

Parent Resource: the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice.

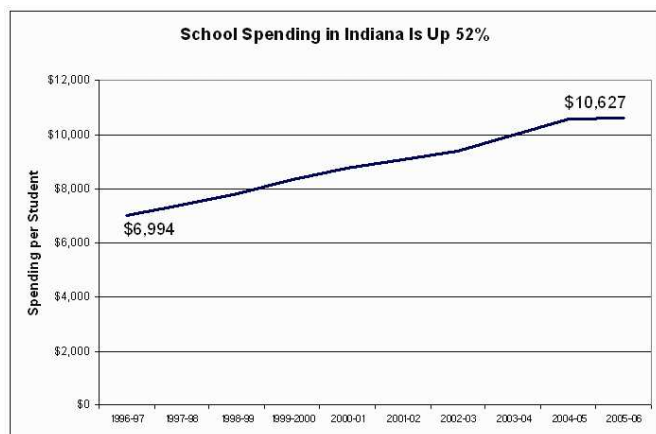


Advance America has partnered with many groups and organizations in fighting for better schools and education. One key Indiana resource is the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice. Based in Indianapolis, this national organization was established by Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman and his wife Rose D. Friedman.

The Friedman's believe that the best way to improve the quality of elementary and secondary education is to **give all parents the freedom to choose** the schools – whether they be public, private, religious, charter, or home schools – which work best for their children. Milton Friedman first articulated and applied this idea of liberty and free markets to our education system in 1955. He believed that parents, not government bureaucrats, are best equipped to make decisions regarding their child's education. In keeping with that ideal, the Foundation works to educate the public on the benefits of common sense education reform policies across the country which **reduce government control of schools and which vests more power within parents.**



In order to improve education in Indiana, parents could benefit from programs that give them more freedom in the education of their children. Innovative programs and policies, such as educational tax credits, opportunity scholarships, and vouchers are among the kinds of policies that other states have recently enacted. The Foundation works with parent groups, research



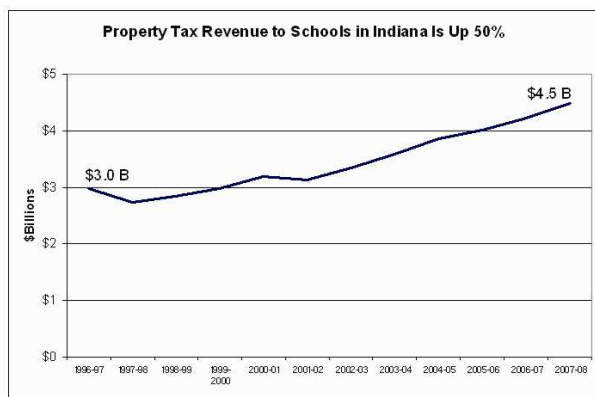
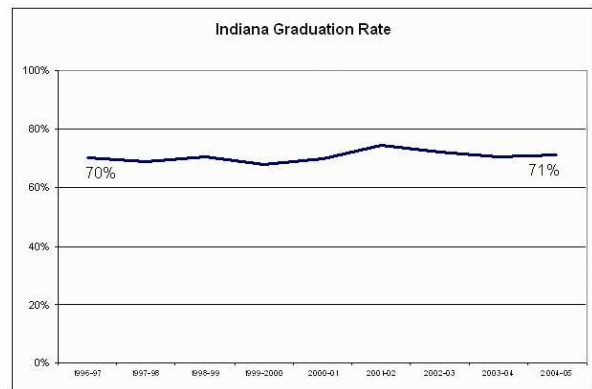
organizations, and other advocates to help make the case for these important parent-empowering policies.

Indiana parents need a better return on our property tax investment in education

The Friedman Foundation does extensive research and analysis on state educational spending and policies. A recent report

examined the huge (\$ 4.5 billion) investment Indiana taxpayers have made in the public education system, and the relatively paltry returns the system has produced. In less than ten

years, school spending in Indiana has increased by 52 percent, yet the system has barely made any improvements in student performance. Test scores and graduation rates have remained essentially flat. What's worse, in urban schools, the research indicates that fewer than half of the students actually graduate. A recent study reports that Indianapolis Public Schools graduate just 30.5 percent of students (Promise Alliance '08).



A recent Friedman Foundation study found that total **property tax revenue going to schools is up by 50 percent in the last decade**, increasing from \$3 billion in 1996-97 to \$4.5 billion in 2007-2008. Much of the growth in property tax revenue has gone to finance increased debt, such as school bonds, amid growth in spending on the purchase and construction of school buildings.

Consequently, very little new money actually makes it into the classroom. These **skyrocketing taxes are paid by all property owners** - regardless of whether or not they have children in the public school system. A more equitable school funding system would allow parents to choose where their child is educated and would ensure that their hard earned tax dollars follow their child to the school of their choice.

As Indiana legislators and taxpayers weigh the merits of property tax reform and education spending, they should review the data on the amount already invested as well as the return on that investment. Years of increased education spending have not been matched by corresponding progress in academic outcomes and crippling property tax bills have been the only noticeable outcome. It's time for common sense education reform - Hoosier taxpayers deserve a better return on their investment.