

Press Clippings 01/31/20

---The New York Times---01/31/2020

States Are Burying Damning Data About School Funding

You've heard about the funding disparities between school districts. The more hidden disparities within school districts are just as troubling.

By: Ary Amerikaner



A classroom in Haverhill, Mass. Credit... Tony Luong for The New York Times

Any debate about fairness in school funding has to start with clear data, but it turns out that data can be very hard to find. Most people understand the inequity of school districts in wealthier areas having [more money](#) than those in less affluent communities. Addressing these disparities — across school districts — is important; but just as important, and less understood, is the unfair distribution of resources within school districts.

Part of the difficulty in tackling these in-district disparities is that — outside of a few spare calculations from nonprofits and the federal Education Department — parents, local advocates and even school board members are often in the dark about how spending breaks down across their local schools.

The Center for American Progress conducted a rare study of this issue and found that [at least 4.5 million students](#) from low-income backgrounds are in schools that receive roughly \$1,200 less per child each year than wealthier schools in the very same district.

In a single school, this shortfall can [be the difference between](#) adding 12 counselors, granting thousands of dollars in bonuses for dozens of teachers who transfer into hard-to-staff subjects and offering high quality art, music and extracurricular programming — or adding nothing at all. And these baseline funding numbers do not even include major advantages affluent schools have through well-funded P.T.A.s, parental social capital and connections with colleges and universities.

Far too often, districts use a one-size-fits-all approach, instead of spending according to student need. So higher-need schools must rely on roughly [the same](#) funding as lower-need schools in the tonier parts of the same district.

This approach to budgeting contradicts research and common sense: [Studies from both Rutgers University and Syracuse University have indicated](#) that schools with a high percentage of students from low-income households need two to three times more money than other schools to address those students' greater challenges: limited

homework time due to work and babysitting responsibilities; lack of internet access and tutoring; unmet health or vision needs; and unsafe or unstable housing, to name a few.

Good news is coming this year, as a new federal reporting requirement, signed into law late in the Obama administration, comes into effect, mandating all states to publicly report how much each school spends per pupil. The idea, which gained conservative support, was to make these often murky budgeting decisions transparent and prompt local conversations about how school boards and superintendents can better allocate resources.

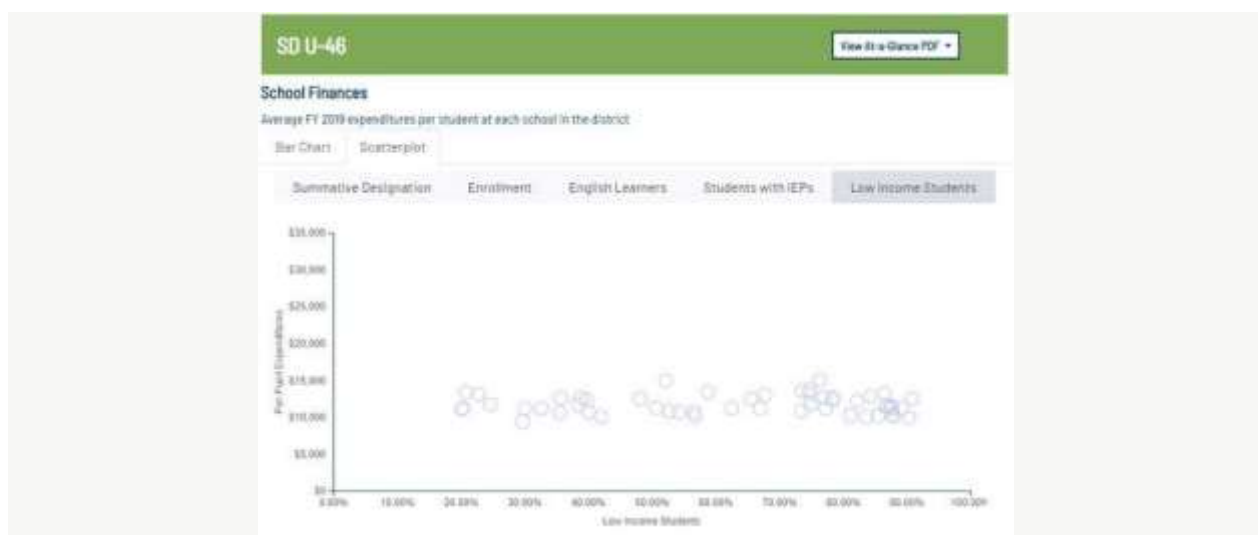
States are required to report this data by this summer. Only about [half](#) of them have released the reports so far. In most of those states, school boards and superintendents aren't yet feeling any pressure to make changes, and the data sets aren't prompting many local news stories. That's not because people don't care. It's because the state education departments that create the funding reports aren't presenting these troubling patterns in a legible way.

