SENATE EDUCATION
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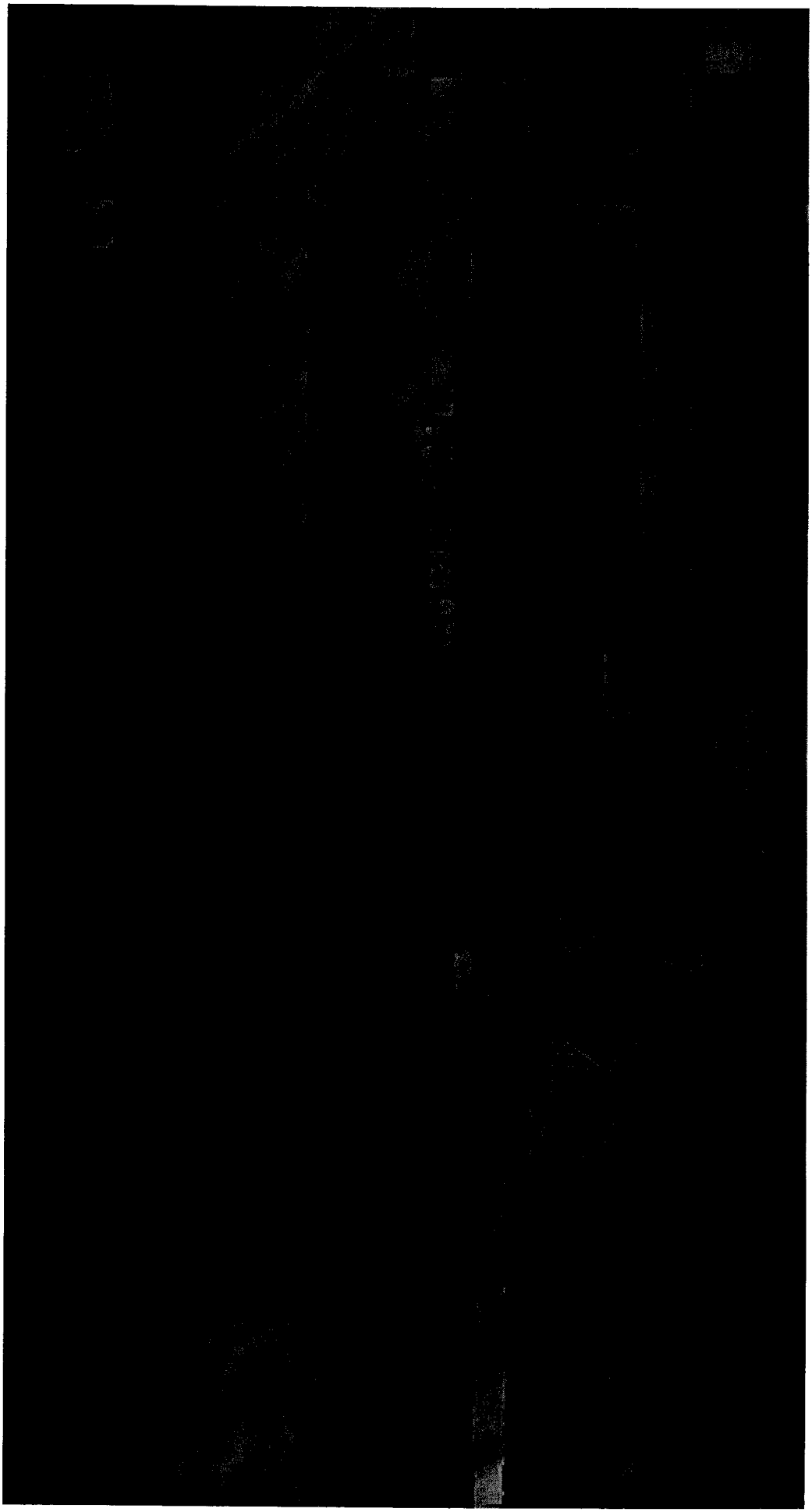

Presenting and Analyzing Important Educational Issues

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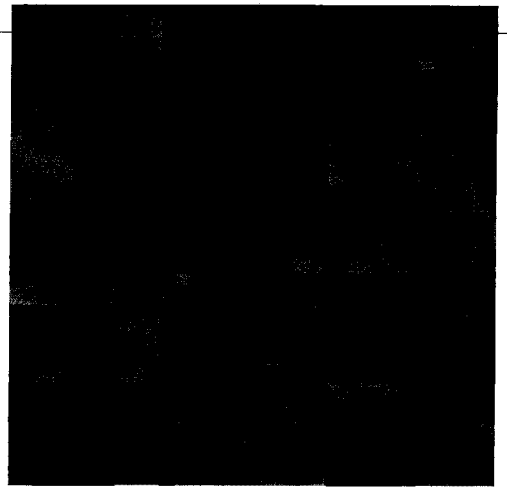

The public perception of school administration is that it is a large bureaucracy diverting critical resources from instruction. But can this perception be backed up with facts?

