



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on September 29, 2011

Report: Education Spending Not Reflected in Test Scores

The lingering institutional wisdom when it comes to education is that increased spending will bring about improved results — even as history continues to reveal otherwise. For example, recent reports indicate that though education spending has increased 64 percent since the inception of the federal No Child Left Behind program, there has been little improvement in America's test scores. Meanwhile, American schools continue to make little progress against other industrialized nations.



No Child Left Behind mandates that public schools meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) levels by 2014, though many states are far from this standard. At the time it was proposed, NCLB purported it would do the following:

- Set higher standards by establishing measurable goals to improve individual outcomes
- Require states to develop assessments in basic skills in order to receive federal funding
- Not set a national standard, instead allowing individual states to construct their own

The program received incredible bipartisan support.

Years later, however, NCLB has proved to be a colossal failure. Now, the Obama administration has sought to rescue states that are struggling under the provisions of No Child Left Behind by granting waivers to schools that are not meeting the standards set forth in the educational program, as well as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), passed by Congress in 2001.

According to the Department of Education, education spending has increased dramatically in order to implement No Child Left Behind. In the first year of the program, mandatory and discretionary spending for elementary and secondary schools increased by \$9.5 billion. By 2002, spending increased 33.6 percent from \$42.1 billion in 2001 to \$56.2 billion.

Over the course of the last decade, spending increased 63.8 percent, with an increase of \$24.6 billion to the Education Department's budget.

By comparison, before No Child Left Behind was implemented, spending for the Department of Education went up less than \$3 billion per year.

The Department of Education website contains data which show the total amounts of spending per year since 1997. The figures reveal the dramatic increases in spending since the inception of No Child Left Behind. CNS News succinctly summarized the numbers as follows:

1997 - \$33.52 billion

1998 - \$35.67 billion



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1999 - \$38.31 billion
2000 - \$38.44 billion
2001 - \$42.06 billion
2002 - \$56.17 billion
2003 - \$63.25 billion
2004 - \$67.21 billion
2005 - \$71.47 billion
2006 - \$100.04 billion (due to a jump in Federal Family Education Loans)
2007 - \$67.12 billion
2008 - \$68.57 billion
2009 - \$138.00 billion (regular spending of \$39.88 billion plus \$98.23 billion under the Recovery Act)
2010 - \$63.00 billion

The 2011 Continuing Resolution has education spending sitting around \$70 billion, but under President Obama's proposed 2012 budget, that amount would increase to \$77.4 billion.

The astronomical figures could theoretically (but not constitutionally) be defensible if there has been a marked and significant increase in educational achievement in America's public schools. Unfortunately that has not been the case. CNS News reports:

Results from the [Nation's Report Card](#) for Fourth Grade reading proficiency in 2002 found 38 percent below basic, 32 percent basic, 23 percent proficient and 6 percent advanced. In 2009 for reading, 34 percent were below basic, 34 percent at basic, 24 percent at proficient and 7 percent at advanced.

More specifically, reading scores for 8th grade reveal that between 2002 and 2009, 26 percent of students were below basic proficiency.

The one area where achievements have been made is mathematics, with scores steadily improving since 1990, which indicates that none of that credit belongs to No Child Left Behind. In 1990, 52 percent of 4th graders were below proficiency in math, but by 2007, that figure had dropped to 19 percent.

Similar trends were found with 8th grade mathematics scores. Since 1990, students performing below basic levels dropped 20 points in 2009. Between 2007 and 2009, however, there were minimal increases in mathematics achievement scores.

Overall, when ranked in the global arena, the United States was rated "average" by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2010, after U.S. students took part in the Programme for International Student Assessment, a reading, math, and science test that is offered internationally to 15-year-olds.

The Department of Education posted on its blog, "The U.S. effectively showed no improvement in reading since 2000. Overall, the OECD's rankings have U.S. students in 14th place in reading literacy among OECD nations."

What's worse is that in 2000, when the test was first administered, the U.S. students ranked 15th in reading and 19th in math. But the latest PISA scores show that American students now rank 25th in math.

The results forced the department to admit, "How much money the U.S. spends on education isn't the problem. We spend more per student than any nation in the PISA ... except Luxembourg."



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The United States spent an average of \$10,500 per student in 2009. The Obama administration is still asking to spend more money on education, even after the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 included \$100 billion to states to address “budget shortfalls.”

At the same time, President Obama has [indicated](#) that he would like to see his administration “implement a new educational system” while he waits for Congress to reauthorize the ESEA. His new plan would permit the states to opt out of provisions of the law on the condition that they adopt other approved policies of the Obama administration.

Obama explains that states will receive exemptions as long as they agree to implement “state-led efforts to close achievement gaps, promote rigorous accountability, and ensure that all students are on track to graduate college and are career-ready.”

Constitutionalists note that the data continue to prove that the best way to save education is to eliminate the Department of Education and return to local governments the reserved power to handle educational issues.

GOP presidential candidate Ron Paul has long been a [proponent](#) of doing just that, as he has been a staunch critic of the Department of Education, observing:

First, the Constitution does not authorize the Department of Education, and the founders never envisioned the federal government dictating those education policies.

Second, it is a huge bureaucracy that squanders our money. We send billions of dollars to Washington and get back less than we sent. The money would be much better off left in states and local communities rather than being squandered in Washington.

Finally, I think that the smallest level of government possible best performs education. Teachers, parents, and local community leaders should be making decisions about exactly how our children should be taught, not Washington bureaucrats.



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