

# PER-PUPIL EXPENDITURES IN ILLINOIS' 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 fourth 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 Illinois, we find that—consistent with copious evidence that shows poor students require more resources<sup>1</sup>—**in six of the state’s ten largest districts, schools with the highest concentrations of students in poverty spend substantially *more* per pupil than schools with the lowest concentrations of poor students.** These advantages range from 6.0% (\$13,331 per pupil average expenditure in highest-poverty schools to \$12,578 in lowest-poverty) in Chicago Public Schools to 13.6% (\$11,238 to \$9,892) in Plainfield School District. However, four districts either spend about the same or less in high-poverty schools, compared with low-poverty schools.
- When considering race/ethnicity, in **six of Illinois’ largest districts, schools with larger concentrations of nonwhite students spend *less* than schools with smaller concentrations of nonwhite students.** These inequities range from 1.6% (\$14,685 to \$14,930) in Naperville to 9.2% (\$12,652 to \$13,930) in Waukegan. However, in four districts, schools with higher concentrations of nonwhite students receive substantially more funding.
- Despite progressive trends in some districts, with increased spending as the concentrations of students in poverty and nonwhite students rise, **we see significant variation in spending, particularly among schools with the highest concentrations of poor and nonwhite students,** suggesting a lack of intentionality around funding based on prioritizing race and poverty at the exclusion of other factors. For example, in the state’s second largest district, Elgin Area SD U-46, among schools with more than 80% low-income students, spending ranges from \$9,925 to \$13,245 per student.

**6** of Illinois’ largest districts, schools with larger concentrations of nonwhite students receive **LESS** than schools with smaller concentrations of nonwhite students.

- Ultimately, **district funding structures have a mixed record on providing additional funding for schools with more poor and nonwhite students.** About half of the largest districts across the state spend less in schools with higher concentrations of nonwhite students and students in poverty, leaving them with fewer resources than their white, more affluent peers. **Moreover, large variations in spending in many districts suggest a potential lack of intentionality on the part of districts.** However, some districts—including Chicago—buck these trends, providing additional recourses to traditionally underserved students.

## ILLINOIS: BACKGROUND

**Revenue:** Federal 7.1%, State 26.9%, Local 66.0%

**Statewide, average per-pupil expenditures:** \$12,793<sup>2</sup>

**Funding Structure:** Since 2018, the state of Illinois has funded districts using resource-based allocations, which use the calculated costs of staff and other resources to determine funding. The number of district staff are calculated based on student-to-staff ratios for regular classroom teachers, as well as administrators and program-specific staff. Illinois has a lower student-to-staff ratio for low income students, as well as for grades K-3, and provides additional staff for low-income students, English language learners (ELL), and students with disabilities. The formula also provides program-based funding for gifted students, ELLs, while career and technical education programs are funded through a separate allocation.<sup>3</sup>

**Adequacy and Between-District Equity:** Education Week’s Quality Counts Report (2019) gives Illinois a B- overall on school finance, a C+ on spending (adequacy and effort) and a B- on equity (between districts).<sup>4</sup>

**Expenditure and Funding Streams Reported:** School-based expenditures, district-based expenditures, federal funds, state/local funds

### ESSA Compliant:

- ✓ Provides per pupil expenditures for all schools
- ✓ Calculates school expenditures using actual spending, including real, rather than average, salaries
- ✓ Separates site-level expenditures from schools’ share of district expenses
- ✓ Presents spending data by funding source, separating federal funds from state and local funds.

## FINDINGS

Using data from the 2018-2019<sup>5</sup> school year we find:

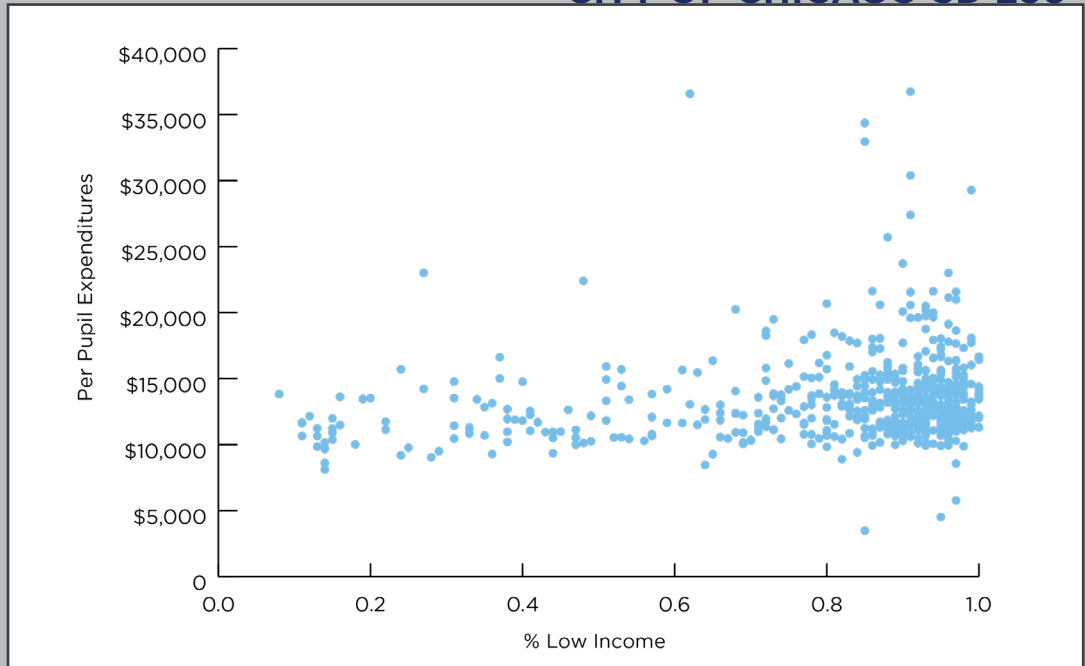
### *By Poverty*

In Illinois, we find that—consistent with copious evidence that shows poor students require more resources—in six of the state’s ten largest districts, schools with the highest concentrations of students in poverty spend substantially more per pupil than schools with the lowest concentrations of poor students. These advantages range from 6.0% (\$13,331 to \$12,578) in Chicago Public Schools to 13.6% (\$11,238 to \$9,892) in Plainfield School District. However, four districts either spend about the same or less in high-poverty schools, compared with low-poverty schools, ranging from a slight 0.3% (\$11,347 to \$11,308) advantage in Oswego (CUSD 308) to an inequity of 6.3% (\$13,050 to \$13,925) in Waukegan (CUSD 60).<sup>6</sup>

District	District Average PP	Average % FRL	Per Pupil Expenditures		% Difference
			Highest Poverty Schools	Lowest Poverty Schools	
City of Chicago SD 299	\$13,383.84	81.7%	\$13,330.99	\$12,578.22	6.0%
SD U-46	\$11,737.56	62.5%	\$11,317.58	\$11,704.93	-3.3%
Rockford SD 205	\$12,844.61	65.7%	\$13,870.19	\$12,604.26	10.0%
Indian Prairie CUSD 204	\$11,578.68	17.2%	\$11,986.88	\$11,215.13	6.9%
Plainfield SD 202	\$10,635.57	28.1%	\$11,237.57	\$9,892.14	13.6%
CUSD 300	\$11,819.45	43.3%	\$12,010.94	\$10,909.28	10.1%
CUSD 308	\$11,239.08	24.2%	\$11,346.90	\$11,307.83	0.3%
Naperville CUSD 203	\$15,047.90	14.6%	\$15,268.57	\$14,017.97	8.9%
Valley View CUSD 365U	\$13,835.42	63.6%	\$13,562.72	\$13,760.20	-1.4%
Waukegan CUSD 60	\$13,388.86	66.8%	\$13,049.53	\$13,925.17	-6.3%
			<b>Highest Poverty Districts</b>	<b>Lowest Poverty Districts</b>	
LEA-Level Statewide	\$12,593.65	43.38%	\$12,739.80	\$13,632.86	-6.6%

