

HB 64 Testimony
March 19, 2015
Vicki Kerman – Parent and Taxpayer

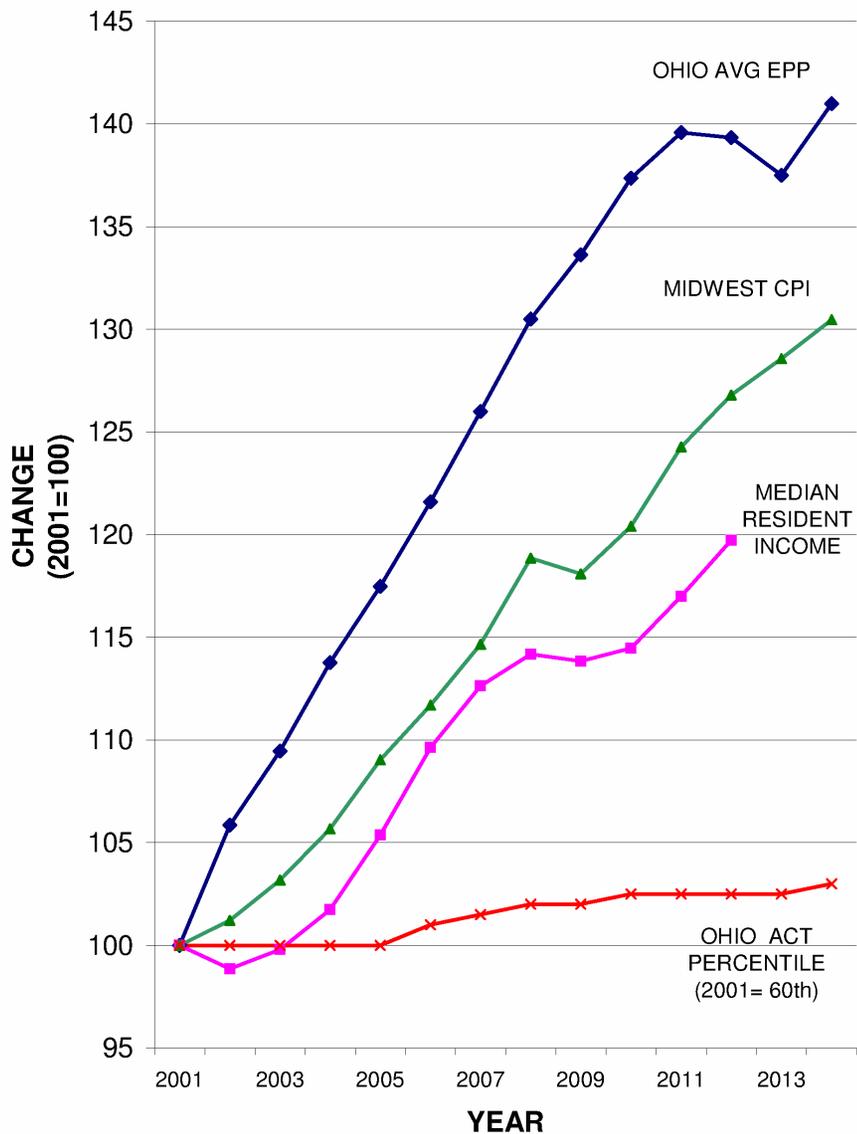
Good day, members of the House Finance Primary and Secondary Education Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Vicki Kerman, and I am testifying as a parent and taxpayer in the Cardington-Lincoln Local School District. For the last four years, I also have studied historical expenditure and academic performance data for all of Ohio's 600+ public school districts, and provide these analyses on a website, <http://www.compareohioschools.org>.

Testimony to date has focused primarily on how to allocate money from the General Fund among the state's school districts, with all of them vying for their piece of a fixed pie. All districts want more money, citing the much heralded – and largely unquestioned – assumption that higher student outcomes can only be achieved with more of it.

This assumption, however, is not supported by the data.