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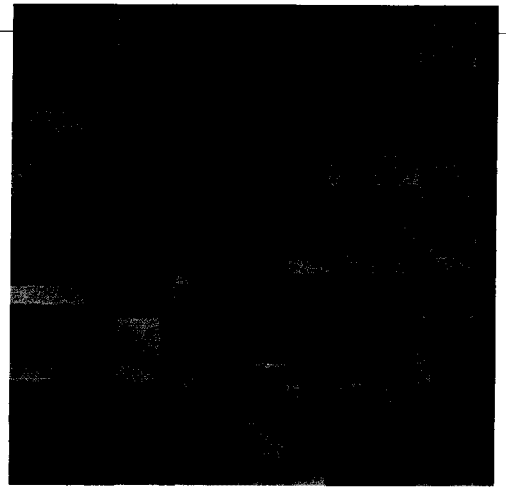

"All too often in recent months, [I listened to] erroneous claims by legislators and others who have made exaggerated statements about the number of school administrators and administrative costs . . . As I heard time after time the repetition of information, I wanted to jump up and yell, '*Just the facts, PLEASE!*'" *(Bozza, 2008).*

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An Overview of the Perceptions

1. Administration is an unnecessary burden on schools and should be curtailed.
2. There are too many administrators.
3. The number of school administrators is growing rapidly and at the expense of instruction.
4. School administrators are paid too much.
5. Increasing amounts of school budgets are going to administration.
6. A lot of money is going to administration that could be better spent for other purposes.

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The Perception:

Administration is an unnecessary burden on schools and should be curtailed.

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Leadership and Student Learning

Academics, practitioners, and reviewers from every field of study have concluded that leadership is a central variable in the equation that defines organizational success.... Looking specifically at education, we have parallel evidence that *leadership is a central ingredient —and often the keystone element—in school and district success as defined in terms of student achievement.*

Source: Restructuring Through Learning Focused Leadership in *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement* (Murphy, 2007).

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Successful leadership can play a highly significant *and frequently underestimated* role in improving student learning.

Source: *Review of Research: How Leadership Influences Student Learning* (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

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- Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school.
- Leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are needed most.

Source: *Review of Research: How Leadership Influences Student Learning* (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

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District-Level Leadership

Repeatedly, case studies confirm that districts can "'matter' in powerfully positive ways for student learning in large numbers of schools and for students of all backgrounds."

Source: *Review of Research: How Leadership Influences Student Learning* (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

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Central-Office Staff Leadership

Educators in highly successful schools "attribute part of their success to the district [and] describe district personnel as providing vision and direction of the reform efforts. . . These district people are credited with setting the expectations, and then with providing the resources, mentoring, and expertise necessary for the schools to achieve the learning goals."

SOURCE: *A Decade of Reform: A Summary of Research Findings on Classroom, School, and District Effectiveness in Washington State* (Fouts, 2003).

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Superintendent Leadership

The correlation between an effective superintendent and student learning equates to almost 10 percentile points on standardized assessments.

This finding stands in sharp contrast to the notion that district administration is a part of what former Secretary of Education William Bennett characterized as an amorphous "blob" that soaks up valuable resources without adding value to a district's instructional program.

SOURCE: School District Leadership that Works: The Effect of Superintendent Leadership on Student Achievement. *ERS Spectrum* (Waters & Marzano, 2007).

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The "What" of Learning-Focused Leadership

- Develop and steward vision
- Hire, allocate, and support quality staff
- Maximize content coverage in an aligned curriculum
- Actively monitor student progress
- Establish positive expectations for academic learning
- Maintain high visibility and involvement by spending time in classrooms
- Are knowledgeable about and involved in the instructional program of the school
- Promote student and teacher incentives through personal interest as well as private and public acknowledgement
- Promote professional development and practice
- Develop a supportive work environment
- Forge home-school links

Source: Restructuring Through Learning Focused Leadership in *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement* (Murphy, 2007).

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Behaviors of Turnaround Leaders

- Understood the importance of achieving a few tangible wins quickly
- Had a driving commitment to obtaining results for their organizations and supported this by requiring all staff to change, rather than making it optional
- Were willing to implement practices they felt were necessary to achieve goals even when they deviated from norms
- Ensured that organization performance data was collected and analyzed
- Made their action plans based on data
- Funneled time and money into successful tactics while halting unsuccessful tactics
- "Acted in relentless pursuit of goals, rather than touting progress as ultimate success"

Source: *School Turnarounds: A Review of the Cross-Sector Evidence on Dramatic Organizational Improvement* (Rhim, Kowal, Hassel, & Hassel, 2007).

