

SCHOOL CHOICE

ISSUES

IN THE STATE

Florida's Public Education Spending



School Choice for Florida:

Many agree with the concept. Some disagree. And some simply want more information. As the public debate continues to grow louder about how best to provide a quality education to all Florida children, it is critical to know the facts about school choice, and to have an understanding of how school choice programs have had an impact on communities, parents and students around the country. All of this analysis is done with one goal in mind: The best possible education for all of Florida's children.

Prepared By:
Dr. Susan Aud

*Senior Fellow
Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation*

January 2006

MILTON & ROSE D. FRIEDMAN
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*Educational
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About the Author

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About the Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation

The Milton and Rose D. Friedman Foundation, dubbed "the nation's leading voucher advocates" by the *Wall Street Journal*, is a non-profit organization established in 1996. The origins of the foundation lie in the Friedmans' long-standing concern about the serious deficiencies in America's elementary and secondary public schools. The best way to improve the quality of education, they believe, is to enable all parents with the freedom to choose the schools that their children attend. The Friedman Foundation builds upon this vision, clarifies its meaning to the public and amplifies the national call for true education reform through school choice.

About The James Madison Institute

Founded in 1987, The James Madison Institute is a non-partisan policy center based in Tallahassee, Florida. JMI advocates the free-market principles of limited government, individual liberty, and personal responsibility. To learn more about The James Madison Institute or to view its recent publications, go to JMI's website, www.jamesmadison.org.

About the Collins Center for Public Policy

Established in 1988, the Collins Center is a nonpartisan research and consulting firm that provides independent analysis of controversial problems. Based in Miami and Tallahassee, the Collins Center offers a wide range of services and expertise on issues such as education, elections, economic development, insurance, health care and urban development. For more information about the Collins Center, visit www.collinscenter.org.

Executive Summary

There is widespread ignorance and confusion about the actual amount Florida spends on its public schools. This study explains the basic outlines of the Florida education finance system – how much is spent, where it comes from, where it goes and what the trend in spending looks like over time. It includes detailed tables of revenue and spending figures for all 67 Florida school districts.

Key findings include:

- In 2003-04, Florida's "current expenditures" on education, which consist mostly of day-to-day expenses, amounted to \$17.6 billion or \$6,931 per student. Current expenditures per student in the five largest districts, which include half of all Florida students, were:

Broward County: \$6,976

Hillsborough County: \$7,156

Miami-Dade County: \$7,309

Orange County: \$6,914

Palm Beach County: \$7,424

- Florida's "current expenditures" per student rose by nearly 9 percent from 1996 to 2002, adjusting for inflation. This represents an increase of \$462 per student after inflation. Expenditures began to grow slightly faster after 1999.
- State data suggest that the growth in Florida's current expenditures continued at least through 2003-04, making it likely that current spending are significantly greater than \$7,000 in 2005-06.
- When the capital costs and debt service necessary to run the school system are included, Florida spent a total of more than \$22 billion on education, or \$8,735 per student, in 2003-04.
- At the end of 2003-04 the state had a nearly \$8 billion ending balance. This represents money raised but not spent.
- About 10 percent of tax revenue for Florida schools comes from the federal government, 45 percent from the state and 45 percent from local sources. A small amount also comes from non-tax sources.
- About two-thirds of all funding (\$12 billion) were distributed through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP), the state's foundation formula, in 2003-04. The required local effort mandated by the legislature accounted for \$5.2 billion, and \$86 million were spent on two voucher programs, leaving \$6.7 billion of the FEFP to be funded by the state.

Introduction

One of the most important issues in education, especially in the last few years, is the question of whether education funding is “adequate.” Unfortunately, this debate is hindered by widespread ignorance, confusion and misunderstanding about how much we actually spend on education. We know the price of gas at every station in town and the price of groceries at competing stores, but we don’t know how much we spend on our children’s education. We’re savvy consumers of everything from cars to cashews, but not of schools. The distribution of resources among states, districts and schools is determined in multiple political arenas, resulting in extremely complex funding mechanisms. This complexity makes it very difficult for the public to know the facts about education funding. Parents and taxpayers have very little knowledge of how much is spent, what portions of the money are raised from which sources, how the funding is distributed among various types of students, or – most important – what they are getting for their money.

This study examines public education funding in Florida. As in most states, Florida has a state funding formula that is lengthy and complex. Also as in most states, there are contradictory claims about how much is being spent on Florida public education. There also are contradictory claims about the funding trend: some say spending has been flat, others say it has been increasing, while still other voices claim it has been decreasing. This study discusses the facts of Florida public school funding in detail. It explains the sources of revenue and the expenditure of funds, reporting figures for each of the state’s 67 districts. It also analyzes the trend in current expenditures – that is, the day-to-day operating costs of schools – to address the question of whether they have been rising or falling in recent years.

Public Perceptions of Florida Education Spending

There are widespread claims that Florida education faces problems caused by low spending. The Florida Education Association (FEA) warns on its web site: "There is not a strong commitment to find both short-term and long-term solutions to funding problems facing our public educational system. Without a systemic and serious commitment to increased funding, Florida will continue falling short on any commitments to having quality public schools."¹ FEA President Andy Ford recently called for Gov. Jeb Bush to demonstrate his commitment to education by putting an unexpected state tax windfall of \$3.2 billion into education. Ford suggested that, as we head into a holiday season, Bush should recall that "Florida teachers have met every challenge placed before them. . . even when they didn't believe the policies were the best way to raise achievement." Ford maintains that education has taken a smaller slice of the state's general revenue under Bush, while businesses and wealthy Floridians have gotten generous tax breaks.²

Local newspapers tend to echo the teacher union's rallying cry that spending levels are low. Do a quick web search at just about any time and you almost always will turn up recent news stories indicating that school funding is a desperate problem in Florida. For example, a search for stories during the last week in November 2005 discovered the following stories:

The *Miami Herald* reported that many school boards were short of cash, quoting Palm Beach County Superintendent Art Johnson: "There's two things that people care about: kids and money. In our case, both of those are on the line." Broward County School Board member Maureen Dinnen - who had been a Florida statewide teacher-union president for five years prior to joining the school board - told the paper, "We've always had money problems, but they're dire right now all over the state."³

Meanwhile, the *St. Petersburg Times* reports that the Hernando County School Board blames the state funding formula for its inability to pay teachers more. Deborah Bruggink, the district's chief financial officer, says she has received a "bombardment of letters from angry teachers." She says the state funding formula is to blame for her district's scarcity of money, pointing out that the formula directs more money to other districts based on factors such as high-performing schools, the local cost-of-living and the number of special-needs students.⁴

The Facts on Florida Education Spending

Uncritical acceptance of these claims about Florida education spending results in the presumption that more spending should always be pursued, regardless of the reason. If a school district is doing well, more money should be directed there to reward good performance. If a school system is failing, more money should be directed there to help it improve. If federal or state mandates require that all students be taught by a qualified teacher or graduate with a basic set of knowledge, more money should accompany those mandates. If traditional public schools have to compete with charter schools, they will need more money to do so. If the government wants to try a voucher program, public schools should get more money for their cooperation.