Figure 1: Ohio Expenditure per Pupil, Median Resident Income, CPI, and Performance Growth - 2001-2014

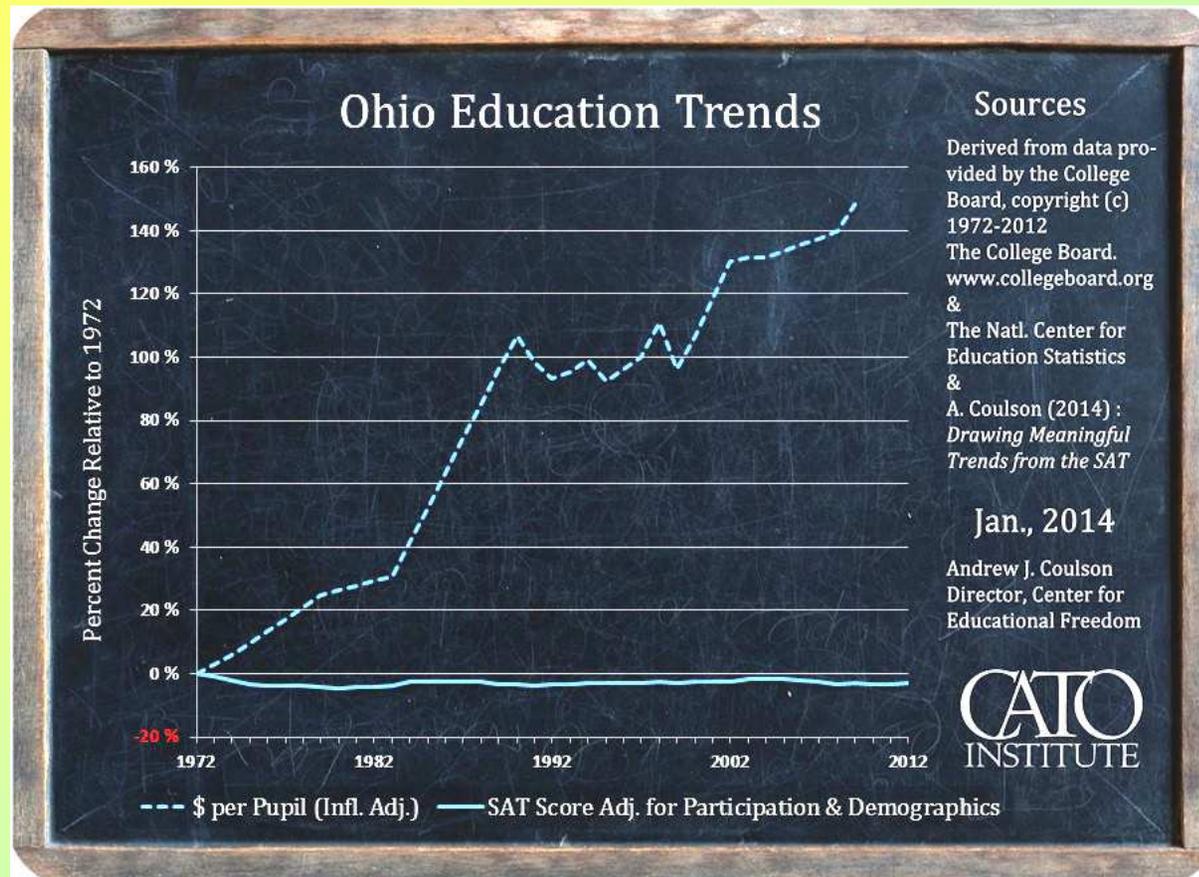


Per pupil expenditures have grown at a rate far exceeding that of inflation and median resident income.

Why?

Furthermore, why has the state's average ACT percentile only increased by 3 points despite a 40% increase in expenditures?

Not only is this financially unsustainable for our taxpayers, but we are doing a tremendous disservice to our students.