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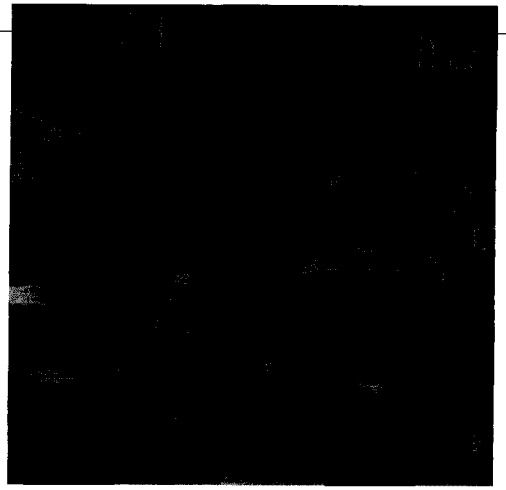

- Good school management is recognized as essential for the development and operation of effective schools.
- Research has identified a link between effective leadership and student learning.
- District-level administrative and professional staff members provide critically needed support for school-level programs.
- Leadership is especially important when rapid "turnaround" is needed for low-performing schools or districts.

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The Perception:

There are too many administrators.

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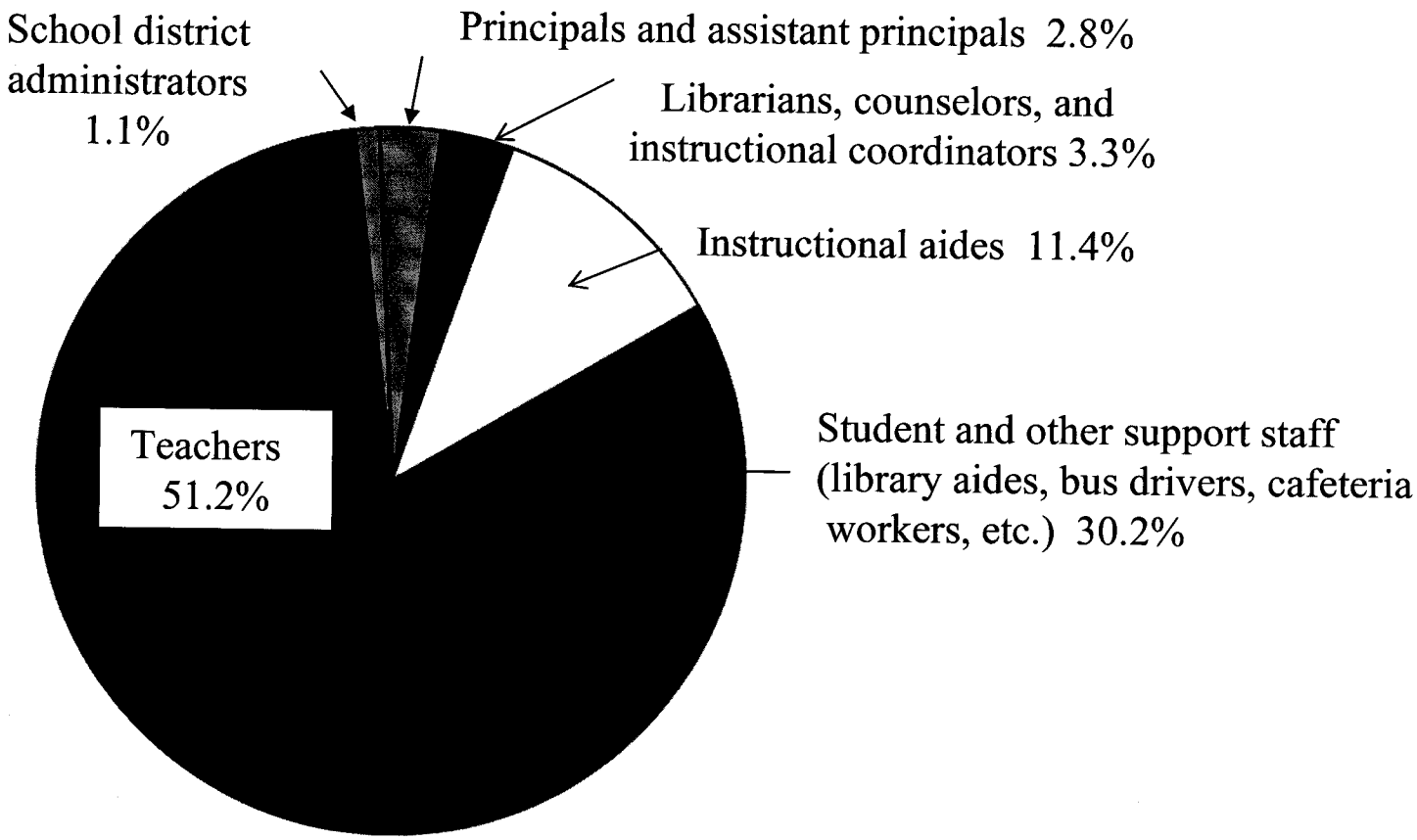
Personnel Employed in Public School Districts, School Year 2005-06



SOURCE: *Public Elementary and Secondary School Enrollment, High School Completions, and Staff from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2005-06* (Sable & Garofano, 2007).

