

Arizona Auditor General

Arizona School District Spending Report

Fiscal Year 2023

This document provides a text-based representation of the numbers and other information presented in the graphics on Safford Unified School District's summary results. All data is for fiscal year 2023 unless otherwise noted.

District demographic information

District name: Safford Unified School District

County: Graham

Operational peer group: 4

Transportation peer group: 6

Achievement peer group: 3

Legislative district(s): 6 and 19

Location: Town

Number of schools: 6

Students attending: 2,803

Size: Medium-large

5-year change in students attending: 4% decrease

Special education population: 17%

English learner population: 1%

Poverty rate for fiscal year 2022: 13%

Graduation rate for fiscal year 2022: 83%

District's spending by operational area

Every year, school districts must decide where to allocate their resources. This pie chart shows how Safford Unified School District spent its funding by operational area, including the percentage it spent in the classroom and specifically on instruction.

We categorize districts with certain similar qualities into peer groups in order to help create meaningful comparisons across districts. Safford Unified School District's peer group had an average instructional spending percentage of 52.6%. This number can help provide context for Safford Unified School District's own instructional spending percentage.

Pie chart showing district spending by operational area

Classroom spending, which includes instruction, student support, and instruction support spending: 72.6%

Instruction: 63.8%

Student support: 5.8%

Instruction support: 3.0%

Nonclassroom spending, which includes administration, plant operations, food service, and transportation spending: 27.4%

Administration: 10.8%
Plant operations: 10.2%
Food service: 3.2%
Transportation: 3.2%

Instructional spending percentage highlights (fiscal years 2001-2023)

We have monitored instructional spending since fiscal year 2001. Below are highlights from Safford Unified School District's instructional spending trend showing the most recent year-to-year change and the years it spent its highest and lowest percentages on instruction. Reviewing these instructional spending percentage highlights can provide insight into short-term (year-to-year comparison) and long-term (highest and lowest comparison) trends of a district's allocation of monies to instruction. Depending on how much a district spends in total, even small changes in a district's percentage spent on instruction can equate to large changes in the actual dollars the district spent.

List of the District's instructional spending percentage for the 2 most recent fiscal years, as well as its highest and lowest instructional spending percentages between fiscal years 2001 and 2023

Fiscal year 2022 instructional spending percentage: 63.7%
Fiscal year 2023 instructional spending percentage: 63.8%
Fiscal year of highest instructional spending percentage: 2021
Highest instructional spending percentage: 66.8%
Fiscal year of lowest instructional spending percentage: 2005
Lowest instructional spending percentage: 58.1%

Why monitor school district spending?

Most school district funding is based on the number of students attending, and districts can choose how to spend most funding, so every decision a school district makes to spend on one operational area directly impacts its ability to spend on another. For example, if a district has higher spending in food service, it will have fewer dollars to spend on instruction.

The bar chart below, "Percentage point change in spending by area," illustrates how Safford Unified School District's spending by area has changed from the prior year and 5 years ago.

To put the spending percentages in context, it also can be helpful to review a district's per student spending in dollars. For example, 2 districts may spend the same percentage of their resources on instruction, but on a per student basis, 1 district may spend hundreds or even thousands of dollars more than the other.

Bar chart showing the percentage point change in spending by area (fiscal year 2018 versus fiscal year 2023)

Change in classroom spending, which includes instruction, student support, and instruction support: -1.1%
Instruction: -1.2%
Student support: 0.2%
Instruction support: -0.1%

Change in nonclassroom spending, which includes administration, plant operations, food service, and transportation: 1.1%
Administration: -0.6%
Plant operations: 2.7%
Food service: -1.3%
Transportation: 0.3%

Bar chart showing the percentage point change in spending by area (fiscal year 2022 versus fiscal year 2023)

Change in classroom spending, which includes instruction, student support, and instruction support: 0.6%

Instruction: 0.1%
Student support: 0.2%
Instruction support: 0.3%

Change in nonclassroom spending, which includes administration, plant operations, food service, and transportation: -0.6%
Administration: -0.4%
Plant operations: 0.9%
Food service: -1.8%
Transportation: 0.7%

