

PER-PUPIL EXPENDITURES IN FLORIDA'S 10 LARGEST SCHOOL DISTRICTS

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Under the “Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA), states must now report, for the first time, actual per-pupil spending for each and every school. This is a significant change from previous practices under which spending was reported using district-wide averages that masked real school-level funding. This is the second in a series of issue briefs examining this new within-district data, toward the goal of informing better policies around resource equity.

FINDINGS AT-A-GLANCE

- In the vast majority of the largest districts **in Florida high-poverty schools have a distinct advantage over low-poverty schools**, ranging from a 9.7% advantage (\$9,000 to \$8,200) in Duval County to an incredible 70.6% advantage (\$13,900 to \$8,100) in Palm Beach County. However, Polk County School District did have school inequities based on poverty (3.4%).
- When considering race/ethnicity, **in all 10 of Florida's largest districts, schools with the highest concentrations of nonwhite students have a significant advantage over schools with lower concentrations of nonwhite students**. These advantages range from 15.1% (\$9,600 to \$8,400) in Broward County to an astounding 88.2% (\$14,600 to \$7,800) in Pinellas County.
- When **we look at the intersection of race and poverty**, race-based advantages remain. However, **small race-based inequities are exposed in Duval County**. Among high poverty schools in the district—those with a proportion of poor students higher than the median—schools that also have larger proportions of nonwhite students receive an average of \$73 less per student than high poverty, low nonwhite schools. This is a gap of 0.8%, compared to an advantage of 23.5% when looking at race alone.
- Ultimately, **Florida's funding structures deliberately provide additional funding for schools with more students in poverty and nonwhite students in an effort to reduce inequalities in student outcomes**.

**Note: This is a corrected version of this report. The previous version misreported a number of schools' nonwhite enrollment.*



FLORIDA: BACKGROUND

STATEWIDE, AVERAGE PER-PUPIL EXPENDITURES: \$8,249

FUNDING STRUCTURE: The state of Florida provides a base-amount of funding per student via a formula that allocates additional funds to certain student populations, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities. Unlike most states, though, Florida's state formula does not weight the number or concentration of students in poverty. However, the state does allocate funds to schools with at-risk students through its Supplemental Academic Instruction program.¹

ADEQUACY AND BETWEEN-DISTRICT EQUITY: Education Week's Quality Counts Report (2019) gives Florida a D+ overall on school finance, an F on spending (adequacy and effort) and an A on equity (between districts).²

FUNDING STREAMS REPORTED: School Costs, District Indirect Costs

ESSA COMPLIANT: Yes

USES REAL SALARIES: Yes

FINDINGS

Using data from the 2017-2018 school year³ we find:

By Poverty

In a vast majority of the largest districts in Florida high-poverty schools have a distinct advantage over low-poverty schools, ranging from a 9.7% advantage (\$9,000 to \$8,200) in Duval County to an incredible 70.6% advantage (\$13,900 to \$8,100) in Palm Beach County. However, Polk County School District did have school inequities based on poverty (3.4%).⁴

District	District Average PP	Average FRL%	Per Pupil Expenditures		% Difference
			Highest Poverty Schools	Lowest Poverty Schools	
Miami-Dade	\$9,973.33	67.65%	\$10,850.30	\$8,748.05	24.0%
Broward	\$9,103.91	67.85%	\$9,756.87	\$8,190.74	19.1%
Hillsborough	\$9,598.91	64.41%	\$11,096.00	\$8,335.10	33.1%
Orange	\$9,627.62	58.47%	\$10,109.59	\$8,097.05	24.9%
Palm Beach	\$10,596.97	62.38%	\$13,877.33	\$8,136.54	70.6%
Duval	\$9,077.48	59.79%	\$9,018.11	\$8,221.46	9.7%
Polk	\$8,951.99	55.10%	\$8,986.03	\$9,301.70	-3.4%
Pinellas	\$10,164.28	56.54%	\$13,032.97	\$7,797.47	67.1%
Lee	\$8,945.44	58.08%	\$11,091.23	\$7,285.31	52.2%
Pasco	\$8,776.97	62.65%	\$11,832.42	\$7,154.13	65.4%