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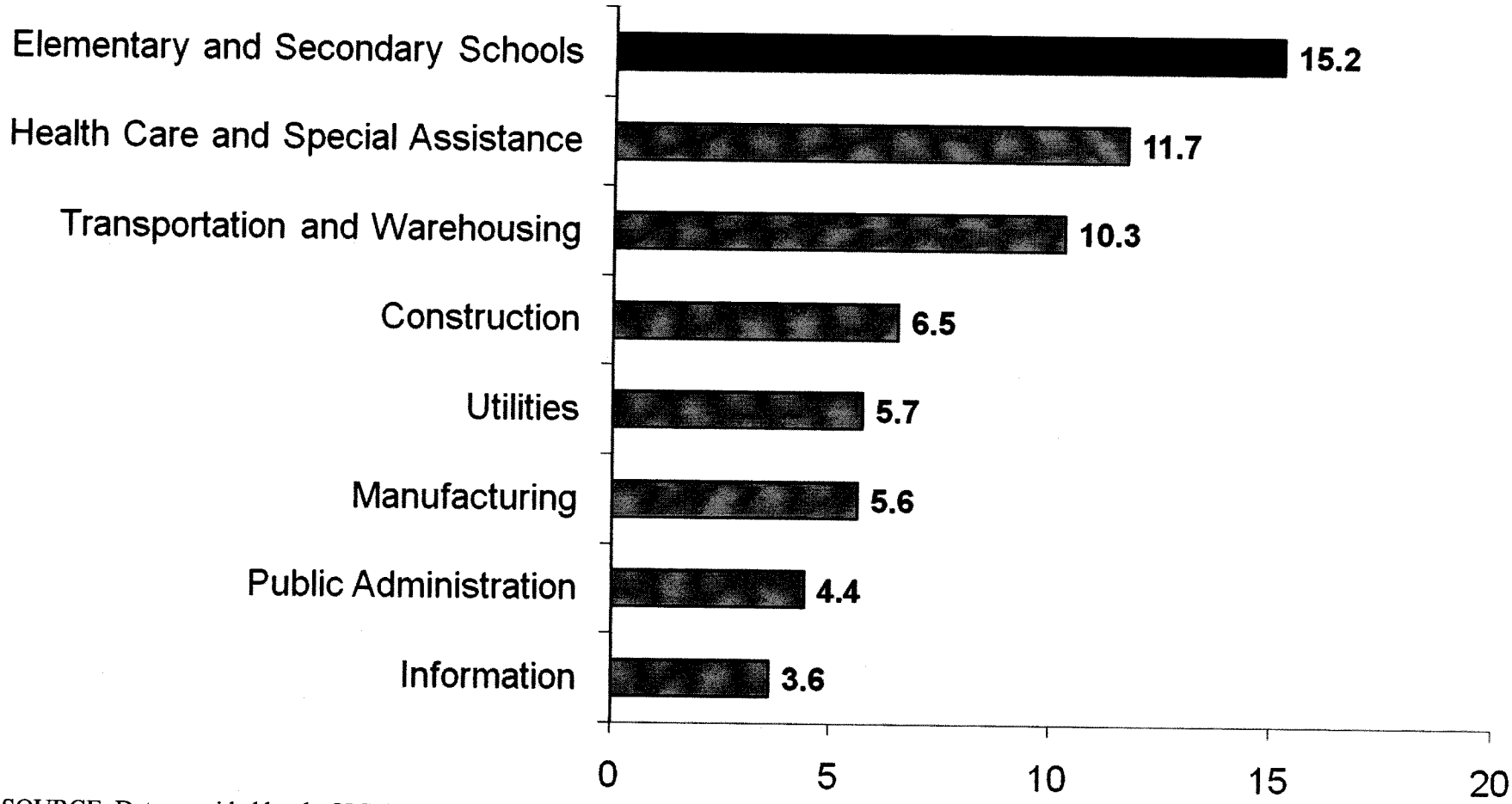
Number of Persons Employed Per Executive, Administrator, and/or Manager in Selected Industries, 2003



SOURCE: Data provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2003) and analyzed by Educational Research Service. Note: The Bureau of Labor Statistics changed its reporting procedures following 2003, and this type of analysis cannot be done for more recent years.

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The "Typical" School District

- Serves about 3,500 students
- Employs over 400 staff members
- Has a budget of about $32 million
- May be one of the largest employers in the community

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What do the facts show?

Local school districts are major institutions performing important public functions with substantially fewer management personnel than found in business and industry.