Table showing per student spending by area

Operational spending

Fiscal year 2022 district instruction per student spending: \$5,922
Fiscal year 2023 district instruction per student spending: \$6,306
One year change in district instruction per student spending: \$384
Fiscal year 2023 peer average instruction per student spending: \$5,523
Difference from peer average for district instruction per student spending: \$783
Fiscal year 2023 State average instruction per student spending: \$6,253
Difference from State average for district instruction per student spending: \$53
Fiscal year 2022 district student support per student spending: \$518
Fiscal year 2023 district student support per student spending: \$573
One year change in district student support per student spending: \$55
Fiscal year 2023 peer average student support per student spending: \$947
Difference from peer average for district student support per student spending: -\$374
Fiscal year 2023 State average student support per student spending: \$1,108
Difference from State average for district student support per student spending: -\$535
Fiscal year 2022 district instruction support per student spending: \$247
Fiscal year 2023 district instruction support per student spending: \$303
One year change in district instruction support per student spending: \$56
Fiscal year 2023 peer average instruction support per student spending: \$626
Difference from peer average for district instruction support per student spending: -\$323
Fiscal year 2023 State average instruction support per student spending: \$717
Difference from State average for district instruction support per student spending: -\$414
Fiscal year 2022 district administration per student spending: \$1,043
Fiscal year 2023 district administration per student spending: \$1,069

One year change in district administration per student spending: \$26
Fiscal year 2023 peer average administration per student spending: \$1,111
Difference from peer average for district administration per student spending: -\$42
Fiscal year 2023 State average administration per student spending: \$1,207
Difference from State average for district administration per student spending: -\$138
Fiscal year 2022 district plant operations per student spending: \$859
Fiscal year 2023 district plant operations per student spending: \$1,008
One year change in district plant operations per student spending: \$149
Fiscal year 2023 peer average plant operations per student spending: \$1,314
Difference from peer average for district plant operations per student spending: -\$306
Fiscal year 2023 State average plant operations per student spending: \$1,363
Difference from State average for district plant operations per student spending: -\$355
Fiscal year 2022 district food service per student spending: \$468
Fiscal year 2023 district food service per student spending: \$313
One year change in district food service per student spending: -\$155
Fiscal year 2023 peer average food service per student spending: \$469
Difference from peer average for district food service per student spending: -\$156
Fiscal year 2023 State average food service per student spending: \$523
Difference from State average for district food service per student spending: -\$210
Fiscal year 2022 district transportation per student spending: \$235
Fiscal year 2023 district transportation per student spending: \$317
One year change in district transportation per student spending: \$82
Fiscal year 2023 peer average transportation per student spending: \$517
Difference from peer average for district transportation per student spending: -\$200
Fiscal year 2023 State average transportation per student spending: \$532
Difference from State average for district transportation per student spending: -\$215
Fiscal year 2022 district total operational per student spending: \$9,292
Fiscal year 2023 district total operational per student spending: \$9,889
One year change in district total operational per student spending: \$597
Fiscal year 2023 peer average total operational per student spending: \$10,507
Difference from peer average for district total operational per student spending: -\$618
Fiscal year 2023 State average total operational per student spending: \$11,703
Difference from State average for district total operational per student spending: -\$1,814

Nonoperational spending

Fiscal year 2022 district land and buildings per student spending: \$2,141
Fiscal year 2023 district land and buildings per student spending: \$2,630
One year change in district land and buildings per student spending: \$489
Fiscal year 2023 peer average land and buildings per student spending: \$2,037
Difference from peer average for district land and buildings per student spending: \$593
Fiscal year 2023 State average land and buildings per student spending: \$1,531
Difference from State average for district land and buildings per student spending: \$1,099
Fiscal year 2022 district equipment per student spending: \$406
Fiscal year 2023 district equipment per student spending: \$425
One year change in district equipment per student spending: \$19
Fiscal year 2023 peer average equipment per student spending: \$811

