



# The Florida Senate

*Interim Project Summary 98-57*

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Committee on Ways and Means

Senator Donald C. Sullivan, Chairman

## REDUCTION IN SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE OVERHEAD

### SUMMARY

School districts employ a variety of administrative, instructional and support staff. The Legislature has encouraged districts to reduce administrative cost and to redirect spending from administration to instruction. Two years ago the state budget included a provision that would have reduced a district's FEFP funding entitlement if it failed to reduce administrative costs to a specified level. Although that budget restriction was never implemented, legislative interest in emphasizing classroom instruction over administrative cost remains.

This report examines school district staffing patterns and goes beyond data found in the state's educational staff database. School districts selected for this report were asked to identify actual job duties for all staff who a) were assigned to an instructional job title for the 1997-98 year, b) were not assigned to a specific group of students, or 3) were assigned to the superintendent's office.

Based on the findings of this report, staff concluded that data in the staff database can not currently be used for any evaluative purpose. Although the proportion of school districts' staff who are administrative is relatively small, it is difficult to identify all staff who function in an administrative capacity because districts can easily assign an instructional job title to an employee who actually functions as an administrator. Some job title assignments are misleading or inaccurate; however, it appears to be more frequently the case that a trend toward greater specialization in the job duties of educational employees causes the distinction between administrative and instructional to become increasingly blurred. Especially for exceptional students, there is a significant number of educational specialists who serve as staff "extenders" of the school principal's role as instructional leader of the school. There is a continuum of job responsibilities between administrative and instructional, and it is currently difficult to define where one leaves off and the other begins. Staff, therefore, recommend that the state's staff database recognize a

distinction between a) instructional employees who are assigned to a specific group of students, b) educational support staff (e.g., guidance counselors, librarians and others) who have direct instructional contact with students for the entire school day even though they are not assigned to a specific group of students, and c) administrators with an instructional responsibility (e.g., curriculum consultants) who have indirect contact with students or who work with a combination of students and teachers or other groups.

### BACKGROUND

### METHODOLOGY

During the 1997-98 school year, there were a total of 255,307 school district employees; 8,740 (3.4%) were administrative employees, 140,163 (54.9%) were instructional employees, and 106,404 (41.7%) were support staff employees. These school district employees were assigned to one of a total of 1,123 different job titles. This interim project report analyzes staffing patterns for two small (Glades and St. Johns), two medium (Collier and Escambia) and two large (Palm Beach and Pinellas) districts. These six districts employed a total of 42,139 people in 673 different job titles during the 1997-98 school year, approximately 17% of the state's total number of school district employees.

This report analyzes staffing data by school size (small, medium and large) and by school type (elementary, middle and high schools) This report also analyzes staffing patterns both for employees assigned to individual school sites (elementary, middle and high) and for employees assigned to the superintendent's office. However, not all school district employees are included in this analysis. Employees assigned to a school that exclusively serves a special population, such as exceptional students or dropout prevention students, or

programs operated pursuant to a contractual agreement with a third party, are not included in this report. The number of students served by such special school centers is relatively small, however. For purposes of this report, employees assigned to a vocational-technical center are included in data reported for high schools.

This report first addresses staff assignments as they are recorded in the staff database. Then, based on conversations with district human resource directors, the report addresses anomalies that affect those data for instructional staff only. Staff data were matched with student data to identify employees classified as instructional personnel who were not assigned directly to students. Excluding some groups of instructional employees (such as art, music and physical education teachers and guidance counselors and librarians who serve large numbers of students and who are not assigned directly to students in the statewide database), human resource directors in these six districts were asked to contact school principals to learn the exact job titles for 1997-98 for all instructional employees not directly assigned to students

## FINDINGS

Not surprisingly, data suggest an inverse relationship between district size the number of district administrators; smaller districts have proportionately greater numbers of administrators. Administrative employees are 5.3% of all school employees in the small districts included in this report; in the large districts included in this report, administrative employees are only 3.0% of all school employees. The larger proportion of administrators in smaller districts probably reflects diseconomies of scale. Regardless of district size, every district has a superintendent and every school has a principal. In small districts, these relatively fixed positions account for a greater proportion of total employees.