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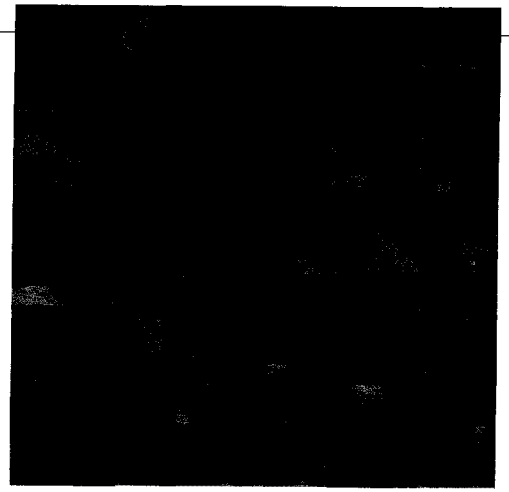

The number of school administrators is growing rapidly and at the expense of instruction.

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Increased Pressure on Schools and Districts to:

- Improve student test scores
- Reduce the achievement gap among all students
- Have every child reading on grade level by third grade
- Raise student learning in math and science to world-class levels
- Ensure students are prepared for the work world
- Find, hire, and retain enough "highly qualified" teachers, even for shortage areas and difficult-to-staff schools
- Increase use of (and pay for) "cutting-edge" technology
- Build new and rehab old buildings
- Increase availability of counseling and similar services
- Improve staff development programs
- Increase family involvement

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Percentage of Staff Employed by Public School Districts, by Category

	1995-96	2005-06
▪ Teachers	52.0%	51.2%
▪ Instructional aides	9.9	11.4
▪ Counselors, librarians, and instructional coordinators	3.4	3.3
▪ Student and other support staff (library aides, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, etc.)	31.2	30.2
▪ School administrators	2.4	2.8
▪ School district administrators	1.0	1.1

Sources: *Public Elementary and Secondary School Enrollment, High School Completions, and Staff from the Common Core of Data: School Year 2005-06* (Sable & Garofano, 2007) and *Public School Student Staff and Graduate Counts by State, School Year 1995-96* (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997).

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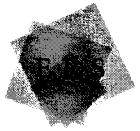

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Changes in Pupil-Staff Ratios, 2002-03 to 2007-08

- 4.3% decline nationally in average pupil/teacher ratio, to 15.5 pupils per teacher in 2007-2008
- 4.0% decline in average pupil/central office administrator ratios, to 501 pupils per central office administrator

Source: *Staffing Patterns in Public School Systems: Current Status and Trends, Update 2008* (Educational Research Service, 2008).

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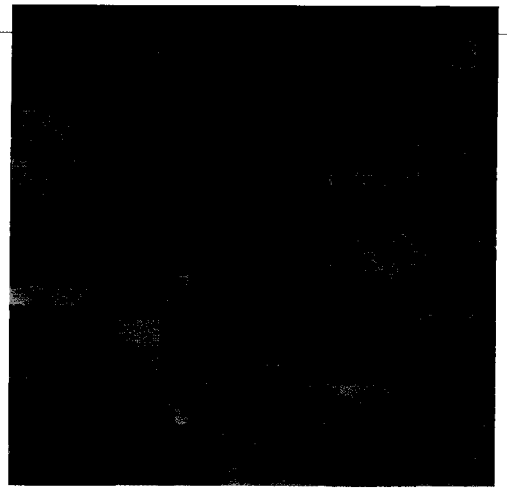
What do the facts show?



- Significant new and expanded responsibilities, many of which must be performed by central-office staff, have been assigned to school districts in recent years.
- There has been no increase in central administration at the expense of instruction over a 10-year period.
- While the ratio of students to district central-office staff has declined slightly over the last decade, the percentage decrease is almost the same as the decline in the number of students per teacher.

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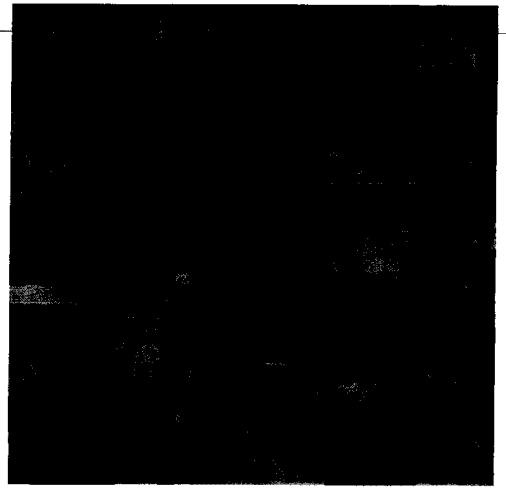

School administrators are paid too much.

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Comparing 2007 Annual Median Salaries for Various Occupations

	Median Salary	Comparison Ratio
School Teachers	$50,936	
Education Administrators, Elem. & Secondary	82,120	1.61
Registered Nurses	62,480	
Internists, General	167,270	2.68
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	47,600	
Lawyers	118,280	2.48
Accountants and Auditors	63,180	
Chief Executives	151,370	2.40
Flight Attendants	62,880	
Airline Pilots, Copilots, and Flight Engineers	148,810	2.37

SOURCE: *National employment and wage by occupation data from the Occupational Employment Statistics survey* (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007) *and analyzed by ERS.*

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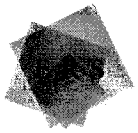

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Comparing Annual Salaries and Daily Pay Rates, 2007-2008

	Average Salary	Days on Duty	Daily Rates	Comparison with Teacher Salary
Teachers	$49,195	186	$264	1.00
Elementary Principals	81,935	224	366	1.39
Junior High/Middle School Principals	88,079	227	388	1.47
Senior High Principals	90,964	231	394	1.49
Assistant Superintendents	112,587	237	475	1.80
Superintendents	125,096	241	519	1.97

SOURCE: *Salaries and Wages Paid Professional and Support Personnel in Public Schools 2007-2008*. Data weighted to generate nationally representative averages (Educational Research Service, 2008a).