Difference from peer average for district equipment per student spending: -\$386
 Fiscal year 2023 State average equipment per student spending: \$852
 Difference from State average for district equipment per student spending: -\$427
 Fiscal year 2022 district interest per student spending: \$44
 Fiscal year 2023 district interest per student spending: \$37
 One year change in district interest per student spending: -\$7
 Fiscal year 2023 peer average interest per student spending: \$167
 Difference from peer average for district interest per student spending: -\$130
 Fiscal year 2023 State average interest per student spending: \$286
 Difference from State average for district interest per student spending: -\$249
 Fiscal year 2022 district other per student spending: \$29
 Fiscal year 2023 district other per student spending: \$38
 One year change in district other per student spending: \$9
 Fiscal year 2023 peer average other per student spending: \$80
 Difference from peer average for district other per student spending: -\$42
 Fiscal year 2023 State average other per student spending: \$257
 Difference from State average for district other per student spending: -\$219
 Fiscal year 2022 district total nonoperational per student spending: \$2,620
 Fiscal year 2023 district total nonoperational per student spending: \$3,130
 One year change in district total nonoperational per student spending: \$510
 Fiscal year 2023 peer average total nonoperational per student spending: \$3,095
 Difference from peer average for district total nonoperational per student spending: \$35
 Fiscal year 2023 State average total nonoperational per student spending: \$2,926
 Difference from State average for district total nonoperational per student spending: \$204

Spending totals

Fiscal year 2022 district total per student spending: \$11,912
 Fiscal year 2023 district total per student spending: \$13,019
 One year change in district total per student spending: \$1,107
 Fiscal year 2023 peer average total per student spending: \$13,602
 Difference from peer average for district total per student spending: -\$583
 Fiscal year 2023 State average total per student spending: \$14,629
 Difference from State average for district total per student spending: -\$1,610

Operational efficiency measures

Performance measures, such as those shown below, can be used in addition to instructional spending percentage to assess a district's operational efficiency. We have classified the District's spending relative to its peer districts' average as very low, low, comparable, high, very high, or N/A (not available or applicable). High or very high spending when compared to peer averages may signify an opportunity for improved efficiency in that area. A district's data may not be available or applicable if it did not operate a program in that operational area. For example, not all districts operate food service or transportation programs.

Table showing operational efficiency measures relative to peer averages

Operational area—Administration

State average administration spending per student: \$1,207

Peer average administration spending per student: \$1,111
District administration spending per student: \$1,069
District's administration spending per student relative to peer average: Comparable
State average students per administrative position: 62
Peer average students per administrative position: 68
District students per administrative position: 65

Operational area—Plant operations

State average plant operations spending per square foot: \$8.05
Peer average plant operations spending per square foot: \$7.49
District plant operations spending per square foot: \$5.85
District's plant operations spending per square foot relative to peer average: Very Low
State average square footage per student: 169
Peer average square footage per student: 177
District square footage per student: 172

Operational area—Food service

State average food service spending per meal: \$4.12
Peer average food service spending per meal: \$4.01
District food service spending per meal: \$2.96
District's food service spending per meal relative to peer average: Very Low
State average meals per student: 128
Peer average meals per student: 121
District meals per student: 106

Operational area—Transportation

Transportation performance measures are compared using different peer groups because we have found there are other factors, such as the number of miles a district averages for each rider, that impact transportation spending.

State average transportation spending per mile: \$6.19
Peer average transportation spending per mile: \$5.70
District transportation spending per mile: \$5.34
District's transportation spending per mile relative to peer average: Low
State average transportation spending per rider: \$2,039
Peer average transportation spending per rider: \$1,194
District transportation spending per rider: \$1,236
District's transportation spending per rider relative to peer average: Comparable

Why monitor average teacher salary?

