

Do “Curriculum,” “Choice,” and “School Funding” Belong in the same Conversation?

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Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy

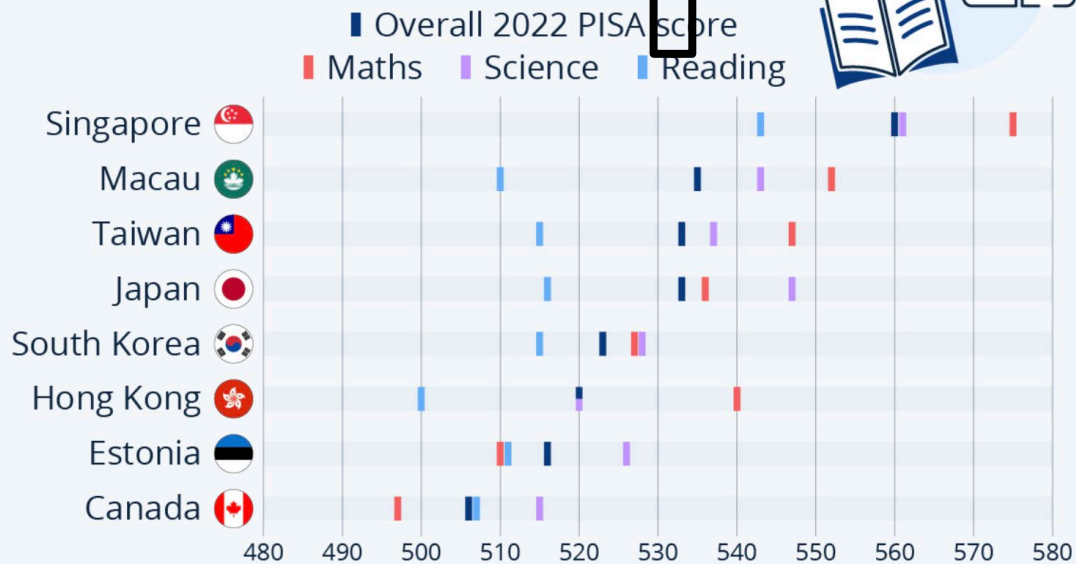
Curriculum Can Solve for this problem:

Persistent Underachievement.

PISA: the OECD's Comparative Test

The Top Performing Places for Education

Mean average of PISA 2022 maths, science and reading scores*



* PISA=Programme for International Student Assessment
690,000 15-year-old pupils tested across 81 countries and economies in 2022
Source: OECD



statista

PISA: the OECD's Comparative Test

United States?

28/36 OECD nations in Math

9/36 OECD nations in Reading

Rankings improved, but scores declined.

Most Recent NAEP Scores: *Public and Private Schools* (Proficient)

Topic	Grade	Year	at or above Proficient
Civics	4	2010	27
	8	2022	22
	12	2010	24
Economics	12	2012	43
Geography	4	2010	22
	8	2018	24
	12	2010	20
Mathematics	4	2022	37
	8	2022	27
	12	2019	24
Reading	4	2022	33
	8	2022	33
	12	2019	37
Science	4	2019	36
	8	2019	35
	12	2019	22
Technology and Engineering Literacy	8	2018	47
U.S. History	4	2010	20
	8	2022	14
	12	2010	12
Writing	4	2002	28
	8	2011	27
	12	2011	27

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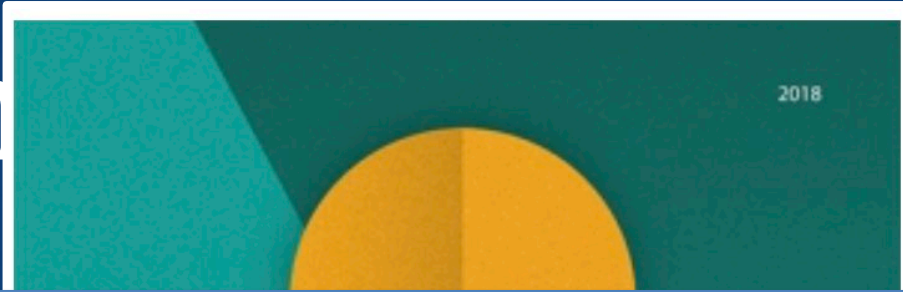
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**Can we solve it –
together?**

