

Advocating for School Funding with an Equity Lens

February 23rd, 2021

This session is being livestreamed and recorded.



Welcome



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Director of Government Affairs

National PTA

Our Why



School Funding 101

Where does the money come from?

- This varies by district but typically the majority comes from state and local sources. Only about 10% comes from the federal government

Where does the money go?

- About 80% of a school district's budget is spent on labor costs (salaries & benefits for staff)
- Other spending categories include facilities, instructional materials, transportation, etc.

Key Term **Per pupil expenditures:** the amount of money a district receives per student. The national average is \$12,756 per student.

Who makes the decisions?

- Creating a district budget should be collaborative, but **the local school board** must vote to approve the final budget

Research Project Overview & Findings



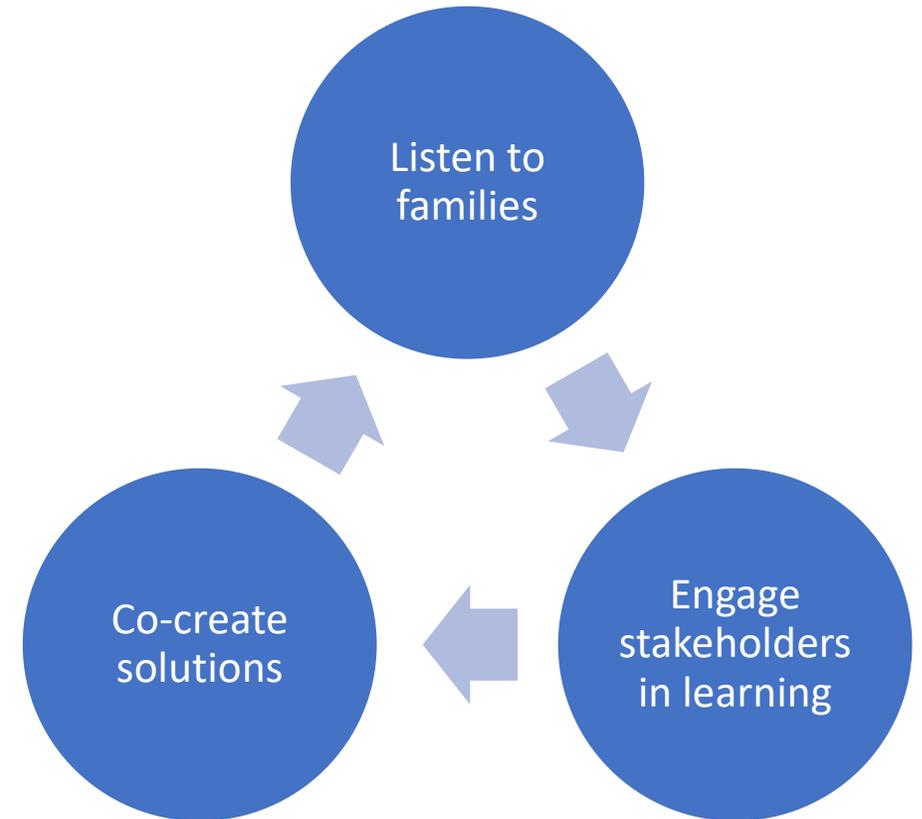
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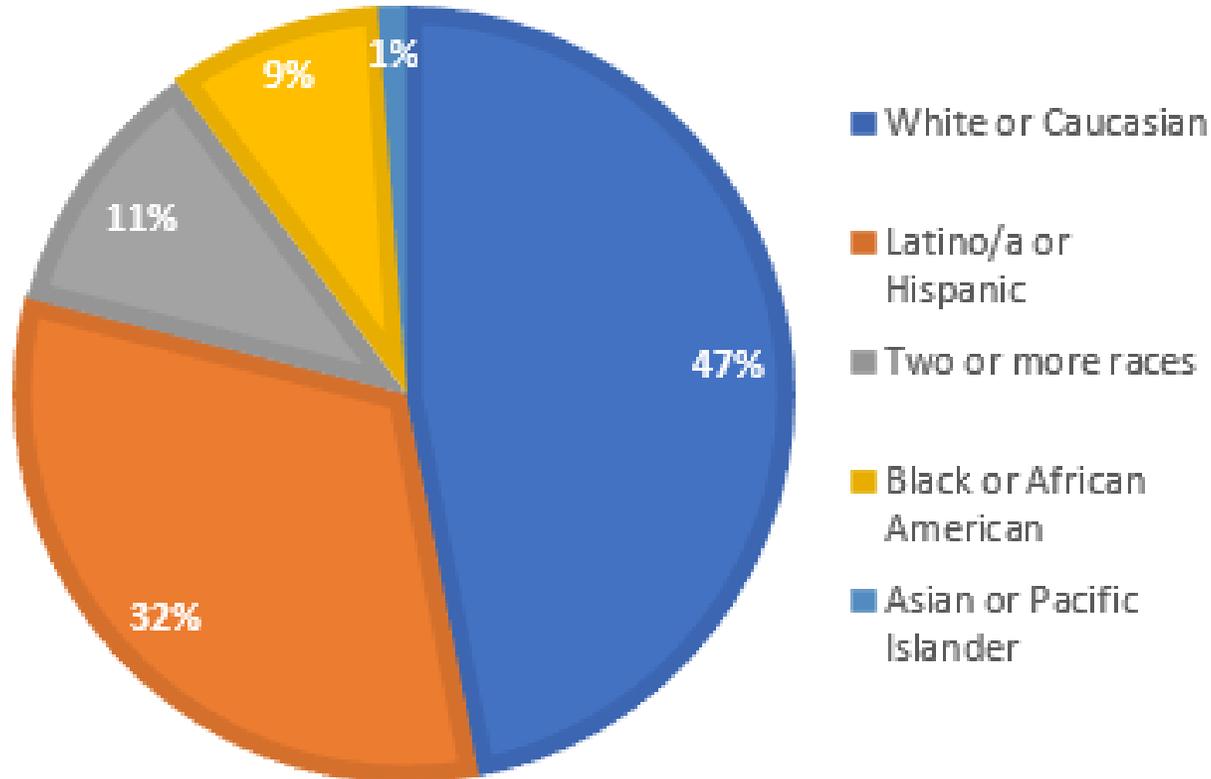
Purpose & Approach

