

# Starving America's Public Schools

How Budget Cuts and  
Policy Mandates are Hurting  
our Nation's Students

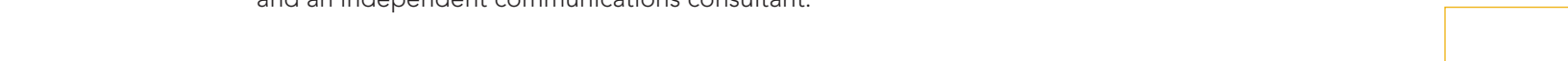


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The Campaign for America's Future (CAF) is a center for ideas and action that works to build an enduring majority for progressive change. The Campaign advances a progressive economic agenda and a vision of the future that works for the many, not simply the few. The Campaign is leading the fight for America's priorities—for good jobs and a sustainable economy, and for strengthening the safety net.



*Great Public Schools for Every Student*

The National Education Association is the nation's largest professional employee organization, representing 3.2 million elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, education support professionals, school administrators, retired educators, and students preparing to become teachers.

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# Executive Summary

## The Crisis in American Public Schools Is Not What You Think



Critics of America’s public schools always seem to start from the premise that the pre-K–12 public education system in this country is failing or in crisis. In fact, as the renowned education historian Diane Ravitch recently noted in an article in *The Saturday Evening Post*, this perpetual state of “crisis” in American public schools goes back a long way, “at least the past half-century.” The claims are that student scores on international tests are middling at best and that the future of the nation is in peril “because other nations have higher scores.”<sup>1</sup>

This crisis mentality is in stark contrast to years of survey research showing that Americans generally give high marks to their local schools. Going back to 1984, Phi Delta Kappa International and Gallup surveys have found that the populace holds their neighborhood schools in high regard. That’s been true every single year—and in fact, this year’s survey found that “Americans, and parents in particular, evaluate their community schools more positively than in any year since” the survey started.<sup>2</sup>

How could there be such a disconnect between a national narrative about public education and opinions about local schools? It’s not so surprising when you consider that there is a similar phenomenon if you ask Americans to rate their members of Congress. The majority of Americans have a favorable impression of their local Congressional representatives even though they perpetually hold the U.S. Congress as a whole in low regard.

But in regard to perspectives of education, the two contradictory narratives draw on completely different sources of evidence.

Debate about public education on the national level generally draws on evidence from macro-sources of data: scores from standardized testing, reports on the nation’s dropout rates, samplings from various student populations, and comparative assessments in various subject areas. But people get their school news from far more local, personal, and qualitative sources—from hometown newspapers, from local television and radio broadcasts, from neighbors, and from their own personal observations and experiences. It’s this broad and personal information flow that informs their opinions about student progress, school events and activities, and services their schools provide to children and families.

The national data sources obviously add value to the national discussion about reforming and improving public schools, but getting a full and comprehensive view of American public education also requires looking at the information flow and data from the local level.

This report looks at American pre-K–12 public schools—from the perspective of what Americans are reading and hearing in their local newspapers and media

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broadcasts. The intent is to see how this bottom-up view of the system might further inform our discussions about improving and renewing America's public schools.

Sifting through these on-the-ground accounts from local news reports and other sources revealed that there is indeed a growing crisis in America's public schools—one that is far more real and much more dangerous to our nation's children than the prevailing narrative suggests. This particular crisis, evident to some degree in nearly every state in the country, hinges on two factors.

The first factor: New austerity budgets passed by state legislatures are starting to have a huge influence on direct services to children, youth, and families. There is widespread evidence that the education funding cuts are leading to:

- Massive cuts to early childhood education programs (pre-K and kindergarten);
- Huge class sizes in many subjects, reaching levels that are upsetting parents and potentially damaging students' education;
- An end to art, music, physical education, and other subjects considered to be part of a well-rounded education;
- Cuts in specialized programs and/or hefty fees for them. Some of these programs serve students with developmental issues or those who need more individualized attention. They also include extra-curricular activities such as band and sports as well as academic offerings in science, foreign language, technology, and Advanced Placement subjects.

The second factor: As public schools are grappling with these severe budget cuts to programs, they also are facing enormous pressure to transfer tax dollars to targets outside traditional public education. New policy mandates at the federal and state levels are forcing public school systems to redirect tax dollars meant for public schools to various privately held concerns such as charter schools, private and religious schools, and contractors and companies tasked with setting up new systems for testing and accountability.

This report confines its attention to the emerging crisis in K–12 education only; although, the authors acknowledge that similar trends and issues are affecting higher education as well. Furthermore, this report focuses on five states—Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, and Pennsylvania—that perhaps epitomize the current crisis in K–12 education systems.

The analysis in this report compels the authors to conclude that the debate and discussion about public education policy must both acknowledge the new realities in American public schools and focus attention on the issue of adequately funding programs that serve all of America's public school students. The report also recommends that states provide regulatory relief to local districts in order to stanch the transfer of public education funds to privately held entities.



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# Introduction



*Imagine it's your child's first day of elementary school and you find out that all art, music, and physical education programs have been eliminated, the teachers have been dismissed, and the programs will not be replaced.*

*Imagine being a working parent on a tight budget and being told that your five-year-old can no longer attend full-day kindergarten—that the program has been cut to a half-day program and you will have to pay significantly more in tuition or fees.*

*Imagine your teenager has set a goal of attending college on an athletic scholarship, but the school board just eliminated that particular sports program.*

*Imagine that the high school your son or daughter attends has stopped offering the advanced classes that are needed to get into a particular college or university.*

**T**hese are not hypothetical examples, farfetched ideas, or isolated scenarios. Parents and students are facing these very concerns. Schools across the country are being forced to cut back on essentials, and these drastic cut-backs are diluting the quality of education that many students are receiving. Parents and students in some places hardly recognize their schools because they look and feel very different from the past.

In state after state, public schools are cutting services, shutting down programs, and charging extra fees for academic and other learning opportunities that American families value and consider part of a public education.

Why is this happening now? Most state legislatures have just passed new state budgets that are having huge negative effects on public education in general and K–12 school systems in particular. These austere budgets are creating a widespread funding crisis throughout the nation's public schools, according to *Education Week*.<sup>3</sup>

And even as state education funds are disappearing, public schools are being asked to respond to expensive new policy mandates for questionable items: more standardized testing, unproven evaluation methods, and brand new systems to funnel public education tax dollars into charter schools, private schools, and privately held education service providers.

This one-two punch to the nation's public schools means that children everywhere are losing essential learning opportunities when schools lay off staff, cut back programs, reduce course offerings, and charge families, already being hit hard financially, extra fees to cover school expenses. In the meantime, the tax dollars that could be used to restore these direct services to children and families instead are being transferred, because of policy mandates, to private concerns that are of questionable value to the public.

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# The Purpose of this Report

## The objectives of this report are to:

- Raise awareness of the fact that severe state budget cuts are undermining the learning opportunities available to students;
- Document on-the-ground effects that these austerity budgets are having on the services that schools traditionally provide to students and families;
- Ask questions about policy mandates that are diverting public tax dollars intended for public education into new education initiatives that have little or no record of success;
- Suggest alternatives that could reverse the effects of this emerging education crisis at the federal, state, and local levels of government.

## In analyzing the data for this report, the following questions were addressed:

- How do severe state budget cuts to K–12 public schools play out in communities, and what are the effects of the austerity measures on students and families in those communities?
- How deep are the cuts, and are there any patterns to them?
- What is the rationale for the cuts, are they necessary, and to what extent do they reflect the will of the people?
- Why are public school funds being steered away from programs and direct services to students—and shifted toward things such as teacher merit pay systems, more standardized testing, and charter schools and school voucher programs, which are more likely to be in the private domain?

## Is it wise to spend more on public education during a recession?

As recently as 2008, the job website careerbuilder.com declared education to be the number 1 recession-proof industry in the U.S.<sup>4</sup> It may be that the editors at careerbuilder.com bestowed this honor on education because of this country's long record of supporting public schools financially, even during tough times.

In fact, according to the journal *Education Next*, per-pupil spending in the U.S. has declined only four times since 1929 and “significantly only twice, once during the Great Depression and once in the midst of World War II.”<sup>5</sup>

The resiliency of education spending in down economies makes good financial and economic sense, because, as many analysts have noted, once issues of race and poverty have been factored out, more public spending on schools is associated with higher scores on international assessments of achievement.<sup>6</sup>

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School finance expert Bruce Baker, associate professor in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University, has cited numerous rigorous empirical studies of state school finance reforms and finds, in general, “that increased funding levels have been associated with improved outcomes, and that more equitable distributions of resources have been associated with more equitable distributions of outcomes.”<sup>7</sup>

Also, it makes sense that education spending has been so resilient because the majority of Americans clearly support this kind of investment in our future. In fact, according to one of the most respected and widely cited surveys of trends in spending priorities—the 2010 General Social Survey conducted by the University of Chicago—education remains one of the top spending priorities of Americans and that has been the case since 1990.<sup>8</sup>

### Cuts to Public Schools Are Deep and Wide

Yet despite historical precedent, empirical evidence of the economic value of continuing to invest in education, and public support for keeping public schools adequately funded during difficult economic times, public education budgets across the U.S. currently are being hit with severe cuts.

As a recent *Los Angeles Times* article notes, education spending is taking a beating nationwide. The authors cite a study from the National Association of State Budget Officers that finds K–12 public education budget cuts will “reduce, or eliminate, personnel and programs vital to the most vulnerable populations: lower-income and minority students.”<sup>9</sup>

The major source of the widespread education rollback, as pointed out by a recent report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, is the “unnecessarily deep spending cuts” enacted by state legislatures. The Center points to 34 states plus the District of Columbia that have already reduced K–12 public education spending, citing numerous examples of how severe the cuts are (see sidebar).<sup>10</sup>

Because state tax dollars are the primary source of support for public schools, there is little doubt that these cuts will have significant effect on school-aged children and families.

