



Delaware School Administrator Funding Analysis: Executive Summary

ABOUT THE STUDY

At the request of House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 39 Task Force to Study School District Consolidation, the University of Delaware’s Institute for Public Administration conducted an analysis of the historical formulas and current placement of school district administrators across the state. In addition, the project team also examined the key functions of district- and building-level administrations in Delaware to determine organizational scope of work.

The project scope included the following four items:

1. Examining the current funding formulas for district- and building-level administrators
2. Identifying the number and types of administrators by district and building, including how they are funded
3. Utilizing teacher-, paraprofessional-, student-, and task-related data at the building level to ascertain span of responsibility for districts
4. Identifying administrator funding formulas or guidance from neighboring states including Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Virginia and peer states including North Carolina and Tennessee

Data included in the report are from the 2017–2018 school year and were self-reported by each of the 19 school districts in Delaware. Information was collected regarding personnel counts and funding sources for Pre-K–12¹ staff, who were grouped in six categories:

1. District office administrators (personnel with a management-level position such as a superintendent, business manager, and director of curriculum)
2. Building-level administrators (principals and assistant principals)
3. Teachers (instructional staff who serve a single building and who are overseen by a principal)
4. Paraprofessionals (instructional support staff who serve a single building and who are overseen by a principal)
5. District-wide instructional staff (teachers, paraprofessionals, and other instructional staff who serve multiple buildings and who are overseen by a district office administrator)
6. Operational support staff (personnel who provide critical support to district and school operations such as nurses, secretaries, custodians, and food services personnel)

¹ Adult education personnel were not examined for this study.

Data pertaining to staff evaluations, transportation, nutrition, and facilities were also obtained. **Charter schools were not required to be examined in this study, in accordance with Senate Amendment 1 to HCR 39.**

KEY FINDINGS

Key findings from the study include:

- Each of the school districts and schools in Delaware is a complex organization that has different service delivery methods and scopes of responsibility. However, some commonalities regarding functions do exist.
- School district- and building-level administrations in Delaware are responsible for performing a variety of tasks. In many cases, a single administrator will be responsible for tasks in multiple function areas; this is more common in smaller school districts.
- **With most decisions about public education being made at the state and local levels, rather than the federal level, it is difficult to compare data across school districts and across state lines. Variations in position definitions, funding models, legislation, regulations, and community needs exist regionally and nationally.**
- The vast majority of district office administrators are funded through the unit allocations provided by state entitlement formulas instead of discretionary sources such as local funding raised in referendums. **This means that the number of district office administrators in Delaware school districts is predominantly determined by state formulas and policies. Of the 236.78 district office administrator positions in Delaware, over 82 percent (194.28 positions) are funded through units provided by state entitlement formulas (which cover approximately 70 percent of the salary; the balance is covered by a mix of local, federal, and other state funding).** Federal funding from sources such as Title I of the Every Student Succeeds Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) supports over 10 percent (25 positions) of district office administrator positions, while other state funding sources account for over 6 percent (16.5 positions). Only one district office administrator position is funded through the tuition tax (local funding).
- Funding for building-level administrators follows a similar trend. **Of the 459.25 building-level administrator positions in Delaware, over 98 percent (453 positions) of principals and assistant principals are funded through units provided by state entitlement formulas.** Federal

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COMPLEX ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Each of the 19 school districts in Delaware has its own unique span of responsibility and community demands. The project team identified 20 key functions for district-level administrations and 15 for building-level administrations. In many cases, a single administrator will be responsible for tasks in multiple function areas; this is more common in smaller school districts.

funding from Title I and Title II of ESSA (4.25 positions) and local tuition tax and current expense funding (2 positions) fund the rest of building-level administrator positions.

- Of the 9,664.63 teaching positions (building level) in Delaware, Division I funding supports the vast majority of personnel (over 85%). However, there are 1,439.21 teaching positions that are funded from sources other than Division I. **This means that over 14 percent of teaching positions are not included in the calculations that determine the number of principal, assistant principal, assistant superintendent, director, 11-month supervisor, visiting teacher, nurse, and secretary positions allocated to a school district.**
- Primary funding sources for paraprofessionals (building level) are similar to those of teachers; of the 2,396.98 paraprofessional positions in Delaware over 66 percent are funded through Division I units. **The remaining 33 percent (791.14 positions) are funded from other state, federal, and local sources and are not included in the formulas that determine unit allocations by the number of Division I units. Note that a single Division I unit can fund 2 paraprofessional positions.**
- In addition to administrators (district and building level), teachers (building level), and paraprofessionals (building level) there are also 521.16 district-wide instructional staff positions and 3,669.84 operational support staff positions in Delaware. Data were not collected on the number of contractors employed by school districts;

however, many personnel are also employed in this category, especially for districts that operate special schools.

FUTURE DISCUSSIONS

As the key findings of the study demonstrate, public education finance and staffing are complex subjects. This report is intended to initiate a conversation that leads to further exploration of these topics. Areas for further discussion and consideration include:

- **Each of the 19 school districts in Delaware has its own unique span of responsibility and community demands, although some commonality regarding key functions does exist. The current discussion regarding public education administrators in Delaware typically focuses on the number of individuals employed without factoring in the scope of work they are responsible for undertaking.** Understanding the work demands created by state and federal policies and community expectations is critical to determining appropriate staffing numbers.
- Due to the fact that state allocation formulas have the greatest role in determining staffing of public schools, further research related to whether or not state allocation formulas need to be modified to better accommodate the current needs of students should be considered. Are there additional positions, supports, or services that should be included in the unit system to address critical needs as determined by the State?

- Currently, a reliance on utilizing Division I units to determine staff allocations creates a situation in which 1,439.21 teaching positions and 791.14 paraprofessional positions are not accounted for in the formulas that determine the number of principal, assistant principal, assistant superintendent, director, 11-month supervisor, visiting teacher, nurse, and secretary positions allocated to a school district. **In essence, administrator counts are being determined by units of pupils, as opposed to the number of personnel under their span of responsibility.** Further research on how this is impacting education service delivery should be considered.
- Further discussions regarding how staffing data are reported in the state are recommended. For example, a disconnect exists between many stakeholders regarding the definition of a district administrator. This situation is exacerbated by the collection of staffing data in which counts can differ greatly depending on the definition that is

used: some data include administrative support staff in the administrator counts while other data only includes management positions.

It is the project team's hope that this report can serve as the catalyst for ongoing discussions related to educational service delivery in Delaware.

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REFERENCES

Delaware School Administrator Funding Analysis: Self-Reported Data by Delaware School Districts for 2017–2018 School Year, Collected by C. Kelly and M. Chesser, 2018



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