



AASA Survey: Impact of the Economic Downturn on School Jobs

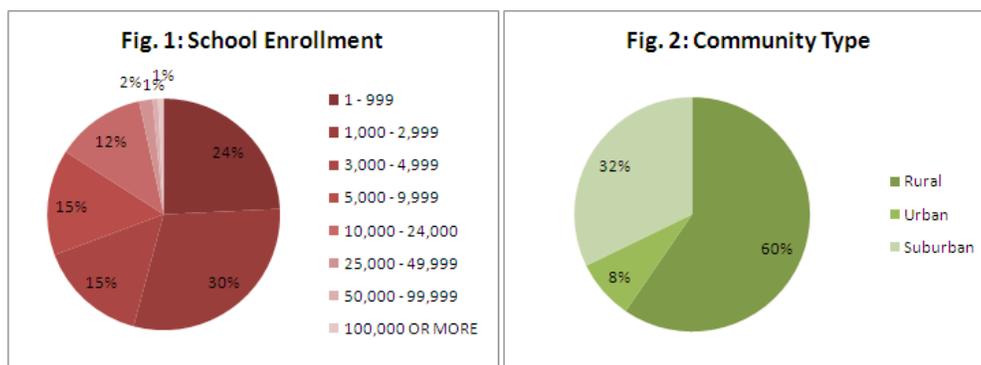
BACKGROUND

As part of an ongoing effort to gauge how school districts across the country are responding to the current economic downturn, the American Association of School Administrators continues to assess various measures of economic impact. Earlier AASA surveys addressed trends in districts’ initial responses to the downturn, districts’ ability to borrow funds, and the availability of ready-to-go public school projects should federal stimulus funds become available. This survey examines what impact the current economic situation is having on school districts’ decisions to eliminate job positions.

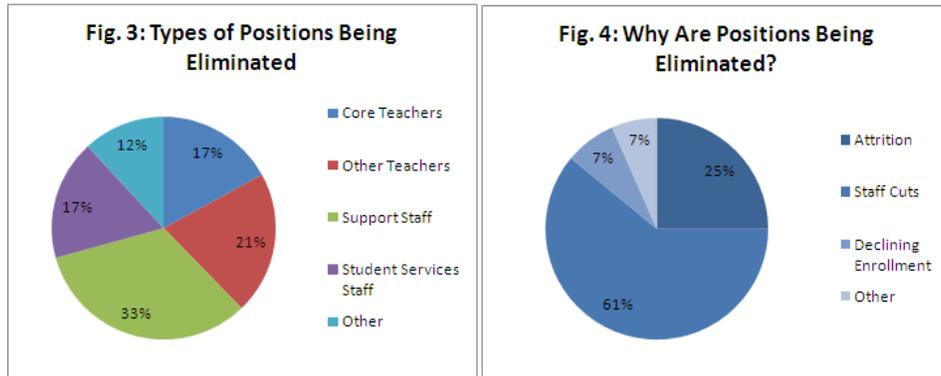
In January 2009, AASA surveyed 1,056 school leaders to examine if school districts are planning to eliminate job positions in the upcoming budget cycle, and if so, where and how the cuts are being made. These results report on more than 250 responders from 46 states.

RESULTS

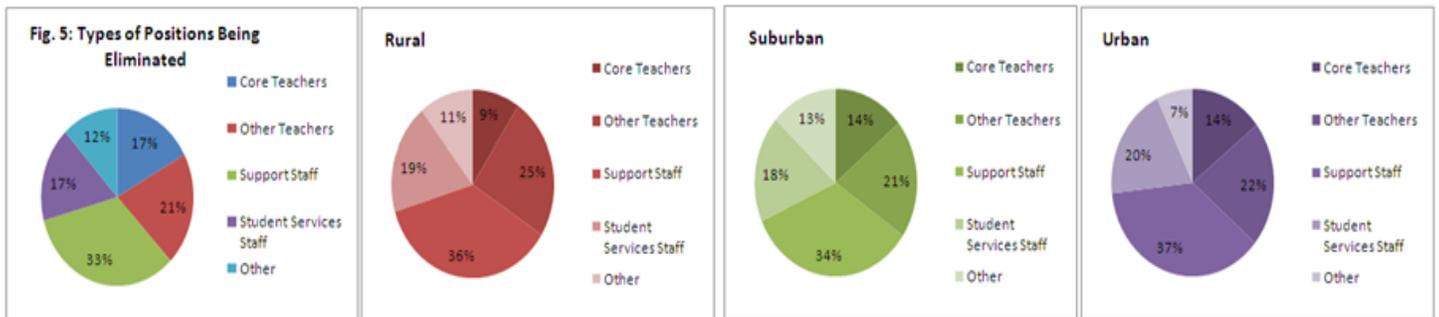
These results show that school districts across the nation will be eliminating job positions in the upcoming school year. Slightly more than half of the respondents (54 percent) were from districts with school enrollments of 3,000 or less (see Figure 1). More than half of respondents (60 percent) were from rural communities (see Figure 2).