Practical Steps

- 1) Know the research*
- 2) Create the conditions*
- 3) Get in it for the long term*

Background knowledge matters

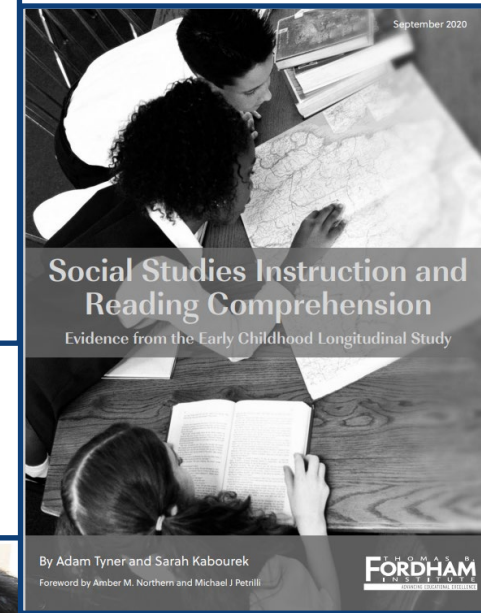
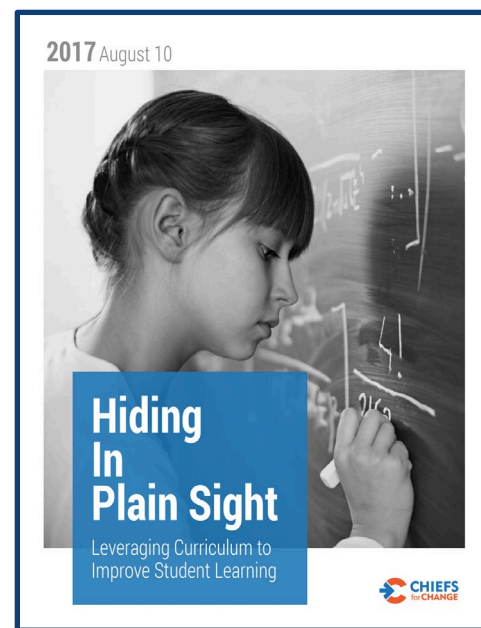
High-quality content

“Stickiness” of knowledge

Culturally representative sources

Cumulative

Multiple perspectives



Study: Knowledge-Rich Curriculum Significantly Boosts Reading Scores

The long-term effects of the Core Knowledge curriculum saw students' reading scores improve by 16 percentile points on state standardized tests.

WHY is “knowledge-building” SO DIFFICULT in the United States?

Since the early 1900s, American education has focused on **PROCESS OVER CONTENT**.

“Learning how to learn” - instead of *learning something specific*.

Prioritizing skills - instead of requiring *mastery of knowledge*.

