



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Report of Findings

Cut Deep:

How the Sequester Will Impact Our Nation's Schools

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Abstract

This study is the thirteenth in a series conducted by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) on the impact of the economic downturn on schools. AASA launched the series in fall 2008 in response to state budget shortfalls, federal aid and interventions, and a series of additional events characterizing a slowing, stagnant economy. As the economic situation worsened, AASA continued to monitor its impact on schools through a series of survey of school administrators nationwide.

The previous studies in the AASA Economic Impact Study Series (<http://www.aasa.org/research.aspx>) include:

- “Weathering the Storm: How the Economic Recession Continues to Impact School Districts” (Mar. 15, 2012)
- “Projection of National Education Job Cuts for the 2011-12 School Year” (May 24, 2011)
- “Surviving a Thousand Cuts: America’s Public Schools and the Recession” (Dec. 16, 2010)
- “Impact of Preventing Projected Educator Layoffs for 2010-11 School Year” (June 22, 2010)
- “Projection of National Education Job Cuts for the 2010-11 School Year” (May 4, 2010)
- “A Cliff Hanger: How America’s Public Schools Continue to Feel the Impact of the Economic Downturn”(April 8, 2010)
- “One Year Later: How the Economic Impact Continues to Impact School Districts” (Oct. 27, 2009)
- “Schools and the Stimulus: How America’s Public School Districts Are Using ARRA Funds”(Aug. 25, 2009)
- “Looking Back, Looking Forward: How the Economic Downturn Continues to Impact School Districts” (March 25, 2009)
- “AASA Impact of the Economic Downturn on School Jobs Snapshot Survey” (Jan. 16, 2009)
- “AASA Opportunity for Federal Education Funding Survey” (Dec. 15, 2008)
- “AASA Study of the Impact of the Economic Downturn on Schools” (Nov. 12, 2008)

About This Study

Four years ago, AASA began documenting how the nation’s greatest recession was impacting its public schools. Faced with unparalleled fiscal realities and budget constraints stemming from the recession, the nation’s schools and the educators who lead them responded with a sense of pragmatism, balancing fiscal hardship with the educational needs of the students who come to school every day, regardless of the nation’s economy.

Cut Deep is the thirteenth survey in AASA’s Economic Impact Series and is based on a survey of school administrators administered in June 2012. A total of 1,060 school administrators from 49 states and the District of Columbia completed the survey. *Cut Deep* has a narrower focus than the previous twelve economic impact studies and focuses on the impact of sequestration on the nation’s schools. Sequestration in education was first addressed in *Weathering the Storm* as a subset of questions; *Cut Deep* is a deeper exploration of how schools are thinking about and planning for the cuts of sequestration, the set of automatic, across-the-board cuts that will take effect on January 2, 2013. The cuts are an automatic spending reduction process that stems from the failure of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction (Super Committee) to produce a plan identifying budgetary savings of at least \$1.2 trillion over ten years.

AASA understands and recognizes the important work of addressing our nation’s budget and the challenges Congress faces in addressing spending, revenues and mandatory programs. AASA firmly believes, however, that the blunt cuts of sequestration run counter to the widely stated and broadly supported goal of putting our nation on the path to economic health and well-being. The blind cuts of sequestration, made regardless of program demand or effectiveness, represent poor, short-sighted policy.

The cuts of sequestration are estimated to be between eight and nine percent, which would reduce funding for the US Education department by an additional \$4 billion and affect millions of students, classrooms and teachers by increasing class size, reducing programs and services and eliminating educator jobs.

State/ local governments and school districts have very limited capacity to soften the cuts of sequestration: When asked if their state or local school district have the ability to soften the impact of sequestration, nearly all respondents replied 'no'. Nine in ten (90 percent) replied that their state would be unable to absorb or offset the cuts of sequestration, equal to the 89.5 percent indicating that their district would be unable to absorb the cuts.

More than half (54.1 percent) of respondents reported that their budget for the 2012-13 school year built-in cuts to off-set sequestration. School administrators report a variety of approaches in planning for sequestration. The annual process of adopting school budgets wrapped in May, meaning survey respondents were able to indicate how/if their district budget offset the anticipated cuts of sequestration. Less than half (45.2 percent) of respondents reported that they are waiting to see when/how sequestration unfolds. Their budgets did not build in cuts to offset sequestration, and they plan to '...make any necessary changes as needed, when the cuts happen'.

The cuts of sequestration will translate into reductions in and eliminations to personnel, curriculum, facilities and operations. Respondents reported that the cuts of sequestration would mean reducing professional development (69.4 percent), reducing academic programs (58.1 percent), eliminating personnel (56.6 percent) and increasing class size (54.9 percent). As one respondent from Alabama replied, ""The bottom line is that kids...pay the price."

School administrators, by a large margin, describe the sequestration-related information provided by the federal government as 'non-existent'. For those reporting some type of information from the federal government (the administration or Congress), respondents describe the quality of information as *poor/very poor*. Information from the state—whether the legislature, chief school officer, governor, or state board of education--didn't fare much better, and professional organizations were recognized as providing sequestration-related information that was *helpful or very helpful*.

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Cut Deep: How the Sequester Will Impact Our Nation's Schools

Sequestration was designed as a consequence. The priority was for the Super Committee to identify a nuanced plan—one that would arguably combine spending cuts, revenue increases and mandatory program reform—to realize the required savings over the next decade. Failure to proactively plan would result in blunt cuts where everybody feels the pain. The true impact of sequestration will ultimately be felt by individuals at the local level. Congress must acknowledge that sequestration is a problem, not a solution; a mistake that derails any hope of long-term, sustained economic well-being and growth. It is the responsibility of Congress to pick up the work of the failed Super Committee and avoid the deep cuts of sequestration.

AASA understands and recognizes the important work of addressing our nation's budget and the challenges Congress faces in addressing spending, revenues and mandatory programs. AASA firmly believes, however, that the blunt cuts of sequestration run counter to the widely stated and broadly supported goal of putting our nation on the path to economic health and well-being. The blind cuts of sequestration, made regardless of program demand or effectiveness, represent poor, short-sighted policy. More directly related to education, sequestration would harm our nation's global competitiveness and economic future by completely undermining progress on improving student achievement, closing achievement gaps and increasing high school graduation and post-secondary education.

As the onset of sequestration draws nearer, more and more attention is directed toward what the cuts will mean for our country, detailing the cuts for defense, infrastructure, health care, transportation, education and more. While the impact of the sequester on defense has received a larger, brighter share of the spotlight, more recent conversations have included candid conversation about the impact on non-defense discretionary (NDD) funding, which supports programs that provide core government functions that benefit everyone, including medical research, public safety, housing services, education and more.

Outside of sequestration, NDD spending—including education—has already taken a significant and disproportionate cut in federal funding. In fact, between the FY11 and FY12 annual appropriations process, education funding was reduced by \$1.48 billion. Since 2010, more than 50 education programs have been eliminated, a funding reduction exceeding \$1.2 billion. As the recession dragged on over nearly four years, the effect of these cuts in federal funding were further compounded by cuts at the state and local level, and their collective impact on the nation's schools became increasingly more obvious and damaging. The cuts of sequestration are estimated to be between eight and nine percent, which would reduce funding for the US Education department by an additional \$4 billion, affecting millions of students, classrooms and teachers by increasing class size, reducing programs and services and eliminating educator jobs.

In this context, recognizing the breadth and depth of cuts that education funding has already sustained at the federal level, AASA administered a survey to gauge how school districts are bracing for sequestration. In June 2012, more than 1,000 school administrators from 49 states and the District of Columbia completed the survey, detailing how their respective districts are preparing for sequestration, how their district would respond to the cuts, and assessing the type and quality of information about sequestration that is available to inform these critical local conversations.

AASA's *Economic Impact Survey Series* has documented the effect of the recession on the nation's public schools. Reductions in federal, state and local funding severely limited the ability of school districts to maintain academic programs, services and personnel and in most cases translated into deep cuts in academic programming and school staffing. Though economic stability is starting to take hold at the state and local level, the stability is

delicate and school administrators deliver a clear message in *Cut Deep*: sequestration is likely to erode the fragile economic stability starting to take hold at the state and local level.

