

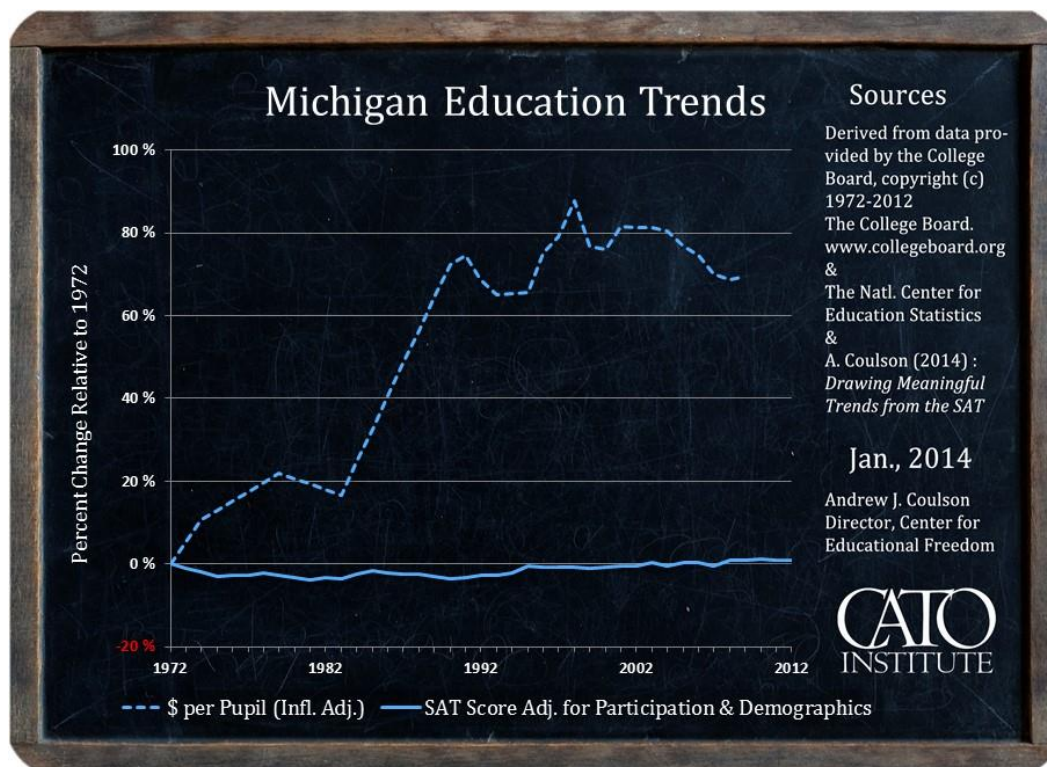


## Michigan School Funding Up, Results Flat

**State spent \$7,500 per pupil in 1972, over \$12,000 today**

By Jarrett Skorup

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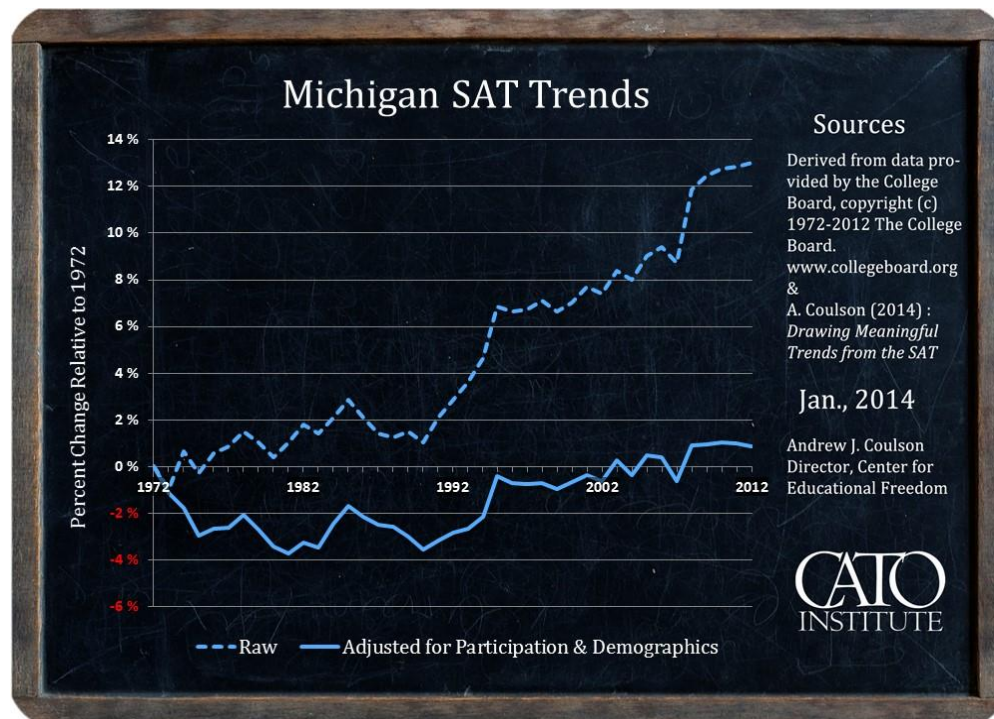
*Michigan per-pupil spending and SAT scores.*

Overall, Michigan school spending has increased significantly over the past few decades, but test scores have remained relatively flat.

A new study from the Cato Institute, using information from the National Center for Education Statistics, found Michigan saw a large increase in spending with few apparent educational benefits.

"Inflation-adjusted per pupil spending in Michigan rose dramatically from 1972 to 2009 — going from \$7,500 to over \$12,000 in today's dollars. That's a 70 percent increase," said Andrew Coulson, director of Cato's Center for Educational Freedom and author of the study. "Over that

same period, the state's academic achievement rose by less than 1 percent. It's hard to look at those numbers and not be disappointed."



*Michigan SAT scores, adjusted.*

Coulson used SAT data because it is the best standardized test score data going back to the early 1970s. The scores have to be adjusted because the test is not taken by all students and the characteristics of the test takers change over time.

Breaking down the spending and test scores into two time periods yielded some interesting results.

From 1972 to 1990, per-pupil spending on K-12 education, adjusted for inflation, increased about 80 percent. During that time period, SAT scores, adjusted for the participation and demographics of students taking them, declined.

From 1990 to 2009, education spending began to flatten out. But the adjusted SAT scores climbed slightly. Michigan began allowing charter public schools in 1994 and schools of choice in 1996.

Charter public schools spend significantly less per pupil than conventional public schools at about \$7,888 per pupil, according to the Michigan Association of Public School Academies. A study last year from Stanford University on Michigan charter public schools, which is considered the most comprehensive to date, found that students picking a charter public school perform much better academically than their conventional school counterparts.

A study from the Mackinac Center for Public Policy found that when using schools of choice, parents choose schools with higher test scores.

Coulson said a main conclusion drawn from the data is that spending does not track with results.

"Though the overall trend around the country has been for states to massively increase real per pupil spending, there have been periods when spending has stagnated and declined," Coulson said. "What's interesting is that these changes in spending patterns have had no impact on performance. Regardless of what spending is doing during any given period, it has almost no relationship to measured academic outcomes. In Michigan, for instance, virtually all of its very modest score improvement has happened since 1991, a period during which inflation-adjusted spending has been fairly flat."