- Collaborate with five district PTAs to further school funding focused advocacy
- Listen to families' perspectives on education funding adequacy and equity
- Identify areas for research and advocacy efforts



A diverse sample of participants from across the country

RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS



164 participants

22 listening sessions and follow-up surveys conducted virtually with families

5 sessions in **Spanish**; All sessions facilitated by National PTA and **transcribed** and **coded** for analysis.

FINDING #1



Families want more information on school funding in their community but don't know where to find it.



“I went through a frenzy of trying to figure out how to influence budgets, back when it became obvious that the kids were not going to have enough teachers to be safe when they went back to school, and it was really hard.” - Participant, Austin, Texas

Families lack knowledge about school spending in their district.

	Strongly agree or agree
I have a general understanding of how my child's school district uses its funding.	32%
I know where to find information on school funding in my community.	29%



“I think school funding comes from the state, right?”



“Las escuelas más ricas, ¿por qué tienen que siempre recibir más dinero, y las escuelas más pobres siempre menos dinero?”



“How do individual principals spend their budgets and what are their budgets actually?”

FINDING #2

Families were unsure if money was being spent effectively and felt skeptical about the district's role.



“I think our library is adequately funded, but I don't think it's being utilized.”

- Participant, Pinellas County, Florida



“From my point of view, I feel like there is a lot of money that is wasted.”

- Participant, Vancouver, Washington

Lack of information contributes to distrust - **81% of families listed District Central Office Staff as an area for potential budget cuts**

FINDING #3



Families value educational equity and support schools receiving funding based on need.



“I think money should be distributed based on the school's needs for each area as well as considering the students that go there as well, [and] what they need.” - Participant, Duval County, Florida

How do families interpret differences in per pupil funding?

Participants were presented with a real-life example of disparities in per pupil expenditures between two schools in their district.

