

# COLUMN: Increased education spending won't solve problems

- [Tucker Cross/The Daily](#)

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Why is our public education system failing? Everyone has a theory, and there obviously seems to be more than one reason.

Some people say that money is the problem. There's just not enough being spent on the kids!

As you would expect, it's the usual suspects spewing this rhetoric. Politicians and teachers unions are the ones who benefit the most from the tremendous waste of taxpayer dollars.

Recently I read a complaint about Oklahoma not spending enough on its public education. Did you know that we're usually ranked as one of the lowest states when it comes to primary and secondary public education expenditures? Sounds alarming, but that still means we spend an average of \$10,000 per K-12 student.

Shouldn't that be enough?

Apparently not, according to the National Education Association. They were thrilled when President Barack Obama signed into law the education jobs/FMAP bill on August 10, which is intended to "save" public education jobs. The NEA says that "some 161,000 educators who had received pink slips will be heading back to school this fall as a result of this win."

Well that sounds great! It's a good thing that America's students won't be suffering from a teacher shortage anymore.

But was there ever a teacher shortage to begin with?

Andrew Coulson at the CATO Institute recently reviewed the 2009 version of the Digest of Education Statistics, a giant collection of statistics that, if one is patient enough to read, tells a lot about the health of our country's public education.

Among his findings, Coulson shows that over the last 40 years "public school employment has risen 10 times faster than enrollment. There are only 9 percent more students today, but nearly twice as many public school employees."

That's amazing. So we should logically assume that the gigantic surplus of public school employees resulted in higher academic achievement for our public schools, right?

Wrong.

Coulson explains that "student achievement at the end of high school has been flat for as long as we've been keeping track—all the way back to 1970." Basically, all of those jobs didn't help much. So why would cutting back these jobs hurt so much?

Remember, this is about the children. Nobody likes to lose his or her job, but that doesn't mean taxpayers should foot the bill.

Our public educational system has become a bloated entity, and we simply cannot afford it any longer.

I wouldn't even care that much about how horrible some of our public schools are if it weren't for the fact that people are forced to pay for this insanity.

"Alright, fine," you might say, "so some of our schools really stink, but I can just put my kid in a better school."

Well, sort of. There is no guarantee that your school district will provide anything better, and unless you are willing to cough up some private tuition, you're stuck with whatever that district can provide.

There is some silver lining however. Charter schools could be available near you, but you might have to endure a barrage of

bureaucratic nightmares in order to get there.

The best thing about charter schools is that many of them operate with less money available, yet attain better results.

What does that say about the argument that public schools need more money?

The real thing public education needs is choice. Choice for the parents, that is.

If a public school is poorly managed, then parents will quickly smell the smoke. The good schools will thrive, and the bad ones will either improve in order to compete, or get wiped out.

In any case, everyone wins. Parents should be able to choose where their tax money is going, especially when it comes to education.

As I write this article, horrible public schools get money no matter what. That's not right.

Let this whole issue be handled on a local, free market level, and watch the magic happen.

— Tucker Cross, letters senior