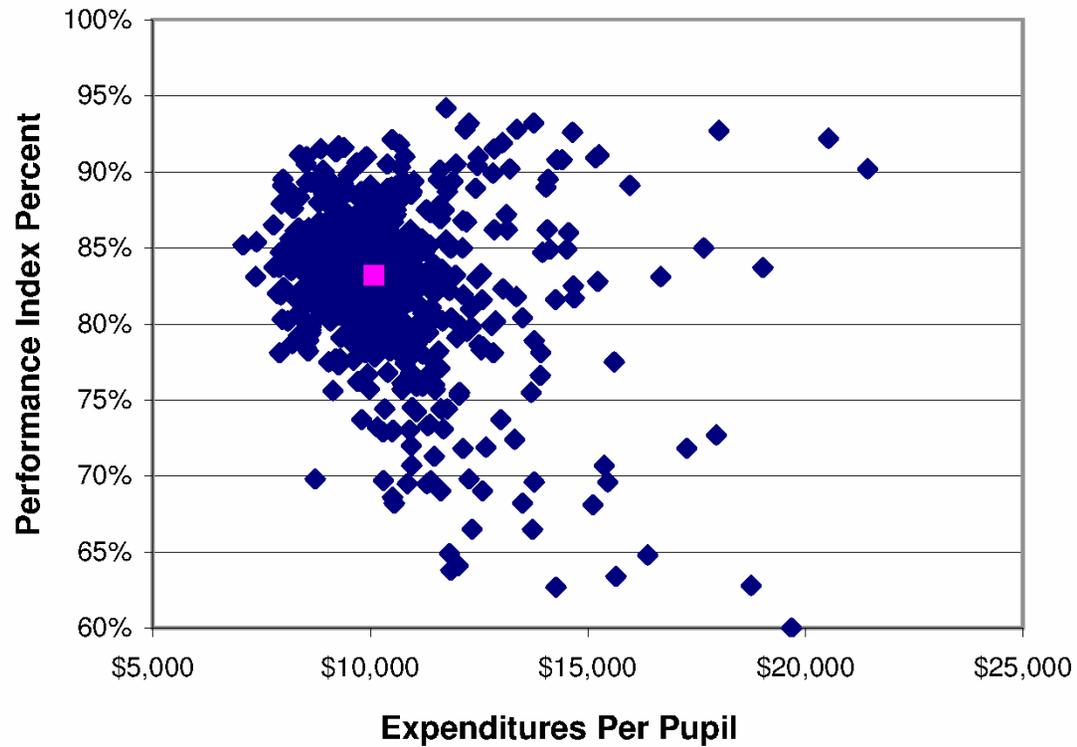


The Cato Institute last year studied all 50 states and found the same result, namely that each year more money is being spent, and we have nothing to show for it.¹

It is also supported by the work of Dr. Eric Hanushek of Stanford, who has spent a lifetime analyzing school economics and the factors which contribute to superior student learning and outcomes.²

Furthermore, a recent study of New York schools by Princeton professor Dr. Will Dobbie showed that factors assumed to be critical in determining student outcomes really weren't all that important, that other specific policies applied within the schools were far more influential.³

Figure 2: Performance Index Percent as a Function of Expenditures Per Pupil - 2014



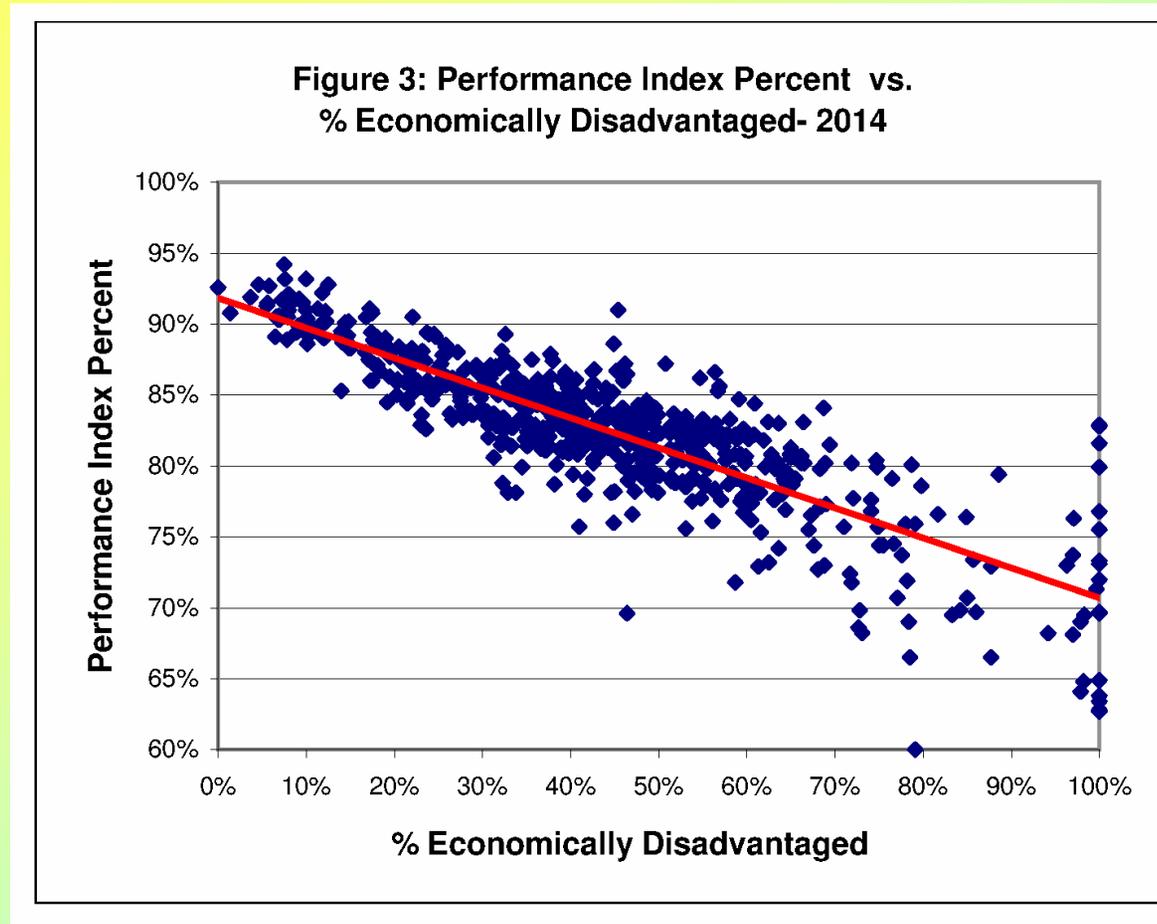
Let's compare the districts.