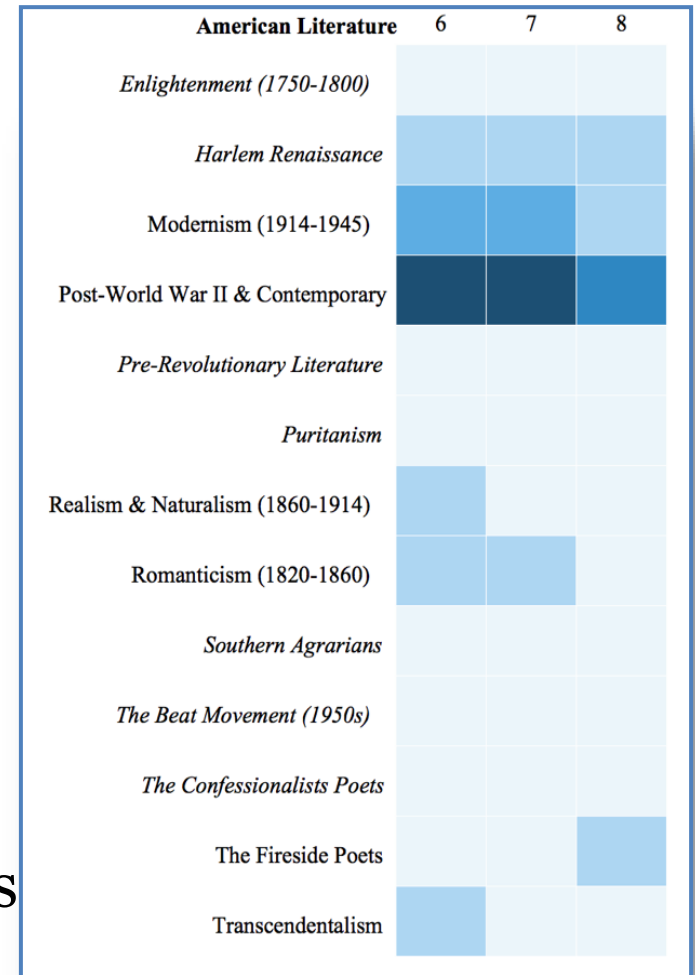
“Find the main idea” from a de-contextualized paragraph about the 1860s - instead of “How does Lincoln’s *Second Inaugural* address the causes of the Civil War?”



Systems are Turning this Around

Example: International Baccalaureate Diploma Program in Chicago's lowest-performing high schools produced a 40% greater chance of attending university.

Example: Duval County, FL, chose Core Knowledge Language Arts and Eureka Math for its schools ----the result is rising academic success that is emulated across the state.



Many charter networks, high-performing Catholic schools, and entire districts and states are putting their emphasis here.

- States: CCSSO supporting 13 states; Chiefs for Change has a major initiative in HQIM
- Districts: Baltimore City, Cumberland County, Duval County...
- Charters: Success, IDEA, Public Prep, Great Hearts...
- Private Schools: many NAIS schools; NYC Partnership Schools

The Institute team spends most of our time supporting system leaders to identify, adopt, implement, and support content-rich curricula. Teacher voice. Principal support. Alignment across the system. Assessments.

Pull down slide show to talk through:

1) Louisiana

2) Massachusetts

3) Nebraska

In Montana, a curriculum focus could include:

Incentives to using high-quality curriculum (CCSSO!).

Fair-minded reviews of private and homeschool curricula.

Content summits open to teachers from all sectors.

Instructional leadership summits open to all sectors.

School quality data dashboard with multiple measures (ask me about the prototype).

Invest in longitudinal data.

Invest in parent navigators.



*Look at the PRE-POLITICAL context.
What are the assumptions we bring to
the policy table? How can we work
towards a more generous space for
doing public education?*

What's “public education?”

Educational Pluralism

- **“Educational pluralism”** is a system in which the government funds and regulates, but does not necessarily operate, a wide array of schools that may be pedagogically and philosophically distinctive from one another. Most systems (171 out of 204 surveyed by UNESCO) have plural structures.



- **“Educational uniformity”** is a system in which only the State delivers public education. The United States has had a uniform system for 100 years. So do some provinces of Canada, Uruguay, China, Brazil, and the Philippines.



Why Does the U.S. Have a Uniform System?

- The United States moved from a plural to a uniform educational system in the 19th century.
 - *Originally funded Jewish schools, Catholic schools, Baptist schools, non-sectarian schools, etc.*
 - *Mid-19th century: Millions of Catholic immigrants frightened the Protestant majority and inspired nativist movements (anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic).*
 - *Cities and states stopped funding religious and pedagogical schools by the 1880s.*
- **RESULT:** our cultural imaginations are shaped by the norm of uniformity. In the U.S., “*public education*” tends to mean the district school.

Consequences?



Educational Pluralism

Premise 1



Education cannot be neutral with respect to values...

...so we should fund schools with distinctive ethos.

Educational Pluralism

Premise 2



Children and families have different needs....

...so we should help all families – not only wealthy families –
find the school (or model!) that works for them.

Educational Pluralism

Premise 3



The state, the individual family, and civil society organizations all have a role to play in education...

...because civil society is important for democracy.