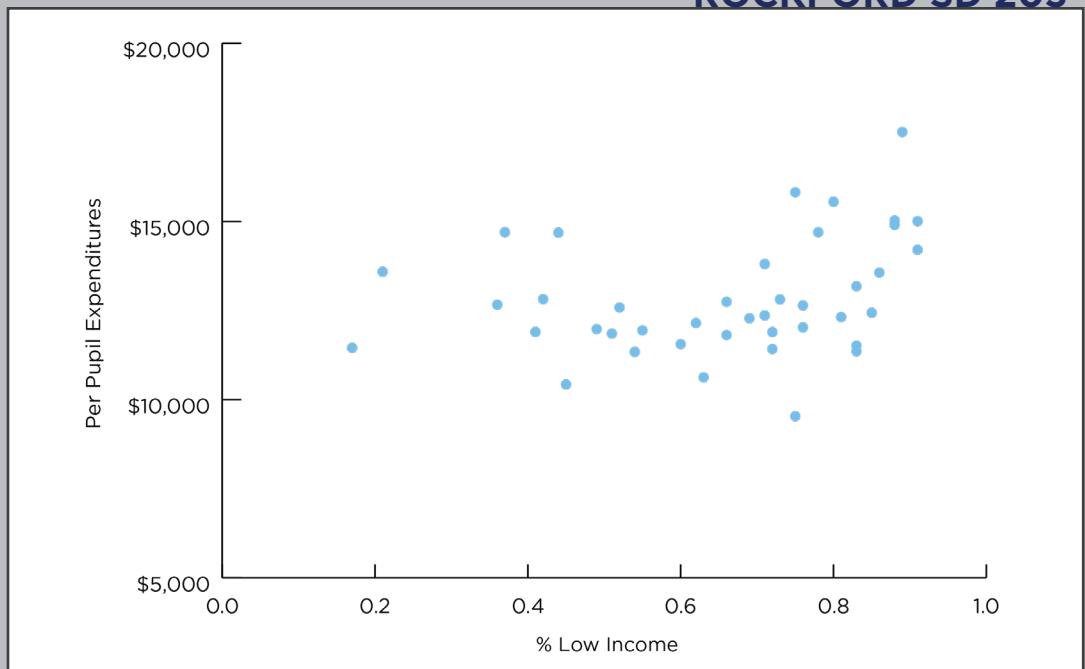
In Chicago, we see a general progressive trend of schools with spending increasing as the concentration of low-income students rises, although we do also see a very large range of funding among schools with the highest concentrations of low-income students: among schools with 90% or more low-income students, spending ranges from \$4,510 to \$36,735 per student. While this may suggest a lack of intentionality on the part of Chicago, the state data don’t provide enough information to examine the source of these differences.

### CITY OF CHICAGO SD 299



In Rockford, we also see strong progressive trends by poverty and some variation in spending among schools with similar concentrations of low-income students. For schools with 80% or more of students free- or reduced-price lunch, per pupil spending ranges from a low of just over \$11,000 to more than \$17,000.

