

# Utah's Funding for Schools Still Lower Than Before Recession

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Utah's schools continue to suffer from cuts in funding made since the start of the recession. These unnecessary cuts deepened the recession, slowed the recovery, and will make Utah less prosperous in the future.

Utah has cut investment in K-12 schools by 5.6 percent since 2008, a deeper cut than 25 other states, according to a report released by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a non-partisan policy research organization based in Washington, D.C.

“Good schools and an educated workforce foster economic growth. We are shooting ourselves in the foot by reducing our investment in our schools and students,” said Allison Rowland, Director of Research and Budget at Voices for Utah Children. “These cuts have undermined our ability to educate Utah’s children and there will be consequences for Utah’s economy,”

State revenue declined sharply during the recession. But instead of addressing budget shortfalls by taking a balanced approach that includes new revenues, Utah cut state services, including education.

Even as revenues have begun to recover, Utah has reinvested only a small fraction of the education funding that was cut during the downturn. This leaves spending per student \$263 below pre-recession levels, taking inflation into account.

Utah’s K-12 education cuts hurt the state’s economy in the short- and long-term. The cuts slowed the economic recovery by making it impossible to hire enough teachers and support staff to keep pace with growing enrollment.

Reducing investment in schools also has long-term economic consequences. A strong education system is essential to creating and maintaining a thriving economy. Businesses need a well-educated workforce, and education cuts undermine the state’s ability to produce workers with the skills needed to compete in a global economy.

“At a time when the nation is trying to produce workers with the skills to master new technologies and adapt to the complexities of a global economy, states should be investing more — not less — to ensure our kids get a strong education,” said Michael Leachman, director of state fiscal research at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and co-author of the report released today.