



An influx of funding may or may not help learning in US classrooms

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Dive Brief:

- Education leaders are still debating whether inequity in school performance stems from unequal funding or unequal usage of funding.
- The libertarian-leaning Cato Institute recently released a report saying no link exists between between spending and academic achievement.
- This same issue has been contested for at least 100 years, NPR [reports](#).

Dive Insight:

Despite disagreement, a few stand-out points are clear when it comes to school performance and quality and funding disparities. First, [race matters](#). Data analyst David Mosenkis recently found poverty alone does not account for funding level disparities among Pennsylvania school districts, and districts with the same number of poor students received different amounts of school dollars depending on the race of those students.

In [Baltimore](#), for example, the city's school system ranked second among the nation's 100 largest school districts in how much it spent per pupil in fiscal year 2011. Yet that spending didn't necessarily equate to [improved school quality](#).

Majority and all-white schools received more funding, while the presence of slightly more minority students had an immediate impact on funding. A [six-month investigation](#) by 20 NPR member stations found great discrepancies in school spending across individual districts, state-by-state. That investigation agreed with findings from the Education Law Center (ELC), in a report entitled "[Is School Funding Fair? A National Report Card](#)."

The ELC found the majority of current school funding formulas across the U.S. are "unfair and inequitable," with "little improvement over the past five years in those states that consistently fail to direct additional funding to districts with high levels of need, as measured by student poverty." Alaska and New York were reported to [spend the most](#), with the

former spending \$17,331 per pupil. Utah and Idaho spent the least, with the latter spending \$5,746 per pupil.

Recommended Reading

NPR: [Can More Money Fix America's Schools?](#)