



### Why California school children can't add

Editorial:

# California public school spending hits record high

By Alan Bonsteel

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Last June, Californians were shocked to discover that the "official" California Department of Education dropout rates were phony, and that *10 times* as many students were dropping out of high school as the CDE admitted to — about one-third of our children, in fact.

Now, Californians are about to discover that the "official" per student spending rates are equally phony.

After the June budget process, the governor's office and the state superintendent of public instruction announced that per student spending for California's public schools would average \$6,025 per student. What they *didn't* tell us, though, is that this number does not include California taxpayer spending on public schools via their federal income taxes; it does not include lottery revenues; it does not include interest payments on school bonds; and, incredibly, it does not include the cost of constructing the school buildings in the first place!

On Nov. 18, San Francisco's Pacific Research Institute released a study by educational researcher Lance Izumi and Certified Management Accountant Carl Brodt. The study demonstrated that our *real* K-12 public school spending averages \$7,272 — or 21 percent more than the figure the California Department of Education has been trying to pass off.

What makes it possible for the public education establishment to get away with these falsehoods on spending is that our public schools are funded at five different levels — federal, state, lottery, county and district. With so many interlocking levels of dysfunctional bureaucracy; it is not only easy for the bureaucrats to play a shell game with our tax dollars, but it also means

that only about *half* of our money is actually trickling down to the classroom.

The Sacramento bureaucrats can't even seem to get the *direction* of the spending right. We've been told time after time that "cutbacks" caused by 1978's Proposition 13 are responsible for the meltdown in our public schools. In fact, however, figures from the nonpartisan state Legislative Analyst's Office prove that California's per student K-12 spending in constant, inflation-adjusted dollars has *increased* 39 percent since 1978.

These numbers are in stark contrast to the spending rates in our schools of choice. Our charter schools — public schools of choice — are easily outpacing our traditional public schools on about \$4,200 per student. And California's private schools are doing the same with about \$3,900 per student.

The public school establishment likes to tell us that it deserves a monopoly in education because it is teaching "common values." Unfortunately, the lies about public school spending - and about California's staggeringly high dropout rate - make it clear that these bureaucrats don't seem to have learned any values themselves.