There is a wide range of expenditures and resulting student performance.

Why is that?

Some policy analysts claim that it's due to student demographics, that poorer districts and those with a higher population of students with special needs and English language learners require more money – because these students cost more to teach.

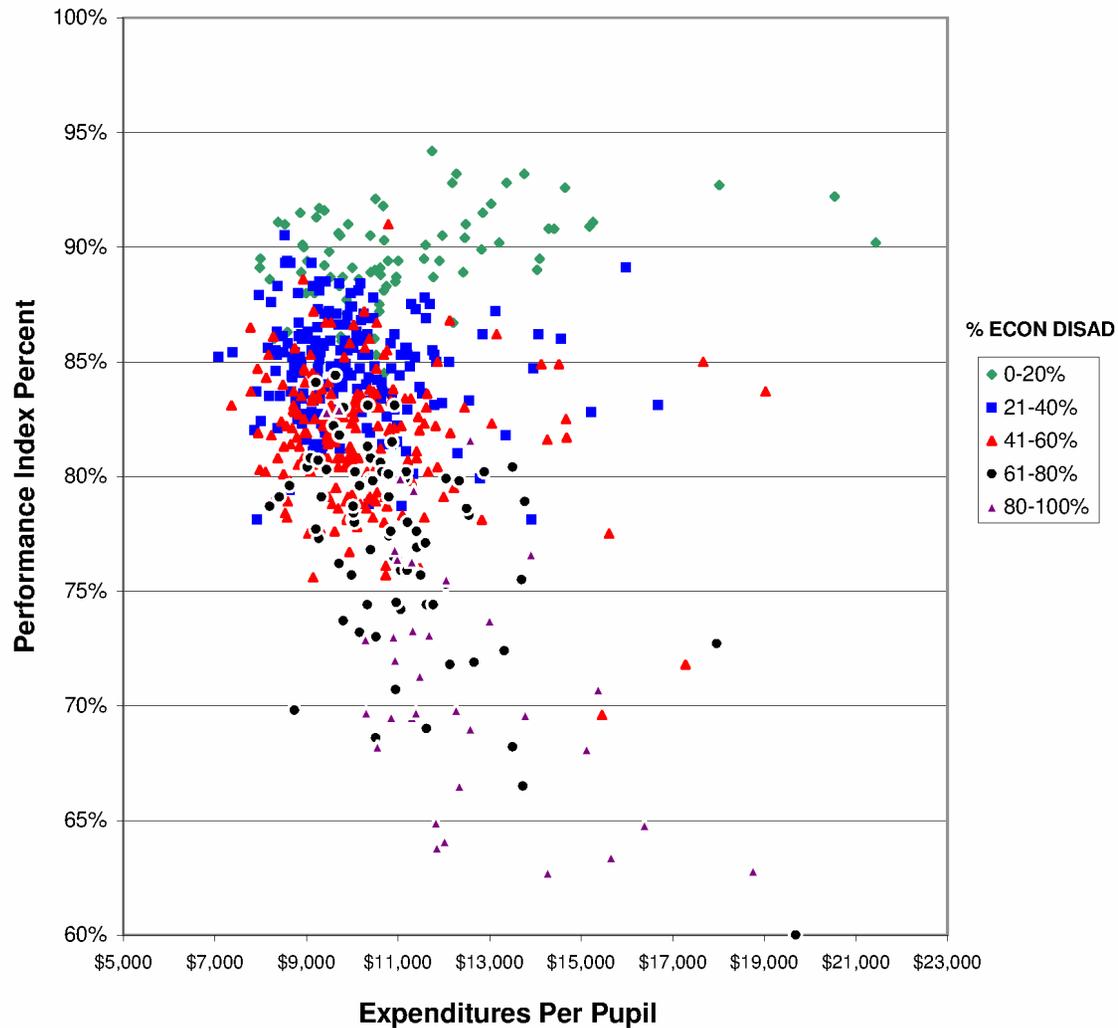
Unfortunately, though, they don't define what "teaching" actually means in terms of results. Nowhere do they address whether this increased funding produces student outcomes comparable to districts without these challenges, just that more money is needed.