- They guessed differences had to do with the school's **neighborhood**, the families' **income** levels, the school's **Title I** status.
- They **wanted more information** about why the money was distributed this way and how it was being spent.

	Strongly agree or agree	Variation between districts
I believe that schools should get funding according to need.	81%	54% - 94%
I believe that schools should get the same funding, regardless of need.	18%	3% - 32%

FINDING #4



Expenses related to core school operations and learning are being supplemented by the PTA and/or other fundraising efforts.



“It's hard to know what the PTA has provided and what the school has provided.” - Participant, Vancouver, Washington

Families reported that the PTA and other parent organizations provide funding for:

- Copy paper, books and other basic resources
- Supplies for the school nurse
- Expenses related to extracurriculars like sports and music
- Laptops & tablets
- Teacher salaries
- Teacher training / professional development



“There's an actual documented need for a reading specialist. And for whatever reason, the district won't provide it and the PTA spent a whole year paying half of a salary for a reading specialist. To me, that is not something that PTA should be paying for.”

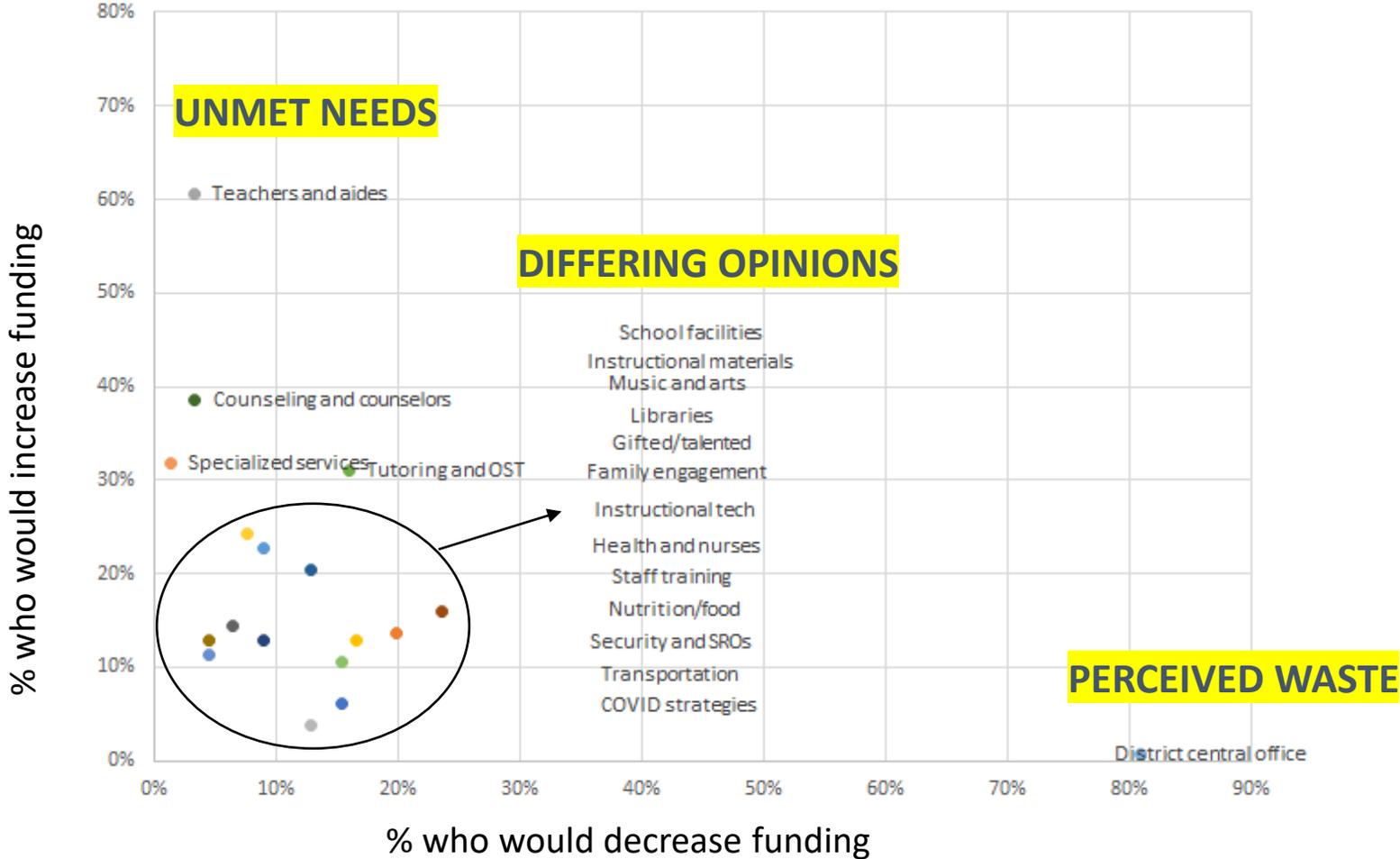
- Participant, Austin, Texas

FINDING #5



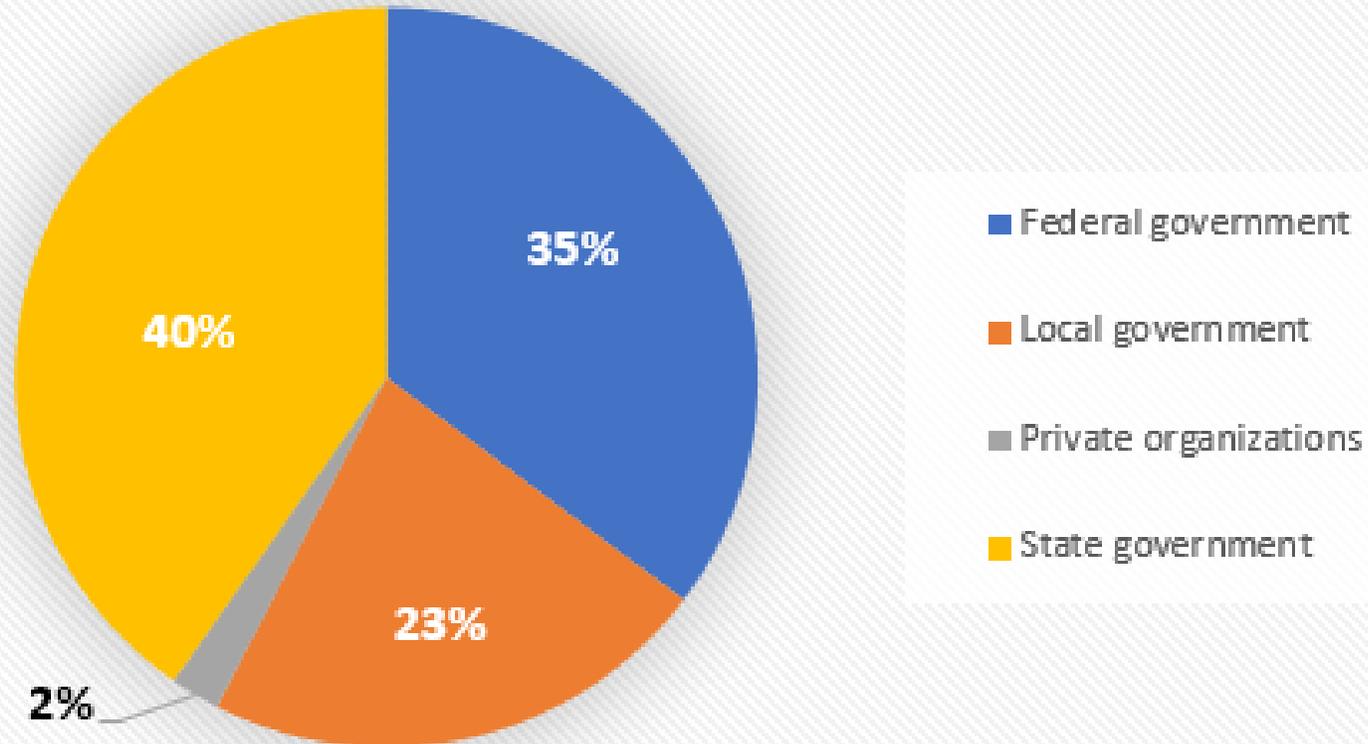
Families believe schools need more funding and identified **Teachers & Teachers Aides, Counseling Services & Counselors, and Specialized Services** as priorities

Families support increased funding but there are only a few areas where there is strong consensus



Overall, families believe the state or federal government should provide extra funding for education, not private organizations.