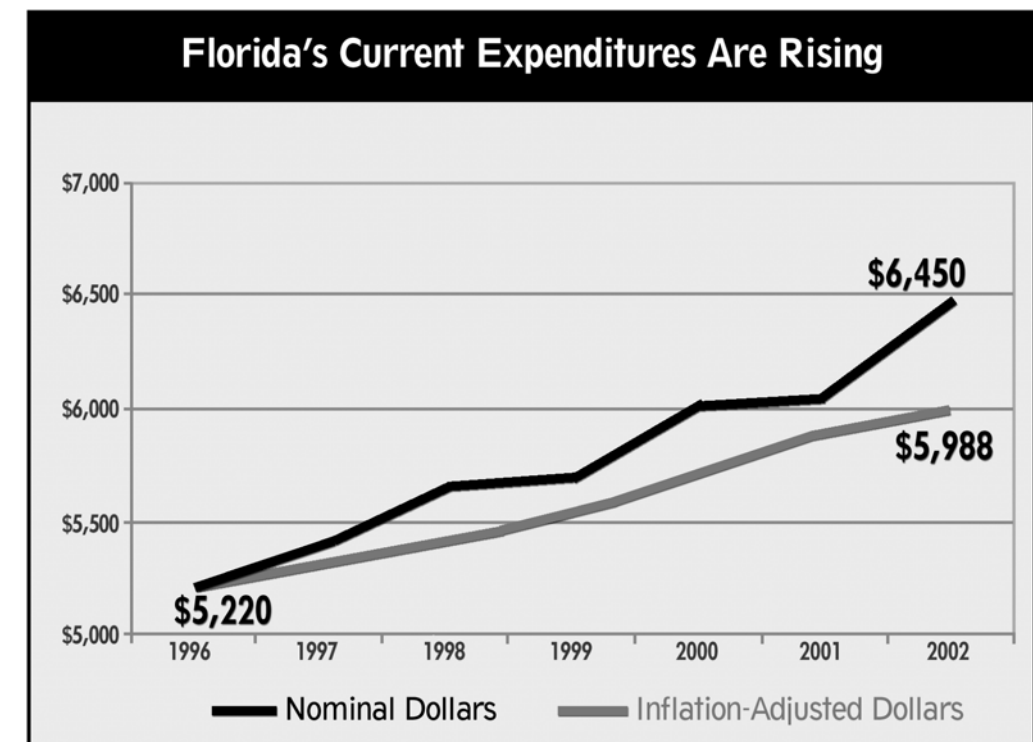
However, as we will see in some detail in the analysis below, Florida education spending is much higher than these portrayals would give us reason to believe. Florida's total education spending in 2003-04 was more than \$22 billion, or \$8,735 per student. In the five largest school districts, which contain half of all Florida students, spending was comparable to or higher than the statewide average: Broward County spent \$8,669, Hillsborough County spent \$9,251, Miami-Dade County spent \$8,893, Orange County spent \$8,551 and Palm Beach County spent \$10,947 (see Table 4 below for details).

Public perceptions also lend credibility to inaccurate claims that Florida spending is declining. For example, in 2002 the *St. Petersburg Times* claimed that while Gov. Bush was taking credit for spending increases in public education, the paper's own analysis found that real education spending actually had remained flat.⁵ According to this analysis, from 1999 (when Bush took office) to 2002, spending per student had risen by only 0.25 percent, or about \$10 per student over three years, after accounting for inflation. It is noteworthy that Florida education spending increased even in 2002, a year of financial turmoil following the terrorist attacks of 2001.

The most appropriate way to evaluate this claim is to look at "current expenditures" rather than total expenditures. As we will see in the detailed analysis below, current expenditures are the portion of the education budget that does not include capital costs and debt service. Due to rapid enrollment growth across the state, most districts have had to build an unusually large number of new schools, and have borrowed an unusually large amount of money to do so. This increase in capital outlays and debt service certainly represents an increase in education spending, but it is not the kind of spending that either Bush or his critics have in mind when they debate whether education spending in Florida has increased. To give a fair hearing to the *Times*' claim, we should examine whether current expenditures have increased.

Data from the U.S. Department of Education show that Florida's current expenditures have risen from \$5,701 per student in 1999 to \$6,450 in 2002 in unadjusted nominal dollars.⁶ Using Consumer Price Index data from the U.S. Department of Labor, we can calculate that, if the 1999 current expenditure amount had risen only at the rate of inflation, it would have been \$6,156 in 2002.⁷ This means inflation-adjusted current expenditures actually rose by \$300 per student, or 5.3 percent, over the same time period.

Looking back over a longer time frame, Florida's current expenditures per student actually rose by nearly 9 percent from 1996 to 2002, adjusting for inflation. This represents an increase of \$462 per student after inflation. In fact, real growth in per-student expenditures got slightly faster after 1999. The data obtained from the Florida Department of Education for the 2003-04 school year, discussed below, suggest that this trend has continued, as current expenditures per student had risen to \$6,931 by that year.



Where to Find Reliable Information

Information on Florida education spending is available to those who know where to look. Unfortunately, sifting through the available data and understanding them often requires a great deal of effort and a relatively sophisticated level of accounting knowledge.

Each school district is required by law to publish in local newspapers a draft of its proposed budget for the coming year. This notification is usually followed by a work session, open to the public, before the budget is finalized. The purpose is to allow citizens to address questions on the budget to the superintendent and school board. These draft budgets contain only estimates of expected revenue and expenditures for the coming year. At the end of the year, the actual revenue and expenditures can vary from what was budgeted. In some cases the variation between the estimates and the actual figures is considerable. However, when the draft budgets are published in local newspapers, this point is not made sufficiently clear. What's more, the media tend to give much more coverage to the release of estimated budgets for future years than to the release of actual budget figures for previous years, which are "old news" by then. As a result, the public is prone to see coverage of the budget estimates year after year without ever seeing the actual budget figures.

A recent state law requires Florida school districts to send parents a financial report with actual revenue and expenditures for prior years. Unfortunately, the data in these reports are not easily understood by an ordinary parent without training in accountancy. For example, most people probably would understand "current expenditures" to be the total amount currently being spent, but it is not. This term refers to expenditures for day-to-day operations, excluding capital costs, debt service and other categories of spending. The district reports are intended to provide Florida parents with information on the funding of their schools, but the information in the reports is likely to be beyond the level of sophistication of most parents.

Similarly, the state Department of Education web site contains volumes of financial data. One of the most comprehensive sources of revenue and expenditure data is the Florida Department of Education web page titled "Return on Investment/School Efficiency Measure (Linking Learning and Costs)".⁸ This web page includes data from the state's student, staff and finance data systems. It provides detailed enrollment and financial data by school, by district or at the state level for the years 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04. Those who are able to locate the database and understand school finance terms can learn quite a bit about Florida public education spending from this source. It is easier to use and provides more information than the online financial databases of many other states. However, finding the page is not so straightforward - the title "Return on Investment" is not an intuitive name for a finance database - and it is unlikely that this page will be useful to those who do not already have some familiarity with the details of school finance.

In addition, the Florida auditor general maintains annual audits of financial statements for each of the 67 districts. The auditor general's office performs annual audits for counties with populations under 70,000. Larger counties are required to arrange for independently performed annual audits, and are audited by the auditor general's office only every third year.

A comparison of the data available from the auditor general's office and those on the Department of Education web page indicates that, although adjustments are required in some districts to remove errors identified by the auditor general's office, the Department of Education data appear to be accurate and comprehensive. Therefore, this study uses the Department of Education data to provide a detailed picture of where Florida's public education money comes from and where it goes.⁹

Where the Money Comes From

For the 2003-04 school year, the latest year for which data are available, more than \$21.3 billion in tax revenue were collected to finance Florida public education. About 10 percent of this amount, or \$2.2 billion, came from federal sources, with the state and local levels of government splitting the remaining amount almost exactly in half (\$9.6 billion and \$9.5 billion respectively). The process for determining the amount of funds allocated differs for each of these three sources. Table 1 provides the precise breakdown of revenue by source, in dollars and as a percentage of the total, for each of the 67 Florida districts for school year 2003-04.