Indeed, there IS a relationship between academic performance and economic status.

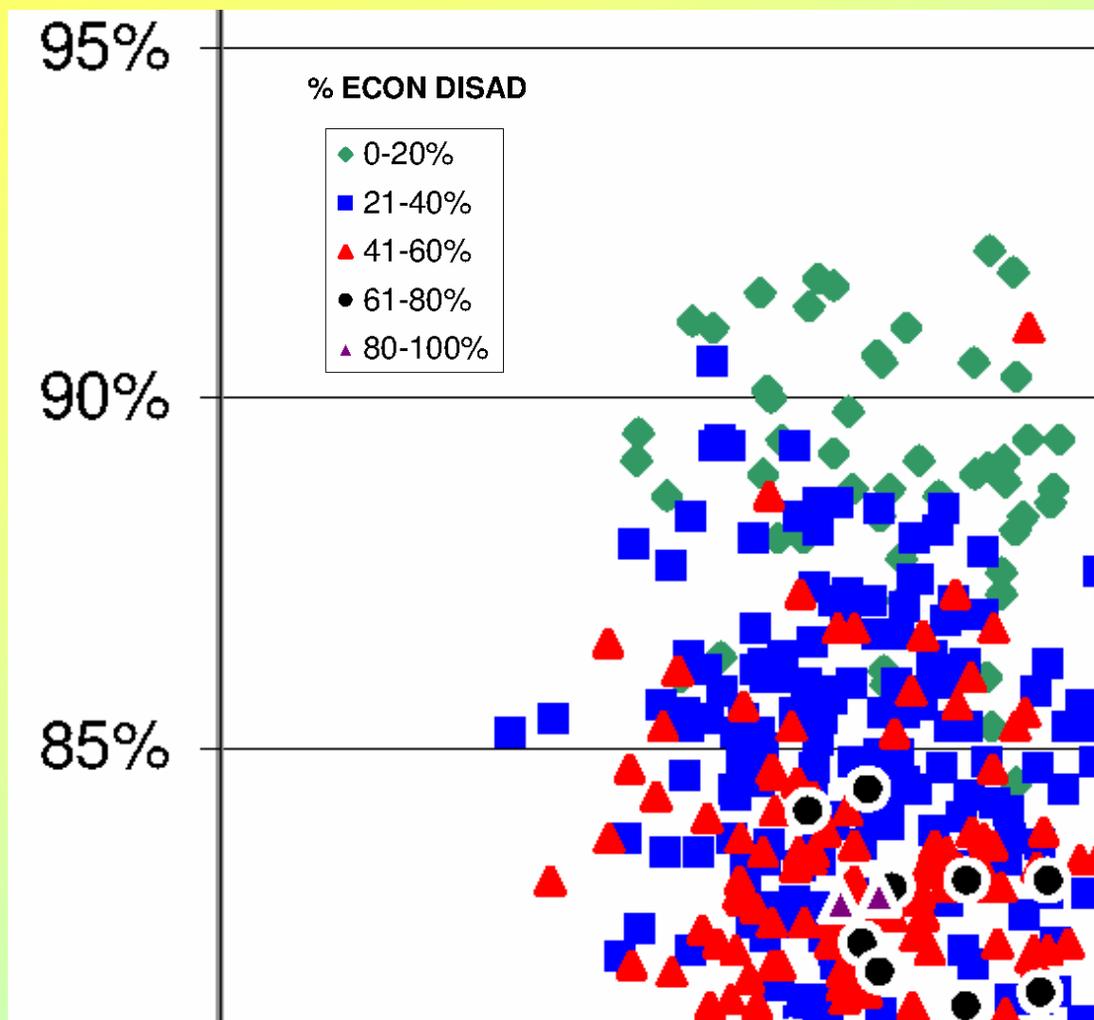
So ... given that districts' economic status varies, how much money does a district REALLY need to spend to achieve superior student outcomes?

