

School Funding

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SEF Position

SEF supports the implementation of equitable K-12 state funding formulas that address historical and present-day opportunity and achievement gaps as well as fiscal inequities that negatively impact students of color.

Background

Research proves that investments in public education matter. Adequate funding for students, especially students with exceptional needs and students requiring supplemental services, is a critical component to increasing academic achievement and making education more equitable.¹ Despite the prerogative to fully and fairly fund education, a number of southern states still implement inequitable and inadequate education budgets. For example, an analysis of Alabama's education budget shows that the state does not allocate extra funds for low-income students and does not use a base, per-pupil funding formula², while Georgia has not updated its funding formula for nearly 35 years despite educating exponentially more low-income students and students of color today. The most recent data from the National Education Association shows 14 southern states³ falling below the United States' national average in per-pupil expenditures. Yet 56% of the nation's Black students attend schools in the South. Inequitable funding and many states' disregard for low-income students and students of color have resulted in worse academic outcomes and diminished opportunities for those populations.



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Benefits of Equitable School Funding

- Progressive funding policies and laws that allocate funds needed to support low-income school districts result in greater student learning and reduced achievement gaps.
- Investing in strong teachers through increased funding for teacher recruitment and retention is key to increasing student achievement.
- Instituting a weighted formula accounting for the needs of specific populations will allow students within those groups to see significant gains and feel more supported in schools.
- Investing adequately in education is essential to achieving improved and equitable results. Low-income students and students of color in many states have not made gains in math and reading, pointing to the necessity for more focused funding and resources for students with greater needs.



SEF Recommendations

- Update and fund K-12 funding formulas to match the actual costs of educating low-income students and student subgroups.
- Work to amend state and local tax provisions to ensure districts have the appropriate level of resources to invest in early childhood education and other critical services for students.
- Address the role of arbitrary factors such as property wealth in school funding formulas to create greater equity in resource allocation.

End Notes

1. Baker, B. D. (2017). How money matters for schools. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. Retrieved from <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/how-money-matters-report>.
2. School Funding Policy By State. EdBuild. Accessed June 26, 2019. Retrieved from <http://funded.edbuild.org/state/AL#LA/NC/TN/WV>.
3. Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia