



# School Finance

APA has worked nationally with policy-makers, practitioners, and stakeholders to examine school finance issues for over 30 years. APA has worked in all 50 states and the District of Columbia to address school finance issues. APA has either fully or partially created a number of current school finance formulas. APA's work with states includes helping them evaluate the structure, equity and adequacy of school finance systems, and helping them examine certain programs for costs and returns on investment. APA also helps districts understand how to most effectively utilize their resources. APA has over 100 years of collective experience in school finance.

## Linked Learning

*From 2012-2015, APA worked with the James Irvine Foundation to examine the costs districts faced in implementing the Linked Learning program—a new initiative being implemented by various districts starting from different points. APA worked with staff from the various districts and schools to first understand the types of tasks necessary to implement Linked Learning successfully. APA then created a collection device so districts with various accounting systems were able to record expenditures in a common format. With this information, APA was able to provide estimates for both start-up and ongoing costs of implementing Linked Learning in variously sized districts across California.*

## Costing-Out Specific Programs or Policies

APA works with clients to help them understand the costs associated with current or proposed programs or policies. APA first helps clients understand the parameters of their programs or policies and the desired outcomes. APA then develops processes to collect pertinent resource information related to the programs or policies. These processes include interviewing practitioners and stakeholders; collecting data onsite; or utilizing collection devices, sometimes web-based, to collect data. APA examines all aspects of a program or policy to then create an estimate of the costs of meeting desired outcomes. Policy-makers and stakeholders can use cost estimates to design policies that help ensure success. Recent examples of this work include a costing-out of the Preschool to Postsecondary Education Alignment Act; a

costing-out of the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids; and work for the Colorado Department of Education and the Linked Learning program for the James Irvine Foundation.

## State Funding

APA help states examine their school funding formulas in a number of different ways. A first step is often to understand the structure of the formula and how this structure compares to common best practices in formula design. Examination of a formula often will include an equity study that examines the relationships between districts' demographics and their revenues, expenditures, and tax efforts. APA also helps states understand the level of resources needed to ensure all students have the opportunity to meet state standards. Adequacy studies examine the types of resources needed for all students to meet state

## Alabama State Finance Review

*APA has been working with Alabama since 2013 to undertake a full review of the state's finance system. This work began with a basic review of the state's finance system and the ways in which the structure compared with the basic tenants of a sound school finance formula. APA then met with stakeholders from across the state to understand how the current formula affected their districts and schools. After creating an understanding of the current system, APA undertook equity and adequacy studies to understand the impacts of the current formula and the level of resources needed to meet current state standards.*

standards, including students with identified needs and students in districts with unique circumstances. Approaches such as professional judgment and successful schools are used to estimate the needed resources. The results of structure reviews, equity studies, and adequacy studies can be used to design state formulas that better target student needs and that ensure all students have the resources needed to meet state standards.

### Return on Investment

For states and districts, it is important to understand how to effectively use the limited resources available for education. There is growing research and literature on the types of educational interventions and programs that show promising returns on investment for states and districts. APA tracks this research and has worked with various stakeholder groups to understand how implementing dollars in specific ways can lead to the best overall return on investment. Examples of APA projects that include return on investment analysis are an early childhood cost estimation model for New York, an early investment model for Colorado, and a childhood cost model for the Children’s Services Council of Palm Beach County. Building on return on investment research, APA has also worked with the Piton Foundation to look at social impact bonds, exploring how private funding can be used to expand successful educational programs.

### School Districts

APA works with school districts to help them understand how to best utilize resources. This includes examining districts’ use of human capital, helping to update salary schedules or create alternative pay structures, designing student-based budgeting systems to link budgeting to student needs, and helping to ensure that districts are using their facilities as efficiently as possible. In each case, APA begins by working with district stakeholders to understand district priorities. By engaging multiple stakeholders, APA helps design processes that target goals, while ensuring broad acceptance across a district.

#### Littleton Public Schools

*APA staffed the Littleton Public Schools Facilities Usage Task Force. APA helped the task force determine what educational program all students in the district should expect to receive at each education level. Then, using data on programs, student demographics, and facility capacity, APA identified schools that might be best to repurpose. APA led a district-wide engagement process that allowed community members to provide input on a group of presented alternatives. The process led to the identification of two schools for repurposing.*

### About APA

Denver-based Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA) has more than 30 years of experience analyzing education systems and policies. APA has worked with hundreds of clients—including legislatures, education agencies, boards of education, state and county leaders, business leaders, and foundations—to provide in-depth, policy-oriented analyses to help improve our country’s education systems.