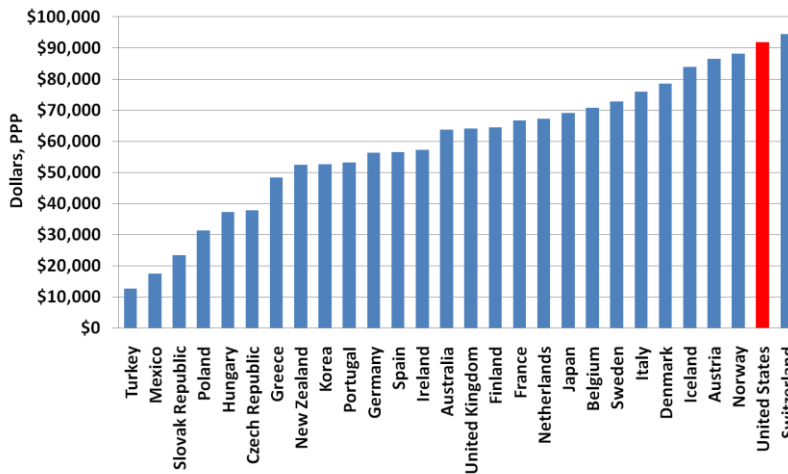




**K-12 Spending Per Student in the OECD**



Source: OECD, 2009 Education at a Glance Note that not all 34 member OECD member countries are represented in the above graphic, which draws its data from OECD Education at a Glance 2009. This metric, Cumulative expenditure per student between 6 and 15 years in equivalent USD in 2008 is not available for the nations of Canada, Chile, Estonia, Greece, Israel, Slovenia and Turkey. Produced by: Veronique de Rugy, Mercatus Center at George Mason University

This week Mercatus Center Senior Research Fellow Veronique de Rugy puts United States’ K-12 education expenditures in context. The above chart compares per pupil expenditures on K-12 education across the member nations of the OECD. As we can see, with the exception of Switzerland, the United States spends more than any other country on K-12 education, an average of \$91,700 per student between the ages of six and fifteen.

Over the last 40 years, spending per pupil in the US has increased by 200 percent. A high school graduate in 2009 had \$149,000 spent on his 13 year public school education; compare this to \$50,000 for a 1970 graduate. Likewise, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, the number of teachers per student in United States public schools has been steadily rising since 1996. Unfortunately, these conventional increases in spending and teaching have not been met with improvements in educational outcomes.

The recent results of the OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), a test given to 15-year-old students across the OECD, find that the United States was, once again, in the middle of the pack in reading and science and a bit below the international average in math. These results are particularly stunning given how much more we spend than other countries. We spend more than many better achieving countries spend – the United States spends a third more than Finland, a country that consistently ranks near the top in science, reading and math testing.

As we look to reform the education system in this country, we need to focus on creative solutions that introduce more inter-school competition, thus forcing schools to deliver results in order to keep their students. This would be a marked improvement over the current system which binds students to bad schools with residency requirements.

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