Figure 4: Performance Index Percent as a Function of Expenditures Per Pupil - 2014



Here is the same plot as before, but with the districts color-coded to reflect the percentage of students categorized as economically disadvantaged.

Let's take a look at the superior districts – those who are achieving the highest student performance with the fewest dollars and who are in the upper left hand corner – in more detail.

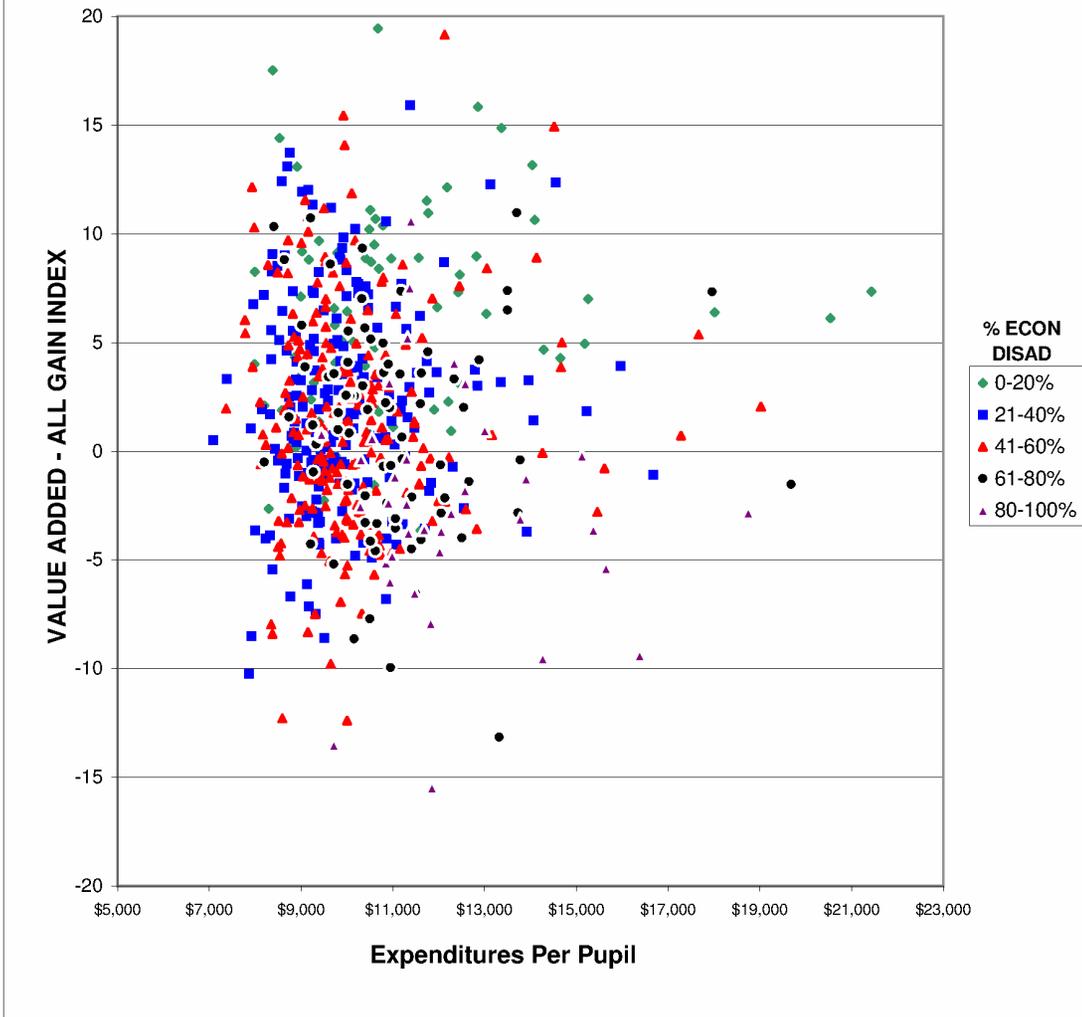


Here's an enlargement showing the superior districts.