Data do not support the common sense notion that relatively larger numbers of administrators are associated with relatively smaller numbers of instructional staff. Smaller districts, which have the *highest* proportion of *administrative* staff (5.3%), also have the *highest* proportion of *instructional* staff (55.4%). Large districts, which have the *smallest* proportion of *administrative* staff (3.0%), also have the *smallest* proportion of *instructional* staff (52.3%).

Rather than a tradeoff between administrative and instructional staff, data suggest a tradeoff between administrative and support staff. Small districts have the *largest* proportion of *administrative* staff (5.3%) and the *smallest* proportion of *support* staff (39.3%). Large districts have the *smallest* proportion of *administrative* staff (3.0%) and the *largest* proportion of *support* staff (44.7%). The greatest number of support staff are teacher's aides, tutors, interpreters and other classroom support personnel.

Calculating the number of district employees per 1,000 students is another way to measure differences between districts with regard to numbers and types of employees. Using that measure, data again show that small districts have more administrative employees than do medium or large districts. In small districts there are 6.0 administrative employees for every 1,000 students, as compared with 4.0 administrative employees per 1,000 students in medium districts and 3.4 administrative employees per 1,000 students in large districts. Although small districts have proportionately more *administrative* employees than medium or large districts, they have proportionately the same number of *instructional* employees as medium districts, and they have *more instructional* employees than large districts; 62.7 instructional employees per 1,000 students in small districts, as compared with 62.4 per 1,000 students in medium districts and 59.2 in large districts. The reverse is true for support employees. Small districts have fewer support employees per 1,000 students (44.5) than either medium districts (51.2) or large districts (50.6).

## ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEES

For the six districts included in this report, 69.4% of all employees classified as administrative employees are assigned to individual school sites (i.e., elementary, middle or high schools), and the remaining 30.6% of all administrative employees are assigned to the superintendent's office. In small districts, school site administrators are 39.7% of all administrative employees; in medium districts, school site administrators are 58.0% of all administrative employees; and in large districts, school site administrators are 77.4% of all administrative employees (see Figure #3 below). Almost all school site administrators are principals, assistant principals, deans and registrars. These job titles account for 95.5% of all school site administrative employees.



report, almost nine out of every ten (87%) instructional employees are classroom teachers directly assigned to a group of students (e.g. self-contained fifth grade classroom teachers, middle school language arts teachers or high school science teachers). In the other five school districts included in this report, the number of instructional employees assigned to a classroom and to a specific group of students ranges from a low of 74.4% in Escambia County to a high of 77.6% in Palm Beach County. Expressed as the number of instructional employees per 1,000 students, the number of teachers directly assigned to students ranges from a low of 44.4 in Collier County to a high of 55.8 in Glades County.

A substantial proportion of instructional employees, ranging from a low of 11.6% of all instructional employees in Glades County to a high of 22.6% of all instructional employees in Escambia County, are teachers who, for a variety of reasons, are not linked directly to a specific group of students in the state's student data base.

The number of employees per 1,000 students for this group of instructional employees who were *not* directly assigned to students ranged from a low of 7.4 in Glades County to a high of 14.3 in Escambia County. In this category are art, music, and physical education teachers who serve a large number of students for a part of the school day and week. Similarly, guidance counselors, media specialists, psychologists and social workers are responsive to all students in the school and are not assigned a specific group of students for a specific part of the school day or week. In addition, there is a significant number of educational "specialists" who have direct contact with students but who are not assigned to a particular group of students. Reading resource teachers, for example, may work with small groups of students who are "pulled out" of their regular classroom for that purpose. Resource teachers for exceptional students and other itinerant teachers may move from room to room within a school or from school to school to work with different groups of teachers and students. "Inclusion" teachers work in the same room with another classroom teacher to provide a mainstream education for exceptional students. Behavior specialists and crisis intervention teachers likewise work as a team with regular classroom teachers. In the statewide student database, a particular student is assigned to only one teacher; if there is a second teacher in the room (e.g., team teaching, "inclusion" for exceptional students, English for Speakers of Other Languages teachers,

speech therapists or reading specialists), there would be no association between that teacher and any student in the state's database at the present time.