Educational Pluralism

Premise 4



Education affects *all citizens* of a democracy....

...so democracies must ensure academic excellence in all schools (accountability).

Educational Pluralism

Premise 5



When designed well (to support distinctive schools + academic excellence)...

...educational pluralism can bring positive academic and civic benefits to the next generation.



PLURALISM

More generous...but also
more rigorous.

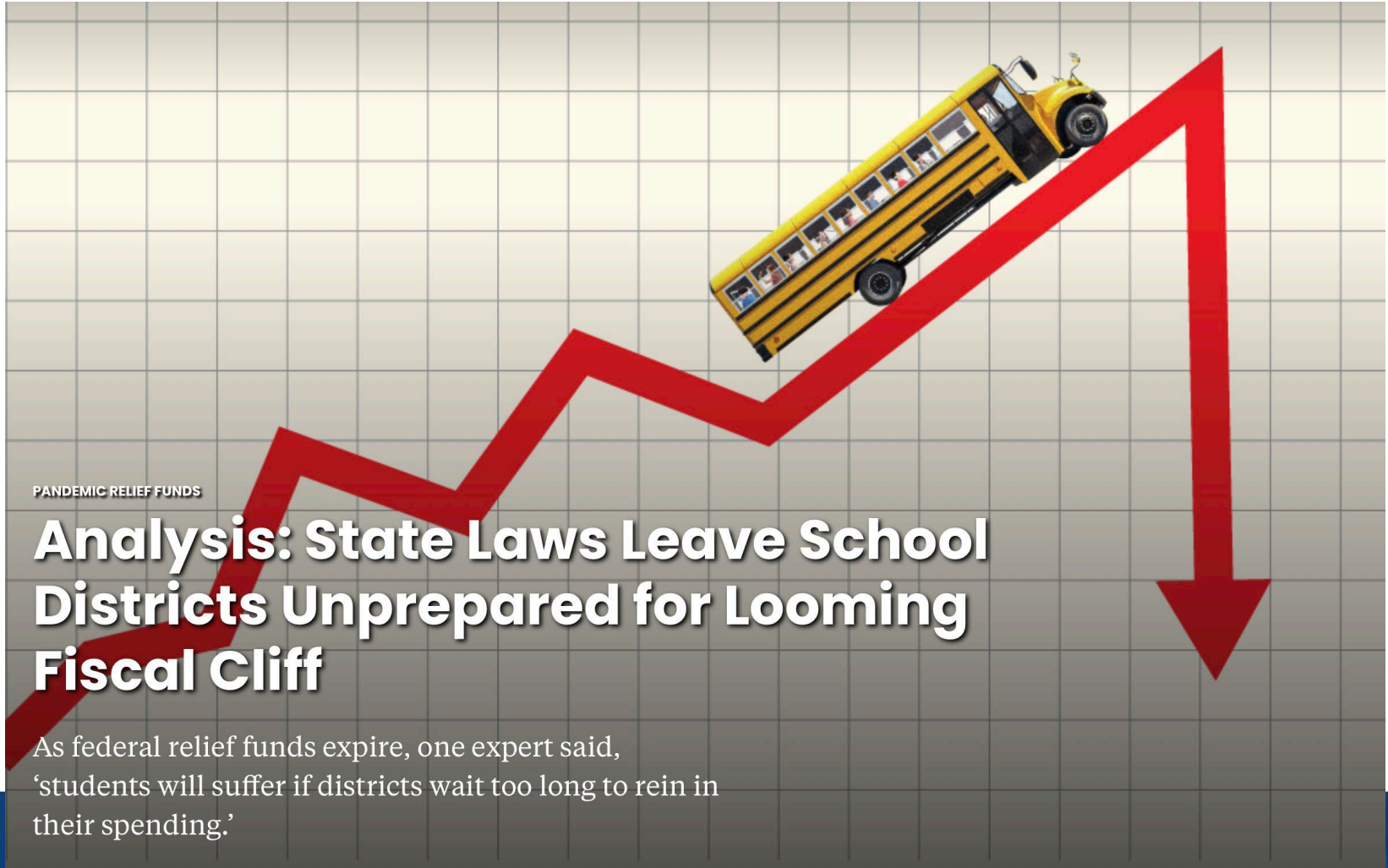
Pull down slide show to talk through:

- 1) *Stop demeaning entire sectors*
- 2) *Focus on curriculum and school culture in all school sectors*
- 3) *Create the conditions for collaboration*
- 4) *Reduce the force of funding*

Funding



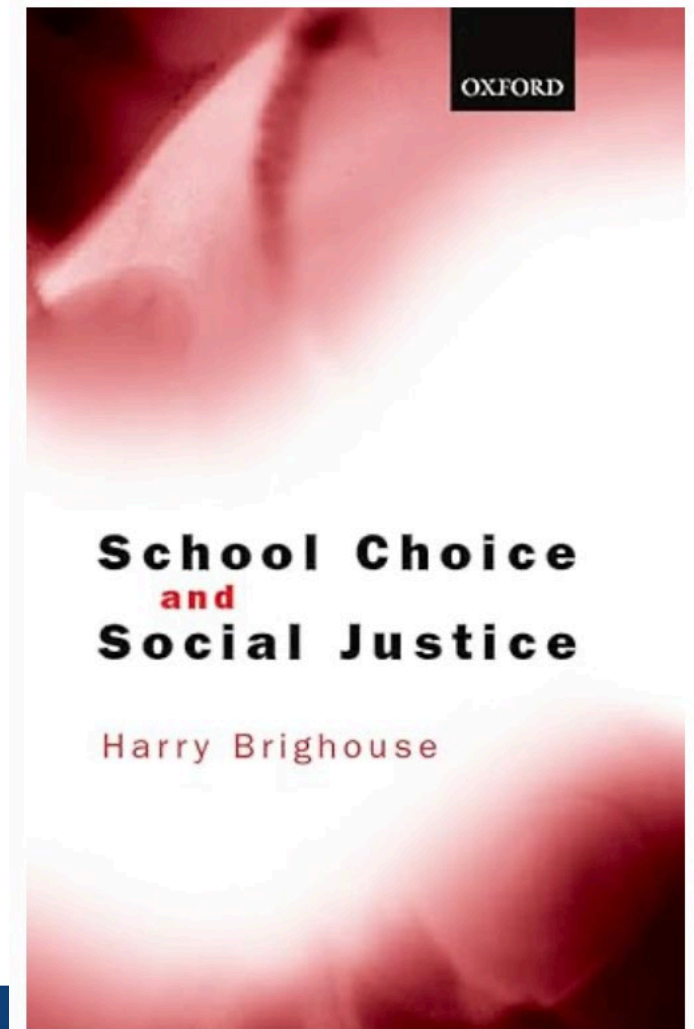
School Funding.....



Finances have a Moral Valence

“If we could get exactly the same results under Plan A costing \$100 as under Plan B costing \$150, we are morally bound to choose Plan A, since that will free up resources for expenditure on other socially valuable projects.”