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## State Budget Cuts in the New Fiscal Year are Unnecessarily Harmful

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- Arizona is cutting \$183 million from K–12 education spending in the coming year and continues another \$377 million in cuts that were implemented over the previous three years, bringing the total cut relative to pre-recession levels to \$560 million, or \$530 per pupil.
- Colorado is cutting state spending on K–12 education by \$347 per pupil compared to last school year.
- Florida is cutting spending on K–12 education by \$542 per pupil compared with last year. The state also has cut \$13 million from the state’s school readiness program that gives low-income families access to high quality early care for their children. The cut means over 15,000 children currently participating in the program will no longer be served. Florida also reduced by 7 percent the per student allocation to providers participating in the state’s universal prekindergarten program for four-year-olds, which will mean that classrooms have more children per teacher.
- Georgia cut state and lottery funds for pre-kindergarten by 15 percent, which will mean shortening the pre-K school year from 180 to 160 days for 86,000 four-year-olds, increasing class sizes from 20 to 22 students per teacher, and reducing teacher salaries by 10 percent.
- Iowa reduced state funding for its statewide pre-kindergarten program for four-year-olds by 9 percent from last year. Schools serving these children will now receive fewer dollars per child and may have to make up for lost funds with reduced enrollment or higher property taxes. The state is also cutting back support for a community-based early childhood program that provides resources to parents with children from birth to age five, including a cut of nearly 30 percent to preschool tuition assistance.
- Illinois is cutting general state aid for public schools by \$152 million, on top of a loss of \$415 million in expired federal recovery dollars—a total decrease of 11 percent. The budget takes \$17 million from the state fund that supports early childhood education efforts, which may result in an estimated 4,000 fewer children receiving preschool services and 1,000 fewer at-risk infants and toddlers receiving developmental services. The budget also eliminates state funding for advanced placement courses in school districts with large concentrations of low-income students, mentoring programs for teachers and principals, and an initiative providing targeted, research-based instruction to students with learning difficulties.
- Kansas cut the basic funding formula for K–12 schools by \$232 per pupil, bringing this funding nearly 6 percent below fiscal year 2011 budgeted levels.
- For the third year in a row, Louisiana will fail to fund K–12 education at the minimum amount required to ensure adequate funding for at-risk and special needs students, as determined by the state’s education finance formula. Per student spending will be \$215 below the level set out by the finance formula for FY 2012.
- Michigan is cutting K–12 education spending by \$470 per student.
- Mississippi, for the fourth year in a row, will fail to meet the state’s statutory obligation to support K–12 schools, underfunding school districts by 10.5 percent or \$236 million. The statutory school funding formula is designed to ensure adequate funding for lower-income and underperforming schools. According to the Mississippi Department of Education, the state’s failure to meet that requirement over the past three years has resulted in 2,060 school employee layoffs (704 teachers, 792 teacher assistants, 163 administrators, counselors, and librarians, and 401 bus drivers, custodians, and clerical personnel).
- Missouri is freezing funding for K–12 education at last year’s levels. This means that for the second year in a row, the state has failed to meet the statutory funding formula established to ensure equitable distribution of state dollars to school districts.

- Nebraska altered its K–12 school aid funding formula to freeze state aid to schools in the coming year and allow very small increases thereafter, resulting in a cut of \$410 million over two years.
- New Mexico cut K–12 spending by \$42 million (1.7 percent). The governor is requiring school districts to spare “classroom spending” from the cuts, which means greater proportional cuts to other areas of K–12 education like school libraries and guidance counseling. The operating budget of the state education department is being cut by more than 25 percent.
- New York cut education aid by \$1.3 billion, or 6.1 percent. This cut will delay implementation of a court order to provide additional education funding to under-resourced school districts for the third year in a row. Beyond cutting the level of education aid in FY 2012, the budget limits the rate at which education spending can grow in future years to the rate of growth in state personal income.
- North Carolina cut nearly half of a billion dollars from K–12 education in each year of the biennium compared to the amount necessary to provide the same level of K–12 education services in 2012 as in 2011. Both the state-funded prekindergarten program for at-risk four-year-olds and the state’s early childhood development network that works to improve the quality of early learning and child outcomes were cut by 20 percent. The budget also reduces by 80 percent funds for textbooks; reduces by 5 percent funds for support positions, like guidance counselors and social workers; reduces by 15 percent funds for non-instructional staff; and cuts by 16 percent salaries and benefits for superintendents, associate and assistant superintendents, finance officers, athletic trainers, and transportation directors, among others.
- Ohio is cutting state K–12 education funding 7.5 percent this year, a cut of \$400 per student and equivalent to nearly 14,000 teachers’ salaries.
- Oklahoma is cutting funding for school districts by 4.5 percent, and making additional cuts to the Department of Education’s budget. The Department of Education has voted to eliminate adult education programs, math labs in middle school, and stipends for certified teachers, among other things.
- Pennsylvania cut K–12 education aid by \$422 million, or 7.3 percent, bringing funding down nearly to FY 2009 levels. The budget also cuts \$429 million dollars in additional funding that the state provides to school districts to implement effective educational practices (such as high quality pre-kindergarten programs) and maintain tutoring programs, among other purposes. Overall state funding for school districts was cut by \$851 million or 13.5 percent, a cut of \$485 per student.
- South Dakota cut K–12 education by 6.4 percent, for next year, an amount equal to \$416 per student, and 8.8 percent in 2013.
- Texas eliminated state funding for pre-K programs that serve around 100,000 mostly at-risk children, or more than 40 percent of the state’s pre-kindergarten students. The budget also reduces state K–12 funding to 9.4 percent below the minimum amount required by the state law. Texas already has below-average K–12 education funding compared to other states, and this cut would depress that low level even further at a time when the state’s school enrollment is growing. This would likely force school districts to lay off large numbers of teachers, increase class sizes, eliminate sports programs and other extra-curricular activities, and take other measures that undermine the quality of education.
- Utah cut K–12 education by 5 percent, or \$303, per pupil from the prior year’s levels.
- Washington has cut more than \$1 billion from state K–12 education funds designed to reduce class size, extend learning time, and provide professional development for teachers—a reduction equal to \$1,100 per student.
- Wisconsin reduced state aid designed to equalize funding across school districts by \$740 million over the coming two-year budget cycle, a cut of 8 percent. The budget also reduces K–12 funds for services for at-risk children, school nursing, and alternative education.

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—“State Budget Cuts in the New Fiscal Year Are Unnecessarily Harmful: Cuts Are Hitting Hard at Education, Health Care, and State Economies,” Erica Williams, Michael Leachman, and Nicholas Johnson, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, July 28, 2011, [www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3550](http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=3550)



# Where School Cuts Hurt Most

**T**his report documents how drastic cuts to education budgets are especially damaging to four education issues that are essential to students' academic and personal development that parents support and that benefit both individuals and society at large.

## 1. Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education programs are popular with parents, particularly those who work long hours and need affordable day care. The average cost for day care at a center varies quite a bit (depending on where you live), but the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies estimates the U.S. average at \$11,666 per year (\$972 a month).<sup>11</sup> Young families find that day care costs typically account for about 20 percent of yearly income.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly, cutting early childhood education is an expensive proposition for families, but the benefits of early childhood programs go well beyond individual family considerations. The value to society of high quality early childhood programs is well documented.<sup>13</sup> Even current Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke has weighed in on this issue, stating, “Studies find that well-focused investments in early childhood development yield high public as well as private returns,” including short-term payoffs to state budgets and long-term “returns to the overall economy and to the individuals themselves.”<sup>14</sup>

Early childhood education also is critically important to children's personal development and future success. A recent *Education Week* article summarizes the massive amount of research on early childhood education in a single sentence: “Evaluations of well-run pre-kindergarten programs have found that children exposed to high-quality early education were less likely to drop out of school, repeat grades, or need special education, compared with similar children who did not have such exposure.”<sup>15</sup>

And communities also recognize the value of these kinds of early investments in our young people. A national organization of more than 5,000 law enforcement leaders called “Fight Crime: Invest in Kids” has set up a grassroots initiative based on the finding that “early childhood education programs are among the most powerful weapons to prevent crime and violence.” According to the group's website [fightcrime.org](http://fightcrime.org), they have urged state government leaders in California, Florida, Kentucky, Montana, Ohio, Tennessee, and elsewhere not to cut early childhood education.

Given the economic and social benefits of early childhood education to individuals and society, it's good education policy, to say nothing about common sense, to help these kinds of programs flourish. Yet funding for early childhood education in the U.S. has been spiraling downward for years. In 2009–2010, states spent \$30 million less than in the previous year, giving \$700 less per child than what was spent in 2001–2002 and enrolling only 26 percent of four-year-olds nationwide. Ten states

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have eliminated all early childhood programs—and now, new state budgets in Texas, Pennsylvania, California, New Jersey, North Carolina, Florida, Colorado, Michigan, Georgia, and Illinois are all making significant cuts to early childhood programs or eliminating them altogether.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. Class Size

Parents have a unique perspective on the issue of class size because they can see that smaller class sizes make a positive difference in their children's lives. And the public agrees. In fact, in a majority of states, voters have approved legislation that limits class sizes.<sup>17</sup> And parent-teacher associations in many states—including Texas and Florida—have been outspoken in their support for keeping current class size limits, despite strained state budgets.

But there's more than parent insights on the issue of class size—there is a significant body of research confirming the benefits of small class sizes. The most comprehensive study of class size ever conducted, the STAR experiment in Tennessee, found that children who were placed in smaller classes (13-17 students) scored significantly higher on tests, received better grades, and had higher rates of attendance compared to children who were placed in larger class sizes (22-26 students). Furthermore, by the time the children who were placed in smaller classes in early grades got into fourth, sixth, and eighth grades, they were ahead of their peers academically. As those children moved through school, they had lower dropout rates, higher grades, and received better results on their college entrance exams. And the study even found that later in life, they had higher incomes and were more apt to open a 401-k retirement plan.<sup>18</sup>

Many school administrators acknowledge the importance of smaller class sizes, so when budgets are slashed, they tend to make reductions in non-teaching positions first. But in the past three years, public schools have lost more than 201,600 jobs.<sup>19</sup> And schools now are facing the prospect of having to shed 250,000 more jobs in 2011-12, many of them full-time teaching positions, which automatically leads to larger class sizes.<sup>20, 21</sup>

## 3. Well-Rounded Curriculum

In a recent address to the National PTA, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan spoke about the importance of students receiving a well-rounded education. "The President and I reject the notion that arts, history, science, writing, foreign language,

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physical education, geography, and civics are ornamental offerings that can or should be cut from school when times are tough,” he said. “In fact, in the information age, a well-rounded curriculum is not a luxury but a necessity.”<sup>22</sup>

He was obviously preaching to the choir here, as most parents and teachers understand that children need a 21st century education that includes classes in the arts, music, health and physical education, social studies, and vocational training.

Here again, the research supports parents’ and teachers’ observations. A report released in 2011 by Common Core, a respected Washington education advocacy organization, confirmed the importance of a well-rounded education.

The report, *Why We’re Behind: What Top Nations Teach Their Students But We Don’t*, examined the curriculum and assessments in nine countries that have outperformed the U.S. on the Program for International Student Assessment, or PISA. The report found that a standard feature of those countries’ school systems is the demand that students receive a broad and diverse education. According to the report, “the common ingredient across these varied nations” was a “dedication to educating their children deeply in a wide range of subjects.”<sup>23</sup>

The report concluded, “Too many American schools . . . are by contrast sacrificing time spent on the arts and humanities.”

Since passage of No Child Left Behind, the federal policy that mandated rigid accountability measures for student achievement in reading and math, schools have spent substantially more instructional time preparing for tests in those subjects— at the expense of science, social studies, art, music, and physical education.<sup>24</sup> Budget austerity measures can only exacerbate that negative trend.

#### 4. Special Programs for Developmental, Academic, and Non-Academic Needs

Everyone knows that children learn in different ways, at different rates, and face different challenges in the classroom. Some have developmental issues that can affect learning while others face physical or behavioral issues that need to be addressed. Some come to school without having learned to speak English. Some come from difficult homes that provide too little support for learning. Some students struggle with academic work but get great joy out of their abilities in other arenas, such as sports, band, or community service.

