015–16	8.3	46.9	44.8
2016–17	8.1	47.0	44.9
2017–18	7.8	46.8	45.3
2018–19	7.8	47.1	45.1
2019–20	7.6	47.5	44.9
Average	8.95	46.83	44.25
Source: NCES. (2023d). Table 235.10			

During the time frame in Table 3, the federal revenue average contributed the least percent of total yearly school revenues per pupil, 8.95%, followed by state revenues, 46.83%, and local revenues, 44.25%. U.S. Department of Education (2023a) officially recognizes 8% as an average estimate of the yearly federal contribution to education coming from itself and other federal agencies, such as the Department of Health and Human Services Head Start program and the Department of Agriculture School Lunch program. The average of the last three years in the table equals 7.73%, slightly under USDOE's average, so the range of years affects the total average calculated. The data and USDOE's official statement represent the much lower federal investment in education funding than state and local sources.

The United States and International School Funding

Does the over 760 billion dollars the United States invests yearly in education matter when compared to other countries? The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2021) is an international organization that has existed over 60 years, includes countries

as members and partners, and helps reform efforts in over 100 countries. The OECD serves as one of the largest international sources for comparable statistics, data, and policy analyses (OECD, 2021). One OECD data table available provides the gross domestic product per capita and expenditures on education institutions per full-time-equivalent (FTE) student for each participating OCED country from 2005 through 2019 (NCES, 2023f, Table 605.10). The United States had the sixth highest elementary and secondary education expenditures per FTE student in 2019 with $14,671, more than the OCED average $10,722. This reflects well on the United States. However, when you more directly compare the total expenditure on elementary and secondary educational institutions per FTE student relative to gross domestic product per capita (NCES, 2023f, Table 605.10), the United States provided 22.68% of its GDPC to elementary and secondary education, while the percent average for all participating OECD countries and members was 22.35%. The U.S. investment in elementary and secondary education was approximately the OCED average. So, although the United States provides much greater money than the OCED average to elementary and secondary education, it only provides about average when the money is compared to the GDPC. So, internationally, the United States is average in its financial investment effort funding elementary and secondary education—not reflecting its international position as a leader in democracy.

State and Local School Funding

Over 90% of yearly education funding in the United States comes from states and local sources, so how much does education matter at these levels? Baker et al. (2021) note that state school finance is "extremely complicated" (p. 1) because every state, district, and school has its own unique contextual factors that impact a dollar's value. Persistent inequalities in funding across school districts persist, especially among those with greater needs but inadequate financial backing. Baker and Cotto (2020) illuminate the struggles faced by predominantly Latinx, impoverished urban districts, often lacking the resources necessary to meet national academic benchmarks. They stress the importance of fair state-level funding systems, where lawmakers play a crucial role in redistributing resources to districts and students requiring the most support. As they assert, "Sufficient funds in the pool alone are insufficient; there must also be effective allocation through a deliberative political process" (Baker & Cotto, 2020, p. 45). Baker and his colleagues develop a system to fairly compare state funding that accounts for student poverty, regional wage variation, district size, and population density. They focus on three school finance measures to measure state education financial investment:

- Fiscal effort: a measure of how much is spent in education compared to the state's total economic capacity as reflected in the gross state product (GSP); that is, how much of the total money available to the state is invested in education.
- Adequacy: a measure of how much educational money is needed for students to achieve an average score in national tests accounting for student characteristics, labor market costs, and district characteristics, that is, whether the money provided by the state is sufficient for every student to achieve average mastery in a national test fully considering that some

student characteristics (poverty) require more financial support to ensure successful adequate learning.

- Progressivity: a progressive funding system provides higher-poverty districts with more funding than lower-poverty districts; a regressive funding system provides more funding to low-poverty districts than to higher-poverty districts.