There is a third group of employees who are classified as instructional even though their contact with students is indirect. The analysis required for this report identified several ways to determine whether an instructional employee's contact with students is direct or indirect. First, records in the state's staff database were matched with records in the state's student database. If no students were assigned to an instructional employee, that employee was initially assumed to have indirect student contact. That assumption was confirmed or contradicted by subsequent conversations with district human resource directors. Second, the state's staff database includes a large number of job titles for instructional employees. Instructional job codes begin with 51001 (Teacher, Dropout Prevention, Elementary) and end with 73030 (Apprentice Trainer I). Direct student contact is most commonly found in job titles with codes greater than 50000 and less than 60000. Third, all instructional employees assigned to the superintendent's office were assumed to have indirect student contact. Conversations with district human resource directors were also used to confirm the accuracy of that assumption as well.

Relative to the total number of instructional employees, the proportion of instructional employees with indirect student contact is small. In the six districts included in this report, the proportion of instructional employees with indirect student contact ranges from a low of 1.4% in Glades County to a high of 4.3% in Collier County. The number of employees per 1,000 students for this group of instructional employees who were *indirectly* assigned to students ranged from a low of 1.8 in Pinellas County to a high of 2.6 in Collier County. Several circumstances are represented in this group of instructional employees.

- First, many teachers serve as "extenders" for the instructional responsibilities of school principals and assistant principals. Their work is principally with other teachers. For example, primary specialists and ESE coordinators are examples of instructional staff who work primarily with other teachers to promote staff development.

- Second, there are several job codes and titles for “Teachers on Special Assignment” who are not assigned to students and who work either with other teachers or in a capacity that is more administrative than instructional.
- Third, some instructional job code assignments obscure the clearly administrative nature of the employee’s actual job responsibilities. For example, in Escambia County one kindergarten teacher and one fifth-grade teacher actually served as trainers for other teachers and were, therefore, not assigned to students. In St. Johns County, the job title “Student Services Worker” was used for instructional employees who actually served as deans. In Palm Beach County, four social studies teachers, two teachers assigned the job title “Senior High Classroom Teacher” and twenty-seven teachers assigned the job title “Teacher, Other Instruction” actually served as deans, assistant principals, and, in the case of one teacher, an athletic director. Collier County used the job titles “Teacher on Special Assignment, Basic Instruction” and “Teacher, Apprentice Trainer I” for instructional employees who actually served as deans.

The distinction between administrative functions and instructional functions is not always easy to recognize. An employee assigned to the job title “Coordinator, Instruction/Curriculum” (job code = 63008) is considered an administrative employee currently in the statewide staff database. An employee assigned to the job title “Specialist/Manager, Instruction/Curriculum” (job code = 63010) is considered an instructional employee. It is possible that the subtlety of that distinction is too fine to be useful. It may be more helpful to define total administrative staff as the sum of the following three groups of employees: (1) school site administrators, who are for the most part principals, assistant principals, deans and registrars; (2) other administrative staff, who are principally those administrative staff assigned to the superintendent’s office, and (3) those instructional staff, both those assigned to individual schools and to the superintendent’s office, who have indirect contact with students. Using this revised definition, the total number of administrative staff per 1,000 students in the six districts included in this report ranges from a low of 4.9 in Palm Beach County to a high of 14.9 in Glades County. Ignoring Glades, which may be very untypical

because of its very small size, the range would be from a low of 4.9 in Palm Beach County to a high of 7.8 in St. Johns County.

Interestingly, the data do not suggest wide variation among districts with regard to the number of employees who function primarily as administrators. With the exception of the smallest district, the variation in the number of administrative employees per 1,000 students is only from 4.9 to 7.8. As discussed earlier in this report with regard to unadjusted data, much more variation exists among districts in their relative emphasis on basic, at-risk, exceptional and vocational education instruction. Variation among districts is the least for basic instruction. The lowest number of basic instructional staff per 1,000 basic students (54.6) is found in Palm Beach County, and the highest number (61.6) is found in Glades County. Ignoring Glades County because of its very small size, the variation is from a low of 54.6 (Palm Beach County) to a high of 60.5 (Collier County). Glades County is able to emphasize basic instruction because they do not have a significant number of “other” basic instructional staff (i.e., art, music, physical education and computer teachers) and because their number of instructional staff for exceptional education per 1,000 exceptional students is also the lowest among the districts included in this report. Collier County’s number of basic instructional staff per 1,000 basic students is high for three reasons. First, Collier has a significant number of ESOL teachers in its basic program who work alongside a basic education teacher in a classroom. Second, Collier has the lowest number of at-risk instructional staff per 1,000 at-risk students. And third, Collier has the lowest number of vocational instructional staff per 1,000 vocational students.