State/ local governments and school districts have very limited capacity to soften the cuts of sequestration:

When asked if their state or local school district have the ability to soften the impact of sequestration, nearly all respondents replied 'no'. Nine in ten (90 percent) replied that their state would be unable to absorb or offset the cuts of sequestration, equal to the 89.5 percent indicating that their district would be unable to absorb the cuts. The recession caused the greatest collapse in state revenues on record (Oliff et al., 2012). Complicating matters further, the 'rainy day' funds that many states and local districts had saved or reserved have long since been drained, as those funds were used to help cover the cumulative \$600 million in budget gaps during the recession (McNichol, 2012). Oliff et al. (2012) report that 31 states are reporting budget gaps totaling \$55 billion for fiscal year 2013, shortfalls that are all the more troubling because states' capacity for closing the gaps are fewer and more limited than in earlier years. A recent joint report by the National Governor's Association and National Association of State Budget Officers found states to be cautious about the strength of the national economic recovery, with 23 states still projecting revenue levels for FY13 to be below pre-recession (FY08) levels (Streeley, 2012). AASA's most recent economic impact survey found that three-quarters (71.2 percent) of school districts reported a decrease in state/local revenues between the 2010-11 and 2011-12 school years, and more than half (57 percent) anticipate a decrease going in to the 2012-13 school year (Ellerson, 2012).

Budgeting for Sequestration

School administrators report a variety of approaches in planning for sequestration. The annual process of adopting school budgets wrapped in May, meaning survey respondents were able to indicate how/if their district budget for the 2012-13 school year offset the anticipated cuts of sequestration. Responses could be grouped in to one of two general categories: budgets that include the cuts of sequestration and budgets that do not include the cuts. Slightly more than half (54.1 percent) of respondents reported that their budget for the 2012-13 school year built-in cuts for sequestration. Digging deeper, the built-in cuts could be described in four ways:

- Full Year, Full Approach: Reduced spending by 9 percent for the full school year (25.9 percent)
- Full Year, Partial Approach: Reduced spending by less than 9 percent for the full school year (9.9 percent)
- Mid-Year, Full Approach: Identified ways to reduce spending by 9 percent mid-year (9.2 percent)
- Mid-Year, Partial Approach: Identified ways to reduce spending by less than 9percent mid-year (7.3 percent)

Less than half (45.2 percent) of respondents reported that they are waiting to see when/how sequestration unfolds. Their budgets did not build in cuts to offset sequestration, and they plan to '...make any necessary changes as needed, when the cuts happen'. There are several reasons why districts may risk the budgetary uncertainty of not planning for sequestration. Much can be attributed to the extremely tight budgeting environment in which school districts operate. The cuts of the recession have left them with little-to-no 'wiggle' room. Additionally, lack of information about the sequester clarifying which programs will be impacted, how deeply, and when means districts are left to plan around a moving target. Speaking to the lack of information and the tight fiscal reality, one respondent wrote:

'...We have little room left to cut which will not significantly impact students, programming, and core areas of education, so we are fearful to cut any further unless we are faced with no other options.' **Pennsylvania**

It should also be noted that just because school budgets haven't already built the cuts in—whether full-year or mid-year—does not mean that district leaders haven't considered a plan of action for when the cuts become reality. Lastly, districts may be taking the 'wait and see' approach to the threat of sequestration because they anticipate Congress will intervene to avoid the January cuts, whether by simply delaying the cuts or reaching a comprehensive alternative to sequestration.

Sequestration Cuts & Impact on Education Programs

The broad, blunt cuts of sequestration will reduce funding to the U.S. Department of Education and Head Start by an estimated \$4.5 to \$4.8 billion.^{1,2} According to recent analysis by the National Education Association (NEA), sequestration would roll back Education Department funding to pre-2003 levels, impacting between 8.9 million and 9.4 million students. Potential job losses are projected to be between 74,600 and 80,500, and the cuts come as schools and colleges enroll 5.4 million more students than they did in 2003 and the costs of K-12 services have increased 25 percent.

Survey respondents identified dozens of federal education programs whose funding is critical to their district. Four programs were voiced across almost all responses: ESEA Title I, IDEA, ESEA Title II and the Rural Education Achievement Program. Sequestration would slash these critical federal funds and the local academic programs they support¹:

- Title I funds would be cut by \$1.2 billion, dropping to 2007 levels, impacting 1.8 million students and eliminating 16,100 jobs.
- IDEA funds would be cut by \$973 million, dropping to 2006 levels, impacting 495,000 students and eliminating 12,600 jobs.
- Title II Grants for Teacher Quality funds would be cut by \$207 million, dropping to its lowest level since its creation in 2002, eliminating 2,800 jobs and reducing funding for class size reduction by \$77 million.
- Rural Education Achievement Program funds would be cut by \$15 million, dropping to 2002 levels, and impacting 400,000 students, even though rural schools have absorbed 70 percent of the growth in the nation’s school enrollment.