Just finding these reports, many of which have been buried several clicks inside a state's website, is challenging. As one local reporter in Alabama [said](#), "comparing schools using the 1,300-plus-page document the state department posted is difficult." It's not unlike trying to digest a balance sheet for a Fortune 500 company.

There are a few state websites adorned with the bells and whistles of appealing graphics. But these visuals still aren't answering the basic, critical question about in-district school funding in relation to student body needs.

We are in the midst of a major missed opportunity. All 50 states — particularly the progressive ones that have talked a big game about recommitting to public schools — should think of this as more than a compliance exercise: It's [an opportunity](#) to prompt new, meaningful debates about educational equity.

Unfortunately, only one of the states reporting so far — [Illinois](#) — is actually harnessing that potential. Its education department has reported in-district spending that makes comparing funding in higher-need schools versus funding in lower-need schools relatively easy.



School district U-46 is spending roughly the same amount per student in its schools instead of allocating spending according to student need. Credit...Illinois Report Card, Illinois State Board of Education (2018-19 data)

Take, for example, **School District U-46** in the northwest suburbs of Chicago. In this district, where only 17 percent of the students from low-income families are [proficient or above on state tests](#) (compared with 45 percent of the students not from low-income families), you might expect that additional dollars are targeted toward the schools populated by those students from low-income families. Instead, the new government data shows schools in U-46 receive roughly the same range of funds regardless of how many students are living in poverty.

This flat approach is better than many districts' — at least it isn't dedicating less money to its highest-poverty schools. And U-46 is underfunded as a district [itself](#): It's harder to spend equitably when you don't have enough to go around in the first place. Still, if students living in poverty are less than half as likely to be proficient in reading and math, then it seems clear that local leaders should be committing substantially more resources to schools with 90 percent low-income students than those with 20 percent.

Many well-intentioned school board members and district leaders believe that they already allocate resources according to student need. For example, in a district that provides one teacher for every 25 elementary school students, it's not uncommon to count students from low-income families or English learners as, say, 1.2 students.

The resulting perception is that higher-need schools are indeed getting much more funding. But high-need schools often rely on a revolving crew of underpaid, novice teachers still learning their craft, and salaries are directly linked to experience. So although a given high-need school might get a few additional staff positions (as a result of the 1.2 calculation), high-poverty schools still often end up spending roughly the same or less than affluent schools because their inexperienced teachers get lower pay.

But at least Illinois makes it possible to see such on-the-ground realities. The rest of the states can follow Illinois's lead and provide a clear look into funding patterns within districts. Then, when a district's spending distribution is shown to be flat, the district should consider ditching the one-size-fits-all approach and replacing it with a progressive spending plan that allocates resources according to student need.

District leaders might also consider supporting [mentoring or "residency" programs](#) for new teachers, creating additional paid planning time, or paying strong teachers more to work in high-need schools and to coach new instructors there.

Arguments over the precise solutions in kindergarten-through-12th-grade education are rightfully endless. But who can argue against knowing as much as we can about the realities on the ground?

Cities and towns should be able to use this new data to clearly see if their values are reflected in their school districts' budgetary priorities. If not, conversations about how to best help all children in the community can reset — with the facts — and begin anew.

---The Courier-News---01/31/2020

Celebrating black history

Festival includes music, speaker and will recognize scholarship winners

By: Rafael Guerrero



Elgin band Accidentally on Purpose performs at the 2019 Black History Family Festival at Gail Borden Public Library. The festival celebrates its 15th year this Saturday at the Elgin library.

The annual Black History Family Festival at Gail Borden Public Library celebrates 15 years this Saturday.

The three-hour festival will feature musical performances, the recognition of six **School District U-46** students winning \$500 scholarships, and a keynote address from local motivational speaker Brittany Barber.