### ROCKFORD SD 205



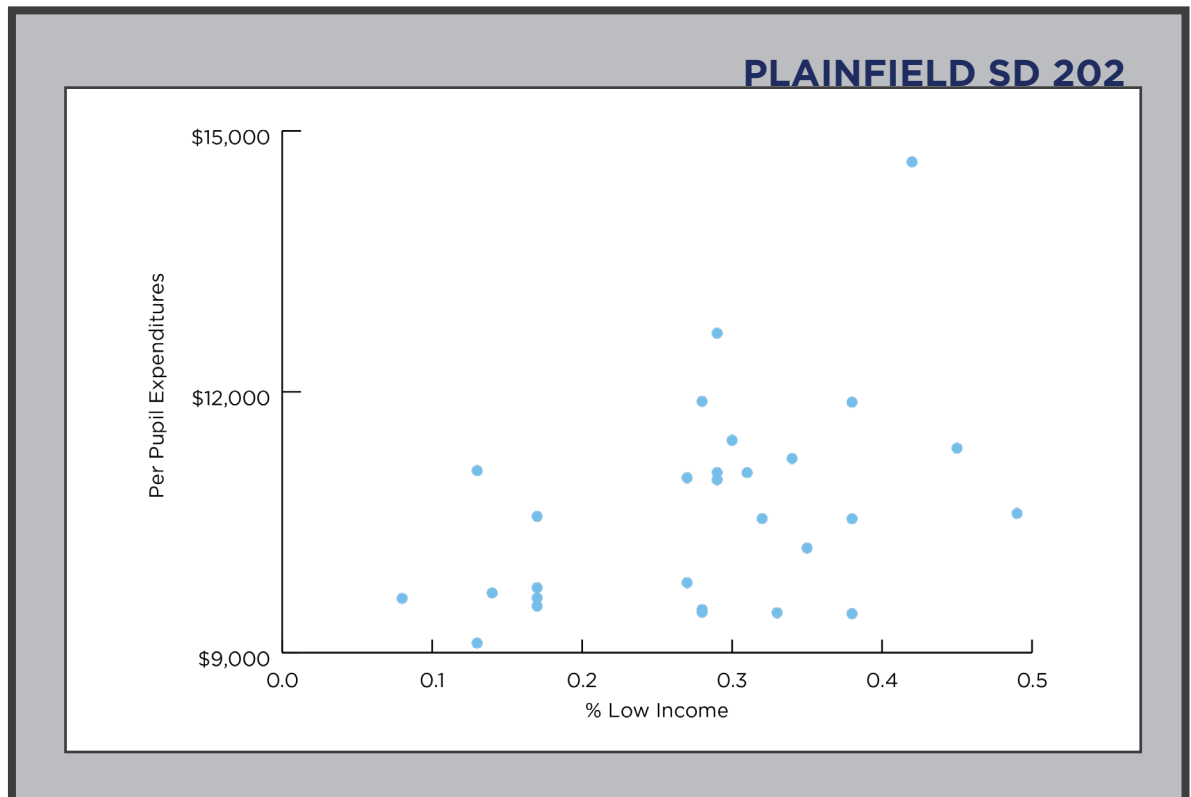
## Defining Resource Equity

There is relative consensus across the education community that disadvantaged students of various types require additional resources to achieve at levels similar to their more advantaged peers, a belief that is increasingly built into state and district school funding formulas. However, while it's simple to see whether schools are funded *equally*, it's not so easy, particularly at first glance, to determine if schools are funded *equitably*.

The Education Trust New York notes that "providing a quality education to low-income students requires 40 percent more funding than for non low-income students."<sup>7</sup> But this doesn't mean that all high-poverty schools should be spending 40% more than low-poverty schools; this would only be the case if the two schools had 0% and 100% students in poverty, respectively. Using the 40% figure, a school with 70% students in poverty should be spending approximately 14% more than a school with 30% students in poverty.

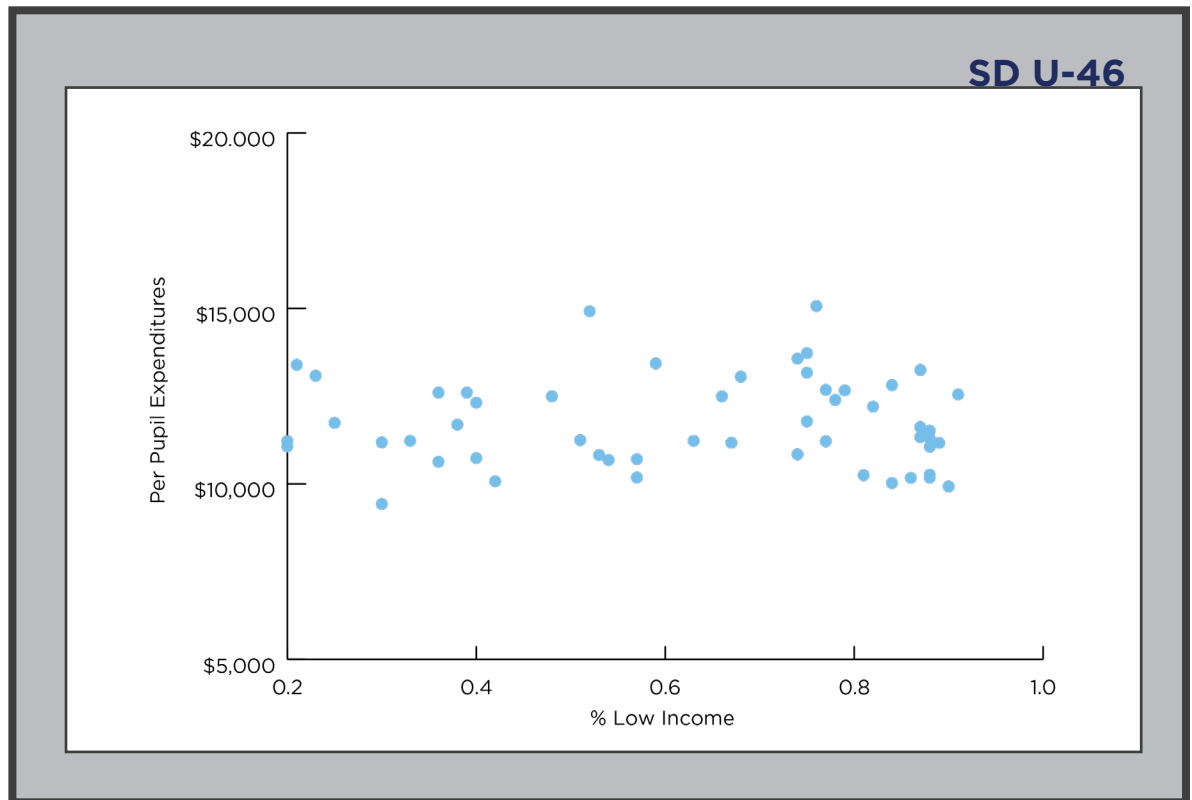
This determination becomes exponentially more difficult as one considers the schools of an entire district. And student poverty is only one of many factors that determine a school's total funding, including critical student-based factors such as special education and English Learners. As a rough estimate, districts should be spending *at least* 3% more per student in their highest-poverty schools than their lowest-poverty schools, a figure that suggests intentionality while also considering other funding factors.

