

Zip Codes and the Future of Our Students



Our country is extremely dependent on public systems. One of our main goals is to provide services that everybody can benefit from. We have various systems in place in order to provide every citizen with access to equal opportunities. One of our biggest systems is our public school system, and yet it is also one of the most ineffective systems we have to date. In an attempt to be fair, we dictate which public schools kids attend based on where they live, or more specifically, their zip code. That means where a child lives is the main determinant in the quality of education they will receive.

We begin to really see the issue with this when we look at the neighborhoods. Children who live in richer areas tend to have access to schools that have sufficient funding. This means they have access to more resources, like computers, better teachers, and smaller classrooms, all leading to a better education. When compared to the education of kids who live in zip codes that are

considered low-income, it is extremely unfair. In the end, this means that the opportunities each student has are directly linked to where they live.

When addressing this issue, we have to understand where each school gets its funding. According to the Peter G Peterson Foundation, public schools for students in kindergarten through 12th grade are funded through a combination of local, state, and federal dollars in proportions that vary across and within states. It is the local aspect that is most harmful to students. Wealthier neighborhoods receive more money from taxes and are therefore better off. The New York Times confirms that the children of the rich perform better in school, on average, than children from middle-class or poor families.

The system we have in place is only perpetuating the cyclical issue, leading to the rich getting richer and the poor staying poor, starting with education. If our public school system is really in place to provide all students with an equal education, then it should start doing so. The current system we have in place that inadvertently ties your wealth to your level of education is exactly the opposite reason why we created our system in the first place. If citizens wanted that educational experience, they would turn to charter or private schools. But they don't, and those who want to ignore these flaws and claim that it is simply the way it is are undermining the needs of students. We can vote to change the manner in which our public education system works, just like any other policy reform is possible if we try.

One manner in which we could improve our current system is by giving more federal or even state funding in general. This way, even if there are disparities in the total amount of money a school has access to, it won't be as if any school is in dire need of funds like they are right now. Secondly, and this might be harder to implement, but schools shouldn't rely so heavily on local funding. If they are forced to follow the same state-wide regulations as each other, then they should receive exactly the same amount of money to execute their curriculum. It is extremely unfair that they are forced to meet the same educational requirements when there is such a disproportionate amount of help each state receives. That's not to say that each school should have its own specific curriculum, just that if everyone is forced to execute the same goal, then they should have the same amount of resources.

This problem is not based on whether or not the issue exists or how much it affects students, because it is blatantly obvious that it is occurring and that each and every student is deeply impacted. The Learning Policy Institute shares that on average, a \$1,000 reduction in per-student spending widened the achievement gap between Black and White students by 6 percentage points. There is data proving that the amount of money spent on each student affects their opportunities and their careers. We have to do it for our future generation so that they can do good for us.

Sources

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- <https://www.pgpf.org/article/how-is-k-12-education-funded/>
- <https://archive.nytimes.com/opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/04/27/no-rich-child-left-behind/>