Schools have an obligation to work with all of these students and help them achieve. Meeting the needs of our diverse student bodies requires specialized personnel and programs for special education, reading, counseling, English as a second language (ESL), sports, clubs, after-school activities, and service learning.

When school budgets are severely cut, however, these special programs and staff often are the first to go. Many schools are eliminating such popular programs as after-school care, special-interest clubs (academic as well as non-academic), and sports. And increasingly, schools are charging families what are known as pay-to-play fees in order for their children to participate in programs that have always been considered part of the school experience. Some schools are even charging fees for basic academic courses such as foreign languages and “non-core” science and social studies classes, including chemistry, physics, civics, and history.<sup>25</sup> These pay-to-play fees can end up costing families thousands of dollars.<sup>26</sup>



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# Austerity, But Not for Everyone

## More Public Funds Go to Privately Operated Schools

While the main focus of this report is to chronicle the effects of these severe education budget cuts on students and families, it's important to note that while schools are being forced to slash programs and services, many state governments are allowing and in some instances, encouraging and subsidizing private interests to capitalize on public education.

Charter and private schools, for example, are enjoying robust growth, due to, in part, budget cuts that are causing traditional public schools to cut back on popular services.<sup>27</sup> Many governors and state legislators who are behind the draconian cuts to public schools are the very same people who passed and signed laws that increase spending on new programs that favor privately operated charter schools and programs that allow citizens to transfer—through vouchers and tax credits—public funds to private and religious schools.<sup>28</sup>

The idea of transferring public tax dollars to the private education sector is a trend that has been documented by the non-partisan, non-profit education group ASCD (formerly known as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development). Its recent analysis concluded that nearly \$1 billion is being redirected every year from public schools to the private sector through voucher and tax credit programs.<sup>29</sup>

According to the American Federation for Children, an advocacy group that supports parental choice in K–12 education, “more than 200,000 children will go ‘back to school’ [in 2011–12] as participants in America’s 26 private school choice programs, spanning 13 states and the District of Columbia.”<sup>30</sup>

Public tax dollars redirected to charter schools operated by for-profit and not-for-profit individuals and organizations are difficult to trace but no doubt amount to many millions of dollars.

## More Public Funds Go to Private Education Contractors and Service Providers

There is another significant area where public education tax dollars are going to private hands—when schools use federal and state education funds to pay private contractors to help implement new federal and state policy mandates. These mandates almost always require schools to expand significantly their use of standardized tests and then build elaborate data systems to track student scores.

*Education Week* recently reported that nearly every state that participated in the federal Race to the Top (RTTT) program sent out requests for proposals for technical help to address the complexities of RTTT proposals. In fact, every state that

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received RTTT grants—except for Massachusetts— has used 50 percent or more of its RTTT grant money for outside contractors.<sup>31</sup>

Testing companies appear to be among the biggest beneficiaries. Pearson, the company that dominates the test-scoring industry, for example, has seen its revenues from testing grow from \$293 million in 2002 to \$1.64 billion in 2009, according to one source.<sup>32</sup>

And even in these austere times, school systems are ramping up the use of standardized testing to ever-higher levels, despite the lack of evidence that increased testing can improve learning. In fact, just the opposite may be the case. As the non-partisan National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest) recently observed, “Two recent studies report striking evidence that [mandatory] exit exams decrease high school completion rates, increase GED test taking, and exacerbate inequalities in educational attainment.”<sup>33</sup>

Even so, elected officials at all levels of government are still calling for more testing. They want to add new end-of-year tests in reading and math, new tests during the year (interim testing), pre-tests in the fall, and they want tests in more subjects. Some states have even announced plans to test children before they enter kindergarten.

One has to wonder how parents who are dealing with cutbacks to their children’s education and being asked to pay hefty fees for basic school services would feel—were they aware—about the billions of dollars being sent to private businesses based on a vague idea of collecting student data and so-called value-added measures.



## Case Studies: Real life Consequences of Budget Cuts

### Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Ohio

**T**his reports cites five states that are prime examples of public schools getting hit by a one-two punch of state budget cuts plus expensive new policy mandates. All five states have implemented severe austerity measures that slash public education by billions of dollars.

Yet all five states have been lauded as education reform role models for other states to follow. Three of the five states—Florida, North Carolina, and Ohio—were winners in the 2010 Race to the Top competitive grant challenge and were described by Education Secretary Arne Duncan as examples of “what is possible when adults come together to do the right thing for children.”<sup>34</sup> Florida and Ohio have both been promoted by conservative reform enthusiasts, such as the Thomas Fordham Institute, which named them “contestants” for an “Education Reform Idol.”<sup>35</sup>

And all five states are key players in steering tax money meant for public education to private interests, including charter and private schools and contractors.

#### Arizona

Arizona is a “cut king,” second only to California in slashing the most from education spending, per pupil, from FY 2008 to FY 2012.<sup>36</sup> State lawmakers cut \$183 million from K–12 education in 2011.<sup>37</sup>

Arizona ranks sixth among states in the amount of public school funds being funneled to private schools. The state redirects \$61 million per year through individual, corporate, and other kinds of tax credit programs.<sup>38</sup>

#### Florida

Florida has cut more than \$1 billion from education in its new budget for 2011–12, an almost 8 percent drop that translates to a loss of \$542 per student.<sup>39</sup>

Florida ranks first among states in the amount of public school tax dollars being sent to private schools. The state redirects \$229 million per year through voucher and corporate tax credit programs.<sup>40</sup>

**All five states have implemented severe austerity measures that slash public education by billions of dollars. Yet all five states have been lauded as education reform role models for other states to follow.**

## North Carolina

Overriding the governor's veto, the North Carolina General Assembly approved a 2011 budget that cut \$800 million in funding for education.<sup>41</sup> The state ranked 47th in spending per pupil in the country in 2010 and likely will slip to 49th for 2011.<sup>42</sup>

North Carolina currently does not have a voucher or tax credit program open to all its citizens. But the legislature this year passed a bill that for the first time allows the state to send public tax dollars to private schools for families of special needs students. And legislators passed a law to allow an unlimited number of charter schools to operate in the state with much less oversight.<sup>43</sup>

## Ohio

Ohio is cutting state K–12 education funding by \$800 million over the next two fiscal years, 2011–2012 and 2012–2013. The cut amounts to an average of 7.5 percent, which equates to \$400 per student and nearly 14,000 teachers' salaries.<sup>44</sup>

Ohio comes in fourth among states in the amount of public school tax dollars being redirected to private schools. The state redirects \$107 million per year through voucher programs.<sup>45</sup>

## Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania's state political leadership passed and approved a new budget this year that cut \$851 million from public schools that will likely lead to, according to the state's teachers' union, increasing class sizes, eliminating programs, laying off teachers, as well as forcing school districts to raise taxes.<sup>46</sup>

Pennsylvania ranks seventh among states in the amount of public school funds being sent to private schools. The state redirects \$52 million per year through various types of tax credit programs.<sup>47</sup>



Photo: Wars

## Yes, It Can Get Worse

**B**y the end of the 2011–school year, Arizona’s public schools had enrolled about 1.1 million students in a little over 2,000 schools. Compared with other states, Arizona has one of the worst records with regard to financial support of public schools.

*Education Week’s 2011 Quality Counts* report gave Arizona a “D+” in the school finance category,<sup>48</sup> and according to the U.S. Census Bureau, Arizona ranks near the bottom when it comes to per-student education spending.<sup>49</sup> In 2010, Arizona school districts spent \$300 less per student than in the previous year, and the state was nearly \$2,500 per student below the national spending average.<sup>50</sup> Then, from 2010 to 2011, in response to these cuts, local schools eliminated more than 10,000 education jobs, including 6,640 teachers.<sup>51</sup>

Instead of reversing this troubling downward spiral, in 2011, Arizona lawmakers voted to cut even more spending on K–12 public education, this time by \$183 million, a 7 percent decline.<sup>52</sup> And again, school districts are being forced to respond by laying off teachers, freezing salaries, increasing class sizes, and closing schools.

The following chart offers examples of how these cuts are affecting services and programs for students and families. Where possible, the chart provides a quantitative and anecdotal account of how the raw numbers agreed to by state legislators have been translated into diminished services in local communities.

Information was not available for every service category due to the differences in how schools report budget outcomes and the gaps in news coverage by local media sources.

These cuts to public education in Arizona are coming at a particularly challenging time—the state is facing growing numbers of students who cost more to educate. From 2000 to 2009, the number of Arizona children living in poverty jumped 42 percent, to 254,000, according to the Census Bureau. The increase in the poverty rate nearly doubled for children under the age of five. And during that same period, the number of public school students with disabilities rose 36 percent, which means that now one out of every eight students is eligible for special education programs and services.<sup>53</sup>

The outlook for early education in Arizona is particularly bleak. More than half of Arizona’s children under the age of six are from low-income families, and 15 percent have limited English proficiency, which puts the state’s youngest citizens significantly at risk, according to the early childhood education advocacy group Pre-K Now, ([preknow.org](http://preknow.org)). Worse, Arizona has a long track record of very limited financial support for pre-K and kindergarten programs. According to Pre-K Now, a coalition of business leaders and early childhood experts helped pass a ballot measure in 2006 that established a dedicated fund to serve children from birth to age five. But in the ensuing years, state leaders kept attempting to divert these resources to fill short-term budget holes. Then in FY 2011, lawmakers eliminated pre-K funding completely, wiping out the dedicated resources voters had insisted on. And to make matters even worse, funds to support full-day kindergarten across the state also were eliminated. As students returned to classrooms this fall, the state was paying only for half-day kindergarten sessions; the extra cost for the full-day program has been shifted onto the backs of parents or must be taken out of local funds such as property taxes.<sup>54</sup>

# ARIZONA



The following list of school districts have experienced deep cuts in state funding to education as well, but due to stop-gap measures or because fiscal year planning has yet to be completed, this report has no data to show how these schools will adapt to the consequences of the cuts.