The variation among districts with regard to the number of at-risk instructional staff per 1,000 at-risk students is substantial. The adjusted instructional staff data show that Collier County has the lowest number of at-risk education instructional staff per 1,000 at-risk students (3.6) and St. Johns has the highest (198.5). Collier County operates its at-risk program for 2,794 full-time-equivalent students with eighteen (18) dropout prevention teachers. St. Johns County operates its At-Risk program for 212 full-time-equivalent students with a staff of twenty-four (24) dropout prevention teachers as well as Chapter I, in-school suspension, and remedial/compensatory teachers.

Adjusted instructional staff data show that the variation among districts with regard to the number of exceptional education staff per 1,000 exceptional students ranges

from a low of 31.0 in Glades County to a high of 64.8 in Palm Beach County. Glades relies on a staff of five (5) varying exceptionalities teachers for its 162 full-time equivalent exceptional students. Palm Beach County employed an exceptional education instructional staff of 1,625 for its 25,061 full-time equivalent exceptional students. In addition to its staff of 1,323 exceptional education classroom teachers (educable mentally handicapped – 45, trainable mentally handicapped – 27, deaf – 25, visually impaired – 10, emotionally handicapped – 119, specific learning disabled – 320, gifted – 213, hospital/homebound – 15, profoundly mentally handicapped – 10, severely emotionally disturbed – 27, varying exceptionalities – 243, physical therapist – 14, and speech and language pathologist – 209), Palm Beach has a substantial staff of resource teachers who work with both students and teachers, such as exceptional education coordinators, diagnosticians, inclusion teachers (exceptional teachers who work in the same room with a basic education teacher for mainstreamed students), staffing specialists, parent liaisons, crisis intervention teachers, behavior specialists, and subject area specialists for exceptional students (writing, math, science and music therapy). Adjusted instructional staff data show that Palm Beach is the only district included in this report that has more exceptional staff per 1,000 exceptional students than it does basic education staff per 1,000 basic students; 64.8 instructional staff for exceptional education as compared with 54.8 instructional staff for basic education.

Variation among districts with regard to the adjusted number of vocational education staff per 1,000 vocational students ranges from a low of 25.5 in Collier County to a high of 94.0 in Glades County. Glades County operates a vocational program with five (5) teachers for its 64 full time equivalent vocational students. Collier County operates its vocational program with a staff of seventy-three (73) for its 842 full time equivalent vocational students.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

***Recommendation #1:*** If staff data are ever to be used for any evaluative purpose, the Department of Education should begin periodically to check and verify districts' job assignments as they are recorded in the state's staff database. Currently, a lack of consistency and uniformity in the application of coding prevents greater use of staff data. The Department should particularly work with districts to eliminate the practice of assigning misleading job codes, such as "Student Services Worker" for staff who are actually functioning as assistant principals.

***Recommendation #2:*** Staff data presented in this report, both unadjusted and adjusted following discussions with school district human resource directors, suggest that school districts have a relatively stable proportion of their total staff devoted principally to administrative duties. It might be useful to recognize the following three components of administration:

- ***school site administrators***, who are, for the most part, principals, assistant principals, deans and registrars;
- ***non-school site administrators***, who are district administrators (superintendents, assistant and associate superintendents and board members); curriculum development and staff training specialists; and various fiscal, information, food, transportation, plant operation and maintenance, and other related business specialists assigned to the superintendent's office; and
- ***administrators with an instructional responsibility***, who are those persons currently coded as instructional staff who have indirect contact with students, which would include both those staff assigned to individual school sites and those assigned to the superintendent's office .

***Recommendation #3:*** Instructional and administrative roles are increasingly differentiated. Like their counterparts in other professions, educators are becoming increasingly specialized in their job responsibilities. Districts employ teachers who provide instruction just for reading or technology instruction or for English instruction for speakers of other languages. For exceptional students, some teachers specialize in diagnosis of conditions while other teachers move from room to room assisting other teachers with "behavioral crisis intervention." There is a continuum from the traditional image of a teacher assigned to a particular room and a particular group of students to the traditional image of an administrator who is assigned to an office and has infrequent contact with students.

