

Without Dollars or Sense

The Budget Crisis and California's School Funding

10.22.12

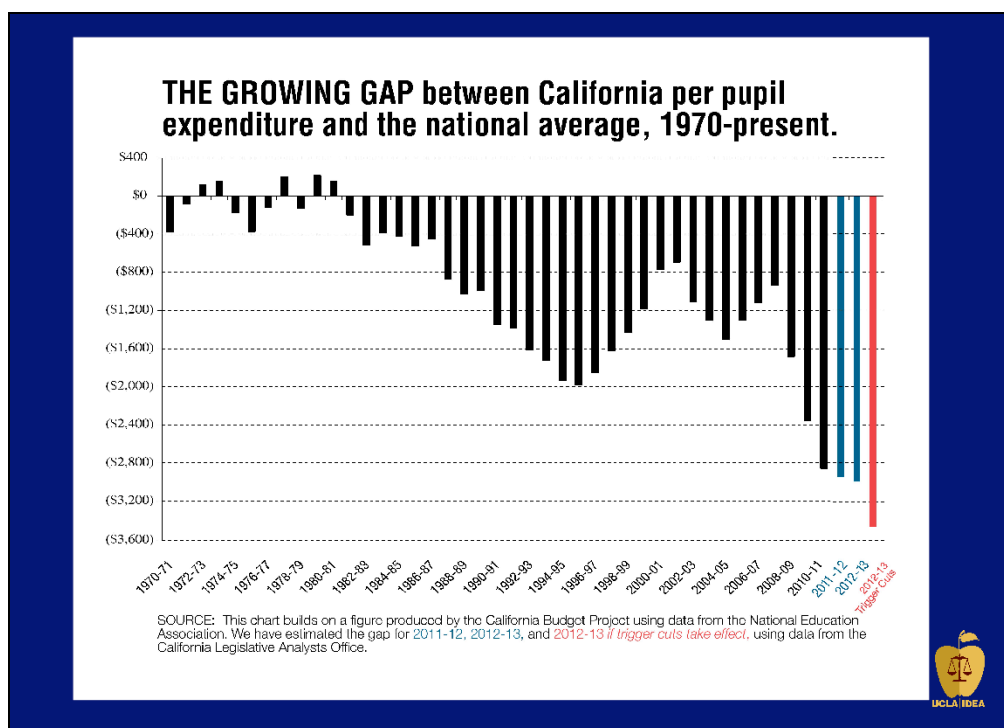


California's system of public education faces dire conditions today that are a product of long-term underinvestment as well as the fiscal crisis that began in 2008. This presentation highlights the most recent data available on California's school funding and school conditions and points to the consequences of underfunding amidst economic crisis.

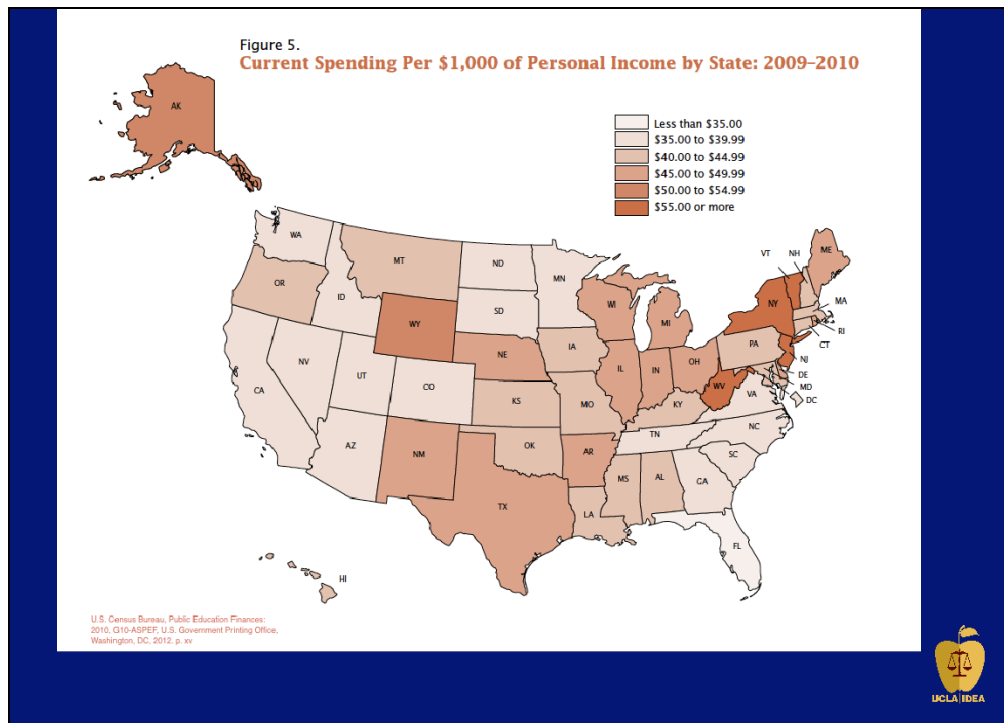
[We face] reduced appropriations at the time when the schools have increased responsibilities put upon them by increased number of pupils and other factors due to the economic collapse; ... closed schools, reduced school years, enlarged classes; failure to build and equip to keep up with increase in population and obsolescence of old equipment; the closing of kindergartens; elimination of manual training, art work, music, physical training, domestic arts; ... scores of thousands of graduates of normal schools and training colleges added to the unemployed; salaries cut and unpaid; night and continuation schools abandoned.