School District	State Cuts
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>\$183 million<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>Phoenix</b>	
Deer Valley	\$11 million <sup>b</sup>
Paradise Valley	\$4.2 million <sup>a</sup>
<b>Tempe-Mesa-Scottsdale</b>	
Gilbert	\$5.4 million <sup>c</sup>
Mesa	\$22 million <sup>d</sup>

## Early Childhood Education

### Statewide

- Eliminated pre-K funding<sup>e</sup>
- Cut funding of kindergarten to half-day only<sup>e</sup>

### Prescott

- (Cottonwood-Oak, Prescott, Humboldt)
- Eliminated full-day kindergarten (Cottonwood-Oak)<sup>e</sup>
- Cut pre-K program (Prescott)<sup>f</sup>

### Other

- (Lake Havasu)
- Charged extra fees for full-day kindergarten<sup>g</sup>

## Class Size

### Phoenix

- (Paradise Valley Higley, Deer Valley, Buckeye, Agua Fria, Tolleson, Isaac, Roosevelt)
- Cut more than 30 teaching positions (Higley)<sup>h</sup>
- Reduced teaching force by 56 (Deer Valley)<sup>b</sup>
- Closed 2 elementary schools (Isaac)<sup>a</sup>
- Closed an elementary school (Roosevelt)<sup>i</sup>

### Prescott

- Closed an elementary school (Cottonwood-Oak)<sup>f</sup>
- Cut 24 teaching and staff positions including a 3rd-grade teacher, a 4th-grade teacher, and a 6th-grade teacher (Humboldt)<sup>k</sup>

### Tempe-Mesa-Scottsdale

- (Tempe, Gilbert, Mesa, Kyrene)
- Closed a middle school (Tempe)<sup>f</sup>
- Eliminated 21 secondary teachers and increased class size at the junior high level from 28 to 30 (Mesa)<sup>d</sup>
- Increased class size by two students in grades K–3 and one student in grades 4–8 (Kyrene)<sup>k</sup>

### Tucson

- (Tucson, Vail, Flowing Wells)
- Fined \$1.9 million for insufficient instruction time for 7th and 8th graders<sup>l</sup>
- Class sizes reaching 40 (Tucson)<sup>m</sup>
- Increased high school class sizes from 24-29 to 32-35 students (Vail)<sup>n</sup>
- Increased class sizes (Flowing Wells)<sup>m</sup>

## Well-Rounded Curriculum

### Statewide

- Eliminated a statewide program funding courses in career and technical education subjects for 9th graders<sup>o</sup>

### Phoenix

- Cut 10 teaching positions in physical education, music, art, and library and reduced time students spend on those subjects (Higley)<sup>h</sup>



## Prescott

- At one school, reduced art, music and physical education faculty to one person (Cottonwood-Oak)<sup>f</sup>
- Cut music, art, and physical education in elementary schools (Prescott)<sup>g</sup>
- Cut an alternative learning center teacher, a computer/social studies teacher, a health teacher, a industrial technology teacher, and a physical education (Humboldt)<sup>j</sup>

## Tempe-Mesa-Scottsdale

- Cut art, music, physical education, and library services (Kyrene)<sup>k</sup>

## Tucson

- Cut geometry, art drama, and photography (Vail)<sup>m</sup>

## Other

(Lake Havasu)

- Eliminated elementary school art and music<sup>g</sup>

## Special Programs

### Phoenix

- Charged pay-to-play fees for sports: \$100 per sport, \$400 family cap (Agua Fria)<sup>p</sup>
- \$100 fee, no family cap (Buckeye)<sup>p</sup>
- \$50 per sport, \$200 family cap (Tolleson)<sup>p</sup>
- Cut cheerleading (Buckeye)<sup>q</sup>

## Prescott

- Cut special education paraprofessionals, behavior coaches, and school nurses (Prescott)<sup>r</sup>
- Cut one English Language Learner teacher, one ELL aide, and one nurse's aid (Humboldt)<sup>j</sup>

## Tempe-Mesa-Scottsdale

- Charged high school students to participate in athletics \$100 per sport (Mesa)<sup>d</sup>
- Cut an elementary-school teacher serving students in the local hospital (Mesa)<sup>s</sup>

## Tucson

- Cut elementary school counselors and librarians (Flowing Wells)<sup>l</sup>

NOTE: Information in this report relies on the most accurate news reports until September 15, 2011. After the school year is underway, individual schools may readjust and call back or lay off employees. Many school districts are using money made available from the 2010 educator jobs bill. If the 2011 American Jobs Act is not passed, schools will have no federal help to fill in gaps in their state budgets.

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## Transferring Public Education Tax Dollars to Private Interests in Arizona

As Arizona slid further down the education finance scale, more tax dollars meant for public schools ended up in private hands. And many traditional public schools across the state reported declining enrollments, in part due to the incentives given to private and charter schools.

A tax credit program enacted by state legislators in 2009 allows individuals and organizations to receive a tax credit either for funding a child's enrollment in or donating to a private school. Tax credits also can be earned by sending students with learning disabilities or those who live in foster care to private schools. Most of the students who benefit from this program already attend religious schools,<sup>55</sup> which prompted a challenge in court. This year, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled to preserve the program, thereby continuing this transfer of public tax money into private hands.

Arizona is known to be a huge promoter of charter schools. The Center for Education Reform notes on its website that Arizona is “the fastest growing charter state in the nation.” From 2000 to 2007, Arizona charter school enrollments did indeed achieve explosive growth—117 percent.<sup>56</sup> More recently, from 2005 to 2011, enrollment growth in charters continued to rise (44.2%) and significantly outpaces enrollment growth in the state's traditional public schools (3.4%), according to the Arizona Charter Schools Association. Some 11.5 percent of Arizona's public school students attend charters, up from 7 percent a decade ago. Despite the popularity of charter schools, the Arizona Department of Education's AZ Learns scale, which ranks each public school's academic performance, indicates that traditional public schools outperform their charter counterparts.





Photo: Ebyabe

## New Cuts Harm a School System Already in Trouble

**T**he state of Florida has 67 school districts that serve 2.6 million students in the K–12 system. Six of the top 20 largest school districts in the U.S. are located in Florida.

Florida, though, has a troubling record in terms of how the state serves all those school children. The state ranks 50th in the nation in per-capita spending per student, 44th in graduation rate, 47th in teacher pay, and 48th in college entrance exam scores.<sup>57</sup> As of 2009, Florida ranked 42nd in state spending on education as percentage of total resources. As a state, Florida spends only 3.1 percent of its resources on education.<sup>58</sup>

Despite its education record, Florida’s elected officials this year passed an education budget that slashes funding to K–12 public schools by \$1 billion, an almost 8 percent cut, or about \$542 per student. The state’s contribution to its public schools will be the smallest since 2003.<sup>59</sup>

The following table offers examples of how these cuts are affecting services and programs for students and families. Where possible, the table provides a quantitative and anecdotal account of how the raw numbers agreed to by state legislators have been translated into diminished services in local communities.

Information was not available for every service category. For instance, in the area of early childhood education, news of service cuts were not generally

reported publicly due, in part, to the way Florida administers its pre-K program—the state contracts with private childcare facilities and schools. That said, it should be noted that Florida’s pre-K program is not known for high quality. Nationally, it ranked 34 out of 37 in a recent ranking of state preschool programs when it came to pre-K funding. It met just three of 10 quality benchmarks on the annual report by the National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University.<sup>60</sup>

Also, regarding class size, the table includes some data on teacher layoffs as evidence of increased class sizes. But the majority of Florida districts have avoided mass teacher layoffs by relying on federal EduJobs funds to pay for teaching positions in the 2011–12 school year.<sup>61</sup> School districts had this money on hand because the Florida Senate appropriations chairman had told them to save these funds or an equivalent amount.<sup>62</sup> These funds will not be around next year.

And even though the state has legal restrictions on class size that are enforceable by fines, Florida lawmakers have passed a law allowing more than 500 courses—including foreign languages and Advanced Placement—to be exempt from these restrictions.<sup>63</sup>



The following list of school districts have experienced deep cuts in state funding to education as well, but due to stop-gap measures or because of fiscal year planning has yet to be completed, this report has no data to show how these schools will adapt to the consequences of the cuts.

School District	State Cuts
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>\$1 billion<sup>a</sup></b>
Broward County	\$141.7 million <sup>a</sup>
Orange County	\$80.4 million <sup>a</sup>
Volusia County	\$34.6 million <sup>a</sup>
Seminole County	\$38.5 million <sup>a</sup>
Duval County	\$70.6 million <sup>a</sup>
Miami-Dade County	\$185.7 million <sup>a</sup>
Indian River County	\$9.2 million <sup>a</sup>
Sarasota County	\$38.5 million <sup>a</sup>
Pasco County	\$38.4 million <sup>a</sup>
Hillsborough County	\$100.1 million <sup>a</sup>
Nassau County	\$5 million <sup>a</sup>
Hernando County	\$12.1 million <sup>a</sup>
Pinellas County	\$66.2 million <sup>a</sup>
Osceola County	\$19.5 million <sup>a</sup>
Putnam County	\$6.1 million <sup>a</sup>
Manatee County	\$17 million <sup>a</sup>
Leon County	\$15.6 million <sup>a</sup>
Charlotte County	\$9.7 million <sup>a</sup>
Clay County	\$19.7 million <sup>a</sup>
St. Johns County	\$12.7 million <sup>a</sup>
Palm Beach County	\$88.9 million <sup>a</sup>
Alachua County	\$15.1 million <sup>a</sup>

**Early Childhood Education**

**Statewide**

- Cut funds for voluntary pre-kindergarten by about \$20 million, an average of about \$180 per 4-year-old<sup>p</sup>

**Orange County**

- 20 percent of providers are considered "low performing" and need financial assistance to improve<sup>p</sup>

**Class Size**

**Statewide**

- Increased pre-K class sizes to 20<sup>f</sup>
- Dropped number of K-12 subjects exempted from class size caps from 849 to 304<sup>a</sup>

**Broward County**

- Eliminated 1,100 teachers<sup>q</sup>
- Cypress Bay High cut 40 teachers<sup>q</sup>
- Miramar High cut 30 teachers<sup>q</sup>
- Boyd Anderson High cut 29 teachers<sup>q</sup>
- South Plantation High cut 27 teachers<sup>b</sup>
- Coconut Creek High and Dillard High cut 26 teachers<sup>b</sup>

**Orange County**

- Eliminated more than 1,300 teachers<sup>c</sup>

**Volusia County**

- Eliminated more than 1,500 positions<sup>c</sup>
- Closed several elementary schools<sup>c</sup>

**Seminole County**

- Closed Longwood Elementary School<sup>c</sup>

**Miami-Dade County**

- Increased class sizes for AP and other "college-prep" courses from 25 to more than 30<sup>o</sup>

**Pasco County**

- Laid off 516 staff, including 249 instructional positions and 139 instructional support positions<sup>h</sup>

**Hillsborough County**

- Enacted amendment to allow more courses to exceed enrollment caps<sup>i</sup>

**Nassau County**

- Cut 39 teachers and 15 paraprofessionals<sup>j</sup>

**Hernando County**

- Cut 10 percent of staffing allocations<sup>k</sup>

**Pinellas County**

- Eliminated 400 jobs, including many teaching positions<sup>r</sup>
- At one high school, class sizes for non-core subjects increased from 25 to 30 students, for AP classes from 25 to 33 students<sup>s</sup>

## Well-Rounded Curriculum

### Statewide

- House version of legislation defined social studies as an “elective,” making it easier to cut<sup>m</sup>

### Broward County

- 44 elementary schools cut art<sup>t</sup>
- Eliminated 40 percent of media specialists<sup>t</sup>
- 20 schools eliminated music<sup>t</sup>
- 20 schools eliminated physical education<sup>t</sup>

### Duval County

- Reduced art, music, and physical education classes<sup>c</sup>
- Canceled purchase of science texts<sup>d</sup>

### Indian River County

- Cut 15 non-core teachers, such as business and drama, at the secondary level<sup>n</sup>

