

INFORMATION CAPSULE

Department of Research Services

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Rebuttal to Recent Attacks on the Size and Expense of School Administration

Nancy Protheroe in her publication, *School Administration Under Attack*, challenges the public perception of educational administration as "bloated" and responsible for diverting badly needed funds away from schools. The publication examines several questions about school administration that have appeared in the media. These questions include the following:

- Are there too many administrators?
- Is the number of administrators increasing at the expense of instruction?
- Are administrators paid too much?
- Are schools increasing the money spent on administration?
- Could the funds spent on administration be better spent on instruction?

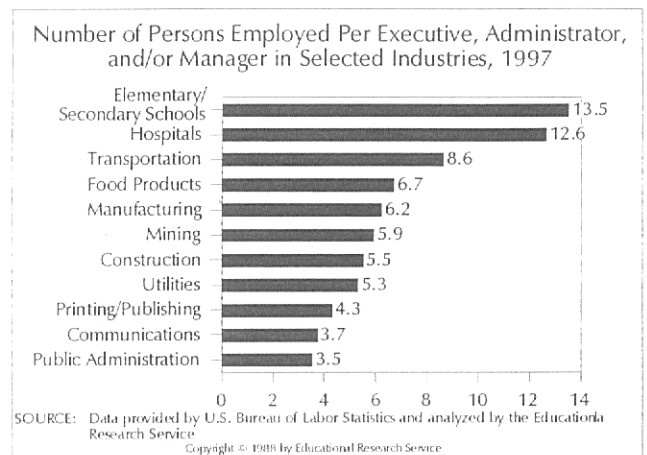
The author cites Effective Schools Research to support the fact that good management is essential to effective schools just as it is in profitable business and industry. The report provides the following answers to the questions outlined above.

Are there too many administrators?

The report indicates that, local school districts are major organizations carrying out important public services with significantly fewer management personnel than found in business and industry. The total central-office administrative and professional staff comprises 1.0 percent of the total staff of public school

districts. School-level administrators represent an additional 2.4 percent.

Within public elementary and secondary schools, executives, administrators, and/or managers have more people reporting to them than is the case with any other business or industry examined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1997. Therefore, the answer to the above question is an unqualified no.



Is the number of administrators increasing at the expense of instruction?

In actuality, the number of administrators has declined nationwide over the past thirty-five years. In 1960 there were 40,520 administrative heads of local school districts. There was a decrease of 63 percent to 15,000 thirty-five years later. This decline is primarily due to the consolidation of school districts and individual schools.

Since the beginning of the school reform movement in the early 1980's, many school districts have been mandated to take on additional responsibilities. The jobs of district and school-level administrators were expanded with additional tasks including: increasing student proficiency in basic skills; decentralizing decision making; improving standardized test scores; increasing students' critical thinking skills; and reducing class size. Additional mandates have included responsibilities for children with disabilities, gifted children, English as a Second Language students, disadvantaged students, preschool students, etc.

Data do not support the assertion that the number of educational administrators has increased. In fact, although the goals of education have expanded over the years, the number of administrators has actually decreased.

Administrative Heads of Public School Units

	1960	1995	Change
Heads of districts	40,520	14,883	-63%
Heads of schools	97,424	84,484	-13%
Pupils enrolled	36 million	45 million	+25%

SOURCE: *Digest of Education Statistics 1997* (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998)

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Are administrators paid too much?

Teachers earn less than other professionals with comparable training (National Center for Education Statistics 1997). Teachers' salaries apparently start low and remain low. The average salaries paid to district-level and school-level administrators are approximately 35 percent more than that for teachers. Differences in training, experience, and length of contract year account for this difference. Data suggest that administrator salaries have not been increasing at the expense of teacher salaries.

Are Schools Increasing the Money Spent on Administration?

The average amount of district funds spent on administration nationally has actually decreased slightly from 4.7 percent to 4.5 percent over the past fifteen years. Money allocated to instruction has increased in schools throughout the nation while the money allocated to administration has remained relatively stable.

Could the Funds Spent on Administration be Better Spent on Instruction?

Since a small amount of most school districts' budgets is going to administration, (about 4.5 percent) there is little money going to administration that could be allocated to improve the instructional program at schools. The report projects that if the typical district eliminated salaries of all central-office administrative and professional staff entirely, reallocating such funds would increase teacher salaries by only 5 percent. Similarly, if all such salaries were eliminated and spent to employ additional teachers, this severe action would reduce class size by only one student per class.

Numerous articles, interviews, and editorials have been published in the past five to ten years that discuss the "bloated bureaucracy" in education. These assertions have been discredited in *School Administration Under Attack: What Are the Facts?* The data presented in this report serve to help educators trying to challenge this common misperception frequently reported in the news media.

References

National Center for Education Statistics. 1997. *America's Teachers: Profile of a Profession, 1993-94*. Washington, DC.

Protheroe, Nancy. 1998. *School Administration Under Attack: What Are the Facts?* Educational Research Service, Arlington, Virginia.