This quote comes from John Dewey's 1933 article, "Education and our Present Social Problems." There are striking similarities between the educational challenges during the Depression and those we face today. In a few minutes, I will describe education in our own hard times in more detail. But, I first want to note that the problems facing California public education did not emerge with the collapse of Lehman Brothers. California public education has been in decline, relative to the rest of the nation, for more than three decades, dating back to Proposition 13 in 1978.



This chart, which we adapted from the California Budget Project, offers a quick glance sense of how California education funding has fared relative to the national average since the early 1970s. In the 1970s, California's per pupil expenditures were at or near the national average. Soon after Proposition 13 took effect, California began to fall further and further behind other states. You will see that just before the Great Recession, California was beginning to close some of the funding gap. Indeed, in 2007 and 2008, there was a good deal of talk in Sacramento about developing a strategy to bring California to parity with the rest of the nation. A set of studies out of Stanford highlighted the need for more funding in order for California to realize its lofty educational goals. Looking forward to a broad and bold agenda, Governor Schwarzenegger announced plans to create a "year of education." And then, the recession hit and, with the refusal of Republican legislators to consider new taxes, the conversation shifted from distributing new revenues to managing decline. You can see that since 2008, California has fallen further behind the rest of the nation. The final red bar in this chart highlights the effects of the trigger cuts that would take back funds from districts this January if Proposition 30 is defeated.



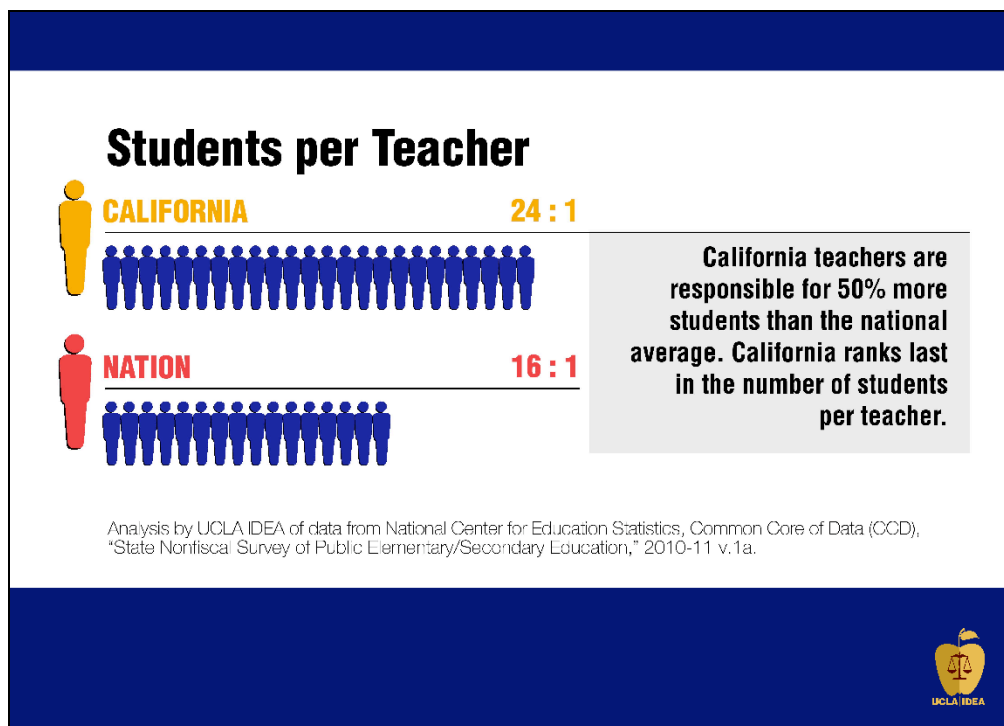
Why did the education funding gap grow over the last three decades? It cannot be explained by changes in California's economic productivity. In 1980, California ranked 10th of all states in median household income. In 2010, California ranked 10th of all states in median household income. One thing that has changed is California's tax effort for education relative to the national average. As this map from the US Census shows, California education spending represents a smaller portion of personal income than the national average—and a far smaller portion than other high-income states such as New Jersey or Connecticut

