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How Has Education Funding Changed Over Time?

Elementary and secondary education is funded through a complex mix of federal, state, and local dollars. Local and national economic changes, legislative decisions, and, in many cases, court orders, have all affected school district funding over time. This tool examines where education funding has changed the most and where it has not.

To understand how education funding has changed, we look at the level of school district funding over time and at the changes in funding progressivity, or how much more is spent on educating low-income students relative to nonpoor students. (Our default is to compare states using dollars that are cost-adjusted based on the salaries of college graduates in each district, but you can turn that adjustment off using the checkbox below.) Though education funding has generally increased since the 1990s, overall progressivity has largely been flat, and states vary widely in how much money they spend on education and how they distribute that money.

Below, you can explore how local, state, and federal funding have changed over the past two decades. The chart to the left shows the national average; clicking a state will add its trend line to the chart. To look only at one type of funding (e.g., from the state government) turn the different funding sources on or off.

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