

# California School Finance Center

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A how-to guide on using  
this useful online resource



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## About

The California School Finance Center database compiles publicly available information from a dozen California Department of Education sources to present the most complete picture possible of the state's public school funding. The database, designed to increase transparency, is a tool for school districts to become more efficient in improving student academic achievement by making it easy for them to identify top performers and by providing the public with accurate comparisons of revenue and achievement.

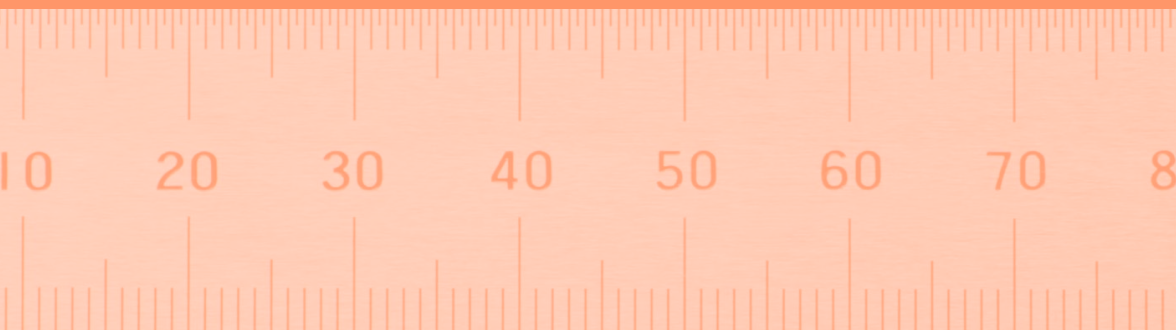
The California School Finance Center database is a joint project of the Pacific Research Institute and the Educational Results Partnership with funding and support from California Business for Education Excellence (CBEE)—a non-profit organization whose mission is to raise student academic achievement and close the achievement gap. The database is updated annually as new financial data becomes available.

### The database provides:

- ✂ Total and per-pupil revenue for more than 900 public school districts.\*
- ✂ Total and per-pupil revenue for more than 280 charter schools.
- ✂ Total and per-pupil revenue for California's 58 County Offices of Education.
- ✂ Easy-to-read data for student achievement, demographic census, and staff salaries.
- ✂ A Return on Investment (ROI) feature that quantifies the relationship between revenue and student achievement.\*\*
- ✂ Peer comparison charts to determine what is working in districts and charter schools similar in size, per-pupil revenue amount, and student population.

\* Per-pupil revenue is derived by dividing total revenue by the districts average daily attendance (ADA)

\*\* Feature created by Education Results Partnership (ERP)



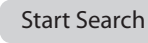
## How to Navigate the Database:

Access the California School Finance Center homepage at <http://www.schoolfinancecenter.org>

### Search Individual School Districts or Charter Schools

Once you have accessed the homepage, you can begin by searching for individual school districts, charter schools, or county offices of education using one of five search methods:

- 1) School district name or charter school name
- 2) City
- 3) Zip code
- 4) County
- 5) Legislative district

Once you have entered your search parameters, click  which will redirect you to your search results page.

The results page will include a list of school districts, charter schools, and county offices of education within your search parameters along with basic information to help guide your selection:

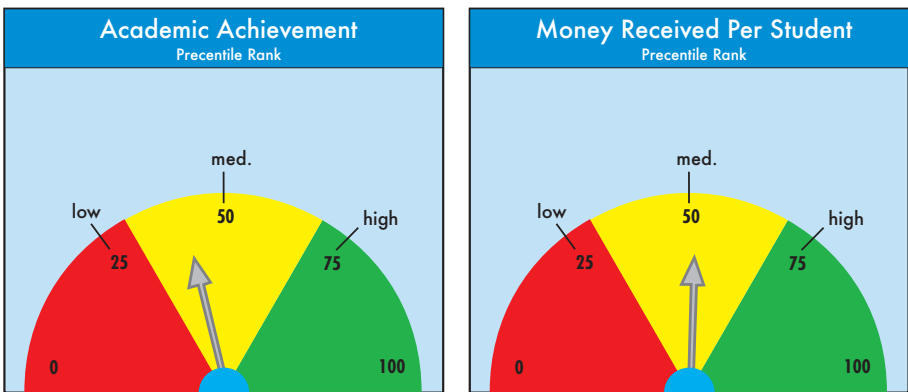
- 1) Type of school organization
- 2) Phone number
- 3) County
- 4) Number of enrolled students
- 5) Number of schools in the district

Once you have found the result you are looking for, click on its blue link. (If your desired result does not show up, you can select the homepage button on the navigation bar at the top of the screen to adjust your search. For best result use one to two words of a school district only. School-level data is not available. While all data is from the California Department of Education, some districts do not have reported data.