If Americans are going to remain competitive, that's our only shot. We can't afford to waste a single young person in America. We need to get as many of them as well educated as we can, and that means on through college. That has become the new secular religion. Twice as many people believe that the moon shot landing was faked than believe you can make it in America without a college diploma.

--- Elizabeth Warren



California's decline in education spending relative to the rest of the nation has come during a period when educational attainment has taken on ever-greater importance. A college degree has come to be viewed as critical to secure and well-paid employment. We can see this shift in parent surveys from 1980 and today. Then, roughly ½ of parents surveyed reported that they wanted their children to attain a Bachelor's degree or higher. Today, more than 90% of California parents report that they want their children to attain at least a Bachelor's degree. This broad belief in the importance of college education holds true across race and social class. These rising expectations for educational attainment have driven increased public investment in education in most states. But not in California. As a consequence, California's core conditions for teaching and learning do not compare well to those in other states.



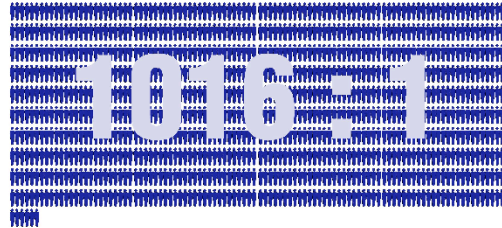
The figures for students per teacher do not give a fair sense of class size. While there are several reasons for this, one explanation is that special education teachers often work with very small numbers of students. Even before the recession, class sizes in California were the largest in the nation—with an average of 30 students compared with a national average of 23 students in 2007 (the last year for which data on average class size is available from the National Center for Educational Statistics.) But average class size masks differences across grades. Before the recession, California's k-3 classes were capped at 20 students—just a little more than the national average for those grades. Now, roughly half of k-3 students are in classes with more than 25, and many are in classrooms with more than 30. Three quarters of upper elementary students attend classrooms with more than 30 students. In middle school and high school, most math and English classrooms have more than 34 students, and many have more than 40 students.

Students per Guidance Counselor



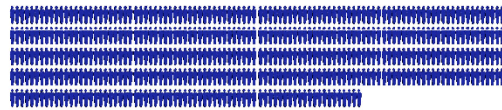
CALIFORNIA

1016 : 1



NATION

471 : 1

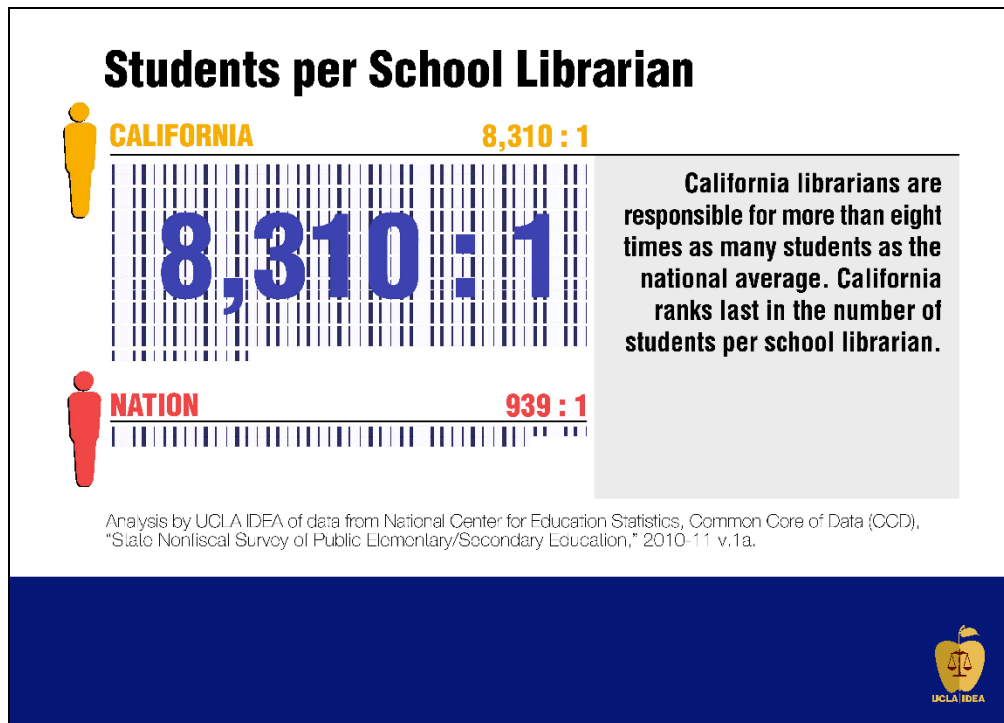


California counselors are responsible for twice as many students as national average. California ranks last in the number of students per counselor.

