

South Carolina public school funding for 2009-2010

By Neil Mellen

Public educators in South Carolina insist the sustained and dramatic failures in their schools are the inevitable consequence of under-funding. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Many parents (and even many lawmakers) are confused about the size and scope of public spending on government schools in South Carolina.

There is plenty of public money being spent, and it is coming from many different places.

In 2008, public schools in South Carolina were given \$11,480 for each and every student sitting in their classrooms.

The \$11,480 average (*now roughly \$11,000 after mid-year state budget cuts*) is a lot of money. Many parents wonder where all that money comes from. Here is a brief overview of how public school funding "works" in South Carolina.

Money -aka your tax dollars- flows into public school districts from three sources. They are:

- local county government,
- state government/Columbia,
- federal government/Washington DC

Local money is collected through property taxes (and now from the state sales tax based on the tax swap) and local sales taxes. State funding is a complicated function of a "base" student cost, matches of local funds, offsets for counties with smaller tax bases, and a range of programs

or categories which assign money to specific programs implemented by schools and districts.

Most state money is tied to a certain account, fund, or program before the local district receives it. Federal money is also provided in the form of grants and programs, and these are calculated on the number and type (income) of the children living in the area that a school serves. Like most state money, federal allocations are not tied to the specific child.

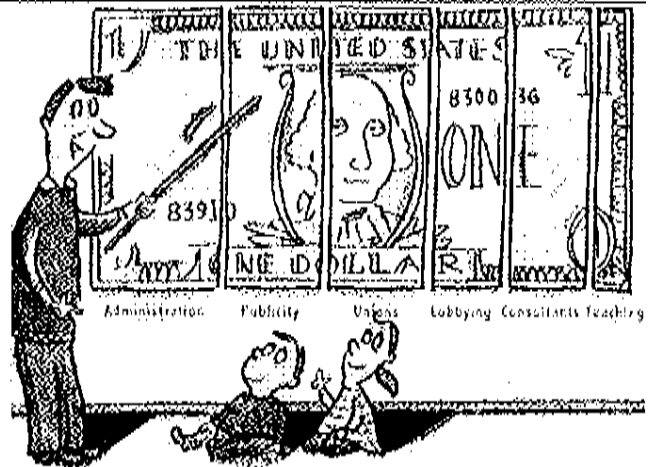
The projected average per-pupil funding in 2009-2010 was:

- \$ 4,867 state
- \$ 1,097 federal
- \$ 5,516 local
- -or- a total of **\$11,480 per pupil,**
excluding local bond revenues

\$11,480 per child is a huge sum of money. This is \$200 more per student than spending in Georgia and \$2,000 more than per-pupil spending in North Carolina. In fact, spending growth in South Carolina since 1960 has been the highest in the entire nation. Total South Carolina K-12 appropriations in 2009 will top \$7.9 billion, excluding local bonds.

In recent months, declining state tax revenues have dropped. Superintendent Jim Rex has stated that total cuts to public schools now reach \$363 million. On a per student basis that is \$500 per child. Total public school spending is still close to \$11,000 for every student.

More striking than the \$11,000 per-child spending is the fact that South Carolina's "worst" public schools, those serving the most under-privileged children, are allocated the most money. Because so much federal money is tied to census determined population demographics, Title-I and other programs send thousands of dollars per students to the



lowest income areas of the state. This money is often a function of total population, not the number of students actually attending the public schools.

The state also provides supplementary funding to districts with a lower-than-average property tax base. With all this extra money, some of the most economically disadvantaged students attend schools with more than \$20,000 per-pupil in funding. Looking across all districts in the state, higher per-pupil spending is not related to student performance as measured by standardized testing.

In South Carolina there is no discernible correlation between per-student funding levels and student achievement, and that real School Choice is the only proven reform that will both save money and improve student achievement.

Sadly, very little of this appropriated money reaches the child. Analysis by the SC Budget and Control Board shows that since 2000, only 45 cents per dollar reaches the classroom in the form of "instructional" spending. This includes classroom materials, books and supplies, teacher salaries, and other costs directly related to teaching children. The 44-cent figure is a statewide average. Because of the enormous administrative bureaucracies operating in districts throughout the state, the figure in many poor urban and rural counties is even lower.

All that said, many parents and taxpayers are still surprised to hear that public schools across South Carolina will be funded at an average of \$11,242 per child this year. Compare that to just \$8,500 last year in North Carolina.