It is widely known and commonly accepted that the school principal acts both as an administrator and as the instructional leader of the school. The principal relies on a variety of other staff to serve as "extenders" both of the principal's administrative and instructional responsibilities. The vast gray area revealed by the data presented in this report is the question, "Where is the line that separates instructional from administrative?" A

science teacher assigned to a specific group of science students would clearly be an instructional employee. If that teacher were itinerant, moving from room to room or from school to school to instruct special topics in science, the teacher would still clearly be instructional. Similarly, if that teacher pulls small groups of students from their regular classroom to conduct special science experiments, the teacher would still clearly be an instructional employee. However, if the teacher is itinerant and works as a consultant with other teachers, helping them to develop and refine curriculum, is the teacher still considered instructional? And if the teacher coordinates the district's science curriculum, and is assigned to the superintendent's office and infrequently spends instructional time with students, is the teacher still to be considered an instructional employee?

It is the conclusion of this report that the Department of Education should revise current definitions to differentiate between the following three groups:

- **instructional staff**, who are staff assigned to a distinct group of students in the state's staff and student databases. Included in this group are staff (such as art, music and physical education teachers) who spend their time during the school day in direct instructional contact with students and who are not currently assigned to students in the state's staff database. *It is recommended that only those staff who have are responsible for evaluating student performance and mastery of curriculum frameworks and for assigning grades for students should be included in this group.*

The Department should add a designation to the staff database that recognizes a dual teaching responsibility for those teachers who are cooperating with other teachers in a team teaching situation or who are working as a second teacher in a classroom as "inclusion" teachers for exceptional students or who otherwise spend their day in direct instructional contact with a specific group of students. Similarly, there should be a designation for teachers who provide direct instruction for large groups, such as art, music, physical education and other teachers who work with a specific group of students for a part of the school day.

- **instructional support staff**, who are all persons currently classified as instructional staff

- 1) who are not assigned to a specific group of students, who do not directly evaluate student performance and who do not assign student grades but
- 2) who, nonetheless, work with small groups of different students or who are available to the entire student body, or who work with groups of students for short periods. *All persons included in this group would spend their entire school day in direct instructional contact with students only.* Guidance counselor, librarians, social workers, psychologists, behavior specialists and reading teachers would be examples of job titles included in this group.

- **administrative staff with an instructional responsibility**, who are all staff currently classified as administrative and instructional who have indirect instructional contact with students; i.e., *those who provide consultative services for other teachers, those who work both with other teachers and with students, or those who work with parents or other groups (e.g., parent liaisons).* It is important to concede that all adults in a school have an instructional responsibility for students. However, it is the conclusion of this report that teachers who work with a combination of other teachers and students as consultants or resource teachers should be considered an extension of the instructional arm of the principal's responsibility to be the instructional leader of the school.

S. 236.685, F.S., provides definitions for "Administrative personnel," Educational support personnel", "Instructional personnel", "Instructional specialists", "Instructional support personnel", and "Managers" and requires school boards to classify all employees into one of the following categories: "Instructional personnel", "Instructional specialists", "Instructional support personnel", "Administrative personnel", "Managers" or "Educational support personnel". This statute should be amended to be consistent with any changes made to existing employee classifications pursuant to these recommendations.

**Recommendation #4:** Because the greatest number of staff currently classified as administrative are assigned to a school site as principals, assistant principals, deans and registrars, it might be helpful for the Department of Education to provide information about, and to evaluate, the different staffing standards districts currently use. For example, Escambia High School in Escambia

County operates with two (2) assistant principals and a student body of approximately 2,100; in contrast, Glades Central High School in Palm Beach County operates with six (6) assistant principals and a student body of approximately 1,650. Does one of those schools have too many assistant principals or does one have too few? Does Escambia High School use other staff to supplement the work of their two assistant principals? Is

Escambia High more efficient? These and other questions could be addressed if the Department of Education were to begin analyzing school district staffing data and to disseminate information about current practices.

**COMMITTEE(S) INVOLVED IN REPORT** *(Contact first committee for more information.)*

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**MEMBER OVERSIGHT**

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