Baker et al. (2021) showed that for 2018, state fiscal effort varies between 2.4% to 4.5% of GSP invested in education. Thus, some states provided almost twice as much of their GSP to schools. However, it is important to note that some states have much greater GSP and, even with a lesser percent of GSP invested, they may provide more monies to schools than states with lesser GSPs. Thus, states with large economies may exert less fiscal effort but still provide a greater investment to education. Nonetheless, effort and capacity jointly explained 70–80% of interstate differences between state and local school funding (Baker et al., 2021). A review of past state fiscal efforts shows the national state average from 2004 to 2018 ranged from the highest 4.07% in 2008 to the lowest 3.43% in 2018. The Great Recession began in December 2007 and ended in December 2007 but triggered a decline in the national state fiscal effort average. The decline began in 2009 from the highest 4.07 state average percent to the lowest 3.43 average percent in 2018 (Baker et al., 2021). Notably, states with high fiscal effort and low state capacity will struggle more to compensate the effects of the economic crisis caused by the Great Recession.

Baker et al. (2021) compared district poverty levels with adequate spending levels in 48 states. They found that, in most of the states, spending in highest-poverty districts (80–100th percentile poverty) was less than the adequate levels needed. Spending in the highest-poverty districts was over 20% below the estimated adequate funding levels in 28 states and at least 40% less in eight states. Only nine states funded the highest-poverty districts at higher than the estimated adequate levels. In contrast, for lower-poverty districts (0–20th percentile) in 41 states, funding was 45% greater than the estimated adequacy amount. High-poverty districts face a greater challenge during economic crisis because they are already below adequacy funding levels. Baker et al.'s findings noted a positive relationship between state adequacy and fiscal effort, suggesting that states that invest more also provide greater adequacy.

Baker et al. (2021) found most states included either a non-progressive or regressive system of educational funding, so high-poverty districts that require more resources per student received equal or less funding than the lowest-poverty districts that require fewer resources per student. In fact, there were only 10 states where high-poverty districts received at least 10% more than zero-poverty districts and 25 states where high-poverty districts received less funding than zero-poverty districts. Education funding has nationally been non-progressive for the past two decades. Moreover, since the beginning of the Great Recession, 32 states became less progressive in 2018 compared to their 2008 status (Baker et al., 2021). To make matters worse, the pandemic will likely cause states to face severe budget crises (Leachman & McNichol, 2020) and become more regressive (Baker et al., 2021) and reduce K–12 school funding (Jackson, 2020).

Baker et al.'s (2021) analyses of state education finances demonstrate the great diversity among states. They strongly stressed that fiscal effort, adequacy, and progressivity work interdependently without one solely predicting state education outcomes. In fact, they noted that even if a state is high in all three factors, state outcomes may be unpredictably poor because, while money is critical, decisions on how money is spent and on which students are also critical. The authors also repeatedly voiced that state education funding is in the hands of state policy makers who can choose to value education by supporting stronger fiscal efforts, meeting, and even surpassing adequacy in funding levels, and establishing a progressive framework to ensure equal opportunity for all children to successful education. State education funding demands great improvements in many aspects and, education appears to be valued more in some states than others depending on each state's political and legislative tones.

As noted in Table 4, local sources contribute an average of over 45% of the yearly national education total funding, which is just about 1% below the state's contribution. Local funding consists primarily of property taxes (Gartner, 2021; Chen, 2021; Pasachoff, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2019; Leachman, 2018; EveryCRSReport, 2021; Martin, et al, 2018; Verstegen, 2014; Leachman, et al, 2017). As can be calculated from Table 4, property taxes average yearly contribution constitutes almost 80% of all local taxes and one-third of the yearly national education total funding.