Unlike poverty-driven school funding inequities, there isn't a body of research that quantitatively addresses the additional funding schools with higher concentrations of nonwhite students may need to counteract structural racism and disenfranchisement and ensure all students have equitable opportunities to meet high standards. However, it's well documented that nonwhite students routinely receive less of what matters most in education, including access to experienced teachers, high-quality curriculum, and technology. This is in addition to financial disparities between districts: a recent EdBuild study found that majority nonwhite districts receive, on average, \$2,226 less per-pupil than majority white districts.<sup>8</sup> The full release of ESSA's school level funding data will help illuminate if these inequities are exacerbated within districts.



In fact, a majority of Illinois' largest districts appear to have a more inconsistent approach to funding, with scattered spending across all concentrations of low-income students. We even see this trend in Plainfield School District (see above), which has the most overall progressive funding based on averages.

Even more dramatic scatter is evident in the state's second largest district, Elgin Area SD U-46, with large spending variations among schools with similar concentrations of low-income students. Among schools with more than 80% low-income students, spending ranges from \$9,925 to \$13,245 per student. Schools with less than 50% low-income students have a comparable spending range of \$9,426 to \$13,393. These findings suggest a lack of intentionality around funding schools based on student poverty exclusive of other factors.

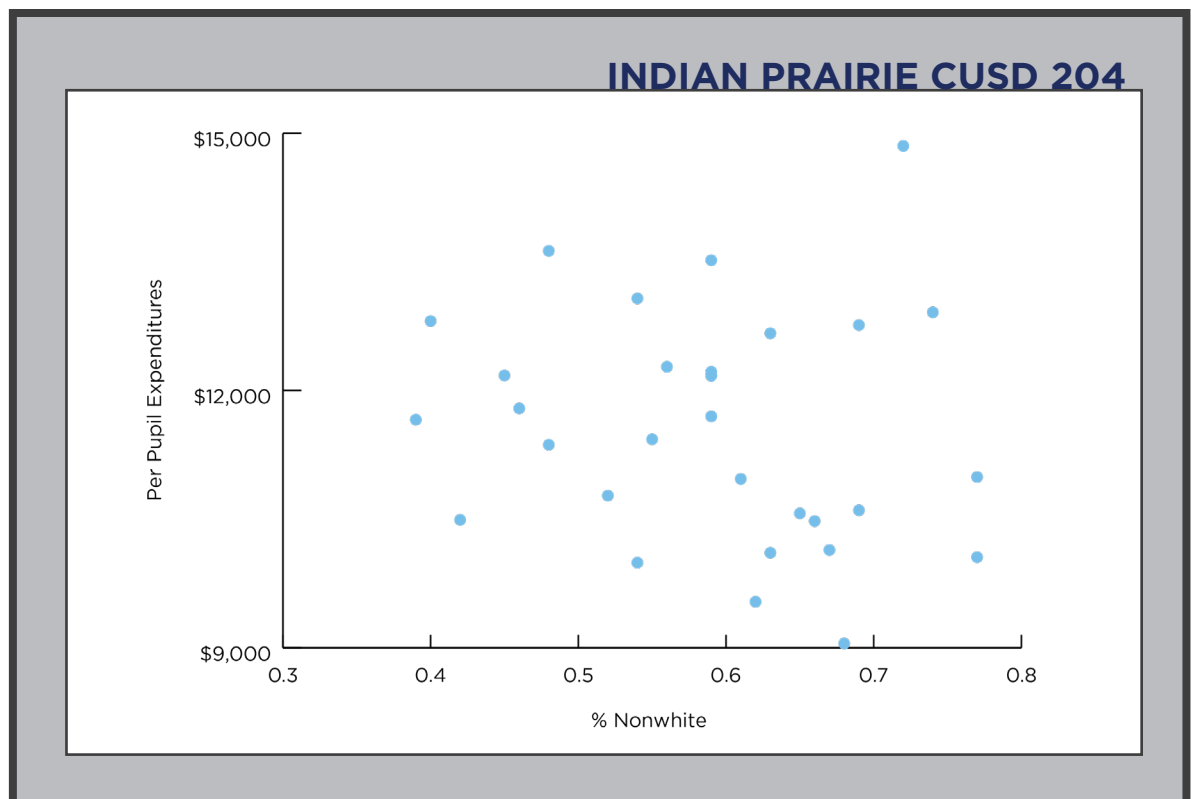


### ***By Race/Ethnicity***

When considering race/ethnicity, in six of Illinois' largest districts, schools with larger concentrations of nonwhite students receive less than schools with smaller concentrations of nonwhite students. These inequities range from 1.6% (\$14,685 to \$14,930) in Naperville to 9.2% (\$12,652 to \$13,930) in Waukegan. However, in four districts, schools with higher concentrations of nonwhite students receive substantially more funding than those with lower concentrations of nonwhite students. These advantages range from 4.5% (\$12,011 to \$11,495) in CUSD 300 to 17.7% (\$14,435 to \$12,265) in Chicago.<sup>9</sup>

