



## **Opinion: U.S. education doesn't need more money**

Chris Talgo

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If only I had a dime for every time I have heard the claim America needs to spend more money on education. As a former public school teacher, it was frequently discussed and often used as an excuse for why U.S. schools aren't performing as well as they should. But is education funding lacking in America?

Hardly. The United States spends upwards of \$1 trillion per year on education, more than the national defense budget. Even more revealing, the average amount spent on a single 17-year-old American student's K-12 education — the inflation-adjusted "total cost" incurred over that student's entire educational career — was greater than \$160,000 in 2012. In 1970, it was \$55,000.

You might be tempted to think that although the United States spends a lot on education, perhaps other countries spend more. This, too, is a common (and false) assertion. Americans spend far more than most advanced nations on education.

Apparently, the United States is spending more than enough taxpayer dollars on education. So, where is all this money going? Increased teacher salaries? No. Improved classroom technology? No. Better educational services for students? Nope.

Bureaucrats have been the biggest beneficiaries of the huge increase in educational spending over the past few decades. The number of education "administrators" — from the Department of Education down to your local school district — have expanded faster than a middle school rumor.

From 1950 to 2014, the student population doubled. During that period teachers increased by 243 percent, while administrators and all other staff have skyrocketed by 709 percent.

Even more startling, “Between fiscal years 1992 and 2014, inflation adjusted (‘real’) per-student spending increased by 27 percent . . . However, real average salaries for public school teachers actually fell by 2 percent during this time period.”

Why the drop in teacher salaries? Well, “all other staff” hires outpaced teacher hires by 38 percent from 1992 to 2014, and many of those administrators are paid more like Fortune 500 CEOs than classroom teachers. Outrageous administrator salaries are a national epidemic that has infected blue and red states alike.

“OpenTheBooks.com found 7,327 Texas public school administrators, athletic directors, teachers, and other employees pulled down six-figure salaries costing taxpayers nearly \$1 billion.” However, “Less than six percent of these highly compensated Texas educators were teachers. In fact, we found as many athletic directors and business managers earning six figure salaries as teachers.”

Since total education spending, teacher and administrative positions, and “non-teacher” salaries have all increased more than a teenager’s appetite, one might think that means American students are killing it in the classroom. Survey says, “incorrect!”

According to the Cato Institute’s Center for Educational Freedom, the inflation-adjusted “total cost” of a K-12 public education increased 180 percent from 1970 to 2010, but proficiency scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress Long-Term Trend Assessment remained stagnant during that period.

These figures clearly show the onslaught of education spending and administrative bloat occurring over the past few decades has had absolutely no positive impact on U.S. students’ test scores.

Contrary to what many on the Left say, perhaps the answer to America’s education problems is not to simply spend more money, but rather to use the massive amount of money it is already spending more wisely.