### Hernando County

- Cut French, automotive, and construction technology courses<sup>k</sup>

### Pinellas County

- Eliminated 6 elementary music teachers, 6 elementary art teachers, and 37 elementary media specialists<sup>r</sup>
- Cut 1 media specialist and 1 elective teacher per middle school<sup>r</sup>
- Cut 2 elective teachers per high school<sup>r</sup>
- One high school eliminated drama and culinary courses and shifted Latin to online only<sup>s</sup>

## Special Programs

### Volusia County

- Eliminated 9th-grade sports<sup>c</sup>

### Duval County

- Phased out public transportation to magnet schools<sup>d</sup>
- Cut back sports programs<sup>u</sup>

### Miami-Dade County

- Cut after-school programs for up to 4,500 young children<sup>e</sup>
- Cut eligibility for 7- and 8-year-olds for state subsidized afterschool programs<sup>v</sup>

### Indian River

- Cut 25 special education teacher assistants<sup>n</sup>

### Sarasota County

- Cut high school guidance counselors and academic advisors<sup>q</sup>
- Eliminated 23 intervention teachers from elementary schools<sup>q</sup>

### Hernando County

- Cut “exceptional education” teachers and staff<sup>k</sup>
- Cut driver’s education<sup>k</sup>
- Instituted pay-to-play fees for sports: \$35 for first sport, \$20 for second<sup>k</sup>

### Pinellas County

- Eliminated 5 English for Speakers of Other Languages teachers and 37 guidance counselors<sup>w</sup>
- Cut 1 guidance counselor in each middle school<sup>w</sup>
- Cut 1 guidance counselor per high school<sup>w</sup>
- Eliminated transportation to magnet school and career academy programs<sup>w</sup>

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NOTE: Information in this report relies on the most accurate news reports until September 15, 2011. After the school year is underway, individual schools may readjust and call back or lay off employees. Many school districts are using money made available from the 2010 educator jobs bill. If the 2011 American Jobs Act is not passed, schools will have no federal help to fill in gaps in their state budgets.

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## Transferring Public Education Tax Dollars to Private Interests in Florida

As state leaders in Florida were enacting the most austere public education budget in memory, they also were hard at work providing a boost to private and charter schools and saddling school districts with costly new mandates.

By passing new laws that provide more taxpayer-funded vouchers for students to attend private schools and allow charter schools to expand with less oversight, Florida has expanded the pipeline so that more public school funds can be routed to private interests. For example, the legislature added a potential 50,000 students to a voucher program for disabled students by expanding eligibility requirements to include students with food allergies, asthma, attention deficit disorder, and other conditions. Another voucher program financed by corporations in exchange for tax credits also is set to expand, pushing enrollment beyond the current 33,000 students.<sup>64</sup> Plus, as the *Orlando Sentinel* reported, under the new budget, while traditional public schools will get no money from the state this year for additions or needed repairs to thousands of aging buildings, charter schools will get \$55 billion.<sup>65</sup>

Adding to the flow of public money to private education interests, Florida is expanding the use of standardized testing. In fact, despite these recessionary times, the state is poised to spend more than \$1 billion to develop and implement end-of-course exams over the next two years. Scores on these new tests will be used for grading schools and awarding teacher merit pay.<sup>66</sup>

## Faced with Increasing Demand for Education, a State Cuts Supply



Photo: Jim Bowen

Immigration to North Carolina has boomed in recent years, and the state’s public school system has grown to nearly 1.5 million students in 115 districts. From 2000–2010, the state took in 1.5 million newcomers and grew at a rate of 18.5 percent, almost twice the national average of 9.7 percent.<sup>67</sup>

Many of those moving to North Carolina were households with children, and local schools in the state have been straining to keep up with rapidly expanding student populations. Yet this year, state legislators responded to this growing demand for services by providing less funding for education.

Budget cuts passed this summer—over the governor’s veto—hit public education with a 9 percent reduction in state funding.<sup>68</sup>

The \$800 million cut was broad and deep and included cuts ranging from textbooks and instructional materials to social programs for students who are deaf or blind. It also included cutting back the number of school janitorial staff as well as social workers, guidance counselors, and media specialists. The most unusual cut may have been a “discretionary cut” requiring schools to *pay back* \$124.2 million in “allocated operational resources” (commonly called discretionary funds) they received from the state. North Carolina designates the amount of the cut, but it’s up to the local school district to decide what to cut. With more than 80 percent of education dollars typically spent on personnel, it’s not surprising that many schools cut the number of classroom teachers, assistant principals, and support staff.<sup>69</sup>

The following chart offers examples of how these cuts are affecting services and programs for students and families. Where possible, the chart provides a quantitative and anecdotal account of how the raw numbers agreed to by state legislators have been translated into diminished services in local communities.

Information was not available for every service category due to the differences in how schools report budget outcomes and the gaps in news coverage by local media sources.

Even though the state budget provides some new funds for hiring new teachers to lower class sizes in first, second, and third grades, many schools have lost more teaching positions than they gained.

In fact, a survey conducted recently by the North Carolina Department of Instruction found that state public schools have lost 16,678 positions and laid off 6,097 people since the 2008–09 school year, which is 8 percent of the education work force. The 2011–12 school year showed the largest number of positions eliminated—6,307.5—and the largest number of layoffs, 2,418.1. Some 35 percent of the jobs lost were teachers.<sup>70</sup>

Many districts—Wake County, Guilford County, Charlotte-Mecklenberg, and others—avoided teacher jobs losses this year by relying on federal EduJobs funds. More than 4,000 public school employees statewide are being paid with federal EduJobs money, but these funds will not be around next year.<sup>71</sup>

Particularly hard hit in the 2011 state budget was North Carolina’s pre-K program called More at Four. Relying on a combination of state and federal funds, More at Four provides free pre-kindergarten to about 40,000 children across the state. But in the 2011 budget, the legislature cut the program’s funding by 20 percent and mandated a co-payment in the future in the amount of 10 percent of gross family income for a family of three. The program also would move to the state’s Department of Health and Human Services’ Division of Child Development, conveying the message that the state is downgrading its pre-K program to “day care” rather than keeping its emphasis as a program with educational goals.<sup>72</sup>

# NORTH CAROLINA



School District	State Cuts
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>\$800 million<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>Mountain</b>	
Asheville	\$1.8 million <sup>b</sup>
Madison	\$1 million <sup>b</sup>
Haywood	\$3-3.5 million <sup>b</sup>
Transylvania	\$1.5 million <sup>b</sup>
<b>South Central</b>	
Lincoln	\$3 million <sup>c</sup>
Cleveland	\$8.7 million <sup>c</sup>
<b>Triad</b>	
Winston-Salem/Forsyth	\$11.3 million <sup>d</sup>
<b>Triangle</b>	
Durham	\$15.6 million <sup>e</sup>
Orange	\$2.4 million <sup>e</sup>
Chapel Hill-Carrboro	\$7.7 million <sup>e</sup>

## Early Childhood Education

### Statewide

- Cut \$16 million (20%) for pre-K education<sup>f</sup>

### Mountain

(Buncombe County, Asheville, Madison, Haywood, Transylvania, Jackson, Clay)

- Closed 2 pre-K programs (Jackson)<sup>g</sup>

### South Central

(Charlotte-Mecklenberg, Iredell-Statesville, Mooresville, Cabarrus, Kannapolis, Union, Lincoln, Cleveland)

- Closed 13 pre-K centers (Charlotte)<sup>h</sup>

## Class Size

### Statewide

- Eliminated 13,000 education jobs<sup>a</sup>

### Coastal

(New Hanover, Lenoir, Carteret, Craven, Pitt, Duplin)

- Cut 6 teachers and 1 teacher assistant (Lenoir)<sup>i</sup>
- Cut 42 teachers and 16 teacher assistants (Carteret)<sup>i</sup>
- Cut 34 teachers (Craven)<sup>i</sup>
- Cut 32 teachers assistants (Pitt)<sup>i</sup>
- Cut 210 teachers (Duplin)<sup>i</sup>
- Cut 58 teachers and 90 teacher assistants (New Hanover)<sup>p</sup>

### Mountain

- Cut 7.5 teaching positions and increased class size in middle schools to 27-30 students (Asheville)<sup>j</sup>
- Cut 25 positions including 4 teachers (Clay)<sup>g</sup>

### North Central

(Vance, Granville, Warren)

- Cut 35 positions (Vance)<sup>k</sup>
- Cut 32 positions including 9 teachers and 16 teacher assistants (Warren)<sup>k</sup>
- Cut 34.5 positions including 12 teachers and 3 teacher assistants (Granville)<sup>k</sup>

### South Central

- Cut 37 teacher assistants (Iredell-Statesville)<sup>l</sup>
- Cut 20 teacher positions and 2 teacher assistants, and increased class size by 25 percent, moving high school classes into larger rooms (Mooresville)<sup>l</sup>
- Cut 10 percent of teacher assistants and reduced remaining assistants' work day by 2 hours (Cabarrus)<sup>l</sup>
- Cut 8 teaching positions and 27 teacher assistant positions and increased class sizes (Kannapolis)<sup>l</sup>
- Cut teachers and teaching assistants (Union)<sup>m</sup>
- Cut 27 teaching positions (Cleveland)<sup>c</sup>
- Cut 190 teacher assistants and 38 teachers (Lincoln)<sup>c</sup>

### Triad

(Winston-Salem/Forsyth, Guilford)

- Cut 211 jobs, including 118 teaching positions, and increased class sizes in all high schools (Winston-Salem/Forsyth)<sup>d</sup>



## Triangle

(Wake, Durham, Orange, Chapel Hill-Carrboro, Johnston)

- Cut 55 teaching positions (Durham)<sup>e</sup>
- Cut 123 positions, including 74 teacher assistants (Johnston)<sup>e</sup>

## Well-Rounded Curriculum

### Statewide

- Cut \$92.2 million from textbook purchasing and \$42 million (46 %) from instructional materials purchasing<sup>f</sup>

### South Central

- Eliminated an elementary school science lab (Charlotte-Mecklenberg)<sup>h</sup>

## Special Programs

### Statewide

- Cut \$22.9 million (5 %) in instructional support for guidance counselors, social workers, and media specialists<sup>f</sup>
- Cut \$1.7 million from residential schools for the deaf and the blind<sup>f</sup>
- Eliminated a \$13.3 million dropout prevention program<sup>f</sup>

### Coastal

(New Hanover)

- Cut 11 special education teachers and 27 special education teacher assistants<sup>p</sup>

## Mountain

- Eliminated 80 Title I and special education assistant positions (Asheville)<sup>i</sup>

### South Central

- Cut 11 school counselors, 2 social workers, 4 special education teachers, and 4 special education teacher assistants (Iredell-Statesville)<sup>j</sup>
- Cut eight positions in guidance, media, technology, and art (Kannapolis)<sup>j</sup>

### Triad

- Eliminated foreign languages in elementary schools (Winston-Salem/Forsyth)<sup>k</sup>
- Instituted pay-to-play fees of \$40 for a student to play high school sports and \$15 for a student to play middle school sports (Winston-Salem/Forsyth)<sup>n</sup>

### Triangle

- Cut 54 jobs to help teachers and to monitor meeting the academic needs of students with disabilities (Durham)<sup>e</sup>
- Instituted pay-to-play fees (Johnston)<sup>o</sup>

NOTE: Information in this report relies on the most accurate news reports until September 15, 2011. After the school year is underway, individual schools may readjust and call back or lay off employees. Many school districts are using money made available from the 2010 educator jobs bill. If the 2011 American Jobs Act is not passed, schools will have no federal help to fill in gaps in their state budgets.