-Harry Brighouse, 2000

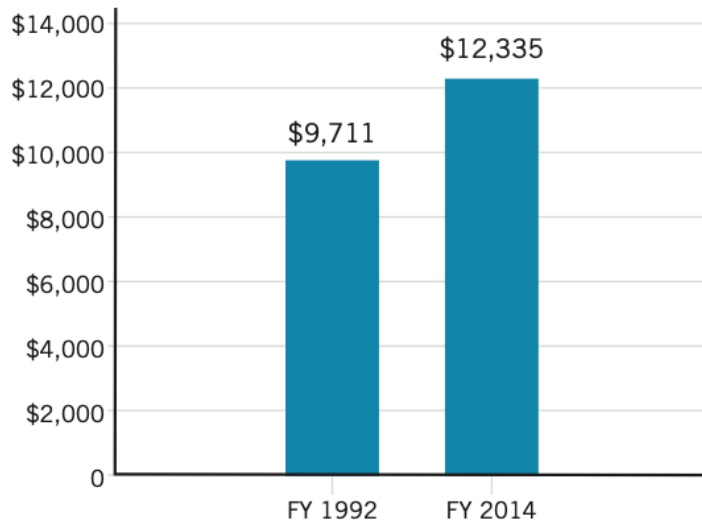


The Staffing Surge

Table 1

FIGURE 9

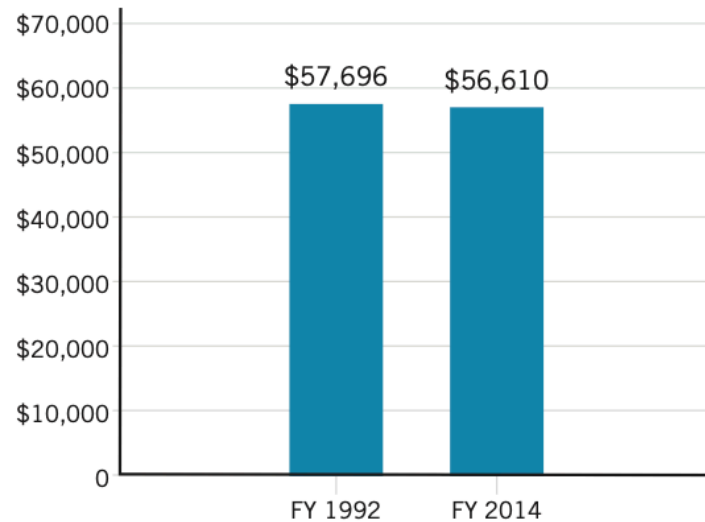
Increase in Real Public School Spending Per Student, FY 1992 to FY 2014



Sources: See Appendix 2.

FIGURE 10

Inflation-Adjusted Average Teacher Salaries, FY 1992 and FY 2014



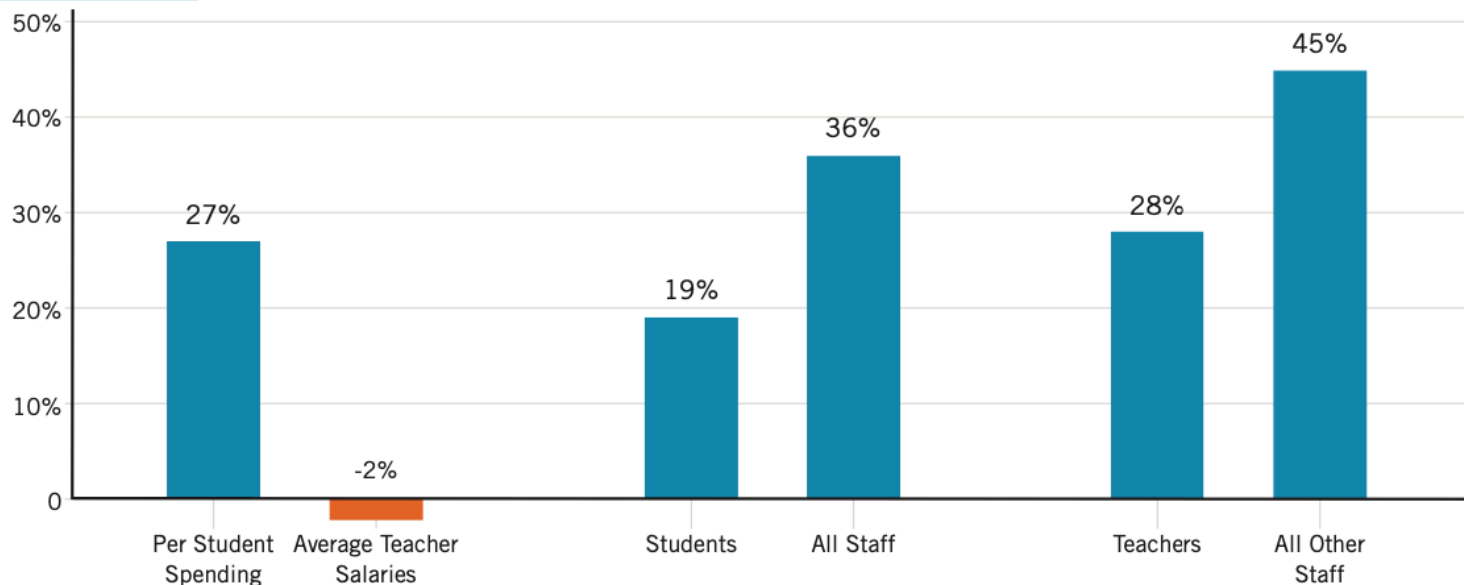
Sources: See Appendix 2.

