State Policy on Education

When it comes to the educational system, everyone wants what is best for their children. Parents and guardians have big dreams for their children and in some cases require a well thought out plan for every aspect of a child’s school career. This can be an issue due to trends in school systems. Many school systems face insufficient funding within their schools due to educational rankings. Parents flock to the better-rated schools to provide the best education for their children. Understandably so, enrollment along with other factors determines the funding a school gets and it creates an endless cycle of schools not receiving the right amount of funds to keep them going. While unconventional, the approach to combat poor funding in schools is to use the method of student-based budgeting. This method works by having students be the source of funding. Students can take their funding to their school of choice and be used for the needs of the school to benefit the students. By doing this method, school funding can be allocated where it is needed and provide better learning environments for the students to be successful.

To understand this method, it is important to go back to the roots of how schools are funding initially. Schools are funded on three different levels: the federal, state, and local levels. Most of the funding comes from the local level through property taxes.[[1]](#footnote-0) This can vary from state to state due to the influx of people and the disparities between urban and rural areas. In the example provided by Biddle and Berliner, it states, “...that the typical student attending a public school in New Jersey was provided more than *twice* the fiscal resources allocated to his or her counterpart in Utah.”[[2]](#footnote-1) This is due to the amount of funding the states received. New Jersey received more public school funding on the local level than Utah. This shows that our system is not efficient in providing the best education for all students in every state of the United States. This usually due to the taxable income of different areas. New Jersey is mostly an urban state compared to Utah, which is mostly rural. In Grey’s work it shows the disparities between urban and rural communities and how it affects the education systems around them. Through millage, certain communities have more valuable assets that can be taxed more. In the eyes of local and state taxes, Some structures can be taxed more than others.[[3]](#footnote-2) This shows that some areas cannot afford to fund school systems due to the amount of taxable structures. From this, the states intervene to make up for some funding disparities. However, there is so much that states can do to assist school systems. State assistance is focused through test scores and student success. This puts students at a disadvantage in lower performing schools. By changing the way schools are funded, students get the funds they need to be successful and not have to worry about other students to determine their success.

When it comes to student based budgeting, there can be some critiques on the way it functions. A big critique is the added role put on principals to make sure things go according to plan. A fraction of power will have to be given to principals to ensure the success of this system, but districts worry that the power will go to their heads.[[4]](#footnote-3) While this could be the case, everyone should be held accountable for their actions, principals especially for this new position. Just like the state regulates funding pending on the scores of students, this can be changed for the system to regulate based on where the funding goes and if the schools are following protocol. If the principal is not doing his job correctly, he should be held accountable. With great power comes great responsibility.

Another criticism is the effectiveness of the student-based budgeting. In a pilot program to establish the effectiveness of this program showed that it did not go according to plan. In the article written by Christian Barnard, the issue with this pilot was the over regulation of the schools. From what was presented in this trial, the DOE did not want to relinquish some of their power to ensure this system functioned.[[5]](#footnote-4) The DOE, in the eyes of this trial, made the process difficult to implement. Why the DOE was so adamant on making this process difficult makes you wonder what their worry was. While it may seem biased in this article, it does raise questions on why this program was over regulated. To combat this issue is to see it at the source. For this system to work, the way things have been done in the past have to change.

As someone who has experienced the current educational system, it can be clear that some things need to change. Student-based budgeting can ensure that the students get the proper education they deserve from any school they attend. Schools should be more accountable along with our current system. From seeing both sides of this system, it does not hurt to try to see if this is something that can be done. If everyone plays along, our future generation of children can have hope in their education to ensure that they are successful. While that being said, if the system is not working for everyone, then it needs to be changed.

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2. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. Virginia Gray, Russell L. Hanson, and Thad Kousser. *Politics in the American States:*

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4. “Opportunities and Challenges of Student-Based Budgeting.” Education Resource Strategies,

   September 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. Christian Barnard, “Examining What Went Wrong With the Student-Based Budgeting Pilot

   Program.” Reason Foundation, December 7, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)