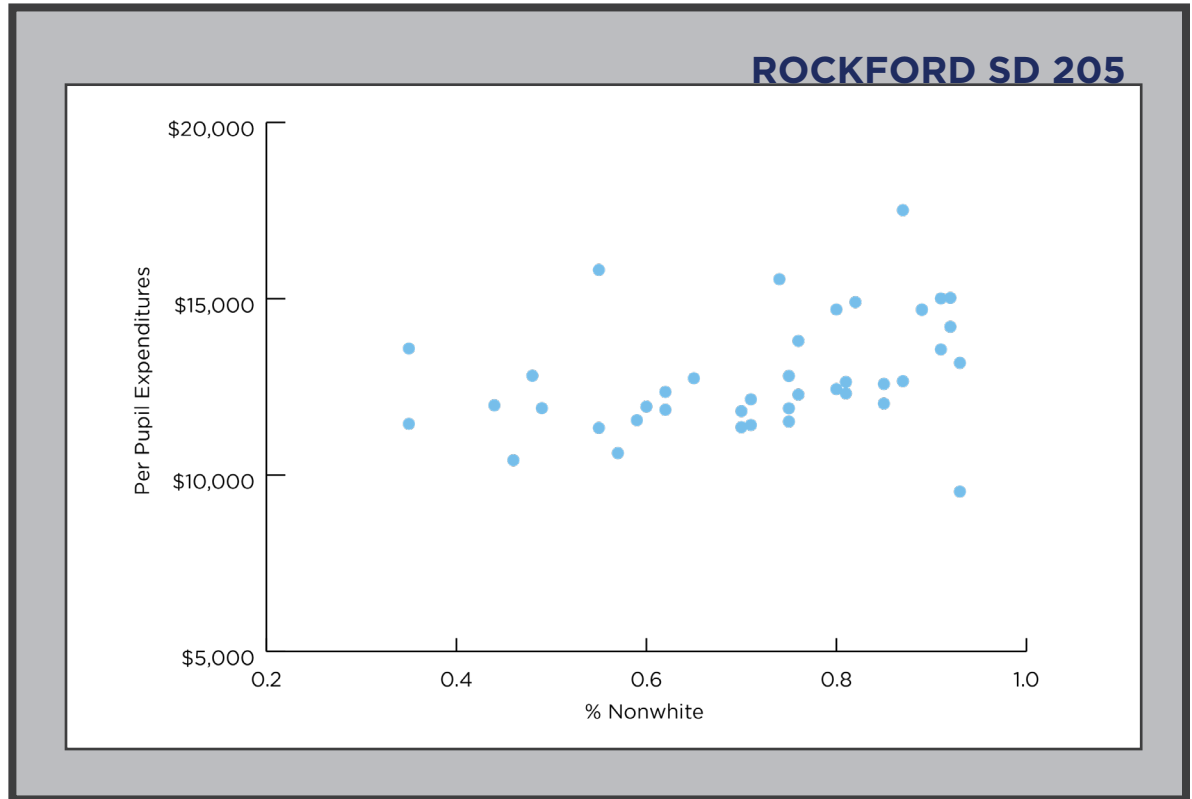
District	District Average PP	Average % FRL	Per Pupil Expenditures		% Difference
			Highest % Nonwhite Schools	Lowest % Nonwhite Schools	
City of Chicago SD 299	\$13,383.84	92.19%	\$14,434.71	\$12,264.84	17.7%
SD U-46	\$11,737.56	74.06%	\$11,132.62	\$11,695.40	-4.8%
Rockford SD 205	\$12,844.61	71.75%	\$14,006.22	\$12,148.22	15.3%
Indian Prairie CUSD 204	\$11,578.68	58.94%	\$11,420.75	\$11,836.88	-3.5%
Plainfield SD 202	\$10,635.57	45.73%	\$10,966.71	\$10,047.14	9.2%
CUSD 300	\$11,819.45	53.50%	\$12,010.94	\$11,495.23	4.5%
CUSD 308	\$11,239.08	44.17%	\$10,726.94	\$11,291.23	-5.0%
Naperville CUSD 203	\$15,047.90	36.96%	\$14,684.79	\$14,929.82	-1.6%
Valley View CUSD 365U	\$13,835.42	76.75%	\$13,767.14	\$14,335.12	-4.0%
Waukegan CUSD 60	\$13,388.86	95.80%	\$12,652.47	\$13,930.00	-9.2%
			<b>Highest % Nonwhite Districts</b>	<b>Lowest % Nonwhite Districts</b>	
