

San Diego Unified School District Investment Model

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of the investment model?

The purpose of the investment model is to have a tool for the larger discussion around funding in California public schools that supports student learning. This tool demonstrates the significant improvements to the classroom that would be afforded for our schools if public education were funded at a robust level. The investments shown are those identified by San Diego Unified as priorities. Other school districts are able to modify these investments to reflect their own priorities.

San Diego Unified took the lead in developing the tool, using numbers appropriate for our district and shared it with other school districts in various coalitions ([Association of California School Administrators](#), [California Association of School Business Officials](#), [California School Boards Association](#) and the [California State Parent Teachers Association](#)) to use in developing their own estimates. We believe the collective use of the investment model by districts throughout California could potentially lead to the calculation of a base grant amount that would be needed by districts across the state. This aggregate number could be used as a more concrete “definition” for legislators of the additional financial investments that are needed to support academic learning in California’s public schools.

2. What do the results, or “investment or opportunity gap,” show?

Staffing and cost projections are divided between the current reality for school districts and what the more appropriate scenario should be if K-12 public education was funded at a more robust level. The difference between the current and improved funding levels is referred to as an “investment or opportunity gap”; what the minimum additional per-pupil funding should be in San Diego Unified.

The investment or opportunity gap is the additional \$350 million in funding per year that would be required to properly fund schools and increase investments in the classroom. The tool is designed to highlight improvements that would be realized with additional resources at a more robust funding level.

3. Who developed or designed this financial model?

San Diego Unified’s efforts to lead the statewide conversation on robust funding has been a collaborative effort with our Board members, Superintendent and other members of our leadership team, including key managers from our curriculum, instruction and leadership, and our finance teams.

Since December 2014, the collective team has been collaborating with the finance department to develop a model that defines the appropriate academic support systems and classroom environment that are needed to ensure success for all students to graduate college and career ready.

4. Is the investment model aligned to the goals, actions and services identified in the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP)?

Yes, the investment model was designed with the goals included in the LCAP in mind. However, the tool only highlights *some* of the examples of support services that are identified in the LCAP. It is not intended to be a comprehensive financial analysis of all the academic programs and social services, as that would have required a more in-depth analysis.

5. What are examples of how additional investments in the classroom would be spent?

A priority for San Diego Unified's trustees, parents, teachers, and staff is to reduce class size at all levels, transitional kindergarten to high school, in order to provide a classroom environment more conducive to learning and with more individualized student instruction. In the tool, our goal would be to provide a 20 to 1 class ratio at the elementary school level and a 17 to 1 class ratio at the elementary schools with the highest concentration of poverty. At the middle and high school, classes would be lowered to 25 to 1 if we had more robust funding.

The tool is designed to highlight improvements that would be realized with additional resources. For example, San Diego Unified does not currently have the resources to place a specialist for literacy, math, or English Learner support at every elementary, middle or high school. With more robust funding, San Diego Unified would invest in one full time equivalent (FTE) employee for each of these categories at every school across the district to support capacity building in the classroom.

These strategies are in keeping with guiding principles that include valuing programs that can show a positive impact on student achievement.

6. Why are additional funds needed for schools?

While there are improvements in K-12 education funding, it is important to acknowledge that California schools are still woefully underfunded. Funding remains below the national average. In 2011-12, the most recent data comparison, California was ranked 46th in per pupil spending. The [2015 Education Week Quality Counts Survey](#) showed the average per-student spending for the top ten states in the country was at \$15,967, yet California's per-student spending was \$8,308 in 2011-12, which was 29 percent below the national average of \$11,735, adjusted for regional cost differences.

The state's own constitution stipulates per-pupil funding should be among the top 10 states; a benchmark that has never been attained. It is clear that, by any measurement, California schools remain underfunded, and students are not receiving the resources they need to succeed in school and beyond.

Increasing the investments in public education funding will ensure all children have a fair, equitable and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and attain high academic standards while improving connections among schools, parents, and communities.

7. The tool illustrates the funding gap to provide more robust funding to schools. Who will come up with the solution or how will additional revenues be generated?

San Diego Unified will continue to urge the Legislature to convene informational hearings on how the state can provide more robust funding for schools in order to meet the local and state's educational goals. The Legislature, in collaboration with stakeholders, will need to consider the steps California would need to take to develop a long-term investment plan to support schools and students.

8. How can I get involved in the advocacy efforts?

As a parent, teacher or local community member, your support for pursuing additional investments in public education is very important by continuing to discuss this issue with other stakeholders and members of your community.

If you are a leader in another school district in California, we encourage you to complete this investment model with the vision for your own schools.

For more information and to get involved, contact Martha Alvarez, San Diego Unified's Director of Government Relations, at martha.alvarez@sandi.net or (916) 798-1338.