When asked to describe how the cuts of sequestration will impact their school district, respondents reported cuts to personnel, curriculum, facilities and operations. The pattern of cuts closely mirrors the types of cuts administrators have reported over the course of the recession. The notable difference, however, is that this round of cuts will directly impact student achievement. Cuts stemming from early recessionary pressures were less likely to impact student achievement, as districts had more budget flexibility and access to rainy day funds and were able to make initial cuts in areas that least directly impact student achievement, including altering thermostats and reducing staff travel. As the recession and cuts wore on, budget flexibility has been all but depleted, meaning that the cuts of sequestration put immediate pressure on areas that directly impact student achievement, including personnel layoffs and reducing academic programs.

Budgetary Impact	Response
Reducing Professional Development	69.4%
Reducing Academic Programs (enrichment, after-school, intervention, etc)	58.1%
Personnel Layoffs (non-instructional staff)	56.6%
Increased Class Size	54.9%
Personnel Layoffs (instructional staff)	54.8%
Deferring Technology Purchases	52.8%
Deferring Textbook Purchases	38.0%
Deferring Maintenance	36.6%
Eliminating Summer School Programs	34.6%
Reducing Course Offerings	25.6%
Reducing Extra-Curricular Activities	25.6%

¹ National Education Association (July 2012). Impact of Sequestration on Federal Education Programs. NEA: Washington, D.C.

² The NEA analysis of the impact of sequestration for both the Congressional Budget Office estimate (7.8 percent) and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (8.4 percent).

Shift Funding of Extracurricular Activities to Families/Community/Boosters	20.2%
Cutting Bus Transportation Routes/Availability	13.6%
Personnel Furloughs	8.6%
Closing/Consolidating Schools	4.4%

In response to an open-ended item asking about the impact of sequestration, respondents delivered a very clear message—consistent with the charted findings, above—that sequestration will result in reduced professional development opportunities, eliminated academic programs and eliminated school personnel:

“The majority of federal funds for our system are provided through Title 1, IDEA, and Title 2a. These funds are essential in our efforts to support struggling learners and improving teacher quality in our district. We have worked hard to build an effective system of interventions for our struggling learners which is yielding positive results. However, we continue to reduce these much needed services as funding declines. The sequestration related cuts are just another threat to these critical services that aid our struggling learners in reading and math in particular. Additionally, these cuts will result in a domino effect that impacts professional development, instructional resources, and enrichment services that are important and necessary for a high quality, world class education.”

Kentucky

“We are a Title I district (just under 70% F&R) and heavily dependent on federal funds... for the past six years we have restructured our federal funds and applied them to improve the quality of instruction/performance in our district. Our graduation rate has improved by 35%. We have fully implemented College and Career Pathways and our achievement gaps have closed significantly. All of our metrics are trending up in a very positive fashion because of the supports we have been able to put into place with the federal funds. Our students and teachers are beginning to believe we can achieve at a high level; however, my greatest fear is that with these additional funding cuts our supports will disappear. Without these supports I question if the growth/improvement we have achieved will be sustainable. It will take more time and consistent resources to break the generational cycle of poverty and low academic expectations in our community.” **Georgia**

“Sequestration is a demonstration of the dysfunctionality of Congress and the sharply partisan climate which holds to untenable positions regardless of the cost. Cutting federal spending is a real need, as is raising additional revenues. To hold to a position that is either/or is not reasonable. Congress is late and has placed schools in a difficult position since personnel will be under contracts which must be honored--regardless of a mid-year cut in funds.” **Arkansas**

“The cuts do not just affect our federally funded programs. They impact all instructional program areas, as these areas will have to assist in covering shortfalls. .. The sequestration of federal program funds will add to the overall reduction impact resulting in further program and budgetary strains” **Missouri**

“Making informed decisions about how best to allocate financial resources is always better than arbitrary across-the-board mandatory cuts. Elected officials should make the tough choices they were elected to make. However, with that said, they need to counter the tough choices with an offset of mandates, accountability, and requirements that will not be funded but will continue to be a burden on local school districts.” **Virginia**