Once you have selected a school district, you will be directed to the Return on Investment (ROI) page which includes information on:

- ✂ District type
- ✂ Enrollment
- ✂ Average Daily Attendance (ADA)
- ✂ Academic Achievement - Based on the district's average of students scoring at grade level in math and English/language arts according to the California Standards Test.
- ✂ Meter display of academic achievement percentile ranking.
- ✂ Meter display of money received per student percentile ranking.



### What does this mean?

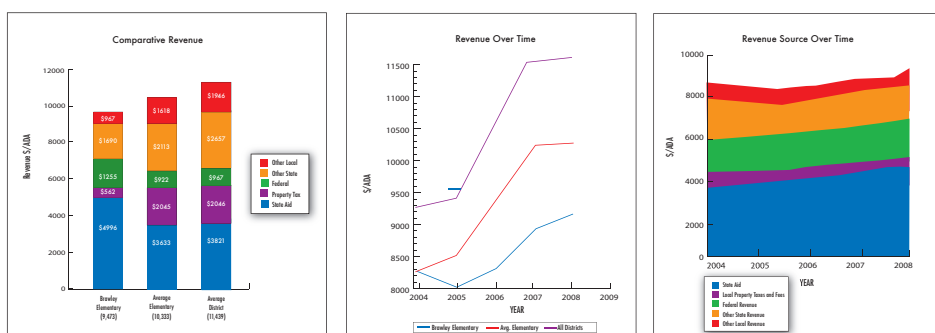
- ✂ The concept of "Return on Investment" (ROI) is commonly used to describe the ratio of the revenue received for a given investment or project to the revenue or benefits delivered. As applied here it attempts to quantify the relationship between a school district's revenue and its history of increases in student achievement.
- ✂ The "Academic Achievement - Percentile Rank" ranks the district's overall student achievement as an average of English language arts and mathematics. Higher numbers represent districts having greater success in raising student achievement.
- ✂ The "Money Received Per Student - Percentile Rank" ranks the school district revenue per Average Daily Attendance (ADA). Higher numbers represent districts receiving higher amounts of per-student funding and conversely, low numbers represent districts receiving lesser amounts of per-student funding.
- ✂ The combination of these two measures enables you to compare the impact the district is having on student academic achievement and the amount of revenue received per attending student.

## Use the navigation bar for more detailed data

return on investment overview \$ per student achievement staff census show all

**Overview:** provides a logistical overview of district information including address, contact information, state senate district, state assembly district, enrollment, and student demographics.

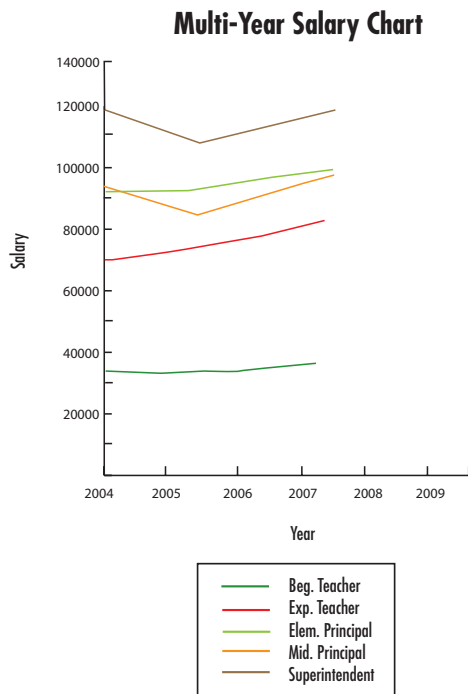
**\$ Per Student:** provides data on the type of revenue received and total revenue received from 2003-04 school year to 2007-08 school year. Each revenue type is linked to a separate page that has a prior-year comparison for that revenue source. The three graphs on the right of the page show (1) Comparative Revenue between the local school districts, similar districts, and California's statewide district average, (2) Revenue Over Time, and (3) Revenue Source Over Time.