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Comparison of Average Daily Rates Paid Experienced Teachers (75th Percentile) and Relatively New Principals and Assistant Principals (25th Percentile), 2007-2008

	Average Daily Rate	Comparison with Teachers' Salaries
▪ Teachers	$308.05	1.00
▪ Elementary Principals	327.95	1.06
▪ Middle/Junior High School Principals	348.61	1.13
▪ Senior High Principals	364.00	1.18
▪ Elementary Assistant Principals	279.61	.91
▪ Middle/Junior High Assistant Principals	293.88	.95
▪ Senior High Assistant Principals	304.50	.99

SOURCE: *Salaries and Wages Paid Professional and Support Personnel in Public Schools 2007-2008*. Data weighted to generate nationally representative averages (Educational Research Service, 2008a).

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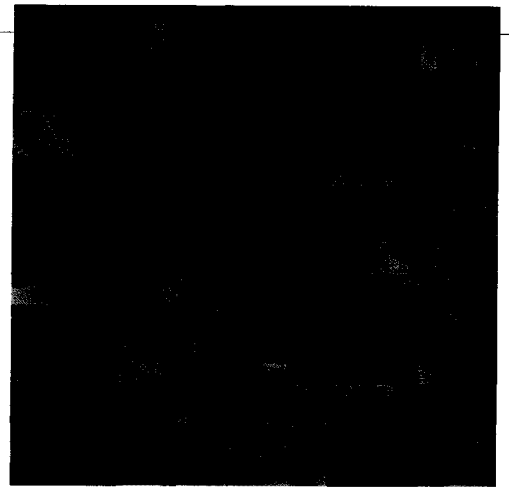

- Administrator salaries have not been gaining at the expense of teacher salaries, which are generally considered to be low.
- Current differences between teacher and administrator salaries, when viewed from the standpoint of length of work year, level of education, and experience, are relatively narrow.

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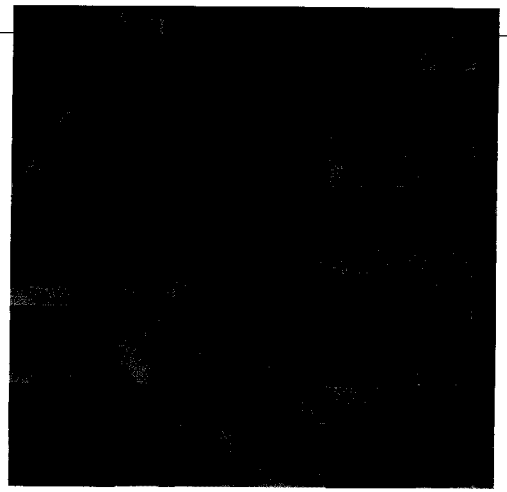

Increasing amounts of school budgets are going to administration.

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Average Percentage of Operating Expenditures Allocated to Various Functional Categories

	1995-96	2005-06
▪ Instruction	64.6%	63.5%
▪ Instructional staff support	4.1	5.1
▪ Student support services	5.0	5.4
▪ General administration	2.4	2.1
▪ School administration	6.1	5.8
▪ Operations and maintenance	10.6	10.3
▪ Transportation	4.3	4.4
▪ Other support services	2.9	3.3

Sources: *Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2005-06* (Zhou, 2008) and *Digest of Education Statistics 2004* (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005).

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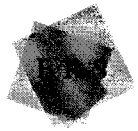

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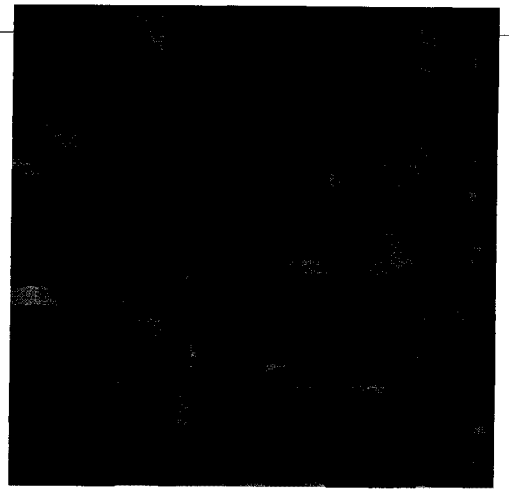

- The share of school budgets going to administration has not increased at the expense of instruction.
- The share of school budgets going to administration and instruction has been relatively stable.