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Here is the district-by-district listing of local, state, and federal allocations for each of the 85 public school districts:

SC School District	Projected Total Pupils for 2009-2010	Per Pupil Funding State	Per Pupil Funding Federal	Per Pupil Funding Local	Total Projected Funding Level (excluding revenues of local bond issues)
Abbeville School District	2,911	\$ 6,059	\$ 1,616	\$ 3,604	\$ 11,279
Aiken School District	23,640	\$ 4,084	\$ 1,225	\$ 3,673	\$ 8,982
Allendale School District	1,454	\$ 7,310	\$ 1,764	\$ 3,978	\$ 13,053
Anderson School District 1	9,168	\$ 4,053	\$ 656	\$ 3,485	\$ 8,194
Anderson School District 2	3,694	\$ 4,573	\$ 609	\$ 3,780	\$ 8,962
Anderson School District 3	2,558	\$ 4,919	\$ 1,370	\$ 3,857	\$ 10,146
Anderson School District 4	2,901	\$ 3,850	\$ 1,231	\$ 7,007	\$ 12,087
Anderson School District 5	11,985	\$ 4,277	\$ 1,488	\$ 4,675	\$ 10,440
Bamberg School District 1	1,377	\$ 5,491	\$ 1,675	\$ 3,723	\$ 10,889
Bamberg School District 2	872	\$ 6,126	\$ 2,011	\$ 4,334	\$ 12,471
Barnwell School District 19	747	\$ 5,256	\$ 2,578	\$ 3,900	\$ 11,734
Barnwell School District 29	972	\$ 4,544	\$ 1,466	\$ 3,305	\$ 9,315
Barnwell School District 45	2,445	\$ 4,898	\$ 1,177	\$ 2,970	\$ 9,045
Beaufort School District	18,425	\$ 1,379	\$ 1,703	\$ 12,157	\$ 15,240
Berkeley School District	28,058	\$ 4,119	\$ 959	\$ 5,655	\$ 10,733
Calhoun School District	1,569	\$ 5,309	\$ 1,495	\$ 6,632	\$ 13,436
Charleston School District	40,639	\$ 2,703	\$ 1,593	\$ 9,874	\$ 14,169
Cherokee School District	8,868	\$ 4,696	\$ 1,558	\$ 4,801	\$ 11,055
Chester School District	5,503	\$ 4,761	\$ 1,970	\$ 5,050	\$ 11,781
Chesterfield School District	7,730	\$ 4,700	\$ 3,303	\$ 1,453	\$ 9,457
Clarendon School District 1	840	\$ 5,935	\$ 1,629	\$ 6,690	\$ 14,254
Clarendon School District 2	2,974	\$ 5,239	\$ 1,897	\$ 2,517	\$ 9,653
Clarendon School District 3	1,207	\$ 5,095	\$ 1,013	\$ 2,570	\$ 8,678
Colleton School District	5,918	\$ 4,822	\$ 2,250	\$ 4,576	\$ 11,648
Darlington School District	10,522	\$ 4,772	\$ 1,642	\$ 5,340	\$ 11,754
Dillon School District 1	794	\$ 5,326	\$ 1,824	\$ 2,183	\$ 9,333
Dillon School District 2	3,380	\$ 4,771	\$ 1,738	\$ 1,733	\$ 8,243
Dillon School District 3	1,616	\$ 4,457	\$ 1,209	\$ 2,199	\$ 7,865
Dorchester School District 2	21,969	\$ 3,790	\$ 641	\$ 4,399	\$ 8,830
Dorchester School District 4	2,190	\$ 4,807	\$ 1,918	\$ 6,918	\$ 13,643
Edgefield School District	3,795	\$ 5,158	\$ 972	\$ 3,879	\$ 10,010
Fairfield School District	2,940	\$ 5,175	\$ 2,003	\$ 8,343	\$ 15,520
Florence School District 1	15,203	\$ 4,228	\$ 1,408	\$ 4,867	\$ 10,503
Florence School District 2	1,230	\$ 4,848	\$ 1,099	\$ 4,008	\$ 9,956
Florence School District 3	3,485	\$ 5,106	\$ 3,087	\$ 2,584	\$ 10,777
Florence School District 4	814	\$ 7,302	\$ 1,980	\$ 4,728	\$ 13,980
Florence School District 5	1,395	\$ 5,314	\$ 1,213	\$ 3,867	\$ 10,394
Georgetown School District	9,467	\$ 3,604	\$ 1,411	\$ 7,484	\$ 12,499
Greenville School District	69,784	\$ 3,898	\$ 1,040	\$ 4,969	\$ 9,908
Greenwood School District 50	8,922	\$ 4,412	\$ 1,143	\$ 6,156	\$ 11,712
Greenwood School District 51	1,053	\$ 5,397	\$ 1,143	\$ 4,229	\$ 10,770
Greenwood School District 52	1,593	\$ 3,152	\$ 867	\$ 6,296	\$ 10,314

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SC Parents Involved in Education

