

The Condition of School Administration in Arizona: 2005

Executive Summary

Contrary to common misperceptions, the relative percentage of administrative costs in Arizona's public schools has declined since 2001 and is below national and state peer-group averages. Because of this fact, Arizona would benefit from a comprehensive study to identify whether an administrator shortage is looming, and its dimensions. A trend where retired or retiring school administrators return to schools as *leased employees* has implications both for the cost in lost innovation and for the cost to the state's retirement system. Finally, district unification (combining elementary and secondary school districts into one district) remains a subject of consideration at the state level, but does not appear to enjoy significant local or community support.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Absent evidence of its validity, Arizona abolish its administrator-testing program.
- The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) commission a study to provide data to ADE and to administrator training programs in Arizona that can be used to estimate a potential administrator shortage.
- Researchers undertake an inquiry to estimate the effects of leasing retired educators to fill teacher and administrative vacancies beginning with the initial collection of data reporting the number of districts, administrators, and teachers involved, the salary savings to school districts, and the fiscal impact on the Arizona State Retirement System.
- Appropriate entities study the potential impact of district unification on the Phoenix metro area.