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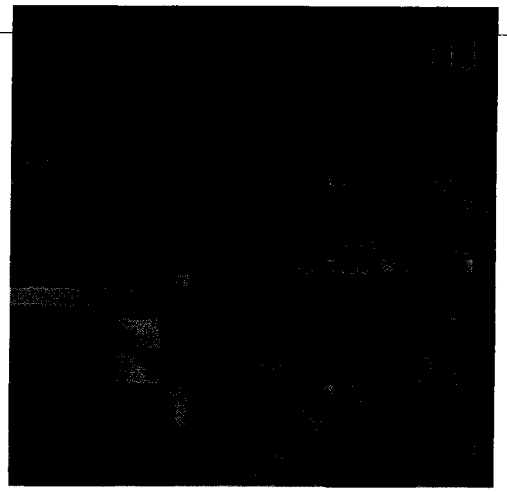

A lot of money is going to administration that could be better spent for other purposes.

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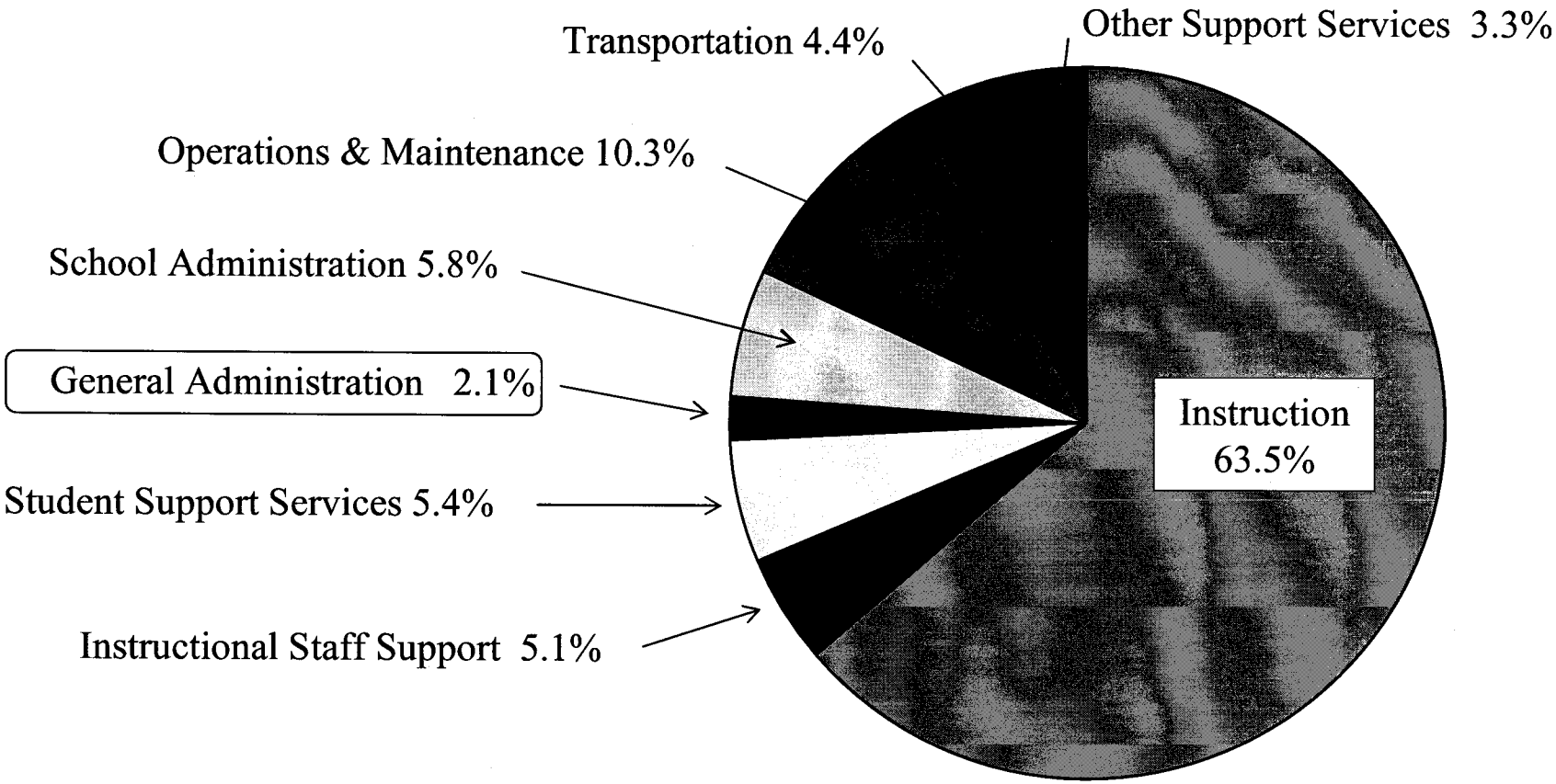
School District Operating Expenditures, 2005-2006



SOURCE: *Revenues and Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education: School Year 2005-06* (Zhou, 2008).

