

A cause and effect analysis: Looking at the effects of lack of funding for schools on US students

Authors: Archit Aryaman (architaryaman2005@gmail.com)

Shaira Jafar (jafars@bxscience.edu)

Angie Mohamed (angie.mohamed22@sitechhs.com)

JK Rajjo Ronobir (jrajjonobir8825@townsendharris.org)

Mentors: Mamadou Barry (Director for FINX Research & Journalism Institute)

Ryan Curran (Director for FINX Research & Journalism Institute)

Aarushi Kaushal (Director for FINX Research & Journalism Institute)

Rehan Yazdani (Director for FINX Research & Journalism Institute)

FINX Research & Journalism Institute

DOI:10.5281/zenodo.3983080

July 19th, 2020

Abstract

The underfunding of schools in the United States (US) is a federal issue that affects schools and its students vastly. It is a given that the importance of schools and the resources and education it provides, through its funds, is a fundamental part of a student's internal and external development. We investigate the problem of the lack of funding for US schools and how it internally affects a student and their mental health. We also analyze how this issue may affect students' futures in terms of their employment, earnings, and delinquent behavior in external society. From that, we were able to explain why various departments of education should improve funding to better the country's students' futures.

Introduction

School is a mandatory activity for all American citizens between the ages of five and sixteen (depending on state laws). It is an important facet of a child's developing years and helps young children form the habit of learning new material promptly. In the modern world, students may view school as a monotonous mandate, and as the centuries passed and education changed students, teachers, and parents alike noticed the faults in the American education system and its funding. Since the 1970s, dozens of lawsuits based on school funding have been filed. In these lawsuits, students and parents have drawn insight into the large gap of funding at high-income schools versus low-income schools, as well as how the education system receives low funding in general. The differences in average state per-pupil spending range from around \$5,700 to \$17,000 (Center for American Progress, 2020). The severe lack of money in schools in

lower-income neighborhoods impacts a teacher's teaching quality, schools' curriculum, and additional extracurricular activities (Center for American Progress, 2020). Funding is a crucial aspect in providing a quality education, and without it, the system cannot continue to improve itself. This deeply rooted issue not only hinders the successful from improving, but also majorly affects low-income communities (Center for American Progress, 2020).

Although funding in the nation's department of education can help benefit the economy, the country's worldwide education rankings, and knowledge as a whole, the core focus of funding should be on the students. The school system was built for the students and they will be the ones experiencing schooling. Students spend at least seven hours a day at school and those in afterschool activities spend even more time in the building.

Elementary and middle schools are important places for kids to learn the building blocks of the English language, mathematics, and science. Their teachers are the most important adult figures in students' lives because they are the authoritative figures that help shape their thinking. Without qualified educators and proper teaching supplies, students will not be able to learn effectively, create respectful relationships with other students and adults, or be motivated to attend school in the first place. If schools were funded more across the US, the effects that those extra dollars might have on a student's future are staggering. The question is, to what extent do these seemingly innocent funding dollars affect an American students' mental health, job success, income, and criminal record once they are out of school? Money can have several effects on a student from a young age, such as their future success, future mental health, future criminal behavior, and many others. These effects on a student may be subtle, but it does impact them on a long-term basis. It is clear that the lack of funding of schools in the United States impacts students' futures, negatively affecting their mental health, job success, income, and criminal record.

Manuscript Body

One of the strongest effects of increased funding for schools is how it might impact students and their mental well-being and cognitive ability during their time in school. Children with mental health and learning disorders often face failure at school and discipline. However, this is due to the fact students are not accommodated for. With funding, schools cover the basic costs, but the money should also be used to accommodate students by hiring and paying support staff. When classrooms don't have regular access to a psychologist or psychiatrist, expulsions in pre-kindergarten are twice as common (Child Mind Institute, 2020). Additionally, students not receiving proper care to their needs and at high risk for mental health problems in 1st grade leads to a 5% drop in academic performance in two years (Child Mind Institute, 2020). Moreover, mental

health and learning disorders are related to higher dropout rates. The dropout rate for all students is 7% (2020). The dropout rate for students served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is 21.1%, and those who serve under IDEA with emotional disturbance have a dropout rate of 38.7% (2020).