			Per Pupil Expenditures		
District	District Average PP	Average FRL%	Highest Poverty Schools	Lowest Poverty Schools	% Difference
			Highest Poverty Districts	Lowest Poverty Districts	% Difference
District Level Statewide	\$8,465.76	57.78%	\$8,795.89	\$7,826.81	12.4%

By Race/Ethnicity

When considering race/ethnicity, in all 10 of Florida’s largest districts, schools with the highest concentrations of nonwhite students have a significant advantage over schools with lower concentrations of nonwhite students. These advantages range from 15.1% (\$9,600 to \$8,400) in Broward County to an astounding 88.2% (\$14,600 to \$7,800) in Pinellas County.⁵

			Per Pupil Expenditures		
District	District Average PP	Average % Nonwhite	Highest % Nonwhite Schools	Lowest % Nonwhite Schools	% Difference
Miami-Dade	\$9,973.33	96.18%	\$11,020.84	\$8,052.76	36.9%
Broward	\$9,103.91	84.39%	\$9,637.08	\$8,372.50	15.1%
Hillsborough	\$9,815.30	72.90%	\$13,110.77	\$7,673.23	70.9%
Orange	\$10,297.71	77.80%	\$12,302.67	\$8,283.27	48.5%
Palm Beach	\$10,596.97	74.68%	\$14,587.36	\$8,288.89	76.0%
Duval	\$9,206.79	71.20%	\$9,734.94	\$7,882.30	23.5%
Polk	\$9,402.24	61.02%	\$10,642.14	\$7,698.97	38.2%
Pinellas	\$10,379.33	50.23%	\$14,596.41	\$7,755.78	88.2%
Lee	\$9,341.94	62.93%	\$11,696.37	\$8,306.63	40.8%
Pasco	\$8,776.97	39.81%	\$11,453.13	\$7,924.08	44.5%
District Level Statewide	\$8,465.76	84.39%	\$9,637.08	\$8,372.50	15.1%

Interaction of Poverty and Race

When we look at the intersection of race and poverty, race-based advantages remain. However, small race-based inequities are exposed in Duval County. Among high poverty schools in the district—those with a proportion of poor students higher than the median—schools that also have larger proportions of nonwhite students receive an average of \$73 less per student than high poverty, low nonwhite schools. This is a gap of 0.8%, compared to an advantage of 23.5% when looking at race alone.

BOTTOM LINE

Ultimately, Florida's funding structures deliberately provide additional funding for schools with more students in poverty and nonwhite students. Because Florida publishes limited information on how funds are allocated within districts, it is unclear what is driving differences in per-pupil funding. However, it's likely caused by districts using a similar student-based formula used by the state, allocating dollars rather than resources to individual schools.

ENDNOTES

1 <http://funded.edbuild.org/reports/state/FL>

2 <https://www.edweek.org/ew/collections/quality-counts-2019-state-finance/state-grades-on-school-finance-map-and.html>

3 Enrollment data comes from the Florida Department of Education's PK-12 Public School Data Publications and Reports Archive (<http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/edu-info-accountability-services/pk-12-public-school-data-pubs-reports/archive.shtml>). Expenditure data was retrieved from the Florida Department of Education at <http://www.fldoe.org/finance/fl-edu-finance-program-fefp/essa.shtml>.

4 Comparisons of schools based on the proportion of students in poverty compare the bottom and top quartiles of schools (ie. schools with the 25% of schools with the highest and lowest proportions of students in poverty), rather than comparing schools with predetermined proportions of students in poverty.

5 Comparisons of schools based on the proportion of nonwhite students compare the bottom and top quartiles of schools (ie. schools with the 25% of schools with the highest and lowest proportions of nonwhite students), rather than comparing schools with predetermined proportions of nonwhite students.