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## Transferring Public Education Tax Dollars to Private Interests in North Carolina

While the North Carolina state legislature was slashing public education funding, they also were passing new laws that increase the flow of money originally meant for public education into private hands. Just as budget cuts were forcing some schools to cut staff for special education, North Carolina passed legislation to implement its first private school choice program that gives a tuition tax credit to families to send their special needs children to private schools. And legislators passed a law to lift the cap on the number of charter schools allowed to operate in the state, so more traditional schools that are cutting programs, narrowing curriculum, and charging pay-to-play fees will likely find themselves competing with new charter start-ups.<sup>73</sup>

As a recipient of \$400 million in federal Race to the Top funds, North Carolina also is scaling up contracts with private companies and foundations to implement more standardized testing, test score-based teacher evaluations, and other initiatives. Among recent contract announcements coming from the state Department of Instruction are new projects to send money to private companies. The projects include money to:

- Produce “an informational video highlighting teachers’ views on creating and implementing new standards for North Carolina’s Race To The Top initiative;”<sup>74</sup>
- “Launch of a variety of communication and change management activities with local educators and community members;”<sup>75</sup>
- Continue to “offer developmentally appropriate reading diagnostic assessments for students in elementary grades.”<sup>76</sup>





## Troubling Indicators on the Rise

**T**he state of Ohio has 613 school districts that provide education for 1.8 million students in the pre-K–12 system.

According to *Quality Counts, Education Week's* annual ranking of state performance indicators on education, Ohio's public education system does better than most other states in the nation, earning a "B-" grade. But a closer look at this ranking shows that the state has lower-than-average results in important areas such as "K–12 achievement" and "chance for success." In terms of per-pupil expenditures (PPE), Ohio's \$10,340 is only slightly above the national average of \$10,297. Once regional cost differences are taken into account, Ohio falls below average, spending nearly 4 percent less than the national average and relegating 68 percent of its students to districts with PPE below the U.S. average.<sup>77</sup>

This year, the Ohio state legislature cut state K–12 education funding by \$800 million (7.5%), a cut of \$400 per student and equivalent to nearly 14,000 teachers' salaries. The cuts will be implemented over two years: 10.5 percent in 2011–2012 and 4.9 percent the following school year. These cuts come at a difficult time for many Ohio school districts in communities coping with job losses and tightening household budgets that limit school funding at the local level.<sup>78</sup>

The following table documents some of the substantial cuts to education that are playing out in districts across Ohio. Where possible, the table provides a quantitative and anecdotal account of how the raw numbers agreed upon by state legislators have translated into diminished services in local communities.

Because Ohio school districts tend to be much smaller when compared to other states, such as Florida, districts have been clustered by geographic proximity that matches, to the extent possible, news media coverage. Two patterns in the data are particularly noteworthy.

### Abandoning Early Childhood Education:

According to *Education Week's Quality Counts* report, 45.8 percent of Ohio children ages three and four attend pre-K programs while 74 percent are enrolled in kindergarten. Those figures are below national averages of 48.3 percent for pre-K and 77.7 percent for kindergarten. To address this issue, Ohio's previous legislature voted to mandate funding for full-day kindergarten statewide. However, this law was undone by the current administration, and early childhood education in the state is noticeably spotty. The situation is likely to get worse because the state has chosen to cut by 75 percent the number of four-year-olds enrolled in tax-funded pre-school since 2001. Ohio's drop in support for early childhood education is the greatest among the 40 states with tax-funded programs for pre-K.<sup>79</sup>

The following table does not reflect these deep cuts to pre-K and kindergarten programs for a number of reasons. One problem in reporting cuts to Ohio's kindergarten programs is that the state now requires school districts to charge fees based on a sliding scale tied to federal poverty levels. School districts have some latitude on how to implement these fees, and that means changes in enrollment may not be evident until the school year is well underway. Cuts to pre-K programs also are difficult to trace due, in part, to the way Ohio distributes early childhood education services. According to the National Institute on Early Education Research (NIEER), although state funds for pre-K are distributed directly to public schools, these schools may subcontract with Head Start programs, faith-based centers, and private child care centers, making program cuts difficult to track. In its latest annual *The State of Preschool*, NIEER found that Ohio's percentage of three- and four-year olds enrolled in state funded pre-K programs declined to unprecedented lows of 1 percent and 2 percent, respectively, and state spending per child enrolled dropped by almost half, from \$6,911 to \$3,902.

*continued on page 32*



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**Embracing Pay-to-Play Fees:** Ohio is a prime example of the strong trend in public schools to charge extra fees for school services—commonly called pay-to-play fees. Many school districts across the state are exploring or setting up fee schedules or raising existing fees that allow students to play sports, participate in band and other extra-curricular activities, attend kindergarten, and enroll in and obtain materials for “non-core” academic courses, including foreign language and college-prep Advanced Placement classes. Regarding sports programs, nearly half of Ohio schools had some form of pay-to-play fees last year with an average cost of \$140. This year, those numbers are expected to rise.<sup>80</sup>

The following list of school districts have experienced deep cuts in state funding to education as well, but this report has no data to show how these schools will implement the cuts.

School District	State Cuts
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>\$800 million<sup>a</sup></b>
Alexander	\$0.81 million <sup>a</sup>
Athens City	\$2 million <sup>a</sup>
<b>Columbus Area</b>	
Columbus City	\$30 million <sup>b</sup>
Federal Hocking	\$0.25 million <sup>a</sup>
Fremont	\$3.7 million <sup>c</sup>
Granville	\$1.4 million <sup>d</sup>
Toledo Area	\$1.48 million <sup>e</sup>
Trimble	\$0.54 million <sup>a</sup>

## Early Childhood Education

### Statewide

- Eliminated mandate for districts to provide and fund full-day kindergarten<sup>f</sup>

### Dayton Area

(Beavercreek, Buckeye, Centerville, Dayton City, Fairborn, Huber Heights, Oakwood, Xenia)

- Eliminated funding for full-day kindergarten (areawide except Oakwood)<sup>d</sup>

### Toledo Area

(Maumee, Oregon, Port Clinton, Toledo City)

- Raised the fee charged for kindergarten (Maumee)<sup>g</sup>

## Class Size

### Alexander

- Will not replace 11 retired teachers<sup>h</sup>

### Athens City

- Not replacing retired teachers<sup>a</sup>

### Bucyrus

(Crawford County)

- Eliminated elementary dean of students and a 2nd-grade teacher<sup>i</sup>

### Cincinnati Area

(Cincinnati, Lakota, Lebanon)

- Cut 7 teaching positions (Lebanon)<sup>c</sup>
- Eliminated 78 positions, mostly teaching (Lakota)<sup>j</sup>
- Cut 208 school district jobs, including 145 teaching positions (Cincinnati)<sup>k</sup>

### Cleveland Area

(Cleveland Metropolitan, Cleveland Heights-University Heights, Medina, Strongsville)

- May increase class sizes to a ratio of more than 25-to-1 (Cleveland Heights-University Heights)<sup>l</sup>
- Laid off nearly 1,000 teachers and paraprofessionals and closing 7 schools (Cleveland)<sup>m</sup>
- Cut more than 70 teacher and teaching support positions and increasing class sizes from 25 to 30-32 (Medina)<sup>n</sup>

### Columbus Area

(Columbiana, Columbus City, Marysville)

- Eliminated 13 teachers and planning to cut up to 40 teaching positions (Marysville)<sup>o</sup>
- Planned to cut more than 80 teaching positions (Columbus)<sup>b</sup>

### Dayton Area )

- Eliminated more than 1,200 education jobs areawide<sup>d</sup>
- Cut 139 teaching positions (Dayton)<sup>d</sup>
- Cut 18 teachers and 16 paraprofessionals (Huber Heights)<sup>d</sup>
- Cut 33 full-time jobs, including many teachers (Fairborn)<sup>d</sup>
- Cutting 76 jobs and closed two elementary schools (Xenia)<sup>d</sup>
- Cutting 18.5 teaching positions (Beavercreek)<sup>p</sup>

### Fremont

- Eliminated 19 teaching, paraprofessional, and student monitoring positions<sup>a</sup>

### Granville

- Eliminated a number of elementary teachers<sup>r</sup>

### Toledo Area

- Trimmed staff by 8 positions and closing an elementary school (Maumee)<sup>g</sup>
- Cut 6 teaching positions, 7 support staff, and 1 part-time teacher (Port Clinton)<sup>s</sup>

## Well-Rounded Curriculum

### Athens City

- Eliminated high school English and consumer science teachers<sup>h</sup>

### Cleveland Area

- Reduced the middle school foreign language program (Strongsville)<sup>t</sup>
- Eliminated many AP science and math classes, the German and French programs, and offerings in art, music, and other electives (Medina)<sup>n</sup>

### Columbus Area

- Eliminated 13 teachers and planning to cut up to 40 teaching positions (Marysville)<sup>o</sup>
- Planned to cut more than 80 teaching positions (Columbus)<sup>b</sup>

### Newark City

- Leaving a science teacher position unfilled<sup>u</sup>

### Toledo Area

- Laid off 132 elementary school art, music, and physical education specialists (Toledo)<sup>v</sup>

## Special Programs

### Statewide

- Proposed cuts to gifted education by \$61.8 million (88%)<sup>w</sup>

### Alexander

- Cut computer classes in elementary grades<sup>h</sup>

### Athens City

- Cut field trip budget<sup>a</sup>
- Cut high school computer and photography classes<sup>h</sup>

### Bucyrus

- Cut an intervention teacher, a special education teacher, a vocal music teacher, a computer science instructor, and a librarian<sup>i</sup>

### Cincinnati Area

- Raised student athletic fees (Lebanon)<sup>c</sup>

### Cleveland Area

- Cut advisers and coaches for sports and extracurricular activities (Strongsville)<sup>t</sup>
- Eliminated social workers, nurses, and coaches (Cleveland)<sup>x</sup>
- Increased fees to \$660 to play a high school sport, \$200 to join the concert choir, and \$50 to act in the spring play (Medina)<sup>n</sup>

### Columbus Area

- Eliminated gifted and talented teachers (Marysville)<sup>o</sup>
- Cut 16 coaches and activity supervisors at the high school, reducing or eliminating middle school sports, and increasing pay-to-participate fees by \$50 to \$200 per activity (Marysville)<sup>o</sup>
- Added student government fees for middle and high school (Marysville)<sup>o</sup>
- Eliminated 6 resource teachers and 2 gifted and talented teachers (Columbus)<sup>b</sup>
- Reduced special education expenditures and staff (Columbiana)<sup>y</sup>

### Dayton Area

- Raised high school sports participation fees to \$100 per sport with an individual limit of \$200 per year and a family limit of \$250 per year; and raised middle school sports fee to \$70 per sport with an individual limit of \$140 and a family limit of \$250 (Beavercreek)<sup>p</sup>

### Granville

- Eliminated an elementary intervention aide<sup>r</sup>

### Newark City

- Eliminated gifted and talented<sup>z</sup>

### Toledo Area

- Raised to \$100 the fee for a student to play any sport, this may increase (Maumee)<sup>g</sup>
- Increased high school athletic fees \$150 for the first sport, \$100 the second, and \$50 the third; and increased middle school athletic fees to \$50 (Oregon)<sup>s</sup>

NOTE: Information in this report relies on the most accurate news reports until September 15, 2011. After the school year is underway, individual schools may readjust and call back or lay off employees. Many school districts are using money made available from the 2010 educator jobs bill. If the 2011 American Jobs Act is not passed, schools will have no federal help to fill in gaps in their state budgets.