Teacher salaries are one of a school district's most substantial costs and have been a topic of high interest in recent years in Arizona. Therefore, we have expanded our reporting on average teacher salary in FY 2023 to provide additional information based on stakeholder feedback. The breakdown below shows Safford Unified School District's average teacher salary and amount from Classroom Site Fund (CSF) monies as we have reported in prior years. In FY 2023, we have also reported the average base salary for teachers depending on their years of experience. This differs from the average teacher

salary. Specifically, average base salary represents the average of only base salaries paid to the teachers within the presented categories of years of experience, meaning it does not reflect additional pay teachers may receive, such as performance pay and stipends or additions to base pay unrelated to additional duties. Neither the average teacher salary nor the average base salary includes payments for additional nonteaching duties a teacher may perform for additional pay, such as tutoring, cocurricular activities, or athletics. A district's average base salary may not be available if the District did not have teachers during the fiscal year for one of the categories of years of experience. For some districts, the data did not meet our criteria for reporting, which is indicated by NR (not reliable).

The additional teacher salary information we report this year can provide a better picture of how a district pays its teachers. For example, if a district has a large difference between the average base salary for teachers in their first 3 years and the average base salary of teachers in their 4th year or later, it indicates that the district's salary schedule provides additional base compensation to teachers as they gain additional teaching experience. If the district's total average teacher salary is substantially higher than the base salary amounts, it indicates that the district pays teachers more in performance pay and one-time payments than a district whose overall average teacher salary is similar to its base salary amounts. Further, not all districts recognize a teacher's classroom experience outside of their school district when determining a teacher's pay. The graphic below indicates whether the district reported recognizing classroom experience outside of the district, and if so, whether the district reported compensating teachers for classroom experience through placement on the district's salary schedule, meaning the teacher's experience resulted in a higher base pay, and/or by making additional payments to teachers in addition to their base pay, such as a stipend.

Additionally, it is important to consider the proportion of experienced teachers in a district's teacher population, which can impact a district's average teacher salary. For example, a district's total average teacher salary may have decreased since the prior year if its most experienced teachers have left district employment and the district has hired less experienced teachers to replace them. Smaller districts generally have more variation in average teacher salary and other teacher measures due to their smaller teacher population where replacing one experienced teacher with a less experienced teacher can have a more substantial year-to-year impact on reported amounts.

District average teacher salary and other measures (fiscal year 2023)

Average teacher salary: \$67,349

Amount from CSF: \$12,781

District average salary compared to the State average: \$4,415

District reported that it paid any of its teachers for prior classroom experience outside the District: Yes
If so, the district reported these payments were made:

 Included in base salary by being accounted for with salary schedule placement: Yes

 In addition to, but separate from, base salary: No

Average years of teacher experience: 10.7

Percentage of teachers in first 3 years: 19%

Average base salary of teachers in their first 3 years: \$42,294

Percentage of teachers in their 4th year or later: 81%

Average base salary of teachers in their 4th year or later: \$73,134

Students per teacher: 19.1

Districts received additional State monies intended to increase average teacher salary

In FYs 2018 through 2021, the State provided additional monies to districts to increase teacher salaries by 20 percent from the FY 2017 base year. The bar chart below shows how Safford Unified School District's average teacher salary changed during this time frame and immediately after the annual State increases from FYs 2018 through 2021 ended, as well as how it compared to the State-wide average. Additionally, the chart shows the portion of the District's average teacher salary paid with CSF monies.

We have also included a table that displays other student- and teacher-related measures that may provide additional context regarding changes to Safford Unified School District's average teacher salary during this timeframe. For instance, changes in a district's teacher population can impact the district's average teacher salary.