Note that there are some poorer districts among them, namely the black circles, purple triangles, and some of the red triangles. They have been able to achieve above average results with per pupil expenditures significantly below the Ohio average – despite the economic status of their students.

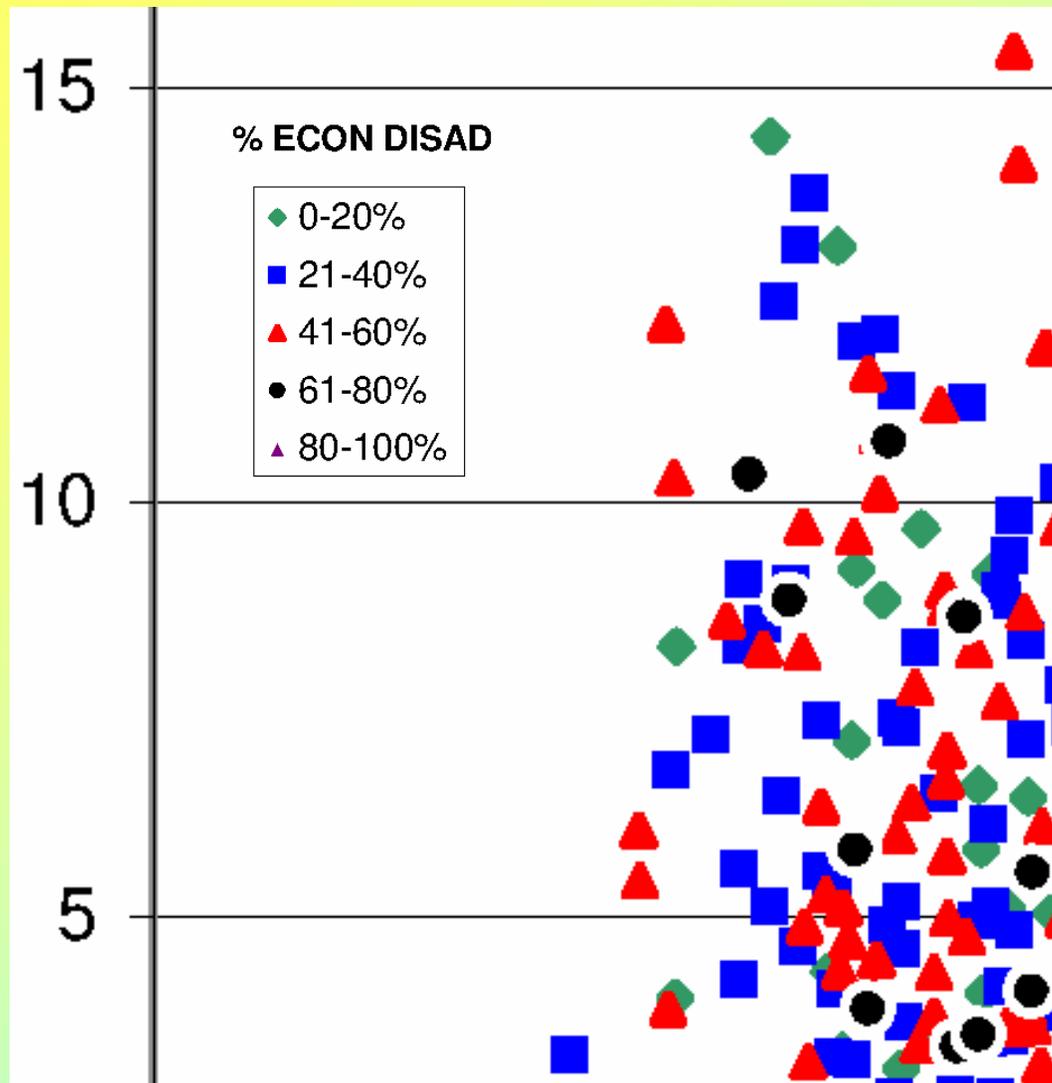
Who are they and how are they doing it?