Table 1: Sources of Funding for Florida Schools

DISTRICT	FEDERAL REVENUE	% OF TOTAL	STATE REVENUE	% OF TOTAL	LOCAL REVENUE	% OF TOTAL	TOTAL REVENUE
FLORIDA	\$2,220,113,281	10%	\$9,591,214,633	45%	\$9,497,352,998	45%	\$21,308,680,972
ALACHUA	\$32,471,032	14%	\$113,146,842	49%	\$84,488,559	37%	\$230,106,434
BAKER	\$3,590,027	12%	\$22,106,491	72%	\$5,059,060	16%	\$30,755,578
BAY	\$23,887,185	11%	\$94,714,982	45%	\$90,210,007	43%	\$208,812,175
BRADFORD	\$4,079,374	14%	\$19,264,034	66%	\$5,816,741	20%	\$29,160,150
BREVARD	\$51,554,862	10%	\$282,174,697	53%	\$198,775,990	37%	\$532,505,550
BROWARD	\$206,770,438	9%	\$1,077,893,160	49%	\$925,123,818	42%	\$2,209,787,417
CALHOUN	\$2,256,113	14%	\$11,386,889	73%	\$1,993,084	13%	\$15,636,087
CHARLOTTE	\$13,733,144	9%	\$37,007,330	25%	\$96,459,115	66%	\$147,199,590
CITRUS	\$12,027,513	10%	\$49,107,029	41%	\$58,126,188	49%	\$119,260,730
CLAY	\$16,209,537	8%	\$138,293,285	65%	\$58,944,218	28%	\$213,447,042
COLLIER	\$36,695,324	9%	\$57,572,729	14%	\$317,992,529	77%	\$412,260,582
COLUMBIA	\$9,879,538	14%	\$45,046,328	64%	\$15,171,530	22%	\$70,097,397
DESOTO	\$7,018,747	18%	\$23,082,433	58%	\$9,621,470	24%	\$39,722,650
DIXIE	\$2,712,026	16%	\$10,560,607	62%	\$3,732,057	22%	\$17,004,691
DUVAL	\$102,462,838	11%	\$451,759,957	49%	\$367,609,633	40%	\$921,832,429
ESCAMBIA	\$45,109,448	14%	\$177,022,447	53%	\$111,457,205	33%	\$333,589,100
FLAGLER	\$5,611,316	6%	\$37,104,846	41%	\$46,756,626	52%	\$89,472,789
FRANKLIN	\$2,054,414	14%	\$2,384,167	16%	\$10,085,566	69%	\$14,524,148
GADSDEN	\$13,504,396	23%	\$36,490,400	61%	\$9,944,962	17%	\$59,939,759
GILCHRIST	\$3,064,416	15%	\$13,471,281	67%	\$3,707,198	18%	\$20,242,895
GLADES	\$2,199,670	15%	\$8,199,871	57%	\$3,913,275	27%	\$14,312,817
GULF	\$2,639,335	14%	\$5,848,855	31%	\$10,348,259	55%	\$18,836,449
HAMILTON	\$3,343,694	13%	\$18,528,539	70%	\$4,683,213	18%	\$26,555,447
HARDEE	\$6,829,425	18%	\$19,700,130	51%	\$12,334,001	32%	\$38,863,558
HENDRY	\$8,992,048	16%	\$32,692,581	57%	\$15,484,821	27%	\$57,169,452
HERNANDO	\$13,298,097	9%	\$75,466,077	49%	\$66,042,900	43%	\$154,807,075
HIGHLANDS	\$14,072,177	16%	\$44,316,396	50%	\$30,633,714	34%	\$89,022,288
HILLSBOROUGH	\$209,240,174	13%	\$842,093,394	54%	\$502,636,597	32%	\$1,553,970,166
HOLMES	\$4,416,314	14%	\$23,669,399	75%	\$3,299,946	11%	\$31,385,660
INDIAN RIVER	\$12,093,499	8%	\$35,748,784	25%	\$95,773,119	67%	\$143,615,403
JACKSON	\$9,308,563	17%	\$35,169,267	64%	\$10,051,696	18%	\$54,529,527
JEFFERSON	\$3,490,440	15%	\$16,450,597	71%	\$3,276,276	14%	\$23,217,314
LAFAYETTE	\$1,319,577	17%	\$5,062,849	65%	\$1,379,719	18%	\$7,762,146
LAKE	\$22,068,603	8%	\$125,128,580	48%	\$115,031,390	44%	\$262,228,573
LEE	\$54,258,855	8%	\$155,621,166	24%	\$433,261,296	67%	\$643,141,318
LEON	\$29,378,607	10%	\$135,342,787	48%	\$119,060,752	42%	\$283,782,148

Table 1: Sources of Funding for Florida Schools

DISTRICT	FEDERAL REVENUE	% OF TOTAL	STATE REVENUE	% OF TOTAL	LOCAL REVENUE	% OF TOTAL	TOTAL REVENUE
LEVY	\$5,851,582	13%	\$29,143,874	64%	\$10,745,076	23%	\$45,740,532
LIBERTY	\$1,909,406	17%	\$7,929,239	71%	\$1,357,700	12%	\$11,196,346
MADISON	\$4,310,683	18%	\$16,259,269	66%	\$4,060,981	16%	\$24,630,933
MANATEE	\$32,770,880	10%	\$120,290,848	35%	\$187,297,275	55%	\$340,359,004
MARION	\$38,081,893	13%	\$164,277,364	55%	\$98,687,473	33%	\$301,046,731
MARTIN	\$14,531,479	9%	\$34,573,225	21%	\$115,867,823	70%	\$164,972,528
MIAMI-DADE	\$383,660,896	12%	\$1,513,259,169	48%	\$1,281,405,099	40%	\$3,178,325,165
MONROE	\$8,947,439	9%	\$14,521,956	14%	\$78,717,342	77%	\$102,186,738
NASSAU	\$5,631,516	8%	\$29,188,657	39%	\$39,492,637	53%	\$74,312,811
OKALOOSA	\$25,070,987	11%	\$111,727,668	50%	\$87,025,335	39%	\$223,823,991
OKEECHOBEE	\$7,096,894	13%	\$32,340,479	61%	\$13,149,251	25%	\$52,586,625
ORANGE	\$122,383,694	9%	\$570,675,919	41%	\$700,865,644	50%	\$1,393,925,258
OSCEOLA	\$29,885,758	9%	\$178,249,029	51%	\$138,557,595	40%	\$346,692,383
PALM BEACH	\$123,523,258	8%	\$478,565,229	31%	\$920,703,698	60%	\$1,522,792,186
PASCO	\$40,438,798	9%	\$262,508,926	58%	\$148,028,366	33%	\$450,976,090
PINELLAS	\$94,762,102	10%	\$392,052,747	42%	\$437,494,434	47%	\$924,309,284
POLK	\$74,474,270	12%	\$340,112,602	55%	\$202,231,637	33%	\$616,818,510
PUTNAM	\$12,491,280	14%	\$51,085,302	57%	\$25,494,299	29%	\$89,070,882
ST. JOHNS	\$11,321,438	6%	\$58,307,892	31%	\$116,310,699	63%	\$185,940,030
ST. LUCIE	\$28,752,235	11%	\$123,848,204	46%	\$116,963,475	43%	\$269,563,916
SANTA ROSA	\$17,164,623	10%	\$100,542,235	58%	\$54,657,117	32%	\$172,363,976
SARASOTA	\$25,757,734	6%	\$68,761,887	17%	\$318,625,751	77%	\$413,145,373
SEMINOLE	\$35,484,516	7%	\$245,372,516	50%	\$211,435,615	43%	\$492,292,647
SUMTER	\$6,585,973	13%	\$25,463,107	51%	\$18,120,540	36%	\$50,169,621
SUWANNEE	\$5,791,174	14%	\$26,828,276	65%	\$8,490,963	21%	\$41,110,414
TAYLOR	\$5,271,393	19%	\$14,931,461	53%	\$8,104,562	29%	\$28,307,417
UNION	\$2,006,290	13%	\$11,235,937	72%	\$2,423,074	15%	\$15,665,301
VOLUSIA	\$49,529,006	9%	\$229,670,029	44%	\$247,834,937	47%	\$527,033,972
WAKULLA	\$2,929,650	9%	\$23,409,595	70%	\$7,204,780	21%	\$33,544,027
WALTON	\$6,286,565	11%	\$10,562,586	18%	\$41,144,038	71%	\$57,993,191
WASHINGTON	\$5,769,103	15%	\$26,890,200	69%	\$6,569,252	17%	\$39,228,556

Overall, Florida K-12 schools received about \$8,400 in tax revenue per student for 2003-04. Of this amount, \$875 came from the federal government, \$3,782 from the state and \$3,745 from local revenue. Table 2 provides the breakdown of Florida education revenue per student.

