

Your Union is Fighting for Fair Education Funding

How State Education Funding Currently Works

In Delaware, the state provides school districts with funding via the unit count system, which translates student counts to funding for staff, operations, and other student supports. Delaware's funding system has not been overhauled in over 80 years and no longer meets the needs of today's students and educators. Your union is fighting to build an education funding system that fully staffs schools and provides all students with the resources they need to succeed.

Current Category Breakdown

- Schools receive money based on **student counts** taken twice a year.
- Student counts are converted into "**units**" that fund staff positions and operations.
- **Categories of Funding:**
 - **Division I** – Educator salaries
 - **Division II**– Other costs (supplies, energy, etc.)
 - **Division III**– Equalization (to address wealth differences across districts)
 - **Opportunity Funding** provides some additional funding based on the number of low-income students and multilingual learners.

Current Student to Unit Ratios (examples)

- K–3 Regular Ed: **16.2 students = 1 unit**
- K–3 Basic Special Ed: **8.4 students = 1 unit**
- PreK–12 Intensive Special Ed: **6 students = 1 unit**
- PreK–12 Complex Special Ed: **2.6 students = 1 unit**

Challenges with State Funding

- **Outdated and inequitable formula** – Units do not include added funding for low-income or multilingual learners. Ratios need to be updated and fully funded.
- **Frozen and broken Equalization Formula** – The funding formula is meant to direct more state money to low-wealth districts, but has continued to underfund those districts for more than a decade
- **Stagnant resources** – Allocation of resources is not keeping pace with inflation.

Building a Fairer Funding Formula

- **Fully fund every unit** so staffing levels match student and classroom needs.
- **Update the formula** to account for children living in poverty and multilingual learners.
- **Modernize and unfreeze equalization funding** so state resources better support underfunded districts.
- **Regularly review and adjust funding levels** to keep pace with inflation and the true cost of educating students in Delaware today.

How Local School Funding Currently Works

Local funding plays a major role in how well schools can meet student needs. But not all communities can raise the same amount. Local property values and voter-approved tax rates often determine whether a district can fully fund its programs, staff, and facilities.

Where Local School Dollars Come From

- Districts rely heavily on **property taxes** to generate local school revenue.
- Local property tax rates can be set either by **referendum** or **property reassessments**. Voters must approve a referendum while districts can raise an additional 10% in revenue following reassessments once every 5 years.
- Variations in local funding can result in disparities in educator pay, classroom sizes, and educational outcomes.

Challenges With Local Funding

- **No flexibility** – Even small cost-of-living increases require voter approval.
- **Tax inequities** – Families in low-wealth districts pay **higher property tax rates** but still raise less money than wealthier communities.

Why It Matters

- Underfunded districts often cannot meet salary needs or fund programs adequately.
- Taxpayers in poorer communities are **penalized**, paying more for less.
- Wealthier districts can raise more money at lower rates, widening inequities.

Fixing Local Funding Inequities

- **Referendum reform** – Allow districts to raise funds for inflation without voter referendums.
- **Fairness for taxpayers** – Local funding should provide comparable educational opportunities for families in all communities.

Join Our Fight for Fair Funding

Changing this broken system is possible if we harness the collective power of our 14,000 members. We need you to join your union's fight to create a better public education system for our students, our educators, and our communities.

Together, we can build a fair education funding system that delivers the resources our educators need and the supports our students deserve.

There are many ways to get involved and fight for change.

Scan the QR code to learn more about how you can get involved.