Figure 5: Value Added All Gain Index as a Function of Expenditures Per Pupil - 2014



The same plot can be generated for another performance measure known as “Value Added.”

This is a measure of student academic growth, with a value of zero indicating that one year’s worth of growth was achieved in one year.



And again, there are poorer districts – those represented by the black circles – which have achieved superior results with lower-than-average expenditures per pupil.

There are also many red triangle districts which have outperformed.

Who are they and how did they accomplish this?

Here's the bottom line.

We can't keep asking taxpayers for more and more money, when district per pupil expenditures have been growing far faster than their incomes and inflation, and when the districts can't show that higher expenditures necessarily result in improved student outcomes.

As it stands now, there is little or no accountability.

All students and taxpayers would benefit from focusing on **HOW** the money is spent rather than how **MUCH**, to study the "superior districts" as well as the body of research on what factors **REALLY** contribute to student outcomes and school effectiveness, and to share what we've learned with all districts so they can consider incorporating them to achieve superior student outcomes with less money.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

Vicki Kerman
Cardington, OH

info@compareohioschools.org

(419) 946-1505

References:

¹The Cato Institute, *State Education Trends, 2013*. Sourced from <http://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/state-education-trends>

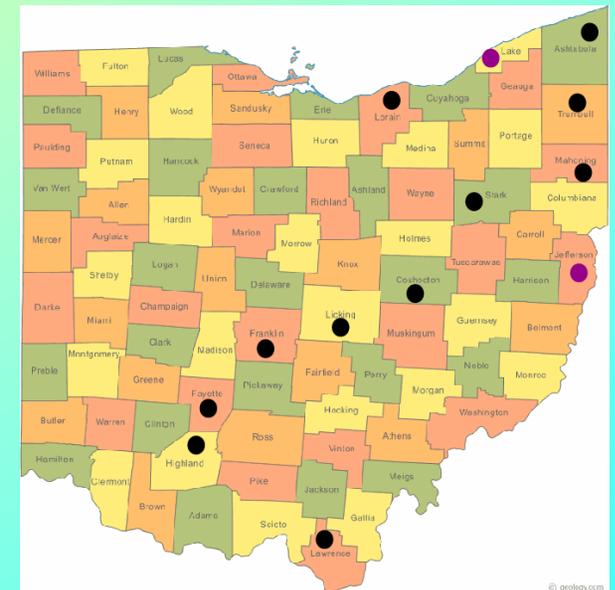
²Dr. Eric Hanushek, Stanford University, <http://hanushek.stanford.edu/>
Specifically, *Assessing the Effects of School Resources on Student Performance*, <http://epa.sagepub.com/content/19/2/141.short> and
Leading Matters, <http://hoorferl.stanford.edu/presentations/hanushek-hoxby/viewer.swf>

³Dobbie, William and Roland Fryer, Jr., *Getting Behind the Veil of Effective Schools, 2013*. Sourced from <http://scholar.princeton.edu/wdobbie/publications/getting-Beneath-Veil-Effective-Schools-Evidence-New-York-City>

The "Superstar" Districts, 2014

Districts with: >60% Economically Disadvantaged
Above Average Performance Index and/or Value Added Gain
Less than Average Expenditures Per Pupil

DISTRICT	EXPEN PER PUPIL	PERF INDEX %	VALUE ADDED	% ECON DISAD	% DISAB
Steubenville (Jefferson)	\$9,445	83	-13.5	100	11
Fairport Harbor (Lake)	9,715	83	.8	100	17
LaBrae Local (Trumbull)	9,638	84	8.6	61	16
Hamilton Local (Franklin)	9,214	84	10.7	69	10
Pymatuning Local (Ashtabula)	9,814	83	1.8	64	15
Washington Courthouse City	8,413	79	10.3	66	20
Clearview (Lorain)	8,638	80	8.0	65	11
Hillsboro City (Highland)	9,018	80	5.8	63	14
Massilon (Stark)	10,033	78	5.5	65	17
Coshocton (Coshocton)	10,025	79	4.2	65	20
Struthers City (Mahoning)	9,090	81	3.9	63	13
Newark (Licking)	9,722	82	3.6	62	18
Ironton (Lawrence)	9,600	82	3.4	61	15
OHIO DISTRICTS AVG	10,225	83	2.1	44	13



These are just the black circles and purple triangles. There are also some red triangles in the 41-60% Economically Disadvantaged range which are worth studying as well because of their performance and expenditure levels.