In addition, nearly \$2 billion were received by districts from other financing sources, such as long-term debt proceeds and the sale of capital assets. Another \$1.2 billion were "transferred in." These transfers represent the movement of money from one fund to another without the expectation of repayment.

Finally, across all districts there is a fund balance left over from previous years of nearly \$7 billion. This is money raised in previous school years but not yet spent.

Table 2: Funding Per Student for Florida Schools

DISTRICT	ENROLLMENT	FEDERAL REVENUE	STATE REVENUE	LOCAL REVENUE	TOTAL REVENUE
FLORIDA	2,536,202	\$875	\$3,782	\$3,745	\$8,402
BAKER	4,525	\$793	\$4,885	\$1,118	\$6,797
HOLMES	4,461	\$990	\$5,306	\$740	\$7,036
NASSAU	10,521	\$535	\$2,774	\$3,754	\$7,063
SUWANNEE	5,802	\$998	\$4,624	\$1,463	\$7,086
PUTNAM	12,483	\$1,001	\$4,092	\$2,042	\$7,135
CLAY	29,861	\$543	\$4,631	\$1,974	\$7,148
DUVAL	128,118	\$800	\$3,526	\$2,869	\$7,195
CALHOUN	2,173	\$1,038	\$5,240	\$917	\$7,196
WAKULLA	4,661	\$629	\$5,022	\$1,546	\$7,197
UNION	2,174	\$923	\$5,168	\$1,115	\$7,206
COLUMBIA	9,701	\$1,018	\$4,643	\$1,564	\$7,226
OKALOOSA	30,949	\$810	\$3,610	\$2,812	\$7,232
BRADFORD	4,029	\$1,013	\$4,781	\$1,444	\$7,238
SANTA ROSA	23,643	\$726	\$4,253	\$2,312	\$7,290
BREVARD	72,529	\$711	\$3,891	\$2,741	\$7,342
LAFAYETTE	1,049	\$1,258	\$4,826	\$1,315	\$7,400
GILCHRIST	2,734	\$1,121	\$4,927	\$1,356	\$7,404
OKEECHOBEE	7,084	\$1,002	\$4,565	\$1,856	\$7,423
MADISON	3,311	\$1,302	\$4,911	\$1,227	\$7,439
HENDRY	7,673	\$1,172	\$4,261	\$2,018	\$7,451
LEVY	6,113	\$957	\$4,768	\$1,758	\$7,483
POLK	82,148	\$907	\$4,140	\$2,462	\$7,509
HARDEE	5,175	\$1,320	\$3,807	\$2,383	\$7,510
JACKSON	7,228	\$1,288	\$4,866	\$1,391	\$7,544
MARION	39,689	\$960	\$4,139	\$2,487	\$7,585
ESCAMBIA	43,871	\$1,028	\$4,035	\$2,541	\$7,604
DIXIE	2,229	\$1,217	\$4,738	\$1,674	\$7,629
SUMTER	6,558	\$1,004	\$3,883	\$2,763	\$7,650
SEMINOLE	63,412	\$560	\$3,869	\$3,334	\$7,763
CITRUS	15,344	\$784	\$3,200	\$3,788	\$7,772
HIGHLANDS	11,428	\$1,231	\$3,878	\$2,681	\$7,790
ALACHUA	29,309	\$1,108	\$3,860	\$2,883	\$7,851
TAYLOR	3,590	\$1,468	\$4,159	\$2,258	\$7,885
BAY	26,431	\$904	\$3,583	\$3,413	\$7,900
PINELLAS	114,754	\$826	\$3,416	\$3,812	\$8,055
DESOTO	4,916	\$1,428	\$4,695	\$1,957	\$8,080
LIBERTY	1,383	\$1,381	\$5,733	\$982	\$8,096
PASCO	54,957	\$736	\$4,777	\$2,694	\$8,206
BROWARD	267,884	\$772	\$4,024	\$3,453	\$8,249
LAKE	31,773	\$695	\$3,938	\$3,620	\$8,253
HERNANDO	18,601	\$715	\$4,057	\$3,551	\$8,323
CHARLOTTE	17,670	\$777	\$2,094	\$5,459	\$8,330
GADSDEN	7,195	\$1,877	\$5,072	\$1,382	\$8,331
VOLUSIA	62,854	\$788	\$3,654	\$3,943	\$8,385
ST. JOHNS	21,940	\$516	\$2,658	\$5,301	\$8,475
MIAMI-DADE	373,375	\$1,028	\$4,053	\$3,432	\$8,512

Table 2: Funding Per Student for Florida Schools

DISTRICT	ENROLLMENT	FEDERAL REVENUE	STATE REVENUE	LOCAL REVENUE	TOTAL REVENUE
ST. LUCIE	31,550	\$911	\$3,925	\$3,707	\$8,544
OSCEOLA	40,482	\$738	\$4,403	\$3,423	\$8,564
MANATEE	39,106	\$838	\$3,076	\$4,789	\$8,703
GULF	2,164	\$1,220	\$2,703	\$4,782	\$8,704
ORANGE	158,643	\$771	\$3,597	\$4,418	\$8,787
HILLSBOROUGH	175,305	\$1,194	\$4,804	\$2,867	\$8,864
LEON	31,855	\$922	\$4,249	\$3,738	\$8,909
INDIAN RIVER	15,980	\$757	\$2,237	\$5,993	\$8,987
WALTON	6,304	\$997	\$1,676	\$6,527	\$9,199
PALM BEACH	164,796	\$750	\$2,904	\$5,587	\$9,240
MARTIN	17,255	\$842	\$2,004	\$6,715	\$9,561
LEE	63,148	\$859	\$2,464	\$6,861	\$10,185
FRANKLIN	1,343	\$1,530	\$1,775	\$7,510	\$10,815
COLLIER	38,104	\$963	\$1,511	\$8,345	\$10,819
SARASOTA	38,026	\$677	\$1,808	\$8,379	\$10,865
MONROE	9,195	\$973	\$1,579	\$8,561	\$11,113
WASHINGTON	3,411	\$1,691	\$7,883	\$1,926	\$11,501
FLAGLER	7,587	\$740	\$4,891	\$6,163	\$11,793
HAMILTON	2,067	\$1,618	\$8,964	\$2,266	\$12,847
GLADES	998	\$2,204	\$8,216	\$3,921	\$14,342
JEFFERSON	1,575	\$2,216	\$10,445	\$2,080	\$14,741

Federal Revenue

Although education is generally considered a state and local responsibility, the role of the federal government has been increasing gradually for about 50 years. The primary focus of this expanded federal oversight and funding of public education has been to ensure that adequate resources are available, particularly for vulnerable students.¹⁰ Today, the federal government provides funds for low-income students mainly through the national school lunch program and Title I, which recently has been tied to increased oversight of school performance under the No Child Left Behind Act. Funding under each of these programs depends on the percentage of low-income students in each district, and the districts are to distribute the funds to schools in a similar manner.

The federal government also provides funds for special-needs students through the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act.¹¹ Until 1997 these funds were based on the current number of special-needs students, as well as low-income students, in each district. In 1997 Congress changed the law in response to concerns that this funding system gave schools a financial incentive to diagnose increasing numbers of students as having special needs. Funding now is determined by a formula based on counts of special-needs students over numerous previous years, as well as low-income students. Like the other major categories of federal revenue, these funds are directed through the state government to districts.

