

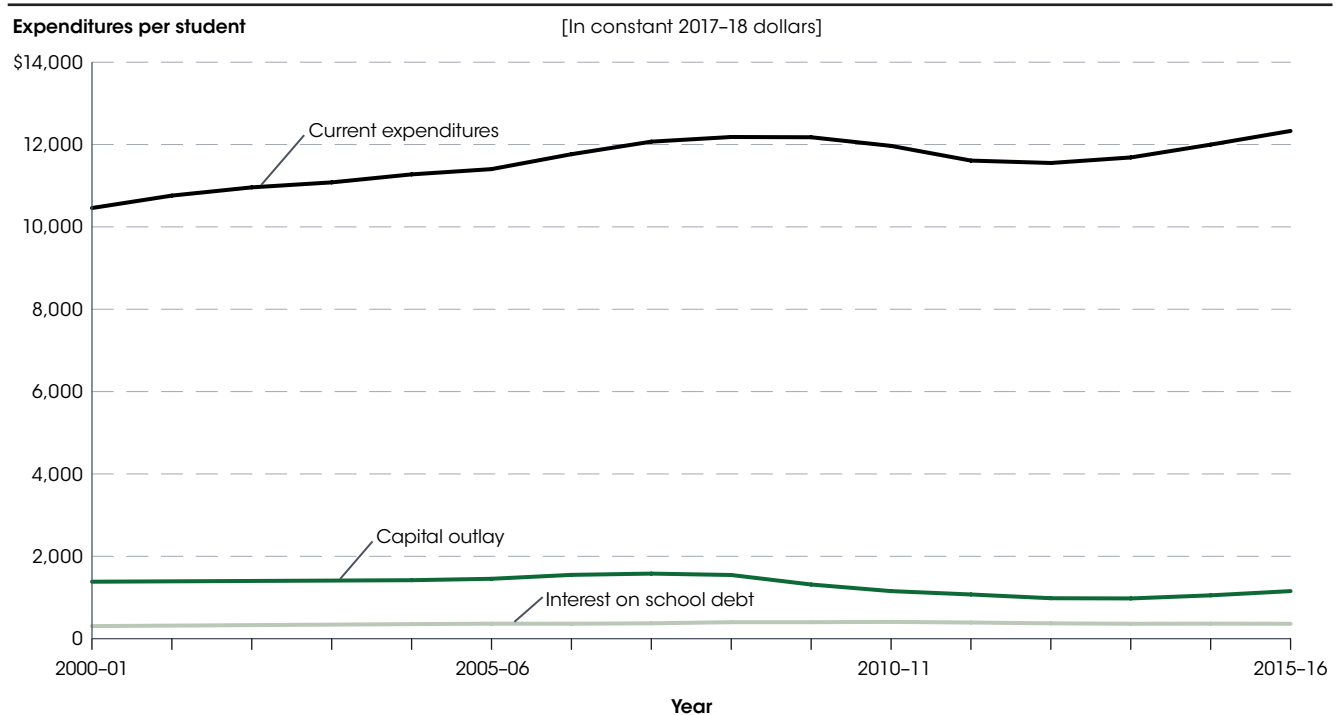
Public School Expenditures

In 2015–16, public schools spent \$12,330 per student on current expenditures (in constant 2017–18 dollars), a category that includes salaries, employee benefits, purchased services, and supplies. Current expenditures per student were 18 percent higher in 2015–16 than in 2000–01, after adjusting for inflation. During this period, current expenditures per student increased from \$10,458 in 2000–01 to \$12,183 in 2008–09, decreased between 2008–09 and 2012–13 to \$11,552, and then reached \$12,330 in 2015–16.

Total expenditures for public elementary and secondary schools in the United States in 2015–16 amounted to \$706 billion, or \$13,847 per public school student enrolled in the fall (in constant 2017–18 dollars).¹ Total expenditures included \$12,330 per student in current expenditures, which include salaries, employee

benefits, purchased services, tuition, and supplies. Total expenditures per student also included \$1,155 in capital outlay (expenditures for property and for buildings and alterations completed by school district staff or contractors) and \$362 for interest on school debt.

Figure 1. Current expenditures, capital outlays, and interest payments per student in fall enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools: Selected years, 2000–01 through 2015–16

