

What Could \$360 Million Buy for Idaho's Public Schools?

Idahoans pride themselves on being fiscally responsible and committed to developing a strong and sustainable economy. Ensuring that state tax dollars are being used to further these goals requires understanding the impact of budget decisions.

A major budget change was proposed during the 2023 legislative session: the creation of a universal private school voucher program that would have diverted significant taxpayer funds to private education. The Idaho Center for Fiscal Policy estimated that the proposal could cost upwards of \$360 million annually.¹

Despite how often words like million and billion are used in these important policy conversations, research shows it is difficult to conceptualize numbers higher than 1 million.² So, what could \$360 million provide for Idaho's public schools? See below.

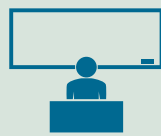
Idaho lawmakers should reject any attempts to establish a voucher program and instead focus on adequately funding the state's public schools and investing in evidence-based and cost-effective strategies that have been shown to improve student outcomes.³

What Could \$360 Million Buy for Idaho's Public Schools?



SPECIAL EDUCATION

Could close the funding gap for special education (\$66M) for over five years.⁴



TEACHERS

Could pay the salaries of the 134 teachers needed to fill our shortage for 48 years.⁵



BUSES

Could replace over half of Idaho's school buses and pay their drivers' salaries.⁶



REPAIRS

Could pay for 40% of the costs of repairs needed to bring Idaho's schools up to good condition.⁷



COMPUTERS

Could pay for all of Idaho's 309,000 students to have access to a computer both in and out of school.⁸

Endnotes

¹ Alejandra Cerna Rios, [Future Costs of Idaho SB1038's Universal Education Savings Accounts Projected to Rise Sharply](#), Idaho Center for Fiscal Policy (Feb. 20, 2023).

² David Landry, Noah Silbert., Aleah Goldin, Estimating large numbers. *Cognitive Science* (2013), 37(5), 775-799.

³ Mary McKillip & Theresa Luhm, [Investing Additional Resources in Schools Serving Low-Income Students](#), Education Law Center (Apr. 2020); Education Law Center, [Money Matters: Evidence Supporting Greater Investment in PK-12 Public Education: Research Talking Points for Advocates](#) (Mar. 2023).

⁴ Kevin Richert, [‘An absolute budget buster:’ Committee takes a sobering look at special education](#), Idaho Ed News (Oct. 30, 2023).

⁵ Idaho State Board of Education, [Idaho's Teacher Shortage Problem Persists](#) (2022); Idaho Department of Education, [Statewide Certified Staff Salary Report](#) (Oct. 20, 2023).

⁶ Idaho Department of Education, [Statewide Non-Certificated Staff Salary Report](#) (2023); Idaho Department of Education, [Student Transportation](#) (2023).

⁷ Idaho Legislature, Office of Performance Evaluations, [K-12 Public School Buildings](#) (Jan. 7, 2022).

⁸ Idaho Center for Fiscal Policy email correspondence with Idaho Association of School Business Officials.

This resource is a collaboration between the [Idaho Center for Fiscal Policy](#), a nonpartisan organization committed to offering Idahoans high-quality fiscal research and analysis, and [Public Funds Public Schools](#), a national campaign directed by [Education Law Center](#) to ensure that public funds for education are used to support and strengthen public schools.