Analysis by UCLA IDEA of data from National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "State Nonfiscal Survey of Public Elementary/Secondary Education," 2010-11 v.1a.



California also ranks last in the nation in access to guidance counselors. We have less than one counselor for every 1000 students enrolled in k-12 public schools in California.



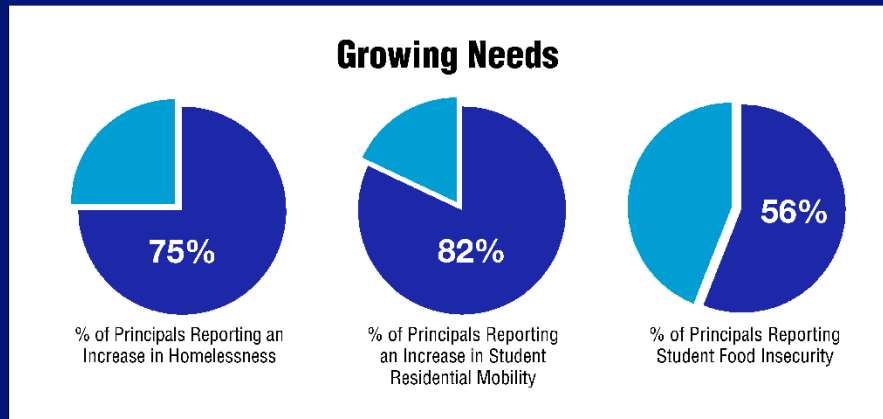
The most dramatic difference between California and the rest of the nation is seen in the number of students each school librarian serves—8 times as many as the national average. California has half as many school librarians as the state that ranks 49th in the nation.

During hard times ...



The figures in the last three slides come from national data covering the 2010-11 school year—this is the most recent national data available and the data speaks to further erosion of conditions in California schools since 2007-8. Beyond that general experience of decline, what do we know about how California public schools have fared in the face of the recession and fiscal crisis? We draw on data from UCLA IDEA's survey with principals across California to point to five ways that hard times have impacted California schools

1) Recession has created acute new social welfare needs.



It will come as little surprise that the recession has dramatically increased the number of students living in poverty as well as the daily pressures on students and their families. Educators have stretched to meet the growing social welfare needs that students bring with them to school. Many educators have created programs to provide students and families with food and clothes, many more have connected families with community and social services. However important all this work is, it means that educators are spending more time attending to social welfare issues, and this is particularly true for educators in high-poverty schools.

2) Recession + Fiscal Crisis means less “stuff”

Less Access to Instructional Materials

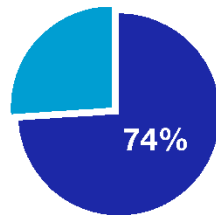
% Principals Reporting Less Student Access to...	
Materials for English Classes	52%
High-Functioning Science Labs	58%
Math Materials	63%



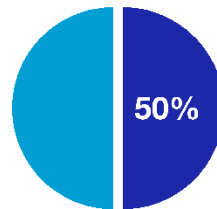
Budgets for instructional materials, field trips, and arts have shrunk, eroding learning conditions in many schools. A principal told us she could no longer afford to provide each table of students a dissection kit in biology class. So, now the teacher dissects the frog in front of the whole class, and a valuable opportunity to engage students in hands-on inquiry has been lost.