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## Transferring Public Education Tax Dollars to Private Interests in Ohio

As state leaders in Ohio were enacting this austere public education budget, they took steps to significantly boost the ability of the private sector in education to receive taxpayer dollars meant for public schools. How? By saddling school districts with costly new mandates.

New measures were passed to more than quadruple the number of school vouchers available to parents, a move that would, in effect, transfer significantly more tax dollars to private schools.<sup>81</sup> According to the liberal think tank Innovation Ohio, the 39 school districts already participating in the state's voucher program would "suffer a loss of \$67 million in state funding—which translates into \$5,200 per year for a private school education, as opposed to the \$4,327 per child the state pays those districts to educate public school students."<sup>82</sup>

Privately operated charter schools, for-profit and others, also are getting a funding boost from the state, as many more of these schools, including e-schools, can now open without local sponsors and without adequate regulatory oversight.<sup>83</sup> Charters in Ohio are enjoying boom times, with state funding increases of a whopping 1,285 percent since 2001, compared to traditional public schools that have received only a 25 percent increase.<sup>84</sup>

This action to bolster charters, Innovation Ohio pointed out in a recent study, was taken despite the fact that only 21 percent of Ohio's charters are rated "effective" or better. That 21 percent rate pales in comparison to 72 percent of the state's traditional public schools earning ratings of effective or better. Furthermore, according to the same report, the cost to Ohio taxpayers to educate a student in a charter school is "more than double what [the state] spends to educate that same child in a traditional public school."<sup>85</sup>

Added to the public-to-private funds issue is the state's investment in vast new data systems, teacher evaluation programs, and school "turnaround" measures related to winning federally funded Race to the Top grants. One local reporter, *The Plain Dealer's* Edith Starzyk, has traced RTTT money and found that nearly half of the \$400 million has gone directly to outside contractors.<sup>86</sup>

Starzyk also points to other uses of RTTT funds: \$12.7 million to "build capacity to run the program," \$19.9 million to "create new standards and assessments," and \$43 million to "link students' performance to their teachers through a 'value-added' measure."<sup>87</sup>





## How Creative Can School Cuts Be?

**P**ennsylvania has 500 school districts that receive the majority of their funding through an elaborate combination of five different funding sources:

1. Basic Education Funding
2. Reimbursement of Charter Schools
3. Accountability Block Grants
4. Education Assistance Program
5. School Improvement Grants

This year, the Pennsylvania legislature and governor figured out a creative way to say they were “increasing” education spending, while in reality, they were slashing education spending by \$851 million.

Simultaneous to adding \$233.2 million to the state’s Basic Education Funding (an increase of 4.6%), Pennsylvania lawmakers rolled back education funding in total to 2008–2009 levels by passing steep cuts in the other four funding sources.<sup>88</sup>

A big cut came from a \$220 million reduction for reimbursing school districts with charter schools. The state’s reimbursement for charter school costs was never more than about 30 percent, but now school districts have to cover the total cost of educating students who transfer to those schools. According to sources, Pennsylvania has more than 90,000 students enrolled in charter and cyber charter schools.<sup>89</sup>

State leaders also eliminated \$155 million for Accountability Block Grants. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s website, the purpose of these grants is to “support any of several proven programs to improve educational achievement of students,” in particular “quality prekindergarten, full-day kindergarten programs, and reduced class size in the early grades, kindergarten through third grade.” Many districts use these grants to offset the cost of pre-K services and full-day kindergarten.

The Education Assistance Program, which provides tutoring for at-risk students, took a \$46.2 million hit. And

last among the enacted education cuts was a \$10.6 million cut from the School Improvement Grants category, which is money Pennsylvania gets from the federal government to “reform” low-achieving schools (as defined by federal guidelines.)<sup>90</sup>

It also must be noted that the state subsidy for special education was frozen for the third straight year.<sup>91</sup>

The bottom line of all this is that any district in Pennsylvania that got a boost in Basic Education Funding got slammed in other areas, which resulted in huge reductions in overall funding.

The following table offers examples of how these cuts are affecting services and programs for students and families. Where possible, the table provides a quantitative and anecdotal account of how the raw numbers agreed to by state legislators got translated into diminished services in local communities.

Information was not available for every service category due to the differences in how schools report budget outcomes and the gaps in news coverage by local media sources.

These cuts have had a profound effect on students and their families. A recent survey, conducted in August 2011 by the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials and Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, reported that, as a result of the state cuts, school districts slashed 5,106 jobs and left 3,259 positions unfilled.

Many of those districts cut afterschool and summer tutoring programs aimed at improving student achievement and scores. They raised class sizes, cut program options, and in some cases, charged fees for participating in sports and extracurricular activities. Some 294 of Pennsylvania’s 500 school districts participated in the survey.

High schools reduced their offerings in foreign languages, middle schools eliminated foreign language

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programs altogether, and most schools cut counselors and nurses. There are now fewer high school business and consumer science courses, fewer classroom aides, and fewer elementary art and music teachers.<sup>92</sup>

What is particularly distressing is that state budget cuts have hit poor school districts hardest. As the Associated Press reported, poorer districts were hit with per-pupil cuts nearly three times the size of those in wealthier districts. The hardest hit, such as Harrisburg, Philadelphia, Reading, and York, lost more than 10 times the money per student as wealthier districts.<sup>93</sup>

In addition to the state cuts, legislators also eliminated an exemption that allows districts to raise municipal taxes for renovation or new construction projects. Now those taxes can only be raised through ballot referenda, which most acknowledge would be difficult and time consuming to pass.<sup>94</sup>

Most Pennsylvania school districts are enduring their third straight year of significant budget cuts, and many have found that to balance their 2011–2012 budgets, they had to rely on their reserve funds, using up to half a million dollars.<sup>95</sup> Many districts now have no reserve funds left at all.<sup>96</sup>

School District	State Cuts
Statewide	\$851 million <sup>a</sup>

## Early Childhood Education

### Statewide

- Cut \$30 million from early childhood education statewide<sup>b</sup>
- 4 districts eliminated full-day kindergarten, 9 reduced full-day kindergarten, 7 eliminated pre-K, and 11 reduced pre-K<sup>a</sup>

### Bethlehem-Allentown Area

(Allentown, Bethlehem, Bangor, Wilson)

- Reduced pre-K program (Bethlehem)<sup>c</sup>

### Philadelphia Area

(Philadelphia, Chester Upland, Southeast Delco)

- Cut full-day kindergarten to half-day (Philadelphia)<sup>d</sup>

### Pittsburgh Area

(Pittsburgh, Beaver County, Bethel Park, Deer Lakes, Duquesne, East Allegheny, Elizabeth Forward, Highlands, West Mifflin Area, McKeesport, Moniteau, Seneca Valley, Sto-Rox, Steele Valley, South Allegheny, South Park, Upper St. Clair, Willkensburg, Woodland Hills)

- Went from full-day to half-day kindergarten (Highlands and East Allegheny)<sup>e</sup>
- Cut full-day kindergarten for at-risk children (South Park)<sup>e</sup>
- Eliminated 15 early childhood teachers and 13 paraprofessionals; reduced the number of children in pre-K by more than 400, or about 20 percent (Pittsburgh)<sup>f</sup>
- Cut 2 kindergarten teachers (Duquesne)<sup>g</sup>

## Class Size

### Statewide

- Cut more than 14,000 school jobs, including 3,556 teachers, 739 administrators, 4,000 other employees, and 5,883 positions left vacant in nearly 60 percent of school districts<sup>a</sup>
- An average of 28.5 positions were cut in districts<sup>c</sup>
- 70 percent of schools increased class size<sup>a</sup>

### Bethlehem-Allentown Area

- Cut 145 jobs, including 88 teaching positions (Bethlehem)<sup>e</sup>
- Eliminated 78 faculty positions (Allentown)<sup>e</sup>
- Eliminated 8 elementary teaching positions, a math teacher, and 2 English teachers (Bangor)<sup>h</sup>

### Harrisburg Area

(Harrisburg, York, Lebanon County, Central Dauphin, Lower Dauphin, Middletown, Palmyra, Susquehanna Township)

- Eliminated 153 teaching positions and closed 4 buildings (Harrisburg)<sup>i</sup>
- 12 teaching positions cut (Lower Dauphin)<sup>j</sup>
- Cut 3 teaching positions and 6 teacher aides (Middletown)<sup>j</sup>
- Cut 10 teaching positions and increased class sizes (Palmyra)<sup>j</sup>
- Cut 5 teaching positions (Susquehanna Township)<sup>j</sup>
- Increased class sizes in secondary schools up to 30-35 (York)<sup>k</sup>

### Philadelphia Area

- Eliminated 3,409 positions, including 1,158 teachers; and increased class sizes in all grades but K–3 (Philadelphia)<sup>d</sup>
- Eliminated over 40 percent of teachers and increased class sizes from an average of 21 students per teacher to 30 in the elementary grades and more than 35 in high school, which prompted students to walk out of over-crowded classes (Chester Upland)<sup>l</sup>
- Eliminated funds for class size reductions in grades 6, 8, and 9<sup>p</sup>