**Achievement:** Measures student achievement from federal and state data sources.

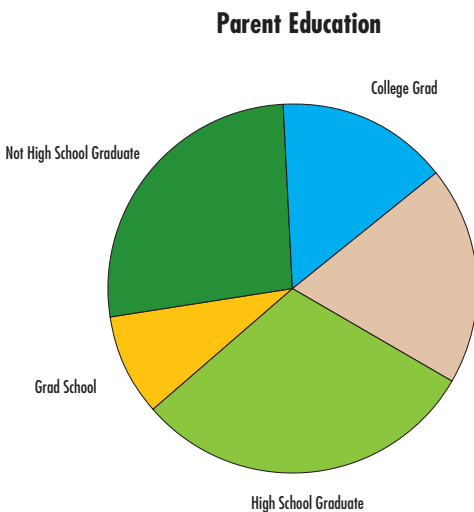
- 1) Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)** - Is the federal measurement of student achievement under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). AYP is a combination score using state test results to look at student growth and grade level proficiency. To achieve the goal of 100 percent proficiency by 2014, each district is given a target number. The first chart in on this page indicates if the school has met the target for all students. Data is also broken out into demographic subgroups. The check boxes located in the second column titled, "Include in Charts Below" can be selected and deselected in order to control which demographic subgroups appear in the graphs below. This allows you to see and compare which student subgroups are best meeting AYP standards.
- 2) Academic Performance Index (API)** - Is the state measure of student achievement. The API averages the state-wide standardized tests including: California Standards Tests (CST) and California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) to give an indicator of each school's academic performance. The chart gives the percentage of students performing at grade level or above. The API thermometer provides a visual for the number of students performing at grade-level overall. You can click on the thermometer image for a more detailed explanation of API scores. At the bottom of the page the chart breaks down API scores by student demographic subgroups from 2003-2008. Each district's goal is to reach a minimum API score of 800. If you click on the boxes under "Subgroup," an API calculator will pop up to display the number of years it will take for students to reach proficiency.

**Staff:** Presents the most recent data on staff salaries, the district or charter school's specific percent change over the previous year, the state's average percent change over the previous year, and the number of teaching days. Salary data is compared by position (including experience level) and the number of teaching days. A multi-year salary graph allows you to view salary trends over time.



**Census:** Provides general census data for the county where the school district is located including:

- 1) Ethnicity - measured by estimated population and percent of population.
- 2) Element - measuring median household income and median home value.
- 3) Parent education level.



Census data allows you to draw comparisons between student achievement and certain correlative indicators such as economics, ethnography, and home environment to determine if a given district or charter school is representative of the overall community.

**Show All:** Presents all previously outlined information for easier comparative analysis.



## More California School Finance Center Tools:

Peer-to-peer comparison: This feature allows you to evaluate school districts' performance and return on investment by district, region, and/or type. This is a valuable tool to identify schools producing higher student performance while using average-to-low revenue per-pupil amounts.

To create a peer-to-peer comparison, begin entering basic search parameters following the same steps for individual school district and charter school searches.

Next, narrow your search parameters by selecting:

1. Automatically or manually selected peers;
2. The number of peers to be compared; and
3. The type of institutions being compared  
(district-charter, charter-charter, or district-district)

### Tips for Finding Peers

- Use the search boxes or pull-downs on the left to find your school district or charter school.
- You can also use any of the boxes or pull-downs (with the exception of District or Charter Name) to limit the school districts or charter schools that will appear in the result. For best results use one to two words in the Name or City box.
- If you use the city, zip code, county or Legislative district boxes, those filters will also be applied to the resulting peers.
- The "Select Peers Automatically" function identifies similar schools or districts. Find details on how similar schools or districts are selected [here](#).
- The "Select Peers Manually" function allows you select up to 10 districts or charter schools to include in the report.

Once you have filled out your parameters, select the  button.

Register: You can register by selecting the "Register" button on the navigation bar at the top of the screen. If you register, you will be able to save your favorite districts or charter schools, so displaying their data is just a couple of clicks away. Registered users also receive email updates about new data and features as they become available.

Log In: You can log in by selecting the "Log In" button on the navigation bar at the top of the screen. Type in your user name and password and access all saved reports including peer-to-peer comparisons.

For questions or comments about the database, please use our contact form.



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## ABOUT US

### **Pacific Research Institute**

The mission of the Pacific Research Institute <<http://pacificresearch.org>> (PRI) is to champion freedom, opportunity, and personal responsibility for all individuals by advancing free-market policy solutions. In Education Studies our goal is to provide all students with access to a quality education.

### **California Business for Education Excellence**

The mission of California Business for Education Excellence <<http://cbee.org>> is to raise student academic achievement and close achievement gaps in California public schools by ensuring every student reaches a minimum of grade level proficiency.

### **Educational Results Partnership**

The non-profit organization Educational Results Partnership <<http://edresults.org>> provides a free on-line data and school improvement system called EdResults.org to California's public schools and communities.

### **Data Sources:**

The data used on this web site is retrieved from the California Department of Education web site <<http://cde.ca.gov>> <<http://cde.ca.gov>>. The site uses a variety of data releases including CDS, SACS, CBEDS, Language Census and APR (AYP/API).