

How are your tax dollars spent in Texas public schools?

Texas Public schools spent a total of \$54.4 billion in 2008–09 to educate 4.6 million students. Of this total, \$8.7 billion was spent on capital outlay, \$4.9 billion was related to debt service, and \$39.6 billion was spent on “basic educational costs.” The remaining expenditures represent payments to shared service arrangements, payments into Tax Increment Financing (TIF) arrangements, and the operating costs associated with building school facilities.

The State of Texas collects a substantial amount of data each year regarding how school districts spend tax dollars. Each year, all school districts must account for expenditures using codes indicating the object, function, and fund for an expenditure, allowing for the analysis of what is purchased, its purpose, and the source of revenue. Detailed employment records also are provided. The 2008–09 data indicate that public education remains a labor intensive operation: salaries and benefits accounted for 80 percent of basic educational costs. Contracted services represented an additional 9 percent, supplies and materials were 9 percent, and other operating costs represented 2 percent.

Instruction, by function, continues to account for the largest share of educational expenditures at 61.7 percent of basic educational costs. In total, Texas employed roughly 328,000 teachers and 62,000 educational aides in 2008–09. Also included here are the salaries and benefits costs of 5,100 librarians as well as the books and other materials that can be found in Texas school libraries. The cost of instructional materials and staff development also are included in this category as instructional costs.

District operations—including facilities maintenance and operations, transportation, food service, data processing, and security—account for the next largest share at 20.8 percent. Included in this category are the salaries and benefits costs of 120,000 full-time equivalent auxiliary staff coded to operations. Of these, 51,000 work maintaining Texas school buildings, 37,000 prepare and serve food for Texas schoolchildren, and 23,000 work transporting students to and from school and school-related events. Though these individuals do not work directly in Texas classrooms, they are an integral part of students’ educational experience.

Instructional support accounts for the next largest share of the public education budget at 14.6 percent. Texas employed 7,400 campus principals, 9,000 assistant principals, 10,900 school counselors, and 5,700 school nurses in 2008–09.

Central administration accounts for the smallest share of all funds expended at 2.9 percent. In all, there are 12,500 full-time equivalents funded within this function. Of those, 7,700 are auxiliary staff. Superintendents, associate superintendents, business managers, and human resource directors are all funded in this category. Also funded in this category are the cost of tax appraisal and collection, legal services, and audit and accounting services.

To provide a complete picture of the inputs that compose public education in Texas, the following chart tracks the breakdown of an educational dollar from the perspective of a Texas public school student. All figures are presented in terms of pennies on the total education dollar using basic educational costs from 2008–09 PEIMS actual financial data.

The typical student begins the school day long before the first bell with a bus ride to school—either because she lives too far to walk or because the district has determined that unsafe conditions warrant the provision of a safe ride. She also will ride the bus home.....	3¢
She arrives to find a building that is clean and well maintained	9¢
The building also is heated in the winter and cooled in the summer—and the lights work.....	3¢

Her parents know her school is made safer by district-supported **security staff**, and that if she is injured or becomes ill, she will be cared for by the **school nurse**.....2¢

She goes to class to find a **teacher** ready to begin instruction..... 49¢

While in class, she has access to an **instructional aide** who supports the teacher in delivering instruction and to district-purchased **instructional supplies**.....9¢

The teacher uses a **curriculum** that is aligned with state standards and that builds on information the student learned the year before. The teacher has been **trained** regarding Texas learning standards and effective instructional practices and has access to **instructional leadership** staff who provide support.....3¢

Midway through the day, she goes to the cafeteria for **lunch**..... 5¢

After lunch, she goes to the **library** to gather information for a research paper..... 2¢

After school, she visits the **guidance counselor** to talk about the process of applying to and paying for college. She is given information about student loan programs, how to prepare for the SAT, and what courses she will need to take in order to be prepared for postsecondary education.....4¢

Throughout the day, she benefits from the fact that the **school is well run**. Classes begin on time, disruptions are kept to a minimum, and staff members have access to the support they need to be effective.....5¢

She also benefits from the fact that her school has access to **district-level staff** who ensure that the checks to her teachers are written on time, that all of the schools are fully staffed, and that campuses have access to the support structures they need.....3¢

At the end of the school day, she rides the bus back home—unless, of course, she stays to participate in an **extracurricular activity**.....3¢