The Staffing Surge

Table 2

FIGURE 11

Changes in Inflation-Adjusted Public School Spending, Teacher Salaries, and Staff, FY 1992 to FY 2014



Note: State-specific data on changes in inflation-adjusted spending, teacher salaries, and staff can be found in Appendix 1.
Sources: See Appendix 2.

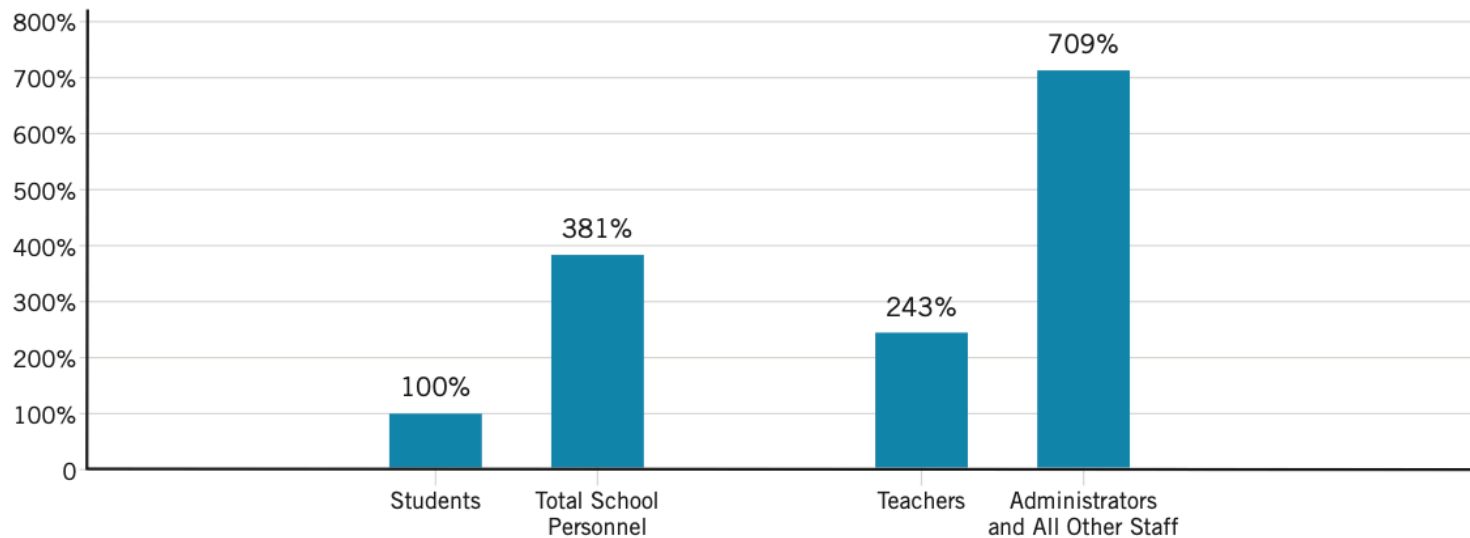


The Staffing Surge

Table 3

FIGURE 14

Growth in Students and Public School Personnel, United States, FY 1950 to FY 2015



Sources: See Appendix 2.



Marguerite Roza

Director



Marguerite Roza, Ph.D., is Director of the Edunomics Lab and Research Professor at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy, where she leads the Certificate in Education Finance program.

[Read More](#)

Resources at Georgetown



School District Finance Workshop

4-Part Virtual Training: April 18, 19, 25, & 26, 12-2pm ET

[LEARN MORE & REGISTER](#)

Do “Curriculum,” “Choice,” and “School Funding” Belong in the same Conversation?

*For many school systems, the answer is
“YES.”*

DISCUSSION



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