School districts also receive federal funding for Federal Impact Aid, Medicaid and other grant programs. Nearly all of the federal funds for public education are considered "operating revenue." This means they are intended to be spent for the provision of education, not on buildings or debt.

Of the \$2.2 billion in federal funding that Florida schools received in the 2003-04 school year, \$160 million came in the form of direct federal aid to individual schools, while slightly more than \$2 billion came through the state. The largest amounts, not surprisingly, went to the largest districts - Broward, Miami-Dade, Duval, Hillsborough, Orange and Palm Beach counties. These districts serve 1.27 million students, or about half of the state's total enrollment of 2.5 million.

State Revenue

Most of Florida's state education funding is provided through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP), which serves as the foundation of the Florida education finance system. In addition, districts receive funds through categorical programs and the state racing commission; some state funds are distributed for capital outlays and debt service.

The FEFP was created by the Florida legislature in 1973 to guarantee adequate resources for every student in Florida, regardless of geographic or local economic differences.¹² Each district receives state revenue based on its number of students, weighted by student characteristics such as grade level or special-needs status. This formula produces weighted enrollment figures for each district, which are called Weighted Full Time Equivalents. This figure then is multiplied by a base amount set annually by the legislature (\$3,630.03 in 2003-04). This amount is adjusted by the cost-of-living differential determined for each district. Other adjustments are made to provide additional revenue to districts based on factors such as declining enrollment, low population density (the Sparsity Supplement), and high crime (the Safe Schools Allocation). Funds are added for supplemental academic instruction, summer reading programs and a guaranteed minimum amount for special-needs students.⁴

This FEFP calculation determines the total revenue each district will receive from state and local sources combined. Next, the state calculates what is known as the "required local effort," or the amount of funding that each school district will be required to raise on its own. This calculation is based on property values and a required millage (tax) rate. The required local effort is subtracted from the total FEFP calculation for each district. Spending on the state's two voucher programs - the Opportunity Scholarship Program for students in chronically failing schools and the McKay Scholarship Program for students with special needs - is subtracted from each district's total FEFP calculation. (Florida's other school choice program, the Corporate Tuition Tax Credit, is not part of the state's education finance system and, thus, is not accounted for in the funding formula.¹⁴) After the required local effort and the funding for the two voucher programs have been subtracted from the FEFP, the remainder is the amount of state funding that the district will receive.

In 2003-04 the total amount of FEFP funding for all 67 districts was about \$12 billion. Of this amount, the required local effort mandated by the legislature accounted for \$5.2 billion, and \$86 million was spent on the two voucher programs, leaving \$6.7 billion of the FEFP, or approximately 56 percent, to be funded by the state. State FEFP funding per student varied from a low of \$441 per student in Sarasota County to \$4,747 in Washington County. (Bear in mind that FEFP funding does not include all state funding; for example, while Sarasota County received only \$441 per student in FEFP funding from the state, its total state funding was \$1,808 per student.)

The FEFP for 2003-04 made up approximately two-thirds of the total state revenue distributed to districts. The amount allocated through the FEFP has been declining in recent years as a percentage of total operating revenue. The FEFP made up 81 percent of state operating revenue in 2001-02 and 76 percent of state operating revenue in 2003-04. Categorical programs include instructional materials, transportation, food service supplements, the Florida Teachers Lead Program, school recognition, teacher recruitment and retention, public school technology and

others. Table 3 provides the amount of FEFP, categorical, racing commission and other state revenue for each district for the 2003-04 school year.

Table 3: Categories of State-Level Funding for Florida Schools					
DISTRICT	FLORIDA EDUCATION FINANCE PROGRAM	CATEGORICAL PROGRAM	RACING COMISSION FUNDS	OTHER STATE REVENUE	TOTAL STATE REVENUE
FLORIDA	\$6,676,160,639	\$1,386,456,964	\$14,554,325	\$1,514,042,668	\$9,591,214,633
ALACHUA	\$86,417,103	\$17,062,283	\$0	\$9,667,455	\$113,146,842
BAKER	\$17,443,939	\$2,911,171	\$255,500	\$1,495,880	\$22,106,491
BAY	\$69,936,635	\$13,928,144	\$211,082	\$10,639,119	\$94,714,982
BRADFORD	\$14,498,576	\$2,165,561	\$223,250	\$2,376,647	\$19,264,034
BREVARD	\$208,886,782	\$38,503,560	\$223,504	\$34,560,850	\$282,174,697
BROWARD	\$740,601,108	\$125,200,739	\$446,500	\$211,644,812	\$1,077,893,160
CALHOUN	\$8,871,572	\$1,303,833	\$215,750	\$995,733	\$11,386,889
CHARLOTTE	\$20,429,331	\$9,055,292	\$148,833	\$7,373,873	\$37,007,330
CITRUS	\$33,080,955	\$9,529,800	\$223,250	\$6,273,023	\$49,107,029
CLAY	\$104,032,408	\$18,082,561	\$223,250	\$15,955,066	\$138,293,285
COLLIER	\$17,915,247	\$21,683,128	\$446,500	\$17,527,854	\$57,572,729
COLUMBIA	\$35,827,497	\$5,336,217	\$223,250	\$3,659,363	\$45,046,328
DESOTO	\$18,228,072	\$2,234,419	\$132,166	\$2,487,775	\$23,082,433
DIXIE	\$8,154,443	\$1,430,840	\$223,250	\$752,074	\$10,560,607
DUVAL	\$353,656,624	\$59,337,264	\$446,500	\$38,319,569	\$451,759,957
ESCAMBIA	\$131,516,738	\$24,544,721	\$446,500	\$20,514,487	\$177,022,447
FLAGLER	\$11,123,115	\$14,475,345	\$223,250	\$11,283,135	\$37,104,846
FRANKLIN	\$598,078	\$727,559	\$306,000	\$752,529	\$2,384,167
GADSDEN	\$24,275,643	\$5,898,933	\$223,250	\$6,092,573	\$36,490,400
GILCHRIST	\$10,823,167	\$1,781,834	\$202,247	\$664,032	\$13,471,281
GLADES	\$2,690,764	\$4,893,487	\$223,250	\$392,369	\$8,199,871
GULF	\$3,126,802	\$1,219,372	\$230,000	\$1,272,680	\$5,848,855
HAMILTON	\$6,328,858	\$11,104,542	\$223,250	\$871,889	\$18,528,539
HARDEE	\$14,568,701	\$3,352,452	\$187,375	\$1,591,601	\$19,700,130
HENDRY	\$26,259,934	\$3,952,671	\$143,300	\$2,336,676	\$32,692,581
HERNANDO	\$52,610,070	\$11,567,674	\$209,750	\$11,078,583	\$75,466,077
HIGHLANDS	\$34,120,982	\$5,900,858	\$223,250	\$4,071,306	\$44,316,396
HILLSBOROUGH	\$555,610,786	\$101,402,792	\$446,500	\$184,633,316	\$842,093,394
HOLMES	\$13,922,286	\$8,722,287	\$209,250	\$815,575	\$23,669,399
INDIAN RIVER	\$15,615,841	\$9,307,076	\$0	\$10,825,867	\$35,748,784
JACKSON	\$26,640,344	\$3,887,333	\$371,500	\$4,270,089	\$35,169,267
JEFFERSON	\$5,234,115	\$9,655,216	\$223,250	\$1,338,016	\$16,450,597
LAFAYETTE	\$3,960,743	\$517,491	\$210,150	\$374,465	\$5,062,849
LAKE	\$87,175,570	\$24,567,937	\$148,833	\$13,236,240	\$125,128,580
LEE	\$69,590,724	\$37,393,314	\$223,250	\$48,413,877	\$155,621,166
LEON	\$94,857,775	\$17,891,766	\$223,250	\$22,369,996	\$135,342,787
LEVY	\$21,792,374	\$3,985,634	\$434,500	\$2,931,365	\$29,143,874

