



## States Spending Less Money On K-12 Education Get Better Results

### States with most improved NAEP scores spending much less than Michigan

By [Jack Spencer](#) and [Jarrett Skorup](#) | May 8, 2014

Many who advocate for [perpetual increases in education spending](#) believe that greater K-12 funding leads to better educational results. But looking at states across the nation shows this is not the case.

In fact, most states that spend less on K-12 education than Michigan perform better — many significantly better. And analyzing gains in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that lower-spending states are making the largest educational gains.

Three states of particular note are Tennessee, Indiana [and Florida](#). According to the NAEP, these states were among the top six in the nation for achieving net gains for 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading and math in 2011, the most recent year for which comparative data is available.

Tennessee, with a per pupil spending level ranked 49<sup>th</sup> nationally [by the U.S. Census Bureau](#) at \$8,765, placed second on the NAEP list, with average scores of 21.8. Indiana, with a per pupil spending level ranked 26<sup>th</sup> nationally at \$11,583, placed third, with average scores of 14.7. Florida, with a per pupil spending level ranked 42<sup>nd</sup> nationally at \$10,031 was sixth, posting average scores of 11.5. The NAEP results include the District of Columbia.

Meanwhile, Michigan, which ranked 22<sup>nd</sup> nationally with a per pupil spending level of \$12,644 was near the bottom of the pack at 39<sup>th</sup>, posting a score of negative 0.4.

In fact, of the top 10 achieving states in the NEAP, only D.C., Hawaii and Minnesota had higher overall per pupil spending levels than Michigan. The other seven, Tennessee, Indiana, Florida, Washington, Oregon, Iowa and California had lower per pupil spending levels.

This matches the findings of other researchers.

A [2012 study from Harvard University](#) found no relationship between increased educational expenditures and student growth. The author's stated that they were "unable to find significant evidence that increased school expenditure, by itself, makes much of a difference."

A [study from earlier this year by the Cato Institute](#) tracked spending nationally and by individual states for the past four decades. It found dramatic increases in spending with little or no educational gains.

Matthew Ladner, senior adviser for policy and research at the Foundation for Excellence in Education, pointed out that a long-term comparison of state education spending and NAEP results reveals the fallacy of equating higher spending on education with better results in the classroom.

"[The] bottom line ... is that Wyoming increased their spending by a huge amount and saw below average NAEP gains [while] Florida had the smallest increase per pupil and the second largest overall NAEP gains," Ladner said. "It's not how much you spend, but how well you use what you spend that really counts."