What should be the main source of extra funding for schools in your community?



* Varies depending on demographics.

Unmet Need: Teachers & Teachers' Aides

- Increase teacher pay
- Hire more teachers and staff



“The pandemic has definitely shown us that teachers are completely underpaid, 100%. Please take my kids back.” - Participant, Vancouver, Washington



“There are teachers that are missing in some of [my daughter’s] classes. I don't think she's had a science teacher for a year and a half.” - Participant, Duval County, Florida



“Porque muchas de las veces es mucho el alumnado para un solo maestro. Entonces, a mí me gustaría que como maestros tuvieran, como, una persona apoyándolos para cada una de sus materias.” - Participant, Austin, Texas

Unmet Need: Counselors & Counseling Services

- Hire more counselors
- Ensure equity & consistency of counseling services available



“There's never been enough counselors and psychologists at any school I've been to. Going back to first grade when kids had to be tested for one reason or another, sometimes you were waiting six months for the psychologist to get you in.” - Participant, Hillsborough County, Florida



“College counseling has immense inequities in awareness, knowledge, [and] caseload.” - Participant, Austin Texas

Unmet Need: Specialized Services

- Need better supports for students utilizing
 - Special education services
 - Bilingual services / education for English language learners
 - Gifted & talented services
- Hire more aides to enable more individualized instruction



“There's not enough support to make sure that every student has a special plan to make sure that they can be the most successful and make it as equitable and experience as possible.” - Participant, Vancouver, Washington



“There needs to be more intervention for those kids that aren't primary English speakers. He's falling behind and it's not because he doesn't know it, it's just not in the language that he understands.” - Participant, Austin, Texas

PTA Advocacy & School Funding Panel



Moderated by

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At-Large Representative

Board of Education for Aurora Public Schools

PTA Advocacy & School Funding Panel



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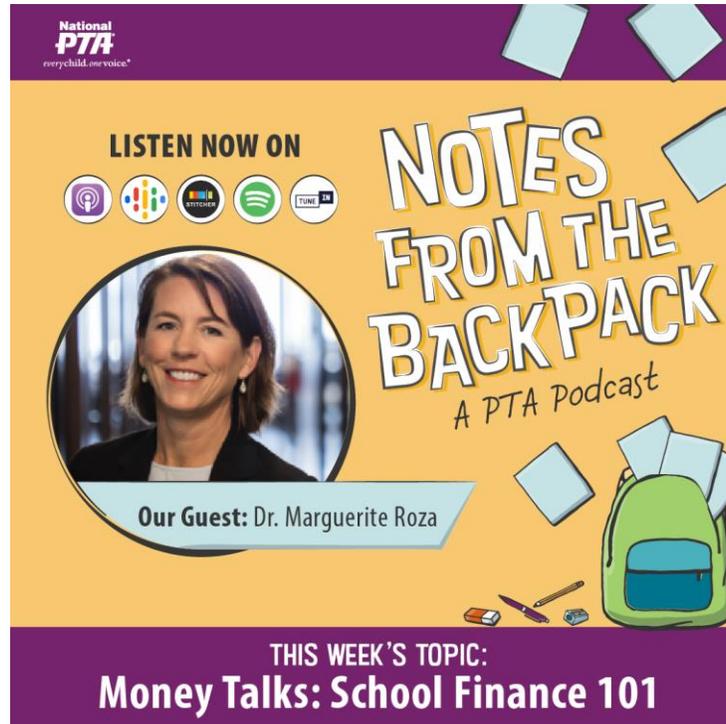
President, Florida PTA



Laurie Solis

President, Austin Council of PTAs

For more information....



- Listen to our Notes from the Backpack episodes featuring Marguerite Roza
- Download “Understanding & Advocating for School Funding” for answers to FAQ
- Visit www.pta.org/schoolfunding

Contact us at familyengagement@pta.org