



Data Sources for Comparing K-12 Education Spending Among States

There are four major sources of national information used to compare K-12 school spending among states. The table below highlights important characteristics of these sources and helps to show the advantages and disadvantages of using each. This table is from the Budget Center publication, *Key Considerations When Comparing California K-12 School Spending to Other States* (August 2015), which provides additional information on these data sources and explains the differences among them.

	Where Do the Data Come From?	When Are the Data Reported?	How Timely Are the Data?	Are the Data Adjusted for Differences in States' Costs of Living?	What Funding Sources Are Included?
National Education Association (NEA)	State departments of education or NEA estimates	First quarter of each calendar year	Estimated expenditures for the current school year	No	Federal, state, and local
National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)	State departments of education	Annually, but with no consistent release date	Actual expenditures for the state fiscal year that ended roughly two years before	No	Federal, state, and local
US Census Bureau	State departments of education	Second quarter of each calendar year	Actual expenditures for the state fiscal year that ended roughly two years before	No	Federal, state, and local
Education Week	NCES*	January	Actual expenditures for the state fiscal year that ended more than two years before	Yes	Federal, state, and local

*The Education Week Research Center has based its analysis on NCES data every year except 2015, when it used US Census Bureau data because NCES data were not available in a timely manner.