### **Pittsburgh Area**

- Increased class size 50 percent (Beaver County)<sup>a</sup>
- Cut teaching staff from 51 to 29 (Duquesne City)<sup>d</sup>
- Eliminated a middle school teacher (Sto-Rox)<sup>d</sup>
- Eliminated 7 high school teachers<sup>c</sup> and increased class sizes at elementary schools (Seneca Valley)<sup>e</sup>
- Eliminated 11 teachers and 7 support staff (South Allegheny)<sup>e</sup>
- Eliminated 11 teachers (South Park)<sup>e</sup>
- Eliminated 19 teachers (Willkensburg)<sup>m</sup>
- Eliminated 22 teachers and 10 teachers aides (West Mifflin)<sup>e</sup>
- Cut 22 full-time and 2 part-time teaching positions (Elizabeth Forward)<sup>e</sup>
- Cut 36 teachers<sup>h</sup> and increased class size by 3 to 6 students per class (Steel Valley)<sup>e</sup>
- Cut 5 teachers (Highlands)<sup>in</sup>
- Expanded teacher-student ratio to 25-1 (Sto-Rox)<sup>m</sup>
- Closed 7 schools;<sup>o</sup> increased class sizes to 25 students in grades K–5, 28 students in grades 6–8, and 30 students in high school;<sup>p</sup> and eliminated 31 full-time teachers,<sup>k</sup> and 23 paraprofessionals (Pittsburgh)<sup>q</sup>
- Increased class sizes at the secondary level (Upper St. Claire)<sup>e</sup>
- Cut 19 teaching positions 1 each, 2nd-, 3rd-, 4th-, 5th- and 6th-grades; (Duquesne)<sup>q</sup>
- Eliminated 35 teachers (Woodland Hills)<sup>e</sup>
- Cut 10 teachers, and 9 paraprofessionals (Moniteau)<sup>w</sup>
- Eliminated 90 positions and increased class sizes (McKeesport)<sup>e</sup>

### **Well-Rounded Curriculum**

#### **Statewide**

- 44 percent of schools reduced curriculum offerings, including core subjects such as math, English, sciences, and social sciences and electives such as foreign languages, music, and physical education<sup>a</sup>
- 41 percent delayed textbook purchases and 58 percent delayed technology purchases<sup>a</sup>

#### **Bethlehem-Allentown Area**

- Ended middle school teacher teams that integrated curriculum across disciplines<sup>c</sup>
- Cut dozens of high school electives and established a 20 student enrollment minimum (Bethlehem)<sup>c</sup>
- Eliminated dozens of music, library, and physical education teachers at all grade levels<sup>c</sup>
- Cut electives in the high schools (Allentown)<sup>c</sup>
- Cut 2 art teachers, 2 physical education teachers, a business education teacher, a middle school science teacher, and, a music teacher. (Bangor)<sup>h</sup>

### **Harrisburg Area**

- Cut all art, music, and physical education teachers in elementary schools; cut high school performing arts program; and eliminated a character education program (York)<sup>k</sup>

### **Philadelphia Area**

- Cut \$7.7 million from art and music instruction (Philadelphia)<sup>d</sup>

### **Pittsburgh Area**

- Eliminated a high school English teacher (Sto-Rox)<sup>e</sup>
- Discontinued high school business and family and consumer science departments (Seneca Valley)<sup>c</sup>; cut a social studies teacher and a half-time business education teacher, and eliminated French and Spanish courses at the middle school (Elizabeth Forward)<sup>e</sup>
- Cut foreign languages at elementary and middle school levels (South Park)<sup>e</sup>
- Cut 3rd-grade music and 5th-grade foreign language (Bethel Park)<sup>e</sup>
- Cut art, music, family and consumer science, business education, foreign languages, and career and technical education (Pittsburgh)<sup>f</sup>
- Cut a middle school math teacher, a science teacher, an English teacher, a drama/theater arts teacher, and a music/band teacher (Duquesne)<sup>q</sup>
- Reduced art, music, and physical education to once every 5 days in elementary schools (Seneca Valley)<sup>q</sup>

### **Special Programs**

#### **Statewide**

- 35 percent of schools reduced tutoring programs<sup>a</sup>
- 20 percent eliminated summer school programs that allowed students to graduate on time<sup>a</sup>
- One-third of the districts reduced or eliminated activities and sports, while 31 percent either established or increased pay-to-play fees<sup>a</sup>
- 57 cut student field trips<sup>a</sup>

#### **Bethlehem-Allentown Area**

- Eliminated teachers who addressed academic, social, and family needs of students (Bethlehem)<sup>c</sup>
- Cut 4 special education behavioral interventionists, 2 special education teachers, a mental health worker, 2 guidance counselors, and a librarian. (Bangor)<sup>h</sup>
- Eliminated assistant coaching positions for football, field hockey, baseball, softball, and wrestling; and cut middle school field hockey and cross country completely (Wilson)<sup>r</sup>

#### **Harrisburg Area**

- Cut 11 library aids (Central Dauphin)<sup>i</sup>
- Eliminated nearly all special education and English Language Learner aides; cut all math and reading coaches, and eliminated all library aides (York)<sup>k</sup>
- Eliminated elementary guidance counselors, some secondary guidance counselors, and an at-risk coordinator who helped students with issues at home (York)<sup>k</sup>

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## Philadelphia Area

- Eliminated nurses and counselors<sup>x</sup>
- Cut special education<sup>p</sup>
- Cut English as a second language instruction by 50 percent<sup>p</sup>
- Cut \$3 million from an extended-day program<sup>i</sup>
- Cut gifted and talented programs and middle school athletics<sup>p</sup>
- Cut \$3 million from a program for students at risk of dropping out (Philadelphia)<sup>s</sup>
- Cut 40 percent of counselors, nurses, and social workers (Chester Upland)<sup>t</sup>
- Cut 6 reading specialists who help at-risk students (Southeast Delco)<sup>u</sup>

## Pittsburgh Area

- Eliminated extracurricular activities (Duquesne)<sup>q</sup>
- Eliminated a behavior specialist, a psychologist, an elementary librarian, and a part-time nurse at the middle school (Sto-Rox)<sup>j, e</sup>
- Dropped 7th grade football<sup>c</sup> and instituted pay-to-play fees charging \$75 per sport and \$35 per nonathletic activity (Seneca Valley)<sup>q</sup>
- Reduced 16 special education classroom aides from full-to-part-time (West Mifflin)<sup>e</sup>

- Cut guidance counselors and a librarian (Elizabeth Forward)<sup>e</sup>
- Eliminated an alternative program for at-risk high school students (Woodland Hills)<sup>e</sup>
- Eliminated literacy and math coaches, writing labs, in-house school suspension programs,<sup>d</sup> and cut after-school tutoring (Sto-Rox)<sup>q</sup>
- Instituted pay-to-play fees for athletics (Upper St. Claire)<sup>y</sup>
- Cut a math coach, 2 reading intervention specialists, and a library/media teacher (Duquesne)<sup>q</sup>
- Reduced French courses at the high school (Moniteau)<sup>w</sup>
- Instituted pay-to-play fees of \$50 for sports and activities (Bethel Park)<sup>q</sup>

NOTE: Information in this report relies on the most accurate news reports until September 15, 2011. After the school year is underway, individual schools may readjust and call back or lay off employees. Many school districts are using money made available from the 2010 educator jobs bill. If the 2011 American Jobs Act is not passed, schools will have no federal help to fill in gaps in their state budgets.

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## Transferring Public Education Tax Dollars to Private Interests in Pennsylvania

While Pennsylvania state legislators were making painful funding cuts to public education, they also were coming up with new ways to ensure that more money intended to be used for public education would end up in private hands.

For starters, Pennsylvania already transfers \$52 million in public education dollars to private schools through a tax credit program for families earning less than \$60,000 per year.<sup>97</sup>

Furthermore, almost all funding transferred to charter and cyber charter schools—more than \$200 million—is provided by local school districts. And some school districts, such as Chester Upland, have as many as 40 percent of school children enrolled in charter schools.<sup>98</sup>

However, unlike traditional public schools in Pennsylvania, these charter and cyber charter schools do not have to reconcile their tuition fees with actual service costs. A recent audit conducted by the Pennsylvania auditor general found that charter and cyber charter schools were holding onto more than \$100 million of the money sent to them each year as “unreserved-undesignated reserve funds” rather than spending those funds on student services and operational costs.<sup>99</sup>

Rather than reforming the state’s flawed charter school funding mechanism, however, Pennsylvania’s legislature is considering a bill that would expand charter schools without involvement from local communities. If the bill becomes law, the school districts would still be responsible for funding charter and cyber charter schools, (payments for charters are taken from school district funds), but they would have no authorization or regulatory oversight. Furthermore, the legislation would establish a new state commission for authorizing these types of schools that would be financed in part by fees from charter and cyber charter schools. So the bottom line would be a system that incentivizes the regulatory process to advance the interests of what the system is supposed to be regulating.<sup>100</sup>

## Conclusion and Recommendations

**T**his bottom-up examination of the state of the American public school system indicates a new and growing crisis in pre-K–12 public education. The crisis is characterized by two widespread trends:

1. Funding cuts recently enacted by state legislatures and signed into law by governors are having a severe negative effect on direct services to children, youth, and families.
2. New policy mandates at both the federal and state levels are forcing school districts to divert tax dollars meant for public education to various privately held concerns, including charter schools, private and religious schools, and contractors and service providers that are hired to meet new demands for testing and accountability systems.

The result of this one-two punch to the nation's public schools is that children everywhere are losing essential learning opportunities at the same time that tax dollars meant for education are being diverted to private concerns for services that are of questionable value to the public.

This report looks at news reports in five states that exemplify the trends identified here: Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

The report also warns that on top of a distressing outlook for the 2011–2012 school year, many states are considering even more dramatic cutbacks for 2012–2013. Many districts noted in this report took extreme measures to respond to budget cuts in 2011–2012 that cannot be repeated in the next fiscal year. Without a doubt, the situation will be even more difficult financially in 2012–2013.

In many Florida districts, for instance, lawmakers took the edge off of this year's cuts by, in effect, reducing the salaries of teachers and other school employees and by reducing or completely foregoing annual contributions to the Florida Retirement System. Most Florida school districts also saved their shares of \$550 million in federal jobs money they received this past year and are using it to offset some of this year's spending cuts. Those factors and prior year layoffs are allowing most districts to avoid eliminating more teachers this year, but these options won't be available in 2012–2013.

Many Ohio districts that are looking at unprecedented deficits for 2012–2013 have responded by placing new fundraising levies and other initiatives on the ballot in November's elections in hopes that local citizens will dig deeper in their pockets to support public education. But with the American economy continuing to falter, it's anyone's guess as to how these measures will fare in fall elections.

It's time for policy leaders at all levels to intercede in this crisis. It is imperative that officials at the national, state, and local levels:

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**According to the 2010 General Social Survey education remains one of the top spending priorities of Americans, and that has been the case since 1990.**



### **Restore funding of public schools to levels that**

- Guarantee all children have access to high quality pre-K and kindergarten programs;
- Ensure class sizes in all subjects reflect community wishes;
- Provide a well-rounded, 21st century education that includes the arts, foreign languages, physical education, social studies, and science;
- Support special programs that personalize school experiences and meet students' differing needs, which may include help with developmental issues, language ability, and learning problems. Provide opportunities for nonacademic and extracurricular activities. Provide support for a more academically challenging curricula in science, foreign language, technology, and Advanced Placement subjects.

### **Offer immediate regulatory relief to schools being forced to send significant financial resources meant for public education to privately held entities, including**

- Charter schools not yet approved by current authorizers;
- Voucher or tax credit programs that redirect education funds to private and religious schools;
- Policy mandates that require hiring of contractors and outside service providers operated by private individuals and corporations.

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