“The bottom line is that kids and society pay the price.” **Alabama**

“At a time where society demands more from schools and student learning this action would put all schools in direct sight for those that already discount schools and their efforts. We have a great opportunity to make the changes for student improved learning and ...now we could face a huge stoppage of effort.” **Wyoming**

Sequestration Outreach and Information

The impact of sequestration on the nation’s schools will in part be driven by how districts plan for sequestration. A district’s ability to plan for sequestration is largely dependent on the type and quality of information that is available as a reference. Survey respondents were asked to rate the type and quality of sequestration information they have received from a number of entities. Generally speaking, school administrators report a dearth of information related to sequestration:

- **Federal Entities:** School administrators, by a large margin, describe the sequestration-related information provided by the federal government as ‘non-existent’. For those reporting some type of information from the federal government, respondents describe the quality of information as *poor/very poor*. Recent efforts in both the House and Senate, calling for reports detailing information about sequestration and how it would impact programs, would eliminate this alarming gap and provide the American public and the officials elected to represent them complete information about the impact of sequestration.
 - **The Obama Administration/Sec. Arne Duncan:** Nearly half of respondents (45.4 percent) describe the information made available by the administration as *non-existent*. An additional 34.9 percent describe it as *poor/very poor*.
 - **Congress (in its entirety):** More than half (55.9 percent) of respondents describe information made available by Congress as *non-existent*, and 35.9 percent describe it as *poor/very poor*.
 - **Respondent’s Congressional Delegation:** Nearly half (48.5 percent) of respondents describe information made available from their specific Representative and/or Senators as *non-existent*, and 32 percent describe it as *poor/very poor*.
 - **Senate and House Education Committees and Appropriations Subcommittees:** More than half (53.1 percent) of respondents describe the information made available from the education-related committees in the House and Senate as *non-existent* and one-third (35.3 percent) describe it as *poor/very poor*.
- **State Entities:** State-level government entities have also stumbled when it comes to providing information about sequestration. School administrators rate the quality of state-provided information as poorly as the federal information.
 - **Your Governor:** Half (50 percent) of respondents describe the information made available by their governor as *non-existent*, and an additional 27.7 percent describe it as *poor/very poor*.
 - **Your Chief State School Officer:** One-third (33.3 percent) of respondents describe the information made available by their chief state school officer as *non-existent*, and an additional 23.2 percent describe it as *poor/very poor*.
 - **Your State Legislature:** One-half (50.3 percent) of respondents describe the information made available by their state legislature as *non-existent*, and an additional 31.8 percent describe it as *poor/very poor*.
 - **Your State Board of Education:** Slightly less than half (44.8 percent) of respondents describe the information made available by their state board of education as *non-existent*, and an additional 26.8 percent describe it as *poor/very poor*.
- **Professional Organizations:** State and national organizations have, by far, provided the information school districts are relying on as it comes to learning about and planning for sequestration.
 - **American Association of School Administrators:** More than half (54.1 percent) of respondents describe AASA’s sequestration information as *helpful/very helpful*.
 - **State Administrator Association (AASA affiliate):** More than half (55.1 percent) of respondents describe their state association’s sequestration information as *helpful/very helpful*.

Asked to rate their level of agreement with a handful of statements related to sequestration, school administrators demonstrate a pragmatic understanding and anticipation of the deep cuts and support for Congress to take action to avoid the blunt action of automatic, across-the-board cuts. School district budgets—and non-defense discretionary spending in general—have already taken a disproportionate share of cuts. School administrators express strong support for Congress to address the issue of sequestration and to do so in a manner that doesn't single out non-defense discretionary (including education) funding. The statements below clarify an expectation that all aspects of the federal budget be under consideration.