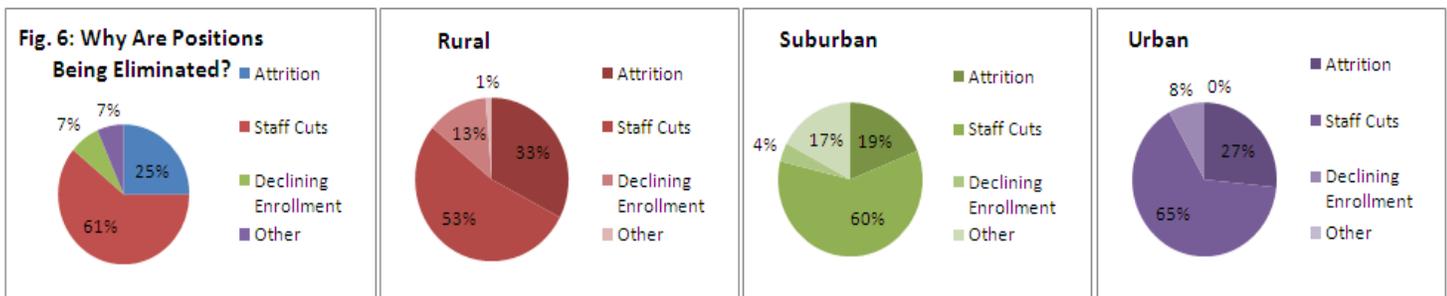
Responders indicated that they plan to eliminate more than 4,600 positions in their next budget cycle. Results indicated that 17 percent of the positions to be eliminated were in the areas of mathematics, science, social studies and English. An additional 21 percent of the positions slated to be cut were in foreign language, special education, art, music and physical education positions. Collectively, teaching positions represented 38 percent of the jobs to be cut. Student services staff positions (librarians, nurses, maintenance, cafeteria and transportation) represented 17 percent of expected cuts. Responders reported that 33 percent of the positions to be eliminated were support staff (teacher aides/assistants, secretaries, and central office positions). (See Figure 3.) More than 60 percent (61 percent) of the cuts will be direct staff cuts. Attrition accounts for 25 percent of the projected job cuts (see Figure 4).



AASA found that teaching positions were just as likely to be cut as support staff positions, regardless of community type. In rural communities, teacher positions and support staff represented 34 percent and 36 percent of positions to be cut, respectively. Suburban schools reported 35 percent and 34 percent for teachers and support staff, and urban schools reported 36 percent and 37 percent for teachers and support staff. (See Figure 5.)



Regardless of community type, direct staff cuts account for more than 50 percent of the positions slated for elimination. Responders from rural districts report that 53 percent of the projected job cuts will be filled through staff cuts. Suburban and urban schools reported slightly higher proportions, at 60 percent and 65 percent, respectively. Across all community types, attrition was the second way school districts were accounting for job cuts: 33 percent of job cuts in rural schools, 19 percent in suburban schools and 27 percent in urban districts (see Figure 6).



The trend is clear: In response to the current economic downturn, schools across the nation are faced with having to eliminate jobs, including classroom instructors in all subject areas. While attrition accounts for some of the position eliminations, schools and students face the stark reality of fewer academic instructors, support staff and student services staff when they return to school for the 2009-2010 school year.