LEA-Level Statewide	\$12,593.65	28.72%	\$14,651.57	\$10,560.66	38.7%

As in our analyses of per-pupil spending by poverty, we find scattered and highly variable funding based on the concentration of nonwhite students. For example, in Indian Prairie CUSD 204, among schools with more than 60% nonwhite students, spending



ranges from \$9,049 to \$14,852 per student, and schools with less than 50% nonwhite students have a spending range of \$10,491 to \$13,628, suggesting a lack of intentionality around funding schools based on student race/ethnicity exclusive of other factors. We find similar trends in most of Illinois' largest districts.

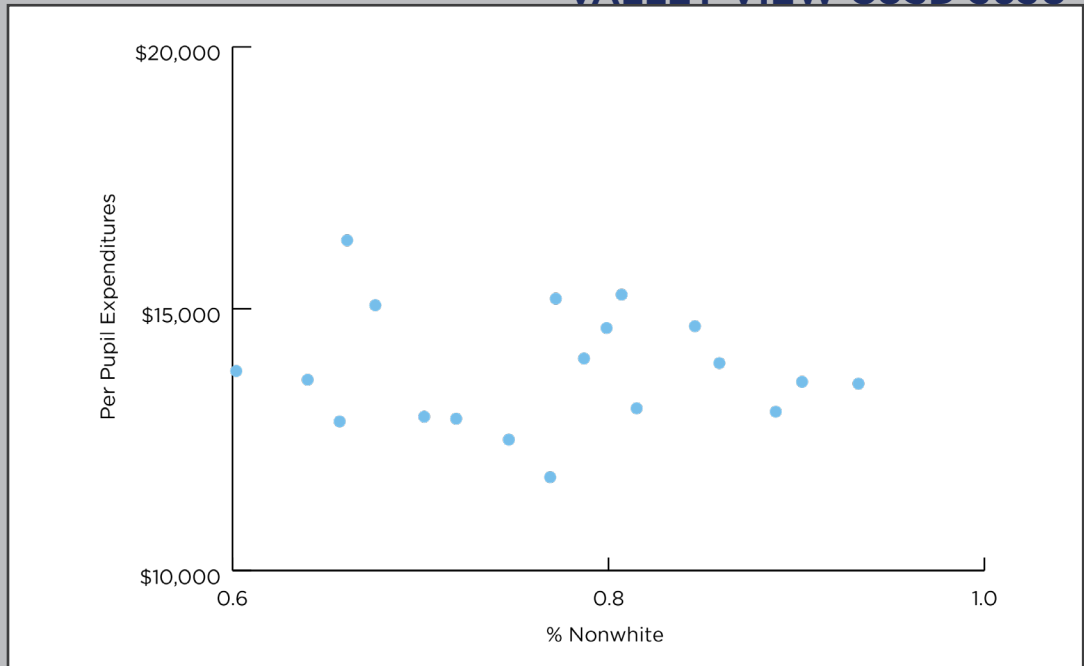
However, as with poverty, we see clear progressive funding by race/ethnicity in Rockford School District, with school spending increasing as the concentrations of nonwhite students increases.



