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Schools dispute conservative group's claim of 1-to-1 administrator-teacher ratio

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The Texas Young Republican Federation, claiming that there is one administrator for every teacher in Texas, is calling for school districts to cut their administrative staffs and put most of their money back in the classroom.

"In the 1970s the teacher to administrator ratio at schools in the State of Texas was around 4 teachers to every 1 administrator, that ratio has recently gone to a near 1 to 1 ratio," the group wrote in a news release this week. "... The TYRF believes that the focus of district personnel should be in the classroom not in administration. There is not only room for movement in this area but improvement."

The state ratio of teachers to administrators, however, is not 1-to-1; it's actually 13-to-1, according to data from the Texas Education Agency.

Administrators made up only 4 percent of school employees in 2009-10, while teachers made up 50.5 percent, according to the TEA.

In North Texas districts, the teacher-to-administrator ratio ranges from about 10-to-1 in Fort Worth and Everman to about 16-to-1 in Arlington, Birdville and Northwest.

Kristy Moore, chairwoman of the federation, said the group's statistic includes all nonteaching staffers -- including superintendents, bus drivers and counselors -- who fill "administrative" roles.

She said the group wants officials to look at cutting nonteaching positions rather than offering incentives for teachers to leave, a move that will increase student-to-teacher ratios and likely result in teacher layoffs.

"We need to keep teachers where they are needed and direct resources that support them and our students," Moore said.

Among those saying the ratio is misleading is Moak, Casey & Associates, an Austin-based school finance consulting firm. The firm notes that the second-largest group of school employees is auxiliary staff, which can include bus drivers and nurses aides.

"I'm not sure why this keeps getting repeated, other than folks trying to beat the drum that schools are overstaffed," said Dan Casey, a partner in the firm.

The Texas Association of School Administrators recently wrote about the ratio on its website, noting that any cuts will ultimately affect teachers -- and students -- if they lose support.

"Those central office folks have important jobs that require specialized skill sets," spokeswoman Jenny LaCoste-Caputo wrote. "But if there was a 1:1 ratio of central administration staff to teachers, I think we could all agree that would be ridiculous."

The Young Republicans also support having 80 percent of payrolls for professional staff going to classroom teachers.

That's significantly more than what Gov. Rick Perry called for in a 2005 executive order that required public schools to devote 65 percent of their operating budgets to classroom instruction. That order was later reversed.

And the organization says it supports requiring school districts to post their check registers online or otherwise make them available to the public.

Rep. Bill Zedler, R-Arlington, filed such legislation this week that would also require districts to post credit card transactions.

Many school districts in Texas -- including Arlington, Fort Worth and Keller -- already post their check registers online at www.texasransparency.org.

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School staffing levels

Some conservative groups have called for better spending of education dollars by trimming excesses, saying the ratio of teachers to administrators is 1-to-1. Here are the actual figures for area school districts in the 2009-10 school year, the most recent data available.

School district	Teachers	Administrators	Ratio
Arlington	4,124	264	16-1
Birdville	1,489	91	16-1
Carroll	544	41	13-1
Everman	333	34	10-1
Fort Worth	5,069	525	10-1
Grapevine-Colleyville	957	72	13-1
H-E-B	1,310	96	14-1
Keller	1,952	137	14-1
Mansfield	1,928	139	14-1
Northwest	945	59	16-1
White Settlement	388	41	9-1

Source: Texas Education Agency

Read more: <http://www.star-telegram.com/2011/03/18/2933254/schools-dispute-conservative-groups.html#ixzz1HLAJ5AKX>