



Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance

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NEWS

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April 30, 2008

Wisconsin Spent 8.5% More Than U.S. to Operate Schools Per Student Salaries Near Parity, Benefits Exceed U.S. Norm by 50%

U.S. Census figures released this month showed that Wisconsin spent \$10,190 per pupil to operate public schools in 2006. A new report from the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (WISTAX) analyzed these data in greater detail and found that school expenditures here ranked 14th highest among the states and 8.5% above the U.S. average (\$9,390). The main reason for the above-average ranking was fringe benefits that exceeded national averages by more than 50%. Now in its 76th year, WISTAX is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public-policy research organization dedicated to citizen education.

Of the \$10,190 per student total, Wisconsin devoted 60.4% to instruction, about the same share as the nation (60.2%). WISTAX said that amounted to \$6,157, or 8.9% more than the national norm (\$5,654), good for 14th place among the states. The Badger State also spent more per student on instructional support, e.g., libraries and staff training, (\$496, 9.9% above the U.S. average, 13th highest); administration (\$781, +14.0%, 16th); building operations and maintenance (\$979, +7.8%, 15th); and transportation (\$411, +2.3%, 22nd). Pupil services, such as counseling, was the only major category where Wisconsin (\$446, -7.9%, 24th) trailed the nation (\$485).

Examining specifically instruction-related expenses, WISTAX calculated that, in 2006, salaries (\$3,939 per pupil) were 2.7% above the U.S. (\$3,835) and 16th highest nationally. Benefits were 52.5% above the U.S. mean (\$1,854 vs. \$1,216) and sixth highest. Instructional costs for items other than compensation (\$364), e.g., books and supplies, were 39.7% below average (\$583) and ranked 44th in the U.S.

Wisconsin spent more (\$6,157, 14th) on instruction per student than the surrounding states: Illinois (\$5,452, 22nd); Iowa (\$5,071, 30th); Michigan (\$5,395, 23rd), and Minnesota (\$5,874, 16th). However, when instruction net of benefits was compared, Wisconsin trailed (\$4,303) the U.S. (\$4,438) by 3.0%, as well as Minnesota (\$4,655) and Illinois (\$4,420). Iowa (\$3,975) and Michigan (\$3,821) both spent less.

For a free copy of the *Focus* newsletter titled “Wisconsin schools—a different drummer?”, contact WISTAX at wistax@wistax.org; 608.241.9789; or WISTAX, 401 North Lawn Ave., Madison, WI 53704.

(Editors' Note: An electronic version of this release is available at www.wistax.org.)

The Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, founded in 1932, is the state's oldest and most respected private government-research organization. Through its research, publications, civic lectures, and school talks, WISTAX aims to improve Wisconsin government through citizen education. Nonprofit, nonpartisan, and independently funded, WISTAX is not affiliated with any group—national, state, or local—and receives no government support.