3) Recession + Fiscal Crisis means fewer trained adults

Less Attention from Teachers and Counselors



% of Principals Reporting
Class Size Increases



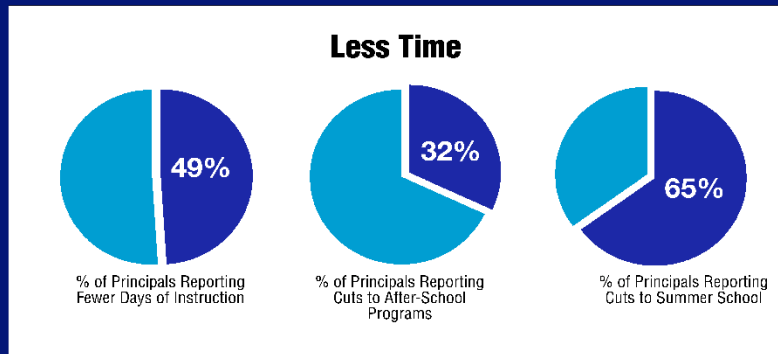
% of Principals Reporting
Cuts to Academic Counselors

Source: UCLA IDEA, *Free Fall: Educational Opportunities in 2011*



More than 80% of school budgets cover staff salary and benefits (and most of this goes to teachers). Budget cuts have meant cutbacks to an array of staff—from teachers, to counselors, to custodians, and cafeteria workers. Students receive less attention and services. And this is particularly consequential for those needing additional support—whether they be English learners or aspiring college students who would be the first in their family to attend college.

4) But cuts particularly mean less time



California has cut back the number of instructional days and hours while many districts across the country are moving to extend the school day and school year. Recent research out of Johns Hopkins University has shown that the most important influence on the so-called achievement gap is access to learning opportunities outside of the traditional school day—opportunities that have grown more unequal in recent decades as more affluent families have been able to invest more in out of school learning than other parents. In this new economy, promoting the full development of all students requires expanding learning time, particularly for students from low-income families. Yet, California has moved in the opposite direction.

5. And ...

Some end up with less than others

Impacts in High Wealth Districts

% of Principals Reporting Cuts to ...	Schools in High Wealth Districts	Schools in all other Districts
Instructional Days	25%	51%
Counselors	25%	52%



This point about time relates to a final effect of the cutbacks: While every community in California has suffered from budget cuts to education, some communities have borne the brunt of the pain. Inequality has grown. One way we see this is that high wealth districts have been the least likely to face debilitating cuts.

Some schools demand private \$ for public services

Has your school begun requiring students and families to pay for or make additional contributions to any of the following services as a consequence of the budget cuts?

	All HS	Low Poverty	High Poverty
Field Trips	43%	53%	26%
Arts and Music	34%	53%	9%
Instructional Materials	19%	32%	9%
Summer School	12%	20%	5%
Tutoring	10%	15%	4%
Clubs	12%	17%	9%
Sports	47%	57%	30%

Source: UCLA IDEA, *Free Fall: Educational Opportunities in 2011*



Further, schools serving few low-income families are more likely to require that students and families pay for a variety of services than high poverty schools. This practice expands services and eases the budgetary pressures in more affluent communities. It also places undue pressure on the small number of low-income families attending these more affluent schools.

Private \$ flow to some schools

Donations to Low and High Poverty Schools

	All High Schools in Survey	Low Poverty High Schools	Mid-Level Poverty High Schools	High Poverty High Schools
% Free/Reduced Lunch		0%-33.9%	34%-62.9%	63%-100%
Median Donations	\$20,000	\$100,000	\$20,000	\$5,000

Source: UCLA IDEA, *Free Fall: Educational Opportunities in 2011*



Direct financial support differs dramatically across schools. More affluent high schools were able to raise \$20 for every \$1 raised in high poverty high schools.

“Crisis Education” undercuts our shared commitment to improving the whole system



Public schooling in California can now be characterized as “Crisis Education.” This crisis is not inevitable. It reflects a set of political choices about how the state meets the needs of its people, how it invests in the future, and how we should distribute the costs of this investment across poor, middle income, and affluent Californians. “Crisis education” means that ALL students in California do not receive the support they need and deserve. It means public schooling exacerbates economic and social inequalities, rather than serving as “the great equalizer.” And, it means further erosion of our shared commitment to the public good. When public schools do not provide adequate instructional materials, or free summer school, or access to college counselors, parents with means are able to secure these goods and services through the private market. Californians have a shared interest in moving beyond “crisis education” and ensuring adequate learning conditions for all of our students.

A first step ... Nov 6



There are two ballot measures that will be decided November 6 that represent a first step toward decent schools and away from crisis education. One is Proposition 30, the other is Proposition 38. Both of these measures would bring much needed revenue into California public schools. Unless Proposition 30 passes, automatic trigger cuts will go into effect on January 1st—cuts that likely would mean ending the school year three or more weeks early.

For more on Proposition 30 and 38

http://cbp.org/pdfs/2012/121004_How%20Do%20Propositions%2030%20and%2038%20Compare.pdf

<http://www.edsource.org/assets/images/misc/graphic/edsource-californiaschoolinitiatives-10-15cs4.pdf>

