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QuickPoint! – Underestimating Public School Spending

By Steve Buckstein

A [2017 national poll on education issues](#) found, among other things, that most Americans underestimate how much money is being spent to educate kids in their local public schools. College-educated whites, for example, underestimated school spending by a fourth, while less-educated whites underestimated spending by almost a third. Before finding out the real numbers, 55 percent of the more-educated group favored higher spending, while 46% of the less-educated did so.

But, when told the actual spending levels, support for higher spending dropped by 14% among the more-educated and by 12% among the less-educated.

While the poll didn't break down results by state, we know the big cry in Oregon is that we aren't funding schools adequately. In reality, we were [recently spending](#) \$14,827 per student in average daily attendance, compared to the national average of just \$13,900. We spend more than 30 other states.

When more Oregonians learn this surprising truth, their support for higher school spending may drop, hopefully to be replaced by support for [policies that might actually make a difference](#). One such policy is a universal Education Savings Account program that offers a portion of current school spending to families interested in choosing between their local public schools, private, religious, online, and home schools. Such choices can save tax dollars and improve educational outcomes. Win, win.

Steve Buckstein is Senior Policy Analyst and Founder of Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy research organization.