Table 3: Categories of State-Level Funding for Florida Schools					
DISTRICT	FLORIDA EDUCATION FINANCE PROGRAM	CATEGORICAL PROGRAM	RACING COMISSION FUNDS	OTHER STATE REVENUE	TOTAL STATE REVENUE
LIBERTY	\$6,113,156	\$1,039,899	\$248,250	\$527,934	\$7,929,239
MADISON	\$12,966,382	\$1,996,741	\$217,000	\$1,079,145	\$16,259,269
MANATEE	\$82,534,658	\$19,601,083	\$0	\$18,155,106	\$120,290,848
MARION	\$126,010,163	\$23,859,319	\$0	\$14,407,882	\$164,277,364
MARTIN	\$8,324,716	\$11,404,324	\$223,250	\$14,620,934	\$34,573,225
MIAMI-DADE	\$1,122,152,731	\$170,752,521	\$0	\$220,353,917	\$1,513,259,169
MONROE	\$4,107,002	\$5,790,532	\$223,250	\$4,401,171	\$14,521,956
NASSAU	\$19,962,901	\$6,300,113	\$223,250	\$2,702,392	\$29,188,657
OKALOOSA	\$81,991,143	\$16,741,390	\$190,750	\$12,804,385	\$111,727,668
OKEECHOBEE	\$25,436,899	\$3,988,395	\$223,250	\$2,691,935	\$32,340,479
ORANGE	\$407,459,237	\$85,718,752	\$0	\$77,497,930	\$570,675,919
OSCEOLA	\$126,665,956	\$23,494,602	\$223,250	\$27,865,221	\$178,249,029
PALM BEACH	\$286,645,268	\$85,863,615	\$0	\$106,056,346	\$478,565,229
PASCO	\$185,205,839	\$30,189,500	\$223,250	\$46,890,337	\$262,508,926
PINELLAS	\$266,811,872	\$56,114,270	\$223,250	\$68,903,355	\$392,052,747
POLK	\$265,400,780	\$43,183,447	\$0	\$31,528,375	\$340,112,602
PUTNAM	\$39,009,686	\$7,949,054	\$401,850	\$3,724,711	\$51,085,302
ST. JOHNS	\$32,915,812	\$13,764,927	\$206,750	\$11,420,403	\$58,307,892
ST. LUCIE	\$85,780,471	\$19,700,922	\$223,250	\$18,143,560	\$123,848,204
SANTA ROSA	\$74,229,165	\$12,996,324	\$223,250	\$13,093,495	\$100,542,235
SARASOTA	\$16,697,408	\$20,850,900	\$446,500	\$30,767,078	\$68,761,887
SEMINOLE	\$179,167,483	\$33,192,970	\$0	\$33,012,063	\$245,372,516
SUMTER	\$18,217,654	\$3,885,619	\$223,250	\$3,136,584	\$25,463,107
SUWANNEE	\$19,590,261	\$3,581,774	\$213,250	\$3,442,990	\$26,828,276
TAYLOR	\$9,756,278	\$1,879,880	\$223,250	\$3,072,052	\$14,931,461
UNION	\$8,801,138	\$1,405,897	\$223,250	\$805,651	\$11,235,937
VOLUSIA	\$177,191,959	\$32,527,389	\$283,485	\$19,667,196	\$229,670,029
WAKULLA	\$17,422,025	\$3,718,507	\$247,250	\$2,021,813	\$23,409,595
WALTON	\$3,088,344	\$4,263,058	\$222,500	\$2,988,683	\$10,562,586
WASHINGTON	\$16,080,550	\$6,186,134	\$223,250	\$4,400,265	\$26,890,200

Local Revenue

The final source of revenue for Florida public education is local governments in each school district. In Florida, the 67 school districts are coterminous with the state's 67 counties. Each of these districts raises education revenue by collecting property taxes. The millage rates vary from district to district; each mill represents \$1 in tax for every \$1,000 of property value.

The FEFP determines the required tax rate for each district by taking the required local effort for the entire state, which is determined by the legislature, and dividing it by 95 percent of the total taxable value of all property in all districts.¹⁵ The distribution between districts is done according to the property wealth of each district relative to the state total. A complicated formula is used that considers property wealth per student as well as the

amount of revenue that could be raised for one mill in each district. In some cases the millage rate is reduced because a district's required local effort cannot exceed 90 percent of its FEFP allocation. The average rate for the 2003-04 school year was 5.679 mills.

Districts are allowed to levy discretionary (that is, optional) taxes beyond the required local effort for school construction and maintenance. This additional levy is limited to 2.0 mills. Beginning in 1997, restrictions on the use of these funds have been phased in, limiting them to spending on spaces that provide instruction to students and on school buses.

Districts also may raise additional operational revenue through a discretionary levy of no more than 0.510 mills. This gives districts the opportunity to exceed the required local effort. In addition, districts may raise an additional supplemental levy of 0.25 mills, but this additional levy may raise no more than \$50 per student.

Several other local sources of tax revenue are available to districts. Each of these, whether for capital, operations or debt service, carries its own restrictions in terms of millage rates and time frames. Some also require voter approval. In addition, local districts may generate revenue from interest on investments, the sale of investments, tuition payments from other districts, student fees and rent.

Where the Money Goes

As we have seen above, the amount of money being spent on public education, particularly on a per-student basis, is a hotly contested issue. There are two main reasons for this - disagreement over which expenditures should be included in the discussion and disagreement over how many students should be counted.

The three major categories of school spending are current expenditures, capital outlay and debt service. Current expenditures includes all spending that does not fall under the other two categories, but it primarily consists of the day-to-day costs of running schools, including staff salaries, supplies, utilities, administrative costs, transportation services, school board expenses and so on. In addition to current expenditures, school districts must build schools (capital outlays) and repay interest and principal on education bonds and other borrowing (debt service).

Capital outlays and debt service often are not considered in discussions of public school funding. In most cases, they ought to be. These funds certainly represent education spending - as anyone can find out by trying to run a school without a building or to run a school that borrows money without paying it back. These funds are extracted from the tax base for the purpose of providing education, and they are not available for any public expenditure other than education. On the other hand, as we saw above, for certain purposes it is sometimes appropriate to look at current expenditures rather than total expenditures.

In the 2003-04 school year, the 67 Florida school districts spent a total of more than \$22 billion, or \$8,735 per student. This left the state with nearly \$8 billion in an ending balance, after accounting for transfers out and other financing uses. Table 4 provides a breakdown of spending in each district. The highest total spending per student was in the Jefferson school district, which spent \$18,174 per student. The lowest was in the Nassau school district, which spent \$6,532. Florida's current expenditures amounted to \$17.6 billion, or \$6,931 per student. The lowest amount spent on current expenditures per student was \$5,170 in the Holmes school district, while the highest amount was \$9,628 in the Washington school district.

