

# The Times Herald

## Research finds no link between school spending and results

July 20, 2016

In an op-ed urging support for a bond proposal for the Port Huron school district, James Clatworthy took issue with a Cato Institute study by the late Andrew J. Coulson that found no correlation between spending and achievement. We take no position on the bond, but stand by our colleague's research.

Despite a near tripling of the inflation-adjusted cost per pupil in public schools nationwide between 1972 and 2012, the performance of high school students on the SAT and National Assessment of Educational Progress has been flat. Coulson's study compared state-level SAT scores, controlling for changing participation rates and student demographics, to the total, inflation-adjusted cost of a K-12 education, finding no discernable link between spending and performance.

Clatworthy erroneously claimed that Coulson's findings did not account for SAT scores being periodically "mean centered," meaning that the average scores were reset. In fact, the Educational Testing Service only recentered the SAT once between 1972 and 2012 and Coulson used ETS's own formula to compare the data before and after the recentering.

Ironically, Clatworthy also criticized Coulson for supporting policies empowering parents to choose schools, claiming that choice would "return us to the status of the 1700s." But choice is clearly the right model for the 21st century, in which a quickly changing world will need a nimbly adapting education system. That requires choice and decentralized control, not a bureaucratic system that demands evermore money without measurably improving results.

*Jason Bedrick is a policy analyst with the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom.*

*Rachel Reese is a research associate at the Cato Institute's Center for Educational Freedom.*