Even though we identified major discrepancies in accommodation for all students, it is not easy to address mental health when several schools don't have the proper budget.

There are only a few mental health programs advised for educational institutions.

However districts all over the country have cut, or never had in the first place, the approved school psychologists and learning programs (Walker, 2018). School districts have undermined schools' ability to address mental health. According to ACMH, 1 in 5 children have a diagnosable condition, and for 1 in 10 children, their mental health disorder is severe enough that it affects how they function. Furthermore, only 40% of students with mental health disorders graduate and 50% of students with emotional and behavioral disabilities drop out of high school, while nationally, 76% of students graduate. It is highly important that mental health is addressed. Without these advances, youth's performance in school can be extremely egregious.

Mental health disorders affect classrooms and how students interact with one another. If funding is provided and the appropriate services are established in schools, it will maximize success and reduce the negative impacts. Mental health affects each student differently and may not appear the same way for all students. Thus, teachers should receive training in how to help students and require special instruction, as well as provide the teacher with the tools to help students manage their anxiety and other mental health issues. Depression is linked to low grade point averages and can result in students dropping out of school (Suicide Prevention Resource Center, 2020). Pressure in school can be overwhelming and without acknowledging mental health, there can be long term consequences affecting overall health, future employment, and income.

Not only does increasing funding for schools benefit current students in the system, but it also affects students' futures as a working adult, specifically their jobs and earnings. In the US, schools have been primarily funded with revenues from local sources such as taxes. In an attempt to equalize expenditure and guarantee equal opportunities to all children, over the past four decades, certain US states have reformed their school finance schemes through changes in their funding formulas (Nber.org, 2020). These school finance equalization reforms are among many causes that lead to increased funding in schools and spending on students in the form of expenditures. The increase in expenditures affects a student's learning experience and income when they leave their well-funded school. This notion holds true, as a 10% increase in per-pupil spending each

year for all 12 years of public school leads to 0.31 more completed years of education and about 7% higher wages (Nber.org, 2020). A student's quality of schooling definitely affects a student's chances of getting into a highly qualified university, affecting their chances of graduating, getting a high paying job, and job satisfaction. This notion is evident when one sees that only 36 percent of all jobs will require a high school diploma or less. During the recent economic recovery, 95 percent of the jobs created went to workers with postsecondary education or training (Center for American Progress, 2020). Those who graduate from college earn about \$1 million more, on average and over a lifetime, than those who only graduate from high school. When school districts spend money wisely, they have better outcomes, including higher test scores, increased graduation rates, and other improved indicators of student achievement (Center for American Progress, 2020). In fact, the study found that spending increases improved high school graduation rates among low-income students and increased their adulthood earnings by 10 percent (Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project, 2020). The relationship between funding and post-graduate success is evident: the greater the funds the better the chances that students have to gain more knowledge, earn their bachelor's and graduate's degrees, and earn more money in their jobs.

Another part of a student's future aside from their economic productivity is their societal productivity, their future behaviors in society, and if they are a delinquent threat to the people around them. Through increased funding, the US fuels more resources and funding into educational programs. This can encourage people to focus more on educating themselves and becoming productive and contributing members of society rather than delinquents (Yousefi, S., 2020). Many fail to realize that putting more funding and resources into early childhood education programs, and education programs can both reduce future crime rates and save money, contributing to society as a whole (Yousefi, S., 2020). Poverty is a leading factor in causing people to commit crimes (Yousefi, S., 2020). A 10% increase in per pupil spending each year for all 12 years of public school leads to a 3.2 percentage-point reduction in the annual incidence of adult poverty (Nber.org, 2020), hence, since more funding for education decreases poverty, a leading cause of crime, it does lead to a decrease in crime. Let's take the example of Finland; in Finland there is no lack of funding in schools, and the murder rate in Finland is also surprisingly just 0.0014%. Now let's compare it with the US. The schools in the US have a lot of funding issues, and the murder rate in the US is also 0.005%. These statistics clearly say that lack of funding can indirectly encourage the growth of criminal activity (THORNBERRY, T., MOORE, M. and CHRISTENSON, R., 1985).

