

Vital school professionals eliminated Student health, career preparation, art exposure suffer

Victoria Jackson

Introduction and Summary

A recent rule change in Ohio is making it easier to limit children's access to those essential components of a complete education. education beyond the traditional subjects of reading, writing, science, math, history and civics.

Until last year, Ohio had in place a rule requiring a minimum level of staffing for music, visual arts, physical education, counselors, librarians, nurses, social workers and visiting teachers. School districts had to have at least five of these eight positions for every 1,000 students. In March 2015, the State Board of Education eliminated this so-called "5 of 8" staffing rule. To understand how these positions were staffed in the 10 years prior to elimination of the rule, we analyzed staffing levels from the 2005-06 to 2014-15 school year.

Over the last decade, even after adjusting for declining student enrollment, trends in educator-to-student ratios have been discouraging. Key findings of this report include:

- Ohio schools have experienced a 12.3 percent decline in visual art, music and physical education teachers when adjusted for student enrollment. Teacher-to-student ratios have grown substantially across the state.
- School librarians were especially hard hit with a decrease of 42.6 percent, or 39.7 percent when adjusted for the decline in enrollment
- School counselors, nurses, and social workers did not see reductions once declines in enrollment were taken into account, but each has an educator-to-student ratio much higher than recommended by national authorities.
- Declines in arts, music and PE teachers along with other education personnel jeopardize student learning. Research consistently finds that these positions improve student outcomes.

Reductions in K-12 funding have contributed to these findings. For more than a decade, school funding in Ohio has been on a rollercoaster, ending up below where it started when adjusted for inflation. Combined state and local, per-pupil funding in Ohio remained 3.8 percent lower in 2014 than in the recessionary year of 2008, adjusted for inflation. Cuts to K-12 education have meant there is less money available to provide students with the education that fosters well-rounded children who are prepared for higher education and the workforce. Rise and fall in funding levels, coupled with many changes in core funding elements, make restoration uncertain.

Key findings

- Between 2005-06 and 2014-15, the number of art, music, and PE teachers has declined by 12.3 percent
- Statewide teacher-to-student ratios have increased
- School librarians have declined by 39.7 percent
- School counselor, school nurse, and social worker-to-student ratios are higher than national recommendations

To reverse these trends, state lawmakers should look for opportunities to increase revenue to invest in K-12 education – providing resources necessary to ensure optimal student-to-teacher ratios and adequate access to educational service personnel, who include school counselors, school librarians, school nurses, social workers, and visiting teachers, across the state. In addition, the State Board of Education and Ohio General Assembly should implement policies that ensure student access to the education and services provided by art, music, and physical education teachers and educational service personnel.