“We’re fortunate in our community that we have these opportunities to learn, to celebrate, to gather,” Danielle Henson, the library’s Community Collaboration Coordinator, said Thursday. “I don’t think every community does this. People should come out and celebrate with us.”

The event attracts between 2,000 and 5,000 people annually, Henson said. Weather can play a factor in the attendance, she said. Last year’s festival came just as record-breaking cold caused pipes to burst in the library’s KidSpace area. Henson said the 2019 festival almost didn’t happen but library officials and their facilities employees worked to make it possible.

The festival was founded by former Elgin Community College trustee and U-46 educator Phyllis Folarin in 2006 in collaboration with the Gail Borden Public Library. According to the festival’s history, the festival’s origins were to provide programming highlighting literary and other accomplishments of African Americans.

In the 15 years, the festival’s demographics shifted, Henson said. More recent festivals have attracted more teenage visitors, as well as a more diverse crowd.

Saturday’s festival will feature performances from local African American artists Mike Lo, TJ Ptak and R&B, Jazz, Hip-Hop and Rap band Accidentally On Purpose.

Motivational Speaker Brittany Barber will give the keynote address Saturday. Barber won the 2019 Martin Luther King Jr. Humanitarian Award from the City of Elgin. In the festival’s announcement, library officials described her presentations as “engaging” and “challenging” for women, students, and others.

“She’s very enthusiastic and a champion for young people,” Henson said.

Six U-46 high school students will be recognized, receive \$500 scholarships, and identified as Future African American Leaders at Saturday’s festivities. They include Jordan Snyder, of Bartlett High School; Martena Mendel-Duckins, of Larkin High School; Arianna Ramos, of South Elgin High School; Alayzia Hairston-El, of Streamwood High School; Jasmine Jacobson, of Elgin High School; and Eryonna Wallace, of the Dream Academy.

As part of the recognition, the students will participate in a panel discussion to talk about their sources of inspiration and hope. According to the festival news release, the students are chosen by their high school principals based on demonstrating good citizenship, academics, extracurricular and community activities, and post-high school plans.

“Gail Borden Library is honored to host the festival, which recognizes the accomplishments of these students,” library board President Jean Bednar said in a written statement. “The festival celebrates the present but also looks to the future when encouraging young people.”

Younger children can work on crafts in the KidSpace area of the library, Henson said. There will be raffle drawings for a Kindle Fire Tablet, Elgin Symphony Orchestra tickets, a dining gift card and a popcorn basket from Mama Lee’s Popcorn. Henson said Elgin-based Mama Lee’s Popcorn will have a special popcorn mix for attendees to take home.

The Black History Family Festival is free to visitors and runs from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at Gail Borden, 270 N. Grove Ave.

The festival is run by Elgin-based nonprofit Black History Family Festival. Sponsors include the City of Elgin, ECC, Elgin Symphony Orchestra, Gail Borden Public Library, The Links Inc., School District U-46, and the Lake Shore Builders Restoration.

10 questions with ...

Teaching close to home

By: Rafael Guerrero



Julie Isham, a first grade teacher at [Willard Elementary School](#) in South Elgin, says she loves to camp and might one day become a librarian when her teaching career is over.

“10 Questions with...” is a Courier-News feature in which reporter Rafael Guerrero interviews someone in the Elgin area, we think you should know and finds out a little more about what makes them who they are.

Julie Isham

Hometown: Geneva

Lives in: South Elgin

Job: First grade teacher, **Willard Elementary School** in South Elgin; she has taught in U-46 schools since 1997

Education: Graduate of Geneva High School and Western Illinois University

Family: Married with three children, ages 11, 22 and 26

What is something people don't know about you?

I actually live three blocks from (the school where I work). My daughter goes to school here. All my kids went to school here. I'm a neighborhood teacher.

I also have lots of animals in my house — too many. We have two Great Danes, a mutt, two chinchillas, a snake, a rabbit, lots of fish. If somebody wants a snake, they can have mine because he needs to go away!

Do you ever see former students out in the community?

I had this one boy when I taught kindergarten. I see him at Panda Express. Every time I go in, he has nothing but smiles and gives me an employee discount. I appreciate that he has fond memories of me.