- An overwhelming majority (92.8 percent) of respondents agree/ strongly agreed with *Sequestration impacts all funding programs without considering the scope or effectiveness of the programs being cut.*
- A large majority (88.2 percent) of respondents agree/strongly agree with *Congress should pick up the work of the Super Committee and work to identify the necessary cuts in a manner that impacts mandatory, defense and discretionary programs and considers program effectiveness.*
- Nearly two-thirds (61.8 percent) of respondents agree/strongly agree with *Across-the-board cuts should be truly across the board. Congress should not provide for—and the President should veto—any efforts to exempt some portions of the budget from the cuts.*
- More than three-quarters (85.8 percent) of respondents agree/strongly agree with *Given that the cuts have to happen, as required by law, Congress should take control of the process and proactively identify a nuanced combination of spending cuts and revenue increases necessary to avoid the deep cuts of sequestration.*
- Respondents are split when responding to *I have reached out to my Congressional delegation (Representative and Senators) to talk about the importance of avoiding sequestration and its impact on education:* 39.3 percent agree/strongly agree, 27 percent are neutral and 31.9 percent disagree/strongly disagree.

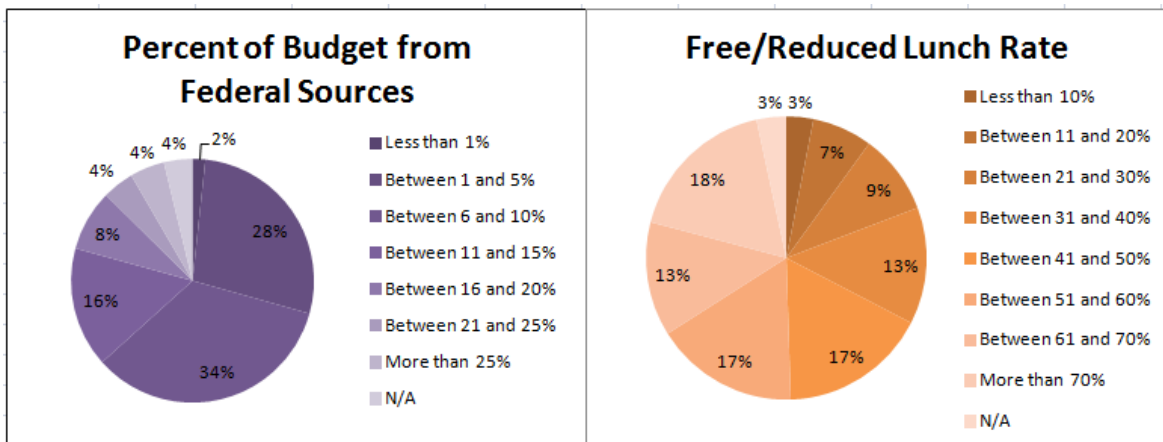
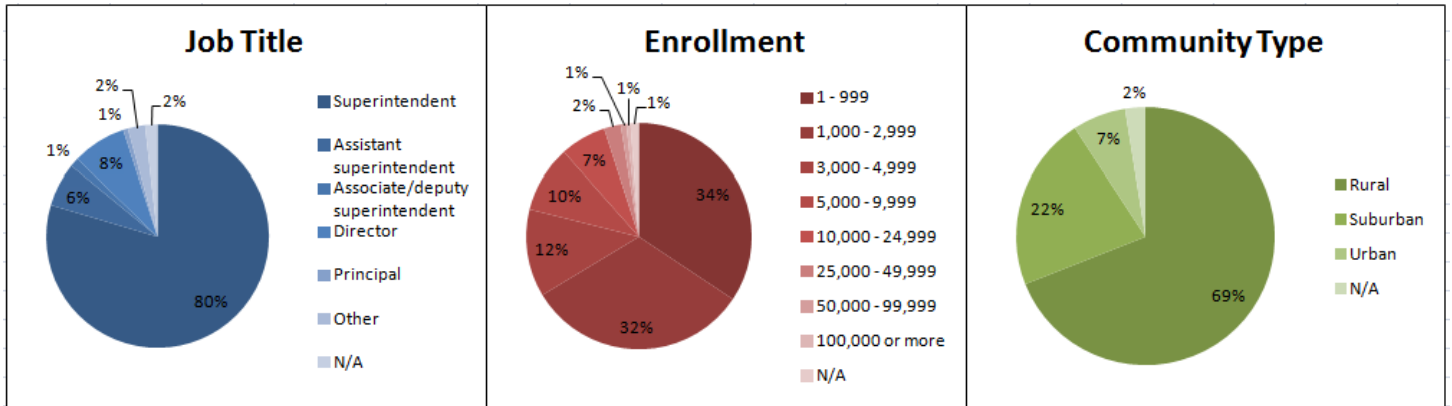
Survey Methodology: The surveyed sample reflects the membership of the American Association of School Administrators and should not be inferred to represent all public school superintendents. Those responding came represent 49 states and the District of Columbia (Hawaii is the only state not represented in survey responses). While no claim is made that the data reflects a representative sample, the demography reported by those responding to the survey does mirror student enrollment, community type, federal funding share and free/reduced lunch program eligibility in school districts nationwide. No claim is made that the same individuals responded to each of the survey efforts, though the population sampled through all thirteen *Economic Impact* surveys was drawn—with very few exceptions—from the same AASA membership listing. This survey, as detailed below, garnered the highest number of responses for any of the *Economic Impact* surveys. All surveys were distributed electronically using traditional survey software with analysis limited to measures of central tendency.