Table 4
National School Local Revenue Sources Per Pupil 2000–01 to 2019–20

School Year	Overall Total	Total Local Revenue	Property taxes	Other public revenue	Private (1)
2000–01	8,503	3,658 (43.0%)	2,809 (33.0%)	654 (7.7%)	195 (2.3%)
2001–02	8,800	3,772 (42.9%)	2,960 (34.8%)	607 (7.1%)	205 (2.4%)
2002–03	9,134	3,908 (42.8%)	3,082 (36.2%)	614 (7.2%)	212 (2.5%)
2003–04	9,518	4,176 (43.9%)	3,309 (38.9%)	652 (7.7%)	216 (2.5%)
2004–05	9,996	4,394 (44.0%)	3,441 (40.5%)	726 (8.5%)	226 (2.7%)
2005–06	10,600	4,702 (44.4%)	3,630 (42.7%)	837 (9.8%)	235 (2.8%)
2006–07	11,281	4,972 (44.1%)	3,822 (44.9%)	910 (10.7%)	241 (2.8%)
2007–08	11,879	5,166 (43.5%)	3,993 (47.0%)	921 (10.8%)	253 (3.0%)
2008–09	12,032	5,265 (43.8%)	4,180 (49.2%)	837 (9.8%)	248 (2.9%)
2009–10	12,089	5,301 (43.8%)	4,274 (50.3%)	786 (9.2%)	242 (2.8%)
2010–11	12,218	5,296 (43.3%)	4,280 (50.3%)	780 (9.2%)	236 (2.8%)
2011–12	12,075	5,411 (44.8%)	4,359 (51.3%)	814 (9.6%)	238 (2.8%)
2012–13	12,137	5,522 (45.5%)	4,462 (52.5%)	827 (9.7%)	233 (2.7%)
2013–14	12,469	5,608 (45.0%)	4,539 (53.4%)	839 (9.9%)	231 (2.7%)
2014–15	12,884	5,792 (45.0%)	4,462 (55.2%)	875 (10.3%)	225 (2.6%)
2015–16	13,451	6,030 (44.8%)	4,906(57.7%)	895 (10.5%)	229 (2.7%)
2016–17	13,954	6,260 (44.9%)	5,111 (60.1%)	918 (10.8%)	231 (2.7%)
2017–18	14,527	6,584 (45.3%)	5,320 (62.6%)	1,033 (12.1%)	231 (2.7%)

Table 4
National School Local Revenue Sources Per Pupil 2000–01 to 2019–20

School Year	Overall Total	Total Local Revenue	Property taxes	Other public revenue	Private (1)
2018–19	15,244	6,871 (45.1%)	5,520 (64.9%)	1,113 (13.1%)	238 (2.8%)
2019–20	15,711	7,056 (44.9%)	5,739 (67.5%)	1,122 (13.2%)	294 (2.3%)
Average	11,925	5,587 (44.2%)	4,221 (35.1%)	838 (7.0%)	228 (2.0%)

(1) Includes revenues from gifts, and tuition and fees from patrons. More specifically, in 2019–20, includes tuition from individuals, transportation fees from individuals, food services (excluding federal reimbursements), district activities, textbook revenues, and summer school revenues.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics. (2023b, August). *Table 235.10 Table 235.10. Revenues for public elementary and secondary schools, by source of funds: Selected years, 1919-20 through 2019-20.*

States' local sources provide an average of 44.2% of national total education funding per pupil. Property taxes comprise an average of over 75% of all local funding and 35.4% of the national total education funding per pupil. Low-poverty school districts include more expensive properties and invest more money in education than school districts with less expensive properties, usually high-poverty school districts. The high percentage property taxes contributed to educational funding supports the need for states to ensure progressive education funding, as defined earlier.

Other Matters May Matter More

There is no doubt that money matters in education. But are there are other matters that may impact money matters in education? The relationship between funding and achievement is multifaceted. While increased funding can have positive effects, some policy makers and researchers maintain the key lies in how these funds are allocated and utilized. Hanushek (2023) synthesizes recent studies on school finance and concludes that adding resources to schools is likely to have a positive effect on student outcomes. However, the impact of resources varies significantly depending on contextual factors and spending constraints. Beyond the various matters involved in school success, decades ago, Ron Edmonds (1979) stated:

> We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that. Whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far. (p. 23)

So, how do we as Americans feel about the fact that our nation does not wisely or fairly distribute money to ensure every child learns to their maximum potential, especially when all research shows that money matters? Other matters impact Americans' feelings about education.

Protecting yourself matters because you can achieve the best for yourself if you take care of yourself. This includes taking care of your physical and financial self as well as your position of power and influence that impact on what matters to you. There is only a poor present and even a poorer future if you do not take care of self-matters. If you are married, your spouse matters. Taking care of your spouse is critical because it ensures a positive life together. If you are a parent, your children matter. Ensuring your children receive a good education ensures they too will have a great future like yours, if not better. So, their own children matter tremendously for almost all parents. Your neighborhood matters. You must ensure your home remains at a high value, and you and your family are safe in your neighborhood. Your neighbors comprise your neighborhood, so who they are matters. It is better to have neighbors who are friends and not enemies. Your community matters. You must ensure you have a community that supports your and your family's safety and present and future successes. So, who leads your community matters. Your state matters. A state governed to support what matters to you is also important for your present and future successes. So, your vote matters. Certainly, your country matters. You can lose everything quickly if your nation does not support what matters to you. So again, your vote matters at all levels.