Table 4: Categories of Spending for Florida Schools

DISTRICT	ENROLLMENT	CURRENT EXPENDITURES PER STUDENT	CAPITAL OUTLAY PER STUDENT	DEBT SERVICE PER STUDENT	TOTAL EXPENDITURES PER STUDENT
FLORIDA	2,539,932	\$6,931			\$8,735
ALACHUA	29,309	\$6,825	\$647	\$617	\$8,089
BAKER	4,525	\$6,275	\$144	\$221	\$6,639
BAY	26,431	\$6,558	\$695	\$504	\$7,758
BRADFORD	4,029	\$6,749	\$511	\$27	\$7,287
BREVARD	72,529	\$6,201	\$985	\$238	\$7,424
BROWARD	267,884	\$6,976	\$1,273	\$421	\$8,669
CALHOUN	2,173	\$6,770	\$417	\$0	\$7,187
CHARLOTTE	17,670	\$6,804	\$654	\$236	\$7,693
CITRUS	15,344	\$7,103	\$1,260	\$36	\$8,399
CLAY	29,861	\$5,901	\$968	\$181	\$7,051
COLLIER	38,104	\$8,411	\$3,944	\$650	\$13,005
COLUMBIA	9,701	\$6,442	\$785	\$83	\$7,310
DESOTO	4,916	\$7,589	\$422	\$146	\$8,157
DIXIE	2,229	\$6,997	\$782	\$52	\$7,830
DUVAL	128,118	\$6,179	\$990	\$218	\$7,386
ESCAMBIA	43,871	\$6,433	\$761	\$257	\$7,450
FLAGLER	7,587	\$7,935	\$3,234	\$597	\$11,766
FRANKLIN	1,343	\$8,012	\$968	\$262	\$9,243
GADSDEN	7,195	\$7,407	\$1,231	\$323	\$8,962
GILCHRIST	2,734	\$7,104	\$509	\$151	\$7,763
GLADES	998	\$8,769	\$7,452	\$435	\$16,656
GULF	2,164	\$7,279	\$838	\$500	\$8,617
HAMILTON	2,067	\$7,311	\$5,336	\$28	\$12,675
HARDEE	5,175	\$6,869	\$609	\$86	\$7,563
HENDRY	7,673	\$6,798	\$432	\$194	\$7,424
HERNANDO	18,601	\$6,253	\$1,066	\$650	\$7,969
HIGHLANDS	11,428	\$6,979	\$689	\$226	\$7,894
HILLSBOROUGH	175,305	\$7,156	\$1,632	\$464	\$9,251
HOLMES	4,461	\$5,170	\$2,361	\$19	\$7,549
INDIAN RIVER	15,980	\$6,948	\$1,333	\$380	\$8,661
JACKSON	7,228	\$6,812	\$1,550	\$374	\$8,736
JEFFERSON	1,575	\$8,063	\$9,909	\$202	\$18,174
LAFAYETTE	1,049	\$7,274	\$362	\$60	\$7,696
LAKE	31,773	\$6,640	\$3,216	\$486	\$10,342
LEE	63,148	\$7,425	\$2,507	\$580	\$10,513
LEON	31,855	\$7,056	\$1,210	\$399	\$8,666
LEVY	6,113	\$6,745	\$634	\$131	\$7,510
LIBERTY	1,383	\$7,345	\$279	\$71	\$7,696
MADISON	3,311	\$6,699	\$347	\$280	\$7,326
MANATEE	39,106	\$6,923	\$2,397	\$589	\$9,909
MARION	39,689	\$6,671	\$1,048	\$462	\$8,181
MARTIN	17,255	\$7,112	\$3,244	\$51	\$10,407
MIAMI-DADE	373,375	\$7,309	\$624	\$961	\$8,893
MONROE	9,195	\$7,735	\$3,996	\$366	\$12,097

Table 4: Categories of Spending for Florida Schools

DISTRICT	ENROLLMENT	CURRENT EXPENDITURES PER STUDENT	CAPITAL OUTLAY PER STUDENT	DEBT SERVICE PER STUDENT	TOTAL EXPENDITURES PER STUDENT
NASSAU	10,521	\$5,953	\$522	\$58	\$6,532
OKALOOSA	30,949	\$6,416	\$431	\$194	\$7,040
OKEECHOBEE	7,084	\$6,647	\$828	\$40	\$7,515
ORANGE	158,643	\$6,914	\$1,138	\$498	\$8,551
OSCEOLA	40,482	\$6,721	\$1,298	\$563	\$8,581
PALM BEACH	164,796	\$7,424	\$2,821	\$703	\$10,947
PASCO	54,957	\$6,794	\$630	\$288	\$7,712
PINELLAS	114,754	\$6,899	\$1,387	\$43	\$8,328
POLK	82,148	\$6,737	\$444	\$337	\$7,518
PUTNAM	12,483	\$6,526	\$592	\$238	\$7,356
ST. JOHNS	21,940	\$6,236	\$1,012	\$553	\$6,974
ST. LUCIE	31,550	\$8,367	\$820	\$696	\$10,894
SANTA ROSA	23,643	\$6,139	\$624	\$114	\$7,667
SARASOTA	38,026	\$7,180	\$2,230	\$297	\$8,745
SEMINOLE	63,412	\$6,536	\$994	\$535	\$8,052
SUMTER	6,558	\$6,880	\$1,496	\$274	\$8,651
SUWANNEE	5,802	\$6,808	\$276	\$94	\$7,177
TAYLOR	3,590	\$7,275	\$540	\$400	\$8,215
UNION	2,174	\$6,796	\$245	\$75	\$7,115
VOLUSIA	62,854	\$6,546	\$1,923	\$628	\$9,097
WAKULLA	4,661	\$6,309	\$555	\$480	\$7,344
WALTON	6,304	\$7,277	\$1,041	\$395	\$8,713
WASHINGTON	3,411	\$9,628	\$561	\$30	\$10,219

In Florida, current expenditures are broken down into four subcategories: instruction, instructional support, general support and community services. The largest of these categories, instruction, incorporates all activities that involve the direct teaching of students. This includes the FEFP basic education program, special education, vocational-technical education and adult education.¹⁶ This is sometimes described as the amount of money that “reaches the classroom,” although that description is problematic since some spending in other categories probably would be considered by most people as “reaching the classroom.” Florida’s instructional expenditures averaged \$4,029, or slightly more than 46 percent of total per-student expenditures.

Instructional support consists of educational support services such as counseling; attendance; instructional media, including hardware and software; and teacher training. General support expenditures cover the administrative costs of the school board and superintendent offices in each district; the principal’s office in each school; food services; student transportation; the operation and maintenance of school facilities; and non-capitalized facility acquisition and construction expenses (which are generally for replacement of facilities, such as a new roof, or for facilities expenses costing under \$1,000, such as a new printer).¹⁷ Finally, community services are activities provided by the school system for the communities in which they exist, such as recreation programs. Table 5 lists the various categories of current expenditures and the amounts spent by each Florida school district for the 2003-04 school year.

