



MSNBC Host Who Said Kids Belong To Community Also Says Education Funding Desperately Inadequate

United States spends more per pupil than any country in the world; 30 percent more than a decade ago

By: Tom Gantert – April 12, 2013

While MSNBC host Melissa Harris-Perry has created a controversy over her comments about children not belonging to their parents, there is another comment Harris-Perry made that deserves a closer look.

In a promotion for the cable news channel, Harris-Perry said:

We have never invested as much in public education as we should have because we've always had a private notion of children. Your kid is yours and totally your responsibility. We haven't had a very collective notion of these are our children. So part of it is we have to break through our kind of private idea that kids belong to their parents or kids belong to their families and recognize that kids belong to whole communities.

While the whole statement is being criticized by many, her statement on education investment is the easiest to look at empirically. If by investing Harris-Perry means dollars, she'd have a hard time convincing people that what she said is credible.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the U.S. spent more per student than any other country on public education in 2009, the last year for which information was available. For all levels of public education, the U.S. spent \$15,812 per student in 2009. That's the highest in the world. Switzerland was second at \$14,716. Mexico spent \$2,895 per student.

State and local governments in the U.S. spent \$859.9 billion on public education in 2010, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. That's a 30.1 percent increase from \$660.5 billion (adjusted for inflation) that the U.S. spent in 2000.

"There's no question we've had very big increases in federal spending in public education," said Neal McCluskey, associate director of the Cato Institute's Center for Education Freedom. "There is no rational way to say we are not spending a lot on public schooling. We are not under spending."

In Michigan, spending from 2000 to 2010 has increased when adjusted for inflation.

In 2000, state and local governments spent \$28.4 billion on all levels of public education, adjusted for inflation. In 2010, state and local governments spent \$29 billion on public education.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, from 1970-2009, funding per pupil for K-12 has increased 300 percent in real dollars.