Conclusion

It is clear that improving the funding of US schools is necessary to improve the mental health of students when they are in school, and to help students become successful, productive, and well-behaved when out of school. The root cause of the issues arising from the underfunding of US schools is budgeting expenditures at the local level. The government should improve funding by equalizing these expenditures to guarantee equal opportunities and effects for students across many localities. Thus, equalizing expenditures can result in better student well-beings and a better economic and social future once they leave school. Further research can be done when funding and education budgets are increased in the US to see if these effects and virtues hold true over time.

References

- ACMH. 2020. Problems At School | Association For Children's Mental Health. [online] Available at: <<http://www.acmh-mi.org/get-help/navigating/problems-at-school/>> [Accessed 12 July 2020].
- Aaltonen, M., Kivivuori, J. and Martikainen, P., 2011. Social determinants of crime in a welfare state: Do they still matter?. *Acta Sociologica*, 54(2), pp.161-181.
- Center for American Progress. 2020. A Quality Approach To School Funding - Center For American Progress. [online] Available at: <<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2018/11/13/460397/quality-approach-school-funding/>> [Accessed 12 July 2020].
- Center for American Progress. 2020. Fixing Chronic Disinvestment In K-12 Schools - Center For American Progress. [online] Available at: <<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2018/09/20/457750/fixing-chronic-disinvestment-k-12-schools/>> [Accessed 12 July 2020].
- Chen, Grace. A Relevant History of Public Education in the United States. 22 Jan. 2012, www.publicschoolreview.com/blog/a-relevant-history-of-public-education-in-the-united-states.
- Child Mind Institute. 2020. Mental Health Impacts In Schools | Child Mind Institute. [online] Available at: <<https://childmind.org/report/2016-childrens-mental-health-report/mental-health-impacts-schools/>> [Accessed 12 July 2020].
- Christopher A. Candelaria and Kenneth A. Shores, "Court-Ordered Finance Reforms in the Adequacy Era: Heterogeneous Causal Effects and Sensitivity." Working Paper (Stanford University, 2017), available at <https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/cofr-efp.pdf>.
- Leadr. (2020, May 14). Evolution of U.S. Public Education. Retrieved July 14, 2020, from <http://evolutionofeducation.leadr.msu.edu/2017/04/18/horace-mann/>
- Nber.org. 2020. [online] Available at: <<https://www.nber.org/papers/w20847.pdf>> [Accessed 12 July 2020].
- Nber.org. 2020. [online] Available at: <<https://www.nber.org/papers/w25368.pdf>> [Accessed 12 July 2020].
- Pew Research Center's Social & Demographic Trends Project. 2020. Education: The Rising Cost Of Not Going To College. [online] Available at: <<https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/02/11/the-rising-cost-of-not-going-to-college/#:~:text=The%20economic%20analysis%20finds%20that,only%20a%20high%20school%20diploma.>> [Accessed 14 July 2020].

- Plazek, David J., and Alan Steinberg. "Political Science Funding Black Out in North America? Trends in Funding 'Should Not' Be Ignored." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2013, pp. 599–604. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/43284394. Accessed 12 July 2020.
- Rud, I., van Klaveren, C., Groot, W. and van den Brink, H., 2016. What Drives the Relationship Between Early Criminal Involvement and School Dropout?. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 34(1), pp.139-166.
- Russellsage.org. 2020. [online] Available at: https://www.russellsage.org/sites/all/files/conferences/Biasi_Draft.pdf [Accessed 12 July 2020].
- Sprc.org. 2020. Consequences Of Student Mental Health Issues | Suicide Prevention Resource Center. [online] Available at: <https://www.sprc.org/colleges-universities/consequences> [Accessed 12 July 2020].
- THORNBERRY, T., MOORE, M. and CHRISTENSON, R., 1985. THE EFFECT OF DROPPING OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL ON SUBSEQUENT CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR*. *Criminology*, 23(1), pp.3-18.
- Walker, Tim. 2018. Are Schools Ready To Tackle The Mental Health Crisis? - NEA Today. [online] Available at: <http://neatoday.org/2018/09/13/mental-health-in-schools/> [Accessed 12 July 2020].
- Yousefi, S., 2020. The Long-Term Benefits Of Education As A Crime-Prevention Measure | Novak Djokovic Foundation. [online] Novak Djokovic Foundation. Available at: <https://novakdjokovicfoundation.org/long-term-benefits-education-crime-prevention-measure/> [Accessed 14 July 2020].