

K-12 Education Spending in Western States

Jeff Miller, Policy Analyst

December 14, 2017

The Education Commission of the States recently produced a comparison of K-12 per-pupil expenditures by state. CSG West has filtered this data (which is published by the National Center for Education Statistics, or NCES) to focus on the western states.

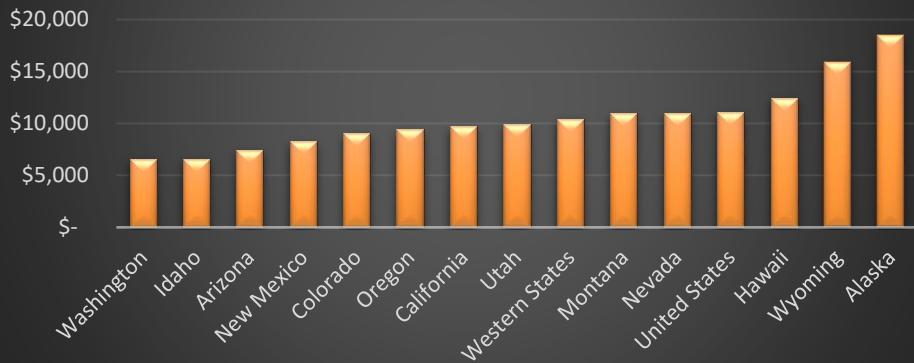
First, we break down per-pupil spending by local, state and federal sources. The most recent figures available are from 2013-14.

K-12 Education Spending in the Western States, 2013-14								
State	Per-pupil spending	Total (thousands)	Local (thousands)	State (thousands)	Federal (thousands)	% local	% state	% federal
Alaska	\$ 18,466	\$ 2,677,359	\$ 529,596	\$ 1,835,601	\$ 312,162	19.8%	68.6%	11.7%
Arizona	\$ 7,457	\$ 9,594,428	\$ 4,173,501	\$ 4,217,359	\$ 1,203,567	43.5%	44.0%	12.5%
California	\$ 9,671	\$ 69,342,921	\$ 23,107,205	\$ 39,293,076	\$ 6,942,640	33.3%	56.7%	10.0%
Colorado	\$ 9,036	\$ 9,241,449	\$ 4,522,141	\$ 4,028,316	\$ 690,992	48.9%	43.6%	7.5%
Hawaii	\$ 12,400	\$ 2,696,662	\$ 55,074	\$ 2,354,600	\$ 286,988	2.0%	87.3%	10.6%
Idaho	\$ 6,577	\$ 2,183,110	\$ 539,149	\$ 1,397,871	\$ 246,090	24.7%	64.0%	11.3%
Montana	\$ 10,941	\$ 1,723,235	\$ 685,644	\$ 832,535	\$ 205,057	39.8%	48.3%	11.9%
Nevada	\$ 10,941	\$ 4,341,723	\$ 2,378,926	\$ 1,560,330	\$ 402,467	54.8%	35.9%	9.3%
New Mexico	\$ 8,275	\$ 3,779,535	\$ 627,840	\$ 2,645,457	\$ 506,239	16.6%	70.0%	13.4%
Oregon	\$ 9,403	\$ 6,622,919	\$ 2,686,960	\$ 3,393,143	\$ 542,817	40.6%	51.2%	8.2%
Utah	\$ 9,959	\$ 4,905,540	\$ 1,798,634	\$ 2,673,267	\$ 433,639	36.7%	54.5%	8.8%
Washington	\$ 6,546	\$ 12,932,336	\$ 4,069,076	\$ 7,833,028	\$ 1,030,232	31.5%	60.6%	8.0%
Wyoming	\$ 15,903	\$ 1,771,864	\$ 693,526	\$ 965,160	\$ 113,179	39.1%	54.5%	6.4%
Western States	\$ 10,429	\$131,813,081	\$ 45,867,272	\$ 73,029,743	\$12,916,069	33.2%	56.9%	10.0%
United States	\$ 11,066	\$623,208,803	\$280,507,097	\$288,196,281	\$54,505,424	45.0%	46.2%	8.7%

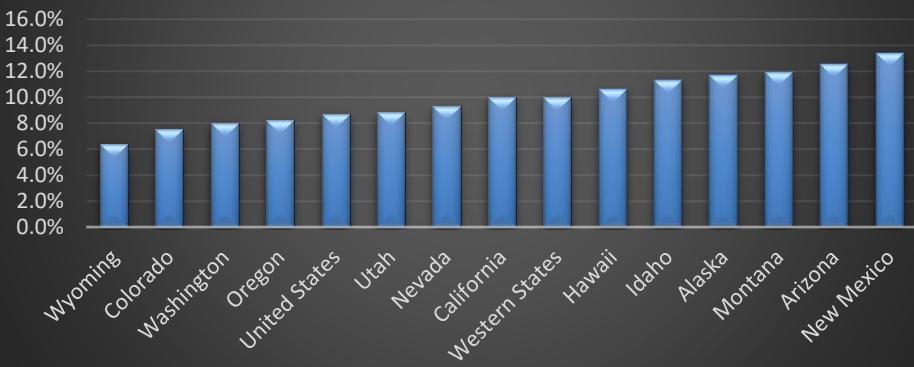
Note: Hawaii does not have local school districts.

