



## **Study: Pennsylvania relies on local taxes for education more than most**

By **Tom Fontaine**

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Pennsylvania relies more heavily on local taxes to foot the bill for public education than all but four states and the District of Columbia, the Census Bureau reported Monday.

"The state hasn't truly shared the expense of public education since the 1970s," said David Davare, director of research for the Pennsylvania School Boards Association.

Pennsylvania's public school districts received \$24.2 billion from local, state and federal sources during the 2006-07 fiscal year, Census data showed.

Of that, 57 percent, or nearly \$13.8 billion, came from local sources. That included \$12.3 billion from property and other local taxes and \$1.5 billion from other local sources, including school lunch, tuition and transportation charges.

Only Washington, D.C., Illinois, Nebraska, Connecticut and New Hampshire used a higher proportion of local funding to cover public education costs. The District of Columbia received almost 90 percent of its funding from local sources, but didn't have a state government to turn to for money.

Pennsylvania's school districts received \$8.6 billion from Harrisburg, or 35.5 percent of their revenue. That was the fourth-lowest share in the nation, excluding Washington, D.C. Only Nebraska, South Dakota and Illinois did less.

"Historically, the intent was to maintain a 50-50 split. But over time, as costs have increased faster than state subsidies, pressure has been put on local taxing bodies to make up the difference," Davare said.

Maureen W. McClure, an associate education professor in administrative and policy studies, said the state's share "probably dropped half a percentage point a year over the last 20 years."

As a result, McClure said, "Pennsylvanians get hammered by local property taxes."

"The Legislature complains they don't have much say in how much teachers get paid, and if you have a lot of small, weak school districts getting bullied by teachers' unions, they would argue, you'll have rapidly rising costs," McClure said. But she added "unfunded educational mandates" from the state contribute to rising costs.

The census data showed Pennsylvania's average per-pupil spending was \$11,098, the nation's 13th-highest total and well above the national average of \$9,666 per pupil.