



Analytics

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RE: What Good is Spending if the Pupil is Forgotten?

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Mr. Ebbs (not his real name) is a middle school English teacher and this year, like others, he and his students are frustrated. They have too few dictionaries and those they do have are at least twenty years old; pages are marked with obscene words or pictures and whole sections are missing. His classroom does not have a computer, walls need paint, students' desks are in poor condition and a 2 x 4 supports one corner of his old metal desk. Hallways and the outside of the school, however, are well-kept.

It is difficult to understand how a classroom can be in such a poor state of repair and ill equipped when Delaware spends \$433,000 per classroom of 25 pupils at an average cost of \$17,329 per pupil which includes instructional costs, DOE expense and capital improvements. Total teacher compensation including benefits averages \$82,000 per year. So how is the \$351,000 that is left each year spent?

Transparency of the education system is necessary for all involved public officials both elected, appointed and employees. It allows citizens to determine how well they are being served by those who pay their salaries and benefits. Transparent education should give families, teachers and taxpayers' access and ability to analyze data and encourage broad participation in education governance; provide insight into how efficient the system is being managed to achieve student outcomes; and, hold the system accountable for performance.

The Delaware State website does provide student performance and financial data but little detail; is not easy to maneuver; does not provide capability to download raw data; only provides a picture of a point in time not over time; and in general categories without significant segmentation, chart of accounts or a clear statement of what funds are included. All of which means it is difficult to analyze and understand how well the system works. A good example is something as simple as class size. The State reports an average of 15 pupils. However, even a casual review of data and teachers' reports show the actual class size is closer to 25 students.

What we do know is that over the past few years performance has moved sideways, not up, and spending continues to be one of the highest in the country. The data continues to show mediocre literacy and high dropout, crime and unemployment rates, especially for the most vulnerable in our society - the Black, Hispanic and low income communities.

Paraphrasing Vice President Biden who has a unique ability to plainly say the obvious, "Tell us it ain't so (fill in the politicians, appointed official or bureaucrats name)?"



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The truth is, good education is achieved one pupil at a time by teachers and parents who are committed to securing a bright future for the child. The political conversation in Delaware must include transparency and accountability.

Article 10, Section 1 of the Delaware State Constitution stipulates “The General Assembly shall provide for the establishment and maintenance of a general and efficient system of free public schools”. Transparency is basic to understanding how well the government is doing its job for our children.

This fall, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles have an opportunity to influence politicians at a time when they not only want but need our support.

Ask them:

- How the system spends the more than \$350,000 remaining for education after the teacher is paid?
- What programs enhance literacy and which ones do not? What he or she will do to focus spending to improve literacy?
- How is it that Delaware’s spending for public education is in the top 10 states and performance is fair to poor in academic, drop out, crime and other rates that measure effectiveness?

It is important to be informed both as a tax payer or parent and ask questions.

They are our children – If we don’t ask, who will?

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