Note that average per-pupil spending in the West, at \$10,429, was slightly lower than that of the nation as a whole, at \$11,066. But western states, on average, picked up a significantly larger share of the cost per pupil than localities, while the state-local spending mix was nearly even in the rest of the country. At the same time, federal funds made up a slightly larger share of per-pupil spending in the West (10%) than in the rest of the country (8.7%).

Combined local, state and federal per-pupil spending in the western states, 2013-14



Federal share of K-12 education spending in the western states, 2013-14

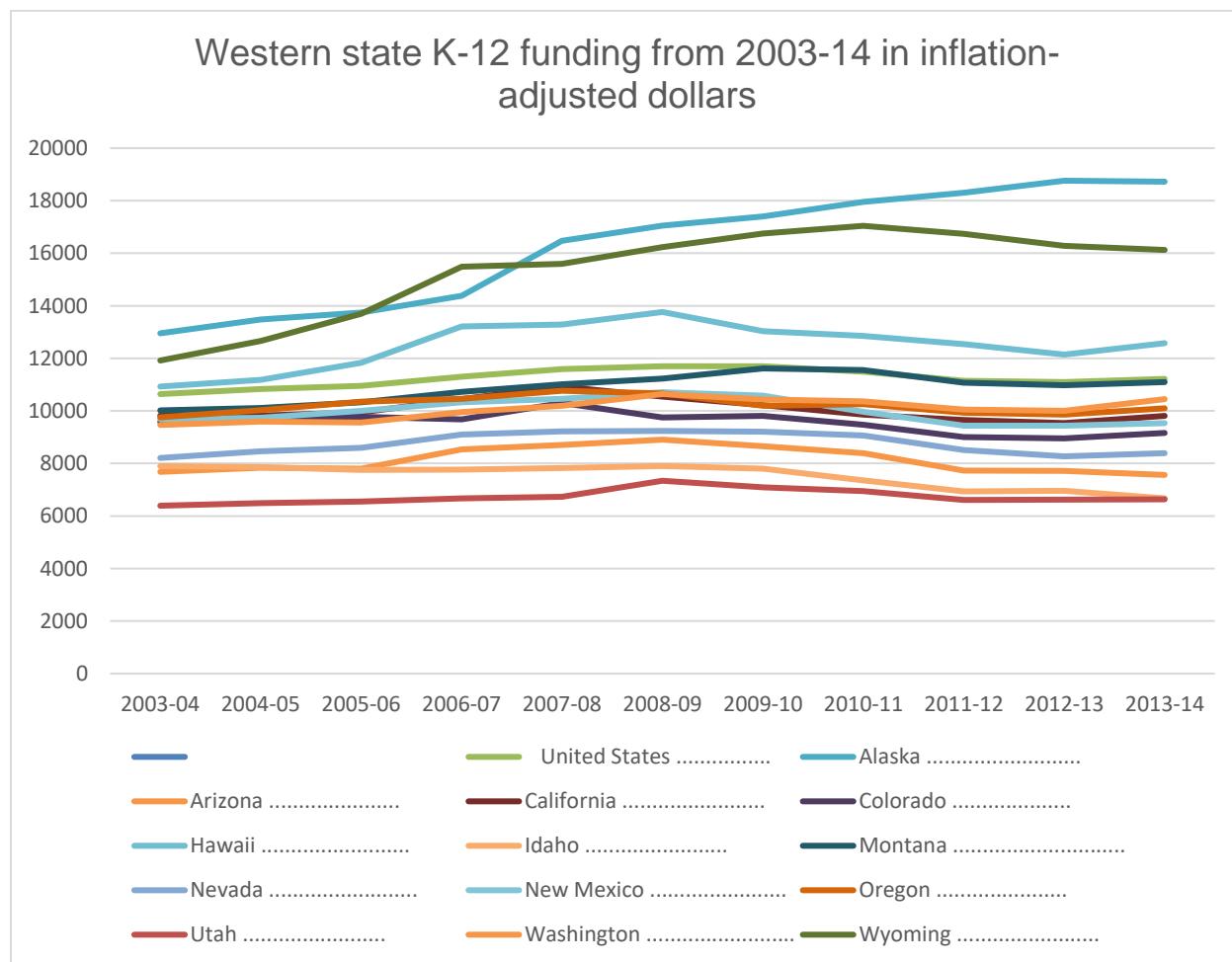


Per-pupil spending numbers for only one school year do not tell us *how* states spent their money, and they provide only a one-year snapshot. But some interesting notes can be gleaned from this data. For example:

- Among western states, Alaska had the highest per-pupil costs in 2013-14, likely due to the remoteness of many Alaskan communities.
- Wyoming, which had the second-highest spending level among the western states, also received the smallest share of its per-pupil spending from federal sources.
- In New Mexico, the share of K-12 spending borne by the state is very high, while the local burden is very low. But among western states, New Mexico also receives the largest share of its per-pupil funding from federal sources.