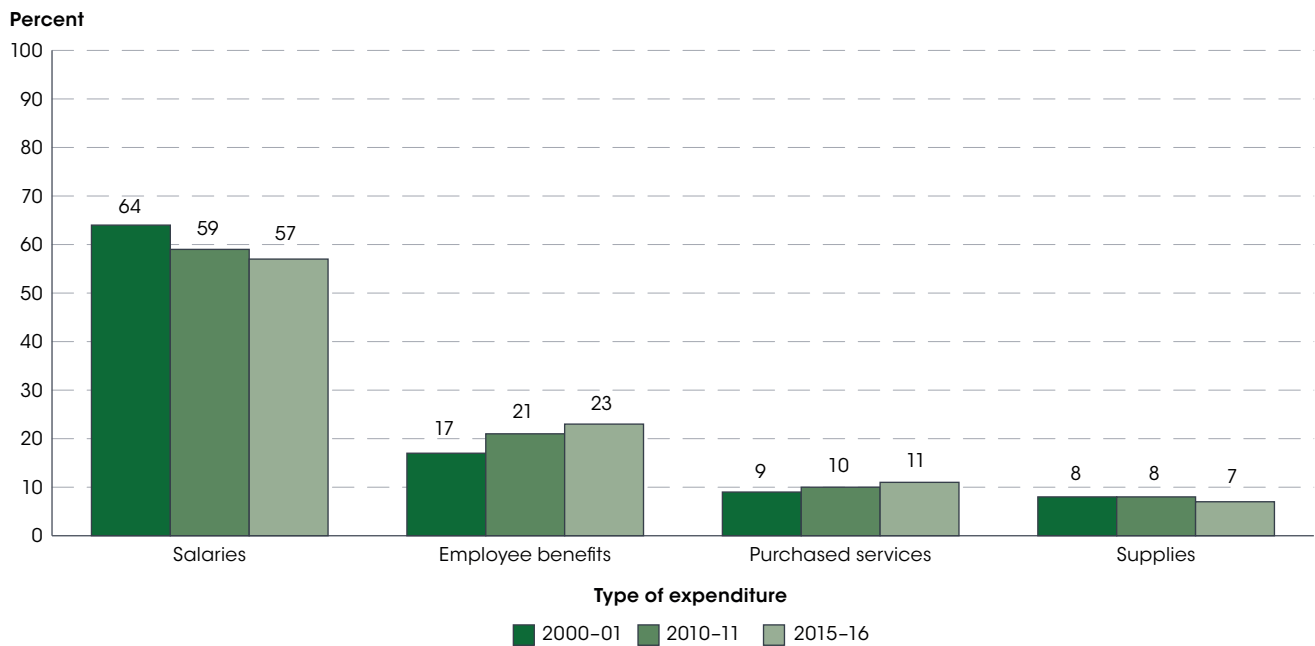


NOTE: "Current expenditures," "Capital outlay," and "Interest on school debt" are subcategories of total expenditures. Current expenditures include instruction, support services, food services, and enterprise operations (expenditures for operations funded by sales of products and services). Capital outlay includes expenditures for property and for buildings and alterations completed by school district staff or contractors. Expenditures are reported in constant 2017–18 dollars, based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Some data have been revised from previous figures. Excludes expenditures for state education agencies. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "National Public Education Financial Survey," 2000–01 through 2015–16; CCD, "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 2000–01 through 2015–16. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 105.30, and *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, tables 236.10, 236.55, and 236.60.

Current expenditures per student enrolled in the fall in public elementary and secondary schools were 18 percent higher in 2015–16 than in 2000–01 (\$12,330 vs. \$10,458, both in constant 2017–18 dollars). Current expenditures per student increased from \$10,458 in 2000–01 to \$12,183 in 2008–09, decreased between 2008–09 and 2012–13 to \$11,552, and then increased each of the next three years, reaching \$12,330 in 2015–16.

Capital outlay expenditures per student in both 2010–11 and 2015–16 (\$1,155 in each year) were 17 percent lower than in 2000–01 (\$1,383). Interest payments on public elementary and secondary school debt per student were 19 percent higher in 2015–16 than in 2000–01. During this period, interest payments per student increased from \$305 in 2000–01 to \$407 in 2010–11, before declining to \$362 in 2015–16 (all amounts in constant 2017–18 dollars).

Figure 2. Percentage of current expenditures per student in fall enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools, by type of expenditure: 2000–01, 2010–11, and 2015–16



NOTE: "Salaries," "Employee benefits," "Purchased services," and "Supplies" are subcategories of current expenditures. Purchased services include expenditures for contracts for food, transportation, and janitorial services, and professional development for teachers. Supplies include expenditures for items ranging from books to heating oil. Two additional subcategories of expenditure, "Tuition" and "Other," are not included in this figure. Excludes expenditures for state education agencies. Although rounded numbers are displayed, the figures are based on unrounded data. SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "National Public Education Financial Survey," 2000–01, 2010–11, and 2015–16. See *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, table 236.60.

Current expenditures for education can be expressed in terms of the percentage of funds going toward salaries, employee benefits, purchased services, tuition, supplies, or other expenditures. On a national basis in 2015–16, approximately 80 percent of current expenditures for public elementary and secondary schools were for salaries and benefits for staff, compared with 81 percent in 2000–01. As the proportion of current expenditures for staff salaries decreased from 64 percent in 2000–01 to 57 percent in 2015–16, the proportion of current expenditures for employee benefits increased from 17 to 23 percent. Approximately 11 percent of current expenditures in 2015–16 were for purchased services,

which include a variety of items, such as contracts for food, transportation, janitorial services, and professional development for teachers. The percentage of the expenditure distribution going toward purchased services shifted only slightly from 2000–01 to 2015–16, increasing from 9 to 11 percent. Seven percent of school expenditures in 2015–16 were for supplies, ranging from books to heating oil. The percentage of current expenditures for supplies decreased about 1 percentage point from 2000–01 to 2015–16. Tuition and other expenditures accounted for two percent of current expenditures in both 2000–01 and 2015–16.

Endnotes:

¹ Expenditures in this indicator are adjusted for inflation using the Consumer Price Index, or CPI. For this indicator, the CPI is adjusted to a school-year basis. The CPI is prepared by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor.

Reference tables: *Digest of Education Statistics 2017*, table 105.30; *Digest of Education Statistics 2018*, tables 236.10, 236.55, and 236.60

Related indicators and resources: [Education Expenditures by Country](#); [Public School Revenue Sources](#)

Glossary: Capital outlay; Constant dollars; Consumer Price Index (CPI); Current expenditures (elementary/secondary); Elementary school; Expenditures per pupil; Expenditures, total; Interest on debt; Public school or institution; Salary; Secondary school