Unfortunately, all these personal matters which everyone has to some degree can become negative matters that harm others. For example, as you achieve a financial and powerful status in your job, do you accept competition from others, so the best person wins and your workplace gains more? Or do you use your advantage to cut opportunities for others to compete against you to ensure your continued financial gains and power? Regarding education, you want your children to receive the best education possible so they too can gain your financial success and power. If another child receives that same education, then that child will compete and may outgain your own child. You can accept this and value the need to support every child's success, or you can choose to undermine and not support the education of other children so that your children can gain the upper hand. In the latter situation, what matters for your own children far outweigh what matters for other children. So, fair school funding, supporting the poor, and ensuring equity in learning for all children do not matter.

A person's negative matters may even become negatively discriminatory by race and ethnicity depending on that person's social experiences. Skin color may matter in a person's decisions, and in the United States, skin color has negatively mattered for over four hundred years (Craigie et al., 2020) and continues at a remarkably high harmful level today, such as the U.S. Supreme Court ruling against college affirmative action enrollment (Blow, 2023), the Florida State Academic Standards—Social Studies 2023 curriculum clarifying that slavery "personally benefitted" slaves (p. 6), and even at a deadly level with George Floyd as just one example of many who have been killed because of racism (Garcia, 2021).

All personal matters, but especially the negative ones, greatly effect Americans' feelings about what matters in education, especially school funding and the learning of all students. We can see in America today a reemergence of harmful, negative matters effecting every aspect of our society, including schools. So, to answer Edmundson's question about how we as Americans feel about

the fact that our nation does not wisely or fairly distribute money to ensure every child learns to their maximum potential, especially when all research shows money matters, well, for many Americans, schooling just does not matter for "some" children, and they prefer it that way!

Conclusion

Yes, money matters in education. In the United States, education receives over $600 billion annually, mostly from state and local sources. However, the United States spends moderately compared to other countries. States have a lot of control over education funding, leading to disparities. Some states provide adequate funding for quality education, but others don't. To improve, we need to ensure fair funding for all American children. What we do with the money matters most. School leaders must use funds effectively. But there are challenges, as one teacher explains:

> A lot of things that schools do are for the benefit of the public, for the benefit of the board. We do political things that have a lot of pizzazz and flash. . . . I've worked in seven school districts in the state of Texas. In 34 years, there hasn't been a great change. The dropout rate has maintained about the same. . . . The verbiage that we use—that we need to do more with less, we need to reallocate our resources, we need to stop doing the things that don't work—I have never; in my 34 years, witnessed stopping something that hasn't worked.
> -Texas educator. (Hill, 2008, p. 7)

Despite being the experience of just one teacher over 34 years, the potential influence on students, along with countless other educators, is significant. The collective impact of their learning journeys on our nation's socioeconomic, safety, and political landscape is immeasurable.

In conclusion, the discourse surrounding school funding and its impact on student achievement in American public education is complex and evolving. Moving forward, prioritizing fair and equitable state-level funding systems, guided by a deliberative political process, is essential to ensure that all students have access to the resources necessary for their educational success. Money does matter for student success, and successful education for all children is crucial for a thriving democracy. Evidence supports the importance of adequate funding for improving student outcomes, and addressing disparities in funding distribution remains a critical challenge. However, for some Americans, actions deemed undemocratic or inhumane take precedence over the education of certain children. Overcoming educational issues, such as equitable school funding, requires overcoming un-American attitudes. It is essential for federal, state, local, and school leaders, as well as every member of the community, to recognize the significant impact each child holds on the future prosperity of the nation and every American family. Only then can school funding matters be resolved for every American child. As a nation, we must reject the "does not matter" attitude in school funding and in the learning of some children! "We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children" and we must fully and actively embrace that the "schooling" of *all children* "is of interest to us" (Edmonds, 1979, p. 23). Embracing and

advocating socially and politically the belief that money does matter in the education of every child is paramount. We must loudly proclaim to all Americans and the world that the learning of every child is of utmost importance. All Children Learning Matters!

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