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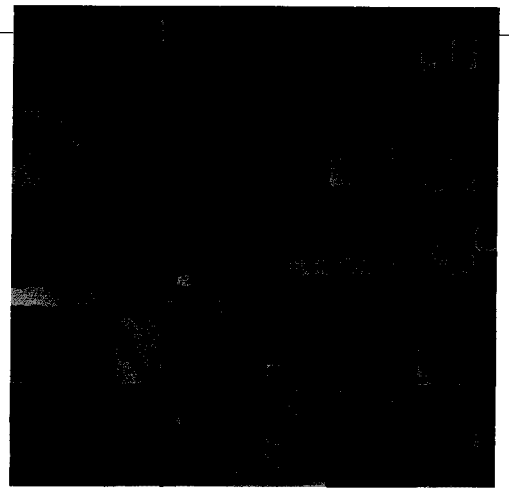

"The data reveal that average administrative expenditures in education generally do not support the theory of the administrative 'blob'… Expenditures on administration tend to be modest by comparison to benchmarks for other organizations."

Finance Center of the Consortium for Policy Research in Education

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"Standard & Poor's analysis of district-level spending and student achievement data in the states that are currently considering a 65 Percent Solution reveals that higher instructional spending allocations are not consistently linked to higher achievement levels."

Standard & Poor's, 2005

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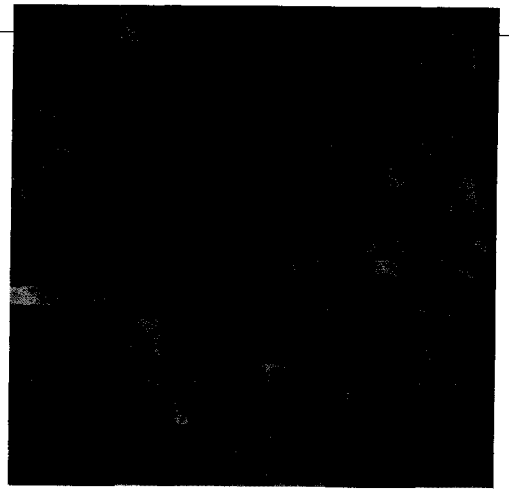

- In the typical school district's budget, there is little money presently going to administration that could be reallocated to improve other functions or programs.
- Elimination of all funds currently directed toward administration would not eliminate the necessity to perform many of the functions currently assigned to the central office.

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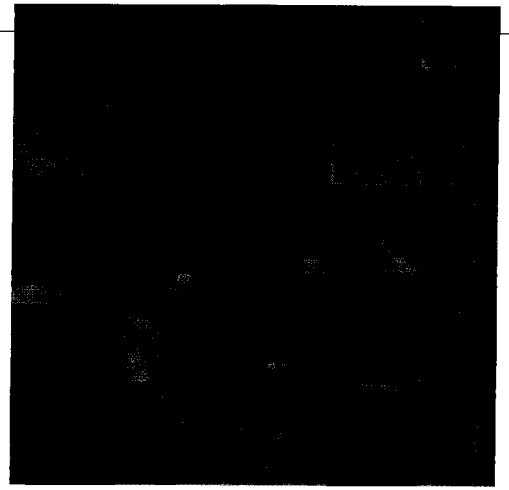
What can school leaders do?



- Ensure that district and school resources are allocated and used in ways that best support student learning
- Address misperceptions about administration so attention is focused on the real problems education is facing

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For More Information ...

1. ERS Concerns in Education: Answering the Critics of School Administration, Second Edition
2. ERS Salaries and Wages Paid Professional and Support Personnel in Public Schools, 2007-08
3. ERS Staffing Patterns in Public School Systems: Current Status and Trends, Update 2008
4. ERS Budgeted Revenues and Expenditures in Public School Systems: Current Status and Trends, Update 2007

Also visit the ERS e-Knowledge Portal at http://portal.ers.org

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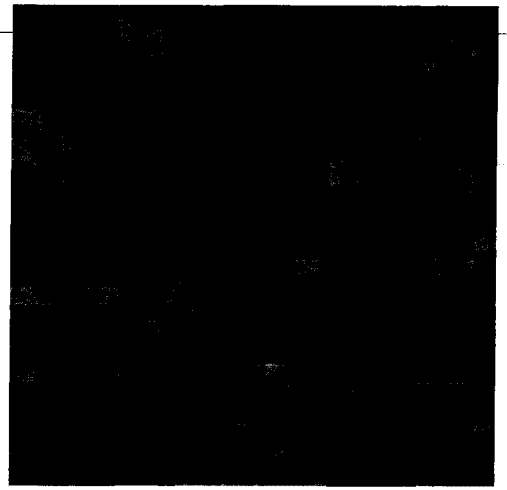

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