

\$9.9 billion

That is how much South Carolina’s school districts are collectively receiving this school year.
Here’s how that breaks down:



Of the \$4.5 billion from the state

The state pays more than \$1 billion to districts to make up for various laws that cut property taxes on homes and businesses. Legislators have no ability to divert that money to other spending.



26%

That money makes up 26 percent of total state payments to districts.



The other sources

1

1977 Education Finance Act

38%

2

Direct grants
(Mostly for employee benefits)

23%

3

1984 Education Improvement Act

12%

4

Lottery ticket profits

1%

The 1977 law remains a primary source of state money. Its “base student cost,” which mainly funds salaries, is supposed to provide for a basic education, as defined then. By law, that per-student cost must be adjusted for inflation annually.

Except it hasn’t been fully funded since 2008.

The base student cost for the 2018-19 school year is \$2,485 per pupil.

Even though economists have calculated that it should be \$3,018/student.

That’s a loss of \$533 per pupil.

How the money is distributed through the 1977 Education Finance Act (EFA)

The law was designed to equalize spending between poor and rich districts – on education basics, anyway – by providing a greater share to areas that lack the industry and high home values to raise money locally. On average, the state is supposed to cover 70 percent of those basic costs, while 30 percent is on districts to raise through local taxes. But the actual percentages depend on a district’s property wealth. How much the state covers ranges between 16 percent and 92 percent, wealthiest to poorest.



Areas with less property



More funding through the EFA

Areas with more property



Less funding through the EFA



And there’s more

Students who cost more to educate come with more money, called “weighting.” For example, per-pupil spending rises by:



15 percent for students in gifted and talented programs



20 percent for students living in poverty



90 percent for students with speech impairments



157 percent for students with autism

Here’s how a district’s share through the EFA is calculated



A district’s percentage of property values statewide



Base student cost



Weighted student amount