Bar chart and table showing average teacher salary and other measures

Fiscal year 2017 district average teacher salary: \$53,549

Fiscal year 2018 district average teacher salary: \$56,135

Fiscal year 2019 district average teacher salary: \$54,367

Fiscal year 2020 district average teacher salary: \$62,850

Fiscal year 2021 district average teacher salary: \$66,136

Fiscal year 2022 district average teacher salary: \$75,384

Fiscal year 2023 district average teacher salary: \$67,349

Fiscal year 2017 district amount from CSF: \$5,452

Fiscal year 2018 district amount from CSF: \$6,757

Fiscal year 2019 district amount from CSF: \$7,506

Fiscal year 2020 district amount from CSF: \$7,217

Fiscal year 2021 district amount from CSF: \$6,002

Fiscal year 2022 district amount from CSF: \$12,761

Fiscal year 2023 district amount from CSF: \$12,781

Fiscal year 2017 State average teacher salary: \$48,372

Fiscal year 2018 State average teacher salary: \$48,951

Fiscal year 2019 State average teacher salary: \$52,441

Fiscal year 2020 State average teacher salary: \$54,814

Fiscal year 2021 State average teacher salary: \$56,349

Fiscal year 2022 State average teacher salary: \$58,366

Fiscal year 2023 State average teacher salary: \$62,934

Fiscal year 2017 district students per teacher: 18.2

Fiscal year 2018 district students per teacher: 19.2

Fiscal year 2019 district students per teacher: 17.4

Fiscal year 2020 district students per teacher: 18.4

Fiscal year 2021 district students per teacher: 16.8

Fiscal year 2022 district students per teacher: 21.3

Fiscal year 2023 district students per teacher: 19.1

Fiscal year 2017 district average years of teacher experience: 13.7

Fiscal year 2018 district average years of teacher experience: 13.8
Fiscal year 2019 district average years of teacher experience: 13.9
Fiscal year 2020 district average years of teacher experience: 15.2
Fiscal year 2021 district average years of teacher experience: 14.6
Fiscal year 2022 district average years of teacher experience: 13.3
Fiscal year 2023 district average years of teacher experience: 10.7
Fiscal year 2017 district percentage of teachers in first 3 years: 15%
Fiscal year 2018 district percentage of teachers in first 3 years: 20%
Fiscal year 2019 district percentage of teachers in first 3 years: 19%
Fiscal year 2020 district percentage of teachers in first 3 years: 9%
Fiscal year 2021 district percentage of teachers in first 3 years: 17%
Fiscal year 2022 district percentage of teachers in first 3 years: 15%
Fiscal year 2023 district percentage of teachers in first 3 years: 19%

Student achievement

For FY 2023, we present an achievement peer group weighted average and the State average for comparison to the individual districts' percentage of students who passed State assessments in Math, English Language Arts (ELA), and Science assessments. We report a passage rate consistent with ADE's publicly available data file, and therefore, some individual districts' results may not be available due to ADE's redaction standards. For FY 2023, we also present an achievement peer group weighted average and the State average for comparison.

Additionally, we have included the district's percentage passing for each of the past 5 fiscal years, excluding FYs 2020 and 2021, for Math, ELA, and Science assessments. In FYs 2020 and 2021 State assessment testing was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with school districts being exempted from conducting State assessments in FY 2020 and not all eligible students participating in FY 2021.

Bar charts showing student assessment passage rates

Fiscal year 2019 district Math passage rate: 45%
Fiscal year 2020 district Math passage rate: N/A
Fiscal year 2021 district Math passage rate: N/A
Fiscal year 2022 district Math passage rate: 35%
Fiscal year 2023 district Math passage rate: 32%
Fiscal year 2023 peer Math passage rate: 27%
Fiscal year 2023 State Math passage rate: 34%
Fiscal year 2019 district English Language Arts passage rate: 41%
Fiscal year 2020 district English Language Arts passage rate: N/A
Fiscal year 2021 district English Language Arts passage rate: N/A
Fiscal year 2022 district English Language Arts passage rate: 38%
Fiscal year 2023 district English Language Arts passage rate: 36%
Fiscal year 2023 peer English Language Arts passage rate: 33%
Fiscal year 2023 State English Language Arts passage rate: 40%
Fiscal year 2019 district Science passage rate: 50%
Fiscal year 2020 district Science passage rate: N/A
Fiscal year 2021 district Science passage rate: N/A

Fiscal year 2022 district Science passage rate: 22%

Fiscal year 2023 district Science passage rate: 22%

Fiscal year 2023 peer Science passage rate: 23%

Fiscal year 2023 State Science passage rate: 27%