

Census: Mixed bag on what states spend on education

Public school systems spent an average of \$10,499 per pupil in fiscal year 2009, a 2.3 percent increase over 2008, according to data released by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Public schools in New York spent more than any other state or state equivalent, with \$18,126 per pupil in 2009. The District of Columbia (\$16,408), New Jersey (\$16,271), Alaska (\$15,552) and Vermont (\$15,175) had the next-highest spending.

Nevada ranks No. 44 when it comes to dollars spent on per pupil education and California is No. 29.

“Most children in the United States rely on public schools for their education, so it’s important for people to understand how available resources are being spent within the public education system,” said Lisa Blumberman, chief of the Census Bureau’s Governments Division, said in a statement. “These data provide a detailed look at how taxpayer money is being spent on education.”

States or state equivalents that saw the largest percent increases in per pupil spending from 2008 to 2009 were the District of Columbia (12.4 percent), Utah (10.3 percent), Minnesota (9.4 percent), North Carolina (7.4 percent) and Maine (6.3 percent).

Public school systems received \$590.9 billion in funding in 2009, up 1.5 percent from the prior year. Of that amount, state governments contributed \$276.2 billion (46.7 percent), followed by revenue raised from local sources, which contributed \$258.9 billion (43.8 percent), and federal sources, which provided the remaining \$55.9 billion (9.5 percent).

Total spending by public school systems was \$604.9 billion in 2009, a 2 percent increase from the prior year. Total current spending was \$517.7 billion (85.6 percent), of which \$311.9 billion went to instruction.

Other highlights:

- States and state equivalents that spent the least per pupil were Utah (\$6,356), Idaho (\$7,092), Arizona (\$7,813), Oklahoma (\$7,885) and Tennessee (\$7,897).
- Instructional salaries accounted for the largest spending category for public elementary and secondary education, totaling \$209 billion in 2009.
- Property taxes accounted for 65.2 percent of revenue for public school systems from local sources.

The data used in the tabulations came from a census of all 15,331 public school districts.

For more information, visit the Census Bureau's website.