Using the NCES data, we can also compare state per-pupil spending over time.

Western state K-12 funding from 2003-14 in inflation-adjusted dollars											
Jurisdiction	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
U.S.	\$10,641	\$10,828	\$10,950	\$11,298	\$11,591	\$11,699	\$11,693	\$11,492	\$11,149	\$11,093	\$11,222
Alaska	\$10,116	\$10,847	\$11,476	\$12,324	\$14,641	\$15,363	\$15,829	\$16,663	\$17,475	\$18,217	\$18,466
Arizona	\$ 5,999	\$ 6,307	\$ 6,515	\$ 7,316	\$ 7,727	\$ 8,022	\$ 7,870	\$ 7,782	\$ 7,383	\$ 7,495	\$ 7,457
California	\$ 7,673	\$ 7,905	\$ 8,301	\$ 8,952	\$ 9,706	\$ 9,503	\$ 9,300	\$ 9,146	\$ 9,220	\$ 9,258	\$ 9,671
Colorado	\$ 7,478	\$ 7,826	\$ 8,166	\$ 8,286	\$ 9,152	\$ 8,782	\$ 8,926	\$ 8,786	\$ 8,594	\$ 8,693	\$ 9,036
Hawaii	\$ 8,533	\$ 8,997	\$ 9,876	\$11,316	\$11,800	\$12,400	\$11,855	\$11,924	\$11,973	\$11,790	\$12,400
Idaho	\$ 6,168	\$ 6,319	\$ 6,469	\$ 6,648	\$ 6,951	\$ 7,118	\$ 7,100	\$ 6,821	\$ 6,626	\$ 6,761	\$ 6,577
Montana	\$ 7,825	\$ 8,133	\$ 8,626	\$ 9,191	\$ 9,786	\$10,120	\$10,565	\$10,719	\$10,569	\$10,662	\$10,941
Nevada	\$ 6,410	\$ 6,804	\$ 7,177	\$ 7,796	\$ 8,187	\$ 8,321	\$ 8,376	\$ 8,411	\$ 8,130	\$ 8,026	\$ 8,275
New Mexico	\$ 7,572	\$ 7,834	\$ 8,354	\$ 8,849	\$ 9,291	\$ 9,648	\$ 9,621	\$ 9,250	\$ 9,013	\$ 9,164	\$ 9,403
Oregon	\$ 7,618	\$ 8,069	\$ 8,645	\$ 8,958	\$ 9,565	\$ 9,611	\$ 9,268	\$ 9,516	\$ 9,485	\$ 9,572	\$ 9,959
Utah	\$ 4,991	\$ 5,216	\$ 5,464	\$ 5,709	\$ 5,978	\$ 6,612	\$ 6,452	\$ 6,440	\$ 6,312	\$ 6,432	\$ 6,546
Washington	\$ 7,391	\$ 7,717	\$ 7,984	\$ 8,524	\$ 9,058	\$ 9,585	\$ 9,497	\$ 9,619	\$ 9,604	\$ 9,714	\$10,305
Wyoming	\$ 9,308	\$10,190	\$11,437	\$13,266	\$13,856	\$14,628	\$15,232	\$15,815	\$15,988	\$15,815	\$15,903



From this data we see that Alaska, Wyoming and Hawaii have consistently spent more per pupil in recent years than the national average, and more than all other western states. Most western state per-pupil expenditures rose during the first part of this period, and then leveled off or declined after the start of the Great Recession in late 2007.

The fact that complete NCES data is available only up to the 2013-14 school year means that any recent changes in school funding are not captured. For example, the 2012 *McCleary* decision by the Washington State Supreme Court resulted in a court order that the legislature increase funding for schools, which it has done in recent years. However, those numbers are not reflected in the above data. Similarly, a decline in mineral revenues in Wyoming over the past several years means that significant cuts in school funding are expected in the next state budget.

According to a recent report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, state K-12 funding is below 2008 levels in most states, including seven western states. In addition to the above factors, the reasons include cuts in federal aid, state tax cuts and increasing costs for state services due to inflation, demographic changes and a growing student population.

The NCES provides a multitude of data sources for those who wish to understand how their state compares to others, including a set of "[Fast Facts](#)" that provide concise, up-to-date information on a variety of topics, including bullying, dropout rates, charter schools, students with disabilities, graduation rates, financial aid, college enrollment, teacher preparation, and many others. This resource can be a useful tool as lawmakers seek to identify those states that are leading the nation in order to learn from their successes.

Sources

[State Information Request: Local State Spending](#), December 4, 2017, The Education Commission of the States.

[Current expenditure per pupil in fall enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by state or jurisdiction: Selected years, 1969-70 through 2013-14](#), The National Center for Education Statistics, accessed 10:45 AM, December 13, 2017.

[A Punishing Decade for School Funding](#), November 29, 2017, The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.