There's a couple of other students that found me through Facebook or somewhere else. I've also been invited to some former students' high school graduation parties.

One thing that is different between teaching first grade and fifth grade is people tend to forget their lower grade teachers. When you think of your favorite teachers, they were probably fifth (grade), sixth (grade), middle school, high school teachers because they're the most current ones, the ones that affect your life the most.

I remember all of my teachers, but the memories that I have are of my more recent ones.

But because I'm in the area, I see so many of my former kids more often than I would if I didn't live here. There's more of a connection.

As a child, what did you want to be grew up?

I didn't want to be a teacher. I wanted to be a nurse. I didn't know what I wanted to be until I went into college.

How did you ultimately choose teaching?

It was my mom. She was a first grade teacher. She taught at the school I went to. Just like my daughter does, I had to go to her classroom before school, after school. I was here all the time, and I hated it. That was one thing I said to myself, "I don't want to be a teacher."

But then when I went to college and came home for breaks, my mom would sort of drag me back to the school. "Can you help me do this?"

I don't know what it was but there was something else that made me realize this was it. When I was old enough to appreciate it, I was in her classroom all the time, any time I had the opportunity. I realized (teaching) was what I needed to do.

Any fears/phobias?

My greatest fear is failure, not being good enough. Working with little kids, that sense of needing to be good enough is pretty strong. If I don't do my best job, it will affect them.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I'm nearing the end of my career. I feel like I have nine years to go.

My goal ultimately is to get a second master's degree in library science so when I retire I can still work with little kids and have a quiet job. I would love to work in a library.

Favorite hobbies?

We have a camper so I love to go camping. We do a lot of local camping.

What is one place you'd like to camp that you haven't already been to?

I would like to go anywhere with mountains. Anytime I can get to the mountains, those are my choice destinations. In retirement, when that happens, that's where I would like to go. Somewhere west with a view.

Do you have a favorite mountain/mountain ranges?

I'd say Glacier National Park is my favorite mountain range I've seen in the U.S. because it looks very European.

What TV shows are you watching?

I love to binge watch. I love Netflix.

I'm ashamed to say I watch reality TV. I watch "Ink Master."

I don't even have a tattoo, I've no desire to have a tattoo. But I'm fascinated with the art of tattoos!

Hundreds attend service for Elgin veteran whose body was unclaimed: ‘No one should have to die alone’

By: Rafael Guerrero



Veteran's funeral

Active and retired members of the armed forces carry the casket of Vietnam veteran John James Murphy to the hearse following funeral services for him Jan. 29, 2020, at Symonds-Madison Funeral Home in Elgin. (Stacey Wescott/Chicago Tribune)

Wendy Gross waited outside the Symonds-Madison Funeral Home in downtown Elgin Wednesday to pay her respects to a man she did not know.

In fact, most of the 400 to 500 people who gathered for the funeral service did not know John James Murphy.

“For me, it was a no-brainer. No one should have to die alone,” said Gross, of West Dundee.

Murphy, 71, lived in Elgin and was a U.S. Air Force veteran. When his body went unclaimed by family or loved ones, the funeral home owners decided they would hold a service fitting of a military vet regardless.

“Many of you have come for a funeral for an unclaimed veteran,” the Rev. Tim Perry told those gathered. “What we would like for you to think about is this man is no longer unclaimed — he is ours.”

Murphy died Dec. 18 at Presence St. Joseph Hospital in Elgin. According to his obituary, he lived at Elgin’s River View Rehab Center, where he was president of the center’s resident council committee.



Vietnam veteran John James Murphy, whose funeral was Jan. 29, 2020, at Symonds-Madison Funeral Home in Elgin. (Symonds-Madison Funeral Home)

“Friends at the rehab center will remember him as a very friendly and cordial man who enjoyed helping others. He had a wonderful sense of humor and was always making jokes,” his obituary read. “He enjoyed spending his free time reading, listening to music, going outside, keeping up with the news, watching TV and movies.”

The Chicago native had worked as a Dominick’s grocery store manager and as a welder.

Murphy was an Air Force jet engine mechanic from 1966 to 1969, his obituary said. A Vietnam veteran, he earned several honors, including the National Defense Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, Presidential Unit Citation and Vietnam Service Medal.