Table 5: Categories of Current Expenditures for Florida Schools

DISTRICT	ENROLLMENT	INSTRUCTION PER STUDENT	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES PER STUDENT	GENERAL SUPPORT PER STUDENT	COMMUNITY SERVICES PER STUDENT	TOTAL CURRENT EXPENDITURES PER STUDENT
FLORIDA	2,539,932	\$4,029	\$765	\$2,061	\$76	\$6,931
HOLMES	4,461	\$2,904	\$380	\$1,884	\$1	\$5,170
CLAY	29,861	\$3,535	\$696	\$1,659	\$12	\$5,901
NASSAU	10,521	\$3,401	\$524	\$2,014	\$14	\$5,953
SEMINOLE	63,412	\$3,765	\$524	\$1,825	\$25	\$6,139
DUVAL	128,118	\$3,659	\$789	\$1,722	\$8	\$6,179
BREVARD	72,529	\$3,837	\$608	\$1,751	\$5	\$6,201
SANTA ROSA	23,643	\$3,499	\$604	\$2,067	\$66	\$6,236
HERNANDO	18,601	\$3,444	\$774	\$2,010	\$25	\$6,253
BAKER	4,525	\$3,328	\$760	\$2,160	\$26	\$6,275
WAKULLA	4,661	\$3,535	\$662	\$2,112	\$1	\$6,309
OKALOOSA	30,949	\$3,970	\$547	\$1,862	\$36	\$6,416
ESCAMBIA	43,871	\$3,565	\$806	\$2,045	\$17	\$6,433
COLUMBIA	9,701	\$3,662	\$797	\$1,954	\$29	\$6,442
PUTNAM	12,483	\$3,649	\$753	\$2,118	\$6	\$6,526
ST. LUCIE	31,550	\$3,688	\$780	\$2,059	\$8	\$6,536
VOLUSIA	62,854	\$3,841	\$690	\$1,988	\$28	\$6,546
BAY	26,431	\$3,900	\$658	\$1,941	\$59	\$6,558
LAKE	31,773	\$3,850	\$716	\$2,037	\$36	\$6,640
OKEECHOBEE	7,084	\$3,746	\$707	\$2,163	\$31	\$6,647
MARION	39,689	\$3,811	\$813	\$1,991	\$55	\$6,671
MADISON	3,311	\$3,572	\$671	\$2,335	\$120	\$6,699
OSCEOLA	40,482	\$3,812	\$920	\$1,944	\$46	\$6,721
POLK	82,148	\$4,007	\$633	\$2,085	\$12	\$6,737
LEVY	6,113	\$3,882	\$662	\$2,201	\$0	\$6,745
BRADFORD	4,029	\$3,803	\$554	\$2,347	\$44	\$6,749
CALHOUN	2,173	\$3,817	\$788	\$2,122	\$43	\$6,770
PASCO	54,957	\$3,952	\$816	\$2,013	\$13	\$6,794
UNION	2,174	\$3,769	\$573	\$2,358	\$97	\$6,796
HENDRY	7,673	\$3,877	\$755	\$2,166	\$0	\$6,798
CHARLOTTE	17,670	\$3,806	\$909	\$2,081	\$7	\$6,804
SUWANNEE	5,802	\$3,967	\$660	\$2,179	\$1	\$6,808
JACKSON	7,228	\$3,743	\$833	\$2,229	\$6	\$6,812
ALACHUA	29,309	\$3,618	\$1,040	\$2,072	\$94	\$6,825
HARDEE	5,175	\$3,898	\$740	\$2,218	\$13	\$6,869
SUMTER	6,558	\$4,118	\$715	\$2,046	\$0	\$6,880
PINELLAS	114,754	\$4,027	\$723	\$2,128	\$20	\$6,899
ORANGE	158,643	\$4,041	\$854	\$1,956	\$63	\$6,914
MANATEE	39,106	\$4,104	\$795	\$2,024	\$0	\$6,923
INDIAN RIVER	15,980	\$3,924	\$725	\$2,235	\$64	\$6,948
BROWARD	267,884	\$4,056	\$811	\$2,025	\$83	\$6,976
HIGHLANDS	11,428	\$3,785	\$815	\$2,368	\$11	\$6,979
DIXIE	2,229	\$3,669	\$650	\$2,678	\$0	\$6,997
LEON	31,855	\$3,898	\$1,029	\$2,011	\$118	\$7,056

Table 5: Categories of Current Expenditures for Florida Schools

DISTRICT	ENROLLMENT	INSTRUCTION PER STUDENT	INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES PER STUDENT	GENERAL SUPPORT PER STUDENT	COMMUNITY SERVICES PER STUDENT	TOTAL CURRENT EXEPNDITURES PER STUDENT
CITRUS	15,344	\$3,983	\$803	\$2,257	\$60	\$7,103
GILCHRIST	2,734	\$3,930	\$717	\$2,451	\$6	\$7,104
MARTIN	17,255	\$4,118	\$720	\$2,143	\$131	\$7,112
HILLSBOROUGH	175,305	\$4,099	\$709	\$2,042	\$306	\$7,156
ST. JOHNS	21,940	\$4,217	\$709	\$2,058	\$196	\$7,180
LAFAYETTE	1,049	\$3,751	\$1,085	\$2,438	\$0	\$7,274
TAYLOR	3,590	\$4,131	\$685	\$2,414	\$45	\$7,275
WALTON	6,304	\$4,058	\$846	\$2,324	\$49	\$7,277
GULF	2,164	\$3,944	\$767	\$2,569	\$0	\$7,279
MIAMI-DADE	373,375	\$4,300	\$762	\$2,148	\$99	\$7,309
HAMILTON	2,067	\$3,834	\$1,050	\$2,390	\$37	\$7,311
LIBERTY	1,383	\$4,452	\$691	\$2,141	\$60	\$7,345
GADSDEN	7,195	\$3,682	\$1,023	\$2,542	\$160	\$7,407
PALM BEACH	164,796	\$4,369	\$842	\$2,074	\$138	\$7,424
LEE	63,148	\$4,090	\$732	\$2,554	\$49	\$7,425
DESOTO	4,916	\$4,474	\$772	\$2,338	\$4	\$7,589
MONROE	9,195	\$4,332	\$851	\$2,462	\$90	\$7,735
FLAGLER	7,587	\$4,360	\$817	\$2,462	\$297	\$7,935
FRANKLIN	1,343	\$4,624	\$527	\$2,861	\$0	\$8,012
JEFFERSON	1,575	\$4,176	\$1,192	\$2,623	\$72	\$8,063
SARASOTA	38,026	\$5,048	\$879	\$2,398	\$43	\$8,367
COLLIER	38,104	\$4,808	\$857	\$2,746	\$0	\$8,411
GLADES	998	\$4,451	\$1,131	\$3,188	\$0	\$8,769
WASHINGTON	3,411	\$5,608	\$796	\$3,052	\$172	\$9,628

Conclusion

It is unlikely that the debate over how much should be spent on public education will end anytime soon. In fact, until the basic facts about education finance are more widely understood, it will be difficult for a truly informed debate to take place. In Florida, as just about everywhere else, spending on education has risen steadily over the past decade. Yet because the public lacks an understanding of school finance, claims that spending is flat are generally accepted uncritically. As schools are being held more accountable to their constituents in terms of performance, it is imperative that accountability for financial performance be on the public agenda as well. The public must be made aware of how its tax dollars flow to school districts and how that money is spent.

Endnotes

- ¹ Florida Education Association, "Education Funding: Imagine the Future," www.feaweb.org/absolutenm/templates/template.aspx?articleid=1138&zoneid=103
- ² Andy Ford, "Down Payment on the State's Future," Florida Education Association, www.feaweb.org/absolutenm/templates/printArticle.aspx?a=1810,
- ³ Hannah Sampson, "School Boards Short of Cash," *Miami Herald*, Nov. 29, 2005.
- ⁴ Abhi Raghunathan, "State's Math Affects Raises, Official Says," *St. Petersburg Times*, Nov. 27, 2005.
- ⁵ Stephen Hegarty and Constance Humburg, "Bush Oversells His Spending on Schools," *St. Petersburg Times*, Feb. 17, 2002.
- ⁶ Common Core of Data, National Center for Education Statistics, <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/bat> .
- ⁷ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index, U.S. City Average, All Items, November 15, 2005, <ftp://ftp.bls.gov/pub/special.requests/cpi/cpiiai.txt>.
- ⁸ Florida Department of Education, Return on Investment/School Efficiency Measures (Linking Learning and Costs), <http://roi.fldoe.org/>.
- ⁹ Financial data for FY 2003-04 were obtained from the Florida Department of Education (via e-mail, Linda Champion, Sept. 9, 2005).
- ¹⁰ U.S. Department of Education, "The Federal Role in Education: History," <http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/role.html>.
- ¹¹ Thomas Parrish, et.al., "State Special Education Finance Systems: 1999-2000, Part II: Special Education Revenues and Expenditures," Center for Special Education Finance, March 2004.
- ¹² Florida Department of Education, "2003-04 Funding for Florida Districts: Statistical Report," EIAS Series 2004-06, September 2003, p. 1.
- ¹³ Like funding formulas in most states, the formula for the FEFP is multi-step and very complex. For a complete explanation, see Florida Department of Education, "2003-04 Funding for Florida Districts: Statistical Report," EIAS Series 2004-06, September 2003.
- ¹⁴ In addition, Florida has several privately funded voucher programs.
- ¹⁵ Florida Department of Education, "2003-04 Funding for Florida Districts: Statistical Report," EIAS Series 2004-06, September 2003, p. 2.
- ¹⁶ Florida Department of Education, *Financial and Program Cost Accounting and Reporting for Florida Schools (Redbook 2001)*, <http://www.firn.edu/doe/fefp/redtoc.htm>.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 4-14.