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SC School District	Projected Total Pupils for 2009-2010	Per Pupil Funding State	Per Pupil Funding Federal	Per Pupil Funding Local	Total Projected Funding Level (excluding revenues of local bond issues)
Hampton School District 1	2,607	\$ 5,135	\$ 1,516	\$ 2,876	\$ 9,526
Hampton School District 2	1,047	\$ 7,510	\$ 2,148	\$ 4,070	\$ 13,728
Horry School District	37,225	\$ 3,391	\$ 1,336	\$ 7,836	\$ 12,563
Jasper School District	3,274	\$ 4,373	\$ 1,793	\$ 6,546	\$ 12,713
Kershaw School District	10,267	\$ 4,588	\$ 1,183	\$ 4,653	\$ 10,424
Lancaster School District	11,786	\$ 4,200	\$ 1,641	\$ 4,597	\$ 10,437
Laurens School District 55	5,559	\$ 4,855	\$ 1,382	\$ 3,520	\$ 9,757
Laurens School District 56	3,058	\$ 5,020	\$ 2,023	\$ 3,725	\$ 10,768
Lee School District	2,367	\$ 6,796	\$ 2,105	\$ 3,295	\$ 12,196
Lexington School District 1	22,013	\$ 4,174	\$ 605	\$ 6,914	\$ 11,693
Lexington School District 2	8,419	\$ 4,639	\$ 1,270	\$ 4,827	\$ 10,736
Lexington School District 3	1,987	\$ 4,959	\$ 1,571	\$ 6,565	\$ 13,095
Lexington School District 4	3,072	\$ 6,247	\$ 2,329	\$ 3,847	\$ 12,423
Lexington School District 5	16,235	\$ 4,650	\$ 672	\$ 7,042	\$ 12,363
Marion School District 1	2,653	\$ 5,025	\$ 2,221	\$ 2,712	\$ 9,959
Marion School District 2	1,857	\$ 4,838	\$ 2,792	\$ 2,864	\$ 10,495
Marion School District 7	694	\$ 7,773	\$ 1,892	\$ 2,989	\$ 12,654
Marlboro School District	4,274	\$ 5,702	\$ 2,037	\$ 2,881	\$ 10,620
McCormick School District	831	\$ 4,428	\$ 2,322	\$ 8,688	\$ 15,439
Newberry School District	5,762	\$ 4,910	\$ 1,596	\$ 6,399	\$ 12,905
Oconee School District	10,274	\$ 3,852	\$ 1,291	\$ 7,284	\$ 12,427
Orangeburg School District 3	2,878	\$ 5,560	\$ 2,075	\$ 6,098	\$ 13,733
Orangeburg School District 4	3,836	\$ 5,002	\$ 1,614	\$ 4,917	\$ 11,533
Orangeburg School District 5	6,392	\$ 5,139	\$ 1,900	\$ 5,795	\$ 12,834
Pickens School District	16,210	\$ 4,040	\$ 1,034	\$ 4,727	\$ 9,801
Richland School District 1	23,060	\$ 4,542	\$ 2,072	\$ 7,897	\$ 14,511
Richland School District 2	24,669	\$ 4,028	\$ 903	\$ 6,326	\$ 11,256
Saluda School District	2,047	\$ 4,971	\$ 1,228	\$ 3,936	\$ 10,135
Spartanburg School District 1	5,009	\$ 4,538	\$ 1,054	\$ 4,840	\$ 10,432
Spartanburg School District 2	9,656	\$ 4,212	\$ 939	\$ 3,747	\$ 8,898
Spartanburg School District 3	2,929	\$ 4,791	\$ 1,190	\$ 5,288	\$ 11,269
Spartanburg School District 4	2,881	\$ 4,465	\$ 850	\$ 4,388	\$ 9,702
Spartanburg School District 5	7,679	\$ 3,847	\$ 760	\$ 6,675	\$ 11,282
Spartanburg School District 6	10,132	\$ 4,180	\$ 960	\$ 4,943	\$ 10,082
Spartanburg School District 7	7,261	\$ 4,999	\$ 1,899	\$ 7,071	\$ 13,969
Sumter School District 2	8,354	\$ 4,629	\$ 1,784	\$ 3,393	\$ 9,805
Sumter School District 17	8,385	\$ 4,607	\$ 1,947	\$ 3,164	\$ 9,718
Union School District	4,403	\$ 5,204	\$ 1,246	\$ 2,788	\$ 9,238
Williamsburg School District	4,980	\$ 5,085	\$ 3,005	\$ 3,277	\$ 11,367
York School District 1	5,187	\$ 4,303	\$ 1,065	\$ 4,189	\$ 9,557
York School District 2	6,353	\$ 3,125	\$ 527	\$ 8,218	\$ 11,870
York School District 3	17,459	\$ 4,377	\$ 770	\$ 6,085	\$ 11,232
York School District 4	10,187	\$ 3,666	\$ 404	\$ 6,771	\$ 10,840