The obituary said it’s believed Murphy had a brother, two sisters, one child and grandchildren, but no one had claimed him as of Wednesday.

Daniel Symonds, an Army veteran who owns the funeral home with his wife, Joy, said they’d held services for other unclaimed vets in the past but never made it publicly known. This time they decided to post it on social media pages in the hope that people might come out to honor him and possibly contact relatives who may not have heard of Murphy’s death.

The response was “overwhelming,” Symonds said. He received more calls Tuesday than on any other day in the funeral home’s history, with some coming from other states, he said.

“It’s just lots of people who wanted to do something,” he said. “Lots of people who never knew him but they wanted to participate or provide something.”

The Symonds said they are not taking any donations because they applied to receive \$3,200 in government assistance to pay for the service, which included bagpipes, a funeral car procession and the playing of taps.

Whether they’d received funding or not, Daniel Symonds said they knew “this needed to be done.” And sometimes there can be a happy ending of sorts, such as when a daughter contacted them after a similar funeral for another unclaimed veteran, he said.

“Even though she was estranged from her father, she appreciated the gesture,” Symonds said. “She got his flag from us, and that meant something to her.”



Elgin-area law enforcement agencies and others lead a procession for veteran John James Murphy out of the Symonds-Madison Funeral Home in Elgin. The funeral home did not have anyone claim Murphy. Large turnout for Murphy late Wednesday morning

Elgin resident Doris Parker, a **School District U-46** bus driver, was among those who attended the service. She waved a flag outside the funeral home as the motorcade passed by to take Murphy's body to the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood.

"I love you John James Murphy, my brother," she shouted as the motorcade departed. Elgin police officers and firefighters led the funeral procession out of Elgin and the Kane County sheriff's office took over on Interstate 90.

Steven Holt, a commander for AmVets Post 103 in Aurora, stopped briefly at Murphy's service before heading to East Aurora High School, his alma mater, where a service for U.S. Army Spc. Miguel Villalon was being held in the afternoon. Villalon, of Aurora, was killed in Afghanistan on Jan. 11.

"I will do what I can to recognize a veteran," said Holt, of Aurora, a noncombat Army veteran of the Vietnam War.

SPORTS

---Daily Herald---01/31/2020

Bartlett rolls by Larkin behind Hare's 34

By: Allen Oshinski

Bartlett could feel the energy almost as soon as the Hawks took the floor against Larkin, and that energy translated into plenty of points on the scoreboard.

Mackenzie Hare scored 32 of her 34 points in the first half and Lexie Sinclair added 20 as the Hawks raced past the Royals, 65-38, in Upstate Eight action in Elgin.

"We came out strong and ready to go," Hare said. "We had way more energy than we had the last game, which was nice to come out with right away so we could get that lead right from the start and keep growing it."

Hare had 15 by the end of the first quarter, after which Bartlett led 30-10. She hit seven 3-pointers as the Hawks rolled to a 54-19 halftime lead.

"You can usually tell in warmups what you're hitting and what you're not," she said. "My teammates made great passes to me so that's nice too."

Bartlett forced turnovers on Larkin's first 4 possessions, leading to 6 quick points.

"Our energy was amazing, and we're basically unstoppable when we start out with that type of speed and energy in creating the type of havoc that we created," said Hawks coach Joe Eirich. "Any time you're up by 20 in the first quarter, that definitely helps you set the tone for the rest of the game."

Danielle Hedeem had 5 rebounds and 5 assists to go along with 4 points for Bartlett (20-8, 14-1).

Ashley Miller scored 7 points for Larkin. Jamylin DeLeon, Candace Newman and Brianna Young added 6 apiece for the Royals.

Led by Miller with 8 rebounds, Larkin dominated the backboards, 46-23. Newman and Young grabbed 7 apiece. But 34 turnovers prevented the Royals from taking advantage of the extra possessions.

Bartlett led 18-4. Larkin made a mini-run with baskets by DeLeon and Aaliyah Dixon. But then Hare completed a 4-point play. A steal by Sinclair led to her 3-pointer, and Hedeem added 2 free throws for a 27-8 lead.

Hare nailed 3-pointers to close the first quarter scoring and start the second. Later in the period, she completed a personal 8-0 run that left the Hawks up 48-12.