

Interpreting the Results of ECF's Cost Calculator

The Education Consumers Foundation's cost calculator allows you to enter basic information about your school or district, including location, number of students, and 3rd grade reading proficiency rates, and calculate the future costs of inadequate reading instruction over their working lifetimes. This walkthrough will help you interpret the inputs and outputs from this tool.

I. Input Page

To use the calculator:

1. Select your state and county. Costs are adjusted for your area.
2. Select your state, district, and school.
3. The calculator displays:
 - Level of reading proficiency
 - Percent of students at the **BELOW-BASIC** level
4. Select a simple or detailed report and click results.

Note: If you need help finding your school or district, visit [NCES' School Finder](#). For other assistance, email calculator@education-consumers.org.

State:

County:

School District:

School:

Number of 3rd grade students:

Percent of students at **BASIC** proficiency:

Percent of students at **BELOW-BASIC** proficiency:

Simple report: Detailed report:

Cost of living is adjusted by county

Total number of 3rd grade students reported by state education agency

The National Assessment of Educational Progress uses the terms **BASIC** and **BELOW-BASIC** to describe the two levels of reading proficiency that are below grade level. Studies show that 7% **BASIC** and 3% **BELOW-BASIC** are attainable. Most states use these or similar terms but because the rigor of their exams varies widely, comparisons across states can be misleading. For more, see <http://education-consumers.org/NAEP.htm>

The simple report contains input percentages, numbers of predictable dropouts and unprepared students, and summary cost estimates. The detailed report breaks costs down into categories of public assistance at the local, state, and federal levels.

II. Simple Output Report

State: TN
County: KNOX COUNTY
School District: Knox County
School: District-wide

Summary of input data

Calculations Based on the Following:

Third grade students enrolled	4471
Percent reading at BASIC level	36.5
Percent reading at BELOW-BASIC level	10

Projection of Dropouts and Unprepared Graduates

Percentage of **BASIC + BELOW-BASIC** 3rd graders who will drop out or graduate unprepared.

Number of dropouts	250
Number of unprepared graduates	1138
Total Dropouts+Unprepared	1388
As a percent of BASIC + BELOW-BASIC readers	67%

Total Cost of Dropouts:

Cost per Dropout	\$93,413
Total cost of dropouts in this class	\$23,325,727

Total Cost of Unprepared Graduates:

Cost per unprepared graduate	\$28,780
Total cost of unprepared graduates in this class	\$35,942,257

Unprepared graduates add smaller per person costs but are far more numerous than dropouts.

Total Cost, all Students:

Total cost of dropouts & unprepared students in this class	\$59,267,984
--	--------------

Costs shown here are for a single graduating class. Costs for succeeding classes cumulate and add to total fiscal burden.

III. Detailed Output Report

State: TN
 County: KNOX COUNTY
 School District: Knox County
 School: District-wide

Calculations are Based on the Following:
 Third grade students enrolled : 4471
 Percent reading at **BASIC** level: 36.5
 Percent reading at **BELOW-BASIC** level : 10

Projected Dropouts and Unprepared Graduates:

DROPOUTS	250
UNPREPARED GRADUATES	1138
Total DROPOUTS + UNPREPARED	1388
As a percent of BASIC + BELOW-BASIC readers	67%

Percentage of **BASIC + BELOW-BASIC** 3rd graders who will drop out or graduate unprepared.

State/local costs are adjusted for cost of living; federal costs are not.

Added Public Spending for Dropouts & Unprepared¹

Dropout Costs:	State/Local	Federal	Total
Healthcare	\$19,647	\$40,250	\$59,897
Public Safety	\$16,541	\$14,350	\$30,891
Welfare	\$2,652	\$14,020	\$16,672
Education ²	-\$11,987	-\$2,060	-\$14,047
Cost per Dropout	\$26,853	\$66,560	\$93,413
Total cost of Dropouts in this class	\$6,705,339	\$16,620,388	\$23,325,727

Unprepared Graduate Costs ³	State/Local	Federal	Total
Healthcare	\$4,861	\$10,190	\$15,051
Public Safety	\$8,273	\$7,170	\$15,443
Welfare	\$522	\$2,750	\$3,272
Education	-\$4,406	-\$580	-\$4,986
Cost per Unprepared Graduate	\$9,250	\$10,520	\$19,770
Total Cost of Unprepared Graduates in this class	\$11,552,024	\$12,762,360	\$24,314,384

Unprepared graduates add smaller per person costs but are far more numerous than dropouts.

TOTALS	State/Local	Federal	Total
Total Cost of Dropouts & Unprepared Graduates in this class.	\$18,257,363	\$41,010,621	\$59,267,984
Avg. Added Expense per Enrolled 3rd Grade Student⁴	\$4,084	\$9,173	\$13,256

Costs shown here are per 3rd grader enrolled in this school or district. Numbers permit users to compare schools and districts within a state as to the cost-effectiveness of their K-3 reading instruction. Ineffective instruction yields a higher percentage of costly dropouts and unprepared students. Best used to compare schools and districts with like demographics.