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Office of Planning & Policy Research

State of Minnesota  Department of Education

**Unrequested Leave of
Absence**

A REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

March 1, 1983

Introduction

The Laws of Minnesota for 1982, Chapter 548, Article 4, Section 22, states:

"By March 1, 1983, the department of education shall evaluate existing law and state board rules governing supervisory and administrative personnel and shall assess whether these laws and rules have resulted in disproportionately small numbers of supervisory and administrative personnel being placed on unrequested leave of absence, as compared with instructional personnel. The department may recommend changes in law or rule as necessary to ensure an equitable balance in placing district personnel on unrequested leaves of absence, which may include consolidation of administrative positions."

During the spring and summer of 1982, a letter was sent by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to legislators who had been instrumental in passing this statute. Also, a letter was sent to such professional organizations as MEA, MFT, MASSP, MESPA, MASA and MSBA to obtain their response. All of these people and organizations were asked for opinions which would be helpful as the data collection process was begun. From this request, several letters and telephone calls were received and two personal conferences were held which helped define the parameters of the report. With this information and information gained from consultants within MDE it was determined that the best data source was the data submitted to MDE by school districts each fall in their Elementary and Secondary Personnel Report.

Using the information collected in these reports along with a review of existing statutes and rules pertaining to school district personnel this report will address the issues raised in Section 22 and will supply information that hopefully will provide some enlightenment to a somewhat cloudy situation.

The pressing issue raised by Section 22 is, over the past years, has there been a disproportionately small number of supervisory and administrative personnel placed on unrequested leave of absence as compared with instructional personnel? The following table sheds some light on this question. (See next page.)

This table shows the number of public school professional personnel by category actually laid off for the four years 1977-78 - 1980-81. (Data for the most recent year, 1981-82, will be available by April 1, 1983, and will be forwarded to the legislature along with new five year total figures as soon as possible). It must be remembered that these numbers represent the people actually placed on unrequested leave in the spring and not rehired by the school district for the following fall. Thus, the numbers are lower than just collecting data on the total number of educators placed on unrequested leave by all public school districts in Minnesota each spring.

CHANGES IN SCHOOL PERSONNEL EMPLOYMENT
(Number of Employed, Changes from Previous Year, Number and Percent Laid Off)

CATEGORY OF SCH. PERSONNEL	1977-78			1978-79					1979-80					1980-81					TOTAL 1977-78 thru 1980-81				
	NO. EMPLOYD.	NO. LAID OFF	% LAID OFF	NO. EMPLOYD.	NO. LAID OFF	% LAID OFF	77-78 TO 78-79 CHANGE	% OF CHANGE	NO. EMPLOYD.	NO. LAID OFF	% LAID OFF	78-79 TO 79-80 CHANGE	% OF CHANGE	NO. EMPLOYD.	NO. LAID OFF	% LAID OFF	79-80 TO 80-81 CHANGE	% OF CHANGE	NUMBER	LAID OFF	% LAID OFF	77-78 TO 80-81 CHANGE	% OF CHANGE
Secondary Teachers	21,452	285	1.3	21,172	374	1.8	-280	- 1.3	20,467	306	1.5	-705	-3.3	20,127	338	1.7	-340	-1.7	83,218	1,303	1.6	-1,325	-1.6
Elementary Teachers	17,893	166	0.9	17,662	110	0.6	-231	- 1.3	17,616	77	0.4	- 46	-0.3	17,536	183	1.0	- 80	-0.5	70,707	536	0.8	- 357	-0.5
Total Elem. & Secondary	39,345	451	1.1	38,834	484	1.2	-511	- 1.3	38,083	383	1.0	-751	-1.9	37,663	521	1.4	-420	-1.1	153,925	1,839	1.2	-1,682	-1.1
Special Ed. Teachers	4,647	19	0.4	5,162	12	0.2	+515	+11.1	5,426	19	0.4	+264	+5.1	5,802	53	0.9	+376	+6.9	21,037	103	0.5	+1,155	+5.5
Total, All Teachers	43,992	470	1.1	43,996	496	1.1	+ 4	0.0	43,509	402	0.9	-487	-1.1	43,465	574	1.3	- 44	-0.1	174,962	1,942	1.1	- 527	-0.3
Secondary Principals	962	2	0.2	942	0	0.0	- 20	- 2.1	955	0	0.0	+ 13	+1.4	950	5	0.5	- 5	-0.5	3,809	17	0.2	- 12	-0.3
Elementary Principals	812	0	0.0	786	2	0.3	- 26	- 3.2	781	2	0.3	- 5	-0.6	785	1	0.1	+ 4	+0.5	3,164	5	0.2	- 27	-0.9
Superintendents	484	0	0.0	483	0	0.0	- 1	- 0.2	470	0	0.0	- 13	-2.7	457	0	0.0	- 13	-2.8	1,894	0	0.0	- 27	-1.4
Total, Supt's & Principals	2,258	2	0.1	2,211	2	0.1	- 47	- 2.1	2,206	2	0.1	- 5	-0.2	2,192	6	0.3	- 14	-0.6	8,867	12	0.1	- 66	-0.7
Other Adminis.	1,129	3	0.2	1,196	4	0.3	+ 67	+ 5.6	1,218	5	0.4	+ 22	+1.8	1,206	5	0.4	- 12	-1.0	4,749	17	0.3	+ 77	+1.6
All Others*	3,261	26	0.8	3,183	30	0.9	- 78	- 2.4	3,405	16	0.5	+222	+6.5	3,552	28	0.8	+147	+4.1	13,401	100	0.7	+ 291	+2.2
Total, All Education	50,640	501	1.0	50,586	532	1.1	- 54	- 0.1	50,338	425	0.8	-248	-0.5	50,415	613	1.2	+ 77	+0.1	201,979	2,071	1.0	- 225	-0.1

*Pupil Personnel Services, Media and Library, all other assignments.