Survey Demographics:

- 1,060 school administrators from 49 states and the District of Columbia completed the survey over a two-week period in June 2012.
- Job Title: The large majority (79.5 percent) of respondents reported their title as *Superintendent*, compared to 7.8 percent reporting *Director*, and 7.6 percent reporting *Assistant/Associate/Deputy Superintendent*.
- Enrollment: Three-quarters (78.9 percent) of respondents work in school districts enrolling less than 5,000 students: 66.3 percent are in school districts enrolling less than 3,000 students, and 34.3 percent are in school districts enrolling less than 1,000 students. Ten (10.4) percent of respondents work in districts enrolling more than 10,000 students.
- Community Type: Two-thirds (69.1 percent) of respondents describe their community as *Rural*, compared to one-quarter (21.7 percent) responding *Suburban* and 6.7 percent responding *Urban*.
- Percent of Budget from Federal Sources: Two-thirds (63.3 percent) of respondents report that less than one-tenth of their operating budget comes from federal sources. One quarter (28.2 percent) report that between 11 and 25 percent of their budget comes from federal resources, and less than five percent

report that more than one-quarter of their budget comes from federal resources. The most recent data available from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that, on average, federal dollars represented 8.9 percent of school district operating budgets over the last decade.³

- **Free and Reduced Lunch Eligibility Rate:** In 2009-10, the national average percentage of public school students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch was 47.5 percent.⁴ Less than one-fifth of respondents reported an eligibility rate between 41 and 50 percent. Looking at the distribution of eligibility ranges reported, the median response was located in the 41-50 percent range, meaning the survey sample eligibility rate closely mirrors that reported by NCES.



³National Center for Education Statistics: Digest of Education Statistics, 2011. (Table 180) The data point for the most recent school year (2008-09) was 9.6 percent, up significantly from 8.2 percent in 2007-08. The single-year increase and above-average share in 2008-09 is likely attributable to the one-time infusion of emergency federal spending made available to schools as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

⁴ National Center for Education Statistics: Digest of Education Statistics, 2011. (Table 45) The percentage of public school students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch was 38.3 percent in the 2000-01 school year, 42.0 percent in 2005-06 and grew from 44.6 percent in 2008-09 to 47.5 percent in 2009-10.

Conclusion

AASA's *Economic Impact Survey Series* has provided the only long-term snapshot of how the nation's schools have responded to and been impacted by the recession. The continued erosion of state and local school budgets leaves school administrators in the tough position of having to cut the academic programs and instructional personnel that are critical to supporting quality public education, improving student learning and giving students the best educational opportunities available. As the recession winds down and economic recovery starts to take hold, education funding faces threats stemming from federal policies and (in)action, including sequestration. *Cut Deep* is a call to action, with school administrators painting a very clear picture of how deeply sequestration will impact their schools and what Congress can and should do to provide information about sequestration and, most importantly, pick up the work of the failed Joint Committee to identify an approach that avoids the blunt cuts of sequestration while addressing the nation's debt and deficit.

AASA looks forward to the time when the newest *Economic Impact Survey* details economic stability and increased invested in education. The unfortunate reality, however, is that state and federal budgets will continue to be hard-pressed to recover and reinstate the billions of dollars cut from operating budgets during the recession. School districts will continue to grapple with tight operating budgets and federal policies such as sequestration simply compound an untenable situation. Schools will continue to operate and open their doors because students will continue to show up. School administrators will continue to address their fiscal reality with a sense of pragmatism, and look to Congress and the administration to pursue a similarly pragmatic approach to sequestration.

Resources

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