



Report Charging School Spending Drop Ignores Local Spending

By: Patrick McGuigan - September 19, 2013

Neal McCluskey: America's 'Morbidly Obese' K-12 System

OKLAHOMA CITY — The [Center on Budget and Policy Priorities](#) concludes, in its recent analysis of public school funding since the start of the Great Recession, that state public school funding has declined in 34 states. The report has been making the rounds in the media.

Further, the report, from a liberal-leaning group based in the nation's capital, says Oklahoma made the steepest reductions in state spending on public schools. But the analysis ignores local government spending on schools and spending for education secured through state authority.

[An immediate critique of the CBPP report](#) from the Kansas Policy Institute pointed out that the national group ignored revenues for public education triggered by state authority, including property taxes. The report also ignored recovery or “stimulus” money states used to “backfill” tax revenue declines during the Great Recession.

“Their claims are deliberately misleading,” wrote KPI President Dave Trabert.

While the CBPP analysis estimated per-pupil *state* spending in Oklahoma at only \$3,038, the National Education Association—also a critic of Oklahoma state spending on schools—places *total* per-pupil spending at \$8,285 per student. Other analysts put the per-pupil figure somewhat higher.

In any case, the per-pupil spending figure may be problematic in its own right. Nationwide, The Cato Institute's Andrew Coulson has sketched the increased number of public school employees: It's made a 100 percent hike since 1970 in contrast to total enrollment (declines for 20 years after 1970, before slowly climbing over three decades). Coulson has pointed out that steady increases in public education spending, some 160 percent over several decades, have nonetheless yielded [flat or declining student achievement](#).

[Mike Antonucci of the Education Intelligence Agency](#) has studied five-year trends in per-pupil spending on government-run schools. For the years 2005-06 through 2010-11, Antonucci found a 0.2 percent

decline in enrollment, a 16 percent increase in taxpayer funding, and flat or declining achievement. After correcting for inflation, he calculated that per-pupil spending has increased 3.6 percent nationwide in the past five years for which figures are available.