

Many Schools, Many Students: Equity in Addressing Barriers

[from a data set compiled by Institute of Education Sciences (U.S.D.O.E.) –
see <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>]

Anyone interested in enhancing how schools equitably address psychosocial and mental health concerns must strive to understand the scale of efforts to educate young people. While pilot and demonstration programs,

projects, and special initiatives for a few students and a few schools can be helpful, matters of equity and overall impact require a focus on both replication to scale and implementation of major systemic changes.

Consider the following statistics:

Number of Public School Districts (in 2002-03)	=	14,465
Number of schools		
public elementary and secondary schools (in 2005-06)	=	97,000
charter schools (estimate from 2004-2005)	=	3,300
private elementary and secondary schools (in 2003-04)	=	28,000
Projected number of public school teachers for 2007-08	=	3.2 million
Projected number of private school teachers for 2007-08	=	464,000
Estimated number of student support staff (in 2003-04)	=	1,074,000
>101,400 counselors		
>68,800 nurses		
>53,700 psychologists		
>34,400 social workers		
>80,600 speech therapists		
(See note about student support staff on next page)		
Estimated number of students		
in public elementary and secondary schools (in 2007-08)	=	49.6 million
in charter schools (in 2004-05)	=	887,000
in private elementary and secondary schools (in 2007-08)	=	6.1 million
home-schooled (about 2 percent of all students in 2003)	=	1.1 million
>42 percent of public school students were designated as minority students in 2005.		
>20 percent of school-age children spoke a language other than English at home in 2005		
>13.7 percent of children enrolled in public pre-k through 12 th grade were diagnosed as having disabilities and were being served by federally supported programs (2003-04)		
>>Of the 6,634,000 served:		
2,831,000 were diagnosed as having a learning disability (LD),		
1,441,000 as have a speech or language impairment,		
489,000 as having emotionally disturbance (ED),		
464,000 as other health impaired (many of these are diagnosed as ADHD)		
Projected average public school expenditure per pupil for 2007-08	=	\$9,969
Projected expenditure for public schools for 2007-08	=	\$489.4 billion

“The retirement of thousands of baby boomer teachers coupled with the departure of younger teachers frustrated by the stress of working in low-performing schools is fueling a crisis in teacher turnover that is costing school districts substantial amounts of money as they scramble to fill their ranks for the fall term. A National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future survey estimated that teacher turnover was costing the nation’s districts some \$7 billion annually for recruiting, hiring and training.” *New York Times* (October, 2007)

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About Student Support Staff

Student support staff constituted 27 percent of all public school staff in the 2003—04 school year. Included as support staff are licensed or certified professionals (e.g., school counselors, social workers, and speech therapists) and teacher aides (e.g., special education, regular Title I, and library aides),

As the Institute of Education Sciences notes:

“About 857,000 support staff worked in elementary schools and 217,000 worked in secondary schools in 2003—04. Nearly all elementary and secondary schools reported having student support staff (99 and 100 percent, respectively), with a greater number employed full time than part time. In terms of licensed or certified professionals, over two-thirds of elementary and secondary schools reported having school counselors, having nurses, and having speech therapists. In terms of teacher aides, 80 percent of elementary schools and 81 percent of secondary schools reported having special education instructional aides. On average, elementary schools had a lower number

of students per all student support staff than secondary schools (33 vs. 62 percent). Elementary schools had a lower number of students per staff than secondary schools in each category of support staff except school counselors.

The number, percentage, and availability of student support staff varied by schools that were low poverty when compared with those schools that were high poverty. A greater percentage of low-poverty schools than high-poverty schools had psychologists, had special education noninstructional aides, and had library instructional and noninstructional aides. In contrast, a greater percentage of high-poverty schools than low-poverty schools had regular Title I (61 vs. 16 percent) and ESL/bilingual (41 vs. 29 percent) instructional aides. With the exception of school counselors, the average number of students per licensed or certified professional (nurses, social workers, psychologists, speech therapists, and other professionals) was smaller in high-poverty schools than in low-poverty schools.”

Note: Schools vary markedly in their ability to provide quality teachers and support staff. As with many fields, the problem can be particularly acute in some geographic locales. Drawing on several data sets, Richard Ingwersoll and David Perda suggest “school staffing problems are not primarily the result of shortfalls in the number ... produced each year to replace retirees or meet increased demand from rising student populations.” The demand is seen as resulting from school staff leaving after only a few years in the field. For support staff, the problem is compounded by lay offs when budgets tighten. (See Ingwersoll & Perda at
http://nces.ed.gov/whatsnew/commissioner/remarks2007/06_20_2007.asp)

This fact sheet was developed by the Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA.

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