Sources: Personnel Licensing & Placement Section and Educational Data Systems Section, Minnesota Department of Education.

The table also includes complement change figures for each category compared to the previous year. What this category shows is how many total people are employed in a category in any given year and when compared to a previous year indicates how much change occurred in the complement whatever the cause. This figure includes: new hires into education, people returning to employment in education, people placed on unrequested leave who are rehired, people changing from one level of employment to another within education, people laid off, rehirees, people leaving education voluntarily, as well as the people returning to their level of employment from the previous year.

It should be remembered that this is self-report data completed by school district personnel as part of the MDE Elementary and Secondary Personnel Report collected in the fall of each year. It is subject to the same accuracy questions that any such data might elicit.

Analysis

In response to the issue raised in Section 22 have "disproportionately small numbers of supervisory and administrative personnel been placed on unrequested leave of absence as compared with instructional personnel" it is true that a significant lower percentage of supervisory and administrative personnel has been laid off than instructional personnel. For instance, elementary and secondary teachers, excluding special education teachers, have had a 1.2 percent average actual lay-off rate over the four years included in the table while superintendents and elementary and secondary principals (including positions classified as assistant or associate at these levels) have averaged 0.1 percent lay-off rate over the same period of time. This is true if one compares instructional personnel to all other types of administrators as well.

This does not tell the whole story however, and maybe not even be the most important part. What appears to be more important is: What has happened to the numbers for the total complement within a category from one academic year to the next? During these same four years the total number of elementary and secondary teachers actually in the classroom, exclusive of special education teachers, went down by 1.1%. The number of superintendents and principals actually administering in the schools went down by 0.7% for that same period. So what at first glance might appear to be a disparity, in reality, at least to any great degree, is not. What it does mean, most likely, is that most superintendents and principals are involved in the personnel decision-making process much earlier than teachers and have more time and freedom to select their geographic location and thus to choose to leave a given position (or the occupation) by choice rather than waiting to receive an official notification by the district.

Looking at the data more closely, while on a percentage basis the total number of secondary principals has declined less rapidly than the total number of secondary teachers during the time period, the total number of elementary principals has actually declined more rapidly than the total number of elementary teachers. Also, the total number of superintendents has declined more rapidly than any category except secondary teachers.

At least three other pieces of significant information are apparent from the data in the table. One, while there have been some people dismissed from positions in the special education classroom there has been a significant increase in the total number of positions in this field over the four years included in the table. This increase amounts to 1,155 actual new positions. It is possible that some of the classroom teachers dismissed have been reassigned or relocated into some of these special education positions. Secondly, there has been an increase in the number of other administrative positions within school districts over this four year span of time. This amounts to 291 new positions or a 2.2 percent increase. Although some of these might be due to the growth in the field of special education it is probably safe to assume there has been an increase in the number of administrative positions that do not carry the title of superintendent or principal. It should be noted that the lay-off percentage for this category is more similar to that of superintendents and principals than it is to classroom teachers. It also should be noted at this time that while Minnesota statute and rule does stipulate certain conditions for the employment of superintendents and principals almost all of the positions in the category of "Other Administrators" are not regulated by state statute and rule but are controlled by local option. Thirdly, there has been an increase in numbers over this time span in the category that includes pupil personnel services (counselors, social workers, psychologists) media and library personnel, and other support services. This category has had a lay-off rate very similar to elementary teachers (0.7%) but has had a real increase of 291 positions or a 2.2 percent total increase despite these lay-offs over the four years. This increase seems to be spread rather evenly over the areas included in this miscellaneous category and it would be the purest form of speculation to try to derive some pattern from the data.

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. If being placed on unrequested leave is narrowly defined as placing professional educators on unrequested leave in the spring and not rehiring them in the fall then it appears clear that a higher percentage of classroom teachers have been laid off as compared to administrators over the four year time span included in the report.
2. However, when the total complement figures are compared from one year to the next the decline in complement for principals and superintendents nearly approximates that of the decline for classroom teachers.

3. Proximity to, and participation in, the decision-making process within a district seems to affect who is placed on unrequested leave but not necessarily the final determination of whether a position is actually eliminated.
4. There has been an increase in the category, "All Others", which includes pupil personnel services, library and media services, and all other non-classroom or non-administrative assignments.
5. There has been an increase in the number of administrators whose positions are not labeled superintendent or principal.
6. When the total complement figures are compared for those administrative categories which are mandated by statute and rule (superintendents and principals) with those administrators whose positions are not mandated, it is apparent that there has been a decrease in the mandated administrative categories and an increase in those administrative categories that are not mandated. This would suggest that present statutes and rules are not major factors in determining who is placed on unrequested leave or which positions are eliminated.
7. Although the lay-off percentage figures do not differ as much as the total complement percentage figures, there does appear to be an inequity when total classroom teacher complement numbers are compared with those for "Other Administrators" and "All Others" categories. These decisions are made, not for reasons of existing state statutes and rules however, but for local reasons and at local option.
8. There appears to be no rules or statutes governing supervisory and administrative personnel that would need to be changed at this time to guarantee equity, if equity is defined in terms of reduction in total complement within a category rather than just educational personnel officially being placed on unrequested leave.
9. Even with the large increase in special education teachers, the actual number of professional educators declined during the four year span included in this report.