By contrast, we also see strong regressive trends in Valley View and Waukegan, with spending steadily decreasing as the concentration of nonwhite students increases. This suggests systematic underfunding of schools with the highest concentrations of nonwhite students. However, in both districts all schools have at least 60% nonwhite students, meaning that differences in spending may be more likely to be driven by other school and/or student characteristics that are more variable across schools in the district in other districts.



## VALLEY VIEW CUSD 365U



### *Interaction of Poverty and Race*

To determine the extent to which the race and poverty are correlated in Illinois, we examine the proportion of schools with the highest proportion of nonwhite students that also are among the schools with the highest proportion of students in poverty. Doing so, we find race is strongly correlated with poverty across nearly all of the state's largest districts. In Elgin Area U-46 of the 13 schools with the highest concentrations of nonwhite students, 11 are also among those with the highest concentrations of students in poverty. Here, inequities are slightly alleviated when we compare these two groups of schools: high-poverty, high-nonwhite schools spend an average \$311 (2.7%) less per student than low-poverty, low-nonwhite schools, compared to inequities of 3.3% and 4.8% by poverty and race separately.

In Chicago, race and poverty are slightly less correlated than other districts. Of the 151 schools with the highest proportion of nonwhite students, 53 also have the highest levels of students in poverty. Meanwhile, 114 of the 151 schools with the lowest concentrations of nonwhite students also had the lowest concentrations of students in poverty in the district. As a result, the spending advantage is between those by race and poverty alone: high-poverty, high-nonwhite schools spend an average of \$1,547 more per student than low-poverty, low-nonwhite schools.

### **BOTTOM LINE**

Ultimately in Illinois, district funding structures have a mixed record on providing additional funding for schools with more poor and/or nonwhite students. About half of the largest districts across the state spend less in schools with higher concentrations of nonwhite students and students in poverty, leaving them with fewer resources than their white, more affluent peers. Moreover, large variations in spending in many districts suggest a potential lack of intentionality on the part of districts. However, some districts—including Chicago—buck these trends, providing additional resources to traditionally underserved students.

## ENDNOTES

1 <https://newyork.edtrust.org/ny-school-funding/>

2 Importantly, these expenditures excluded a few spending categories, including debt services, legacy pension payments, adult/continuing education programs, and capital outlays. Capital outlays are a notable exception because these funds are often substantial and are a source of equity concerns with funds going to schools with larger concentrations of white and affluent students, while schools filled with poor and nonwhite students are passed over.

3 <http://funded.edbuild.org/reports/state/IL>

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

5 Enrollment and expenditure data: <https://www.isbe.net/pages/illinois-state-report-card-data.aspx>

6 Average expenditures reported are non-weighted averages of the highest and lowest quartile of schools by the percentage of students in poverty. This means the concentration of students in poverty included in the average will vary by district. This report is focused on K-12, so it excludes early childhood centers and preschools, which also spend, on average, far more per pupil than K-12 schools.

7 <https://newyork.edtrust.org/ny-school-funding/>

8 <https://edbuild.org/content/23-billion#LA>

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