



Ed Co Memo, Volume 3

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RE: **POP QUIZ!**

As students statewide sharpen their no. 2s and begin the annual bubble filling and essay writing on academic assessments to measure their progress, we thought Sacramento legislators and political reporters alike could share in the experience with a special “pop quiz” on education funding issues.

Since much misinformation has been spread recently about the real facts and figures on school funding, be careful – while there are no “trick questions,” there are plenty of wrong answers.

We hope you “ace” the pop quiz, but if you’d like to discuss your grade or your answers, please contact: **Robin Swanson at (916) 204-6890.**

1) The Education Coalition reports that per pupil spending in California is \$7,081, while the governor says it is \$11,541. Which number accurately reflects direct spending in our schools?

- A) \$7,081
- B) \$11,541

2) True or False: The education funding cuts are a “mere 1.9 percent,” as some legislators and the governor have reported.

- A) True
- B) False

3) A \$4.8 billion cut to our schools is equivalent to:

- A) Cutting every classroom by \$24,000
- B) Laying off 107,000 teachers or 137,000 custodians, bus drivers, food service workers, maintenance personnel and other essential school support professionals
- C) Increasing class sizes by more than one-third
- D) Eliminating all music, art and career technical education programs statewide with room to cut even more
- E) Each of the above.

4) What is California’s ranking on per-pupil spending?

- A) First in the nation
- B) 46th out of 50 states
- C) 25th out of 50 states

ANSWER KEY:

Question #1) Correct Answer: A) \$7081

The Education Coalition uses the per pupil figures provided by *Education Week's* 2008 "Quality Counts Survey," that bases its calculation on the actual amount of money spent on a student in the classroom, showing that California spends \$1,900 less than the National Average.

In addition, the *Education Week* numbers account for regional cost-of-living differences, whereas the governor's numbers do not.

The governor's estimates are higher because he lumps in additional federal and state funding.

The governor counts dollars that are spent at the state level and are never received by districts, including the state debt service on school facilities bonds. In addition, not all locally-received dollars are available for spending on K-12 education. These include funds for adult education and preschool programs. While the governor counts these among dollars spent on public education, he does not use adult education or preschool enrollment for computing the per pupil amount, further distorting his numbers.

Question #2) Correct Answer: FALSE!

When he released his budget, the governor announced across-the-board cuts of 10 percent to all programs, and unfortunately, his education budget does just that.

In fact, even the Legislative Analyst's Office reported that under the governor's proposal, schools would receive: "compared to a workload budget: \$4.8 billion less than full funding for current programs plus a 4.9 percent cost-of-living adjustment (COLA)," or the equivalent of a 10.9 percent cut.

The governor hasn't released any other proposals since then.

The thousands of parents and educators who have opposed these budget cuts know that while the 1.9-2.7 percent cuts apply to "adjusted" revenue limits, the governor is also proposing an additional 6.5 percent cut for categorical programs, including cutting critical programs like special education, class-size reduction, school counseling, gifted and talented education programs and instructional materials, just to mention a few.

In addition, by eliminating a cost-of-living adjustment, there is no way for school districts to keep up with students' basic needs. Most Californians understand that as the price of gas increases along with health care costs and other basic daily needs, the cost of operating schools increases.

The more than 20,000 pink slips that have already been issued from struggling school districts to educators and school employees statewide is proof positive that the governor's proposal decimates funding for local schools.

Our schools are already woefully underfunded – any further cuts to schools directly impact students. There's simply no way around it.

Question #3) Correct Answer: E) Each of the Above!

Question #4) Correct Answer: B) 46th out of 50 states.

While California's students deserve answer "A) first in the nation," we continue to shortchange their future by chronically underfunding education in California. According to the 2008 *Education Week* "Quality Counts Survey," California ranks 46th out of 50 states in per-pupil spending. That's down from 43rd in the nation just two years ago, bringing us to an abysmal \$1,900 less per student than the National Average.

In addition, the "Getting Down to Facts" studies from Stanford University say California needs to spend 40 percent more in order to help all students reach the high standards we have set for them.

And while some are using a recent report from the U.S. Census Bureau to attempt to contradict these numbers, they are simply comparing apples to oranges. The Census Bureau numbers show that California still spends significantly less per student than the national average, even though their figures on "student spending" are inflated to include funds from outside the state that never make it into the classroom, and don't adjust for cost-of-living differences.