



CATO Study – Educational Spending and Student Achievement Not Related

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April 7, 2014

A Cato Institute study recently confirmed what School Choice advocates have long suspected. In spite of spending more per student, America's public schools and student outcomes from that education, continue to decline. According to the study, "State Education Trends: Academic Performance and Spending over the Past 40 Years," there appears to be no correlation between educational spending and student performance.

The recentl-released 60-page study by the Center for Educational Freedom at the Cato Institute, seems to clearly demonstrate that throwing money at the educational problem doesn't create geniuses. It doesn't even produce good scores. American student performance, over the past 40 years, has remained dismal even though in that time period, per student spending nationwide has tripled. (Expenditures adjusted for inflation.)

Andrew Coulson, director of the Center for Educational Freedom says, "The takeaway from this study is that what we've done over the past 40 years hasn't worked. The average performance change nationwide has declined 3 percent in mathematical and verbal skills. Moreover, there's been no relationship, effectively, between spending and academic outcomes."

In the same time-period, congressional mandates have forced schools to provide other services to students. Today, schools must provide more comprehensive special education, after school programs, and, in light of advances in technology, new equipment, computer labs for example. These new programs take a bite out of the educational budget. Still, private schools whose students still excel over public school attendees, operate at budgets about 34 percent lower than their state-funded counterparts. Public schools spend, on average, \$11,000 per student per year.

The study, funded by the Cato Institute, (an independent, free market think tank based in Washington, DC,) also demonstrates that lowering of per-student spending doesn't affect the overall student performance either.

"At one time or another over the past four decades, Alaska, California, Florida and New York all experienced multi-year periods over which real spending fell substantially (20 percent or more of their 1972 expenditure levels)," Coulson wrote. "And yet, none of these states experienced noticeable declines in adjusted SAT scores."

The 60-page report verifies that since 1970 reading and math scores of American students have remained mediocre. According to National Public Radio, American students are not even in the global top 20 for math, reading, and science scores.

“That is remarkably unusual,” Coulson wrote, “In virtually every other field, productivity has risen over this period thanks to the adoption of countless technological advances — advances that, in many cases, would seem ideally suited to facilitating learning. And yet, surrounded by this torrent of progress, education has remained anchored to the riverbed, watching the rest of the world rush past it.”