



Public Schools Do Not Spend 40% of their Budgets on “Bureaucracy and Overhead”

Republican gubernatorial candidate Meg Whitman includes “fixing” education among her top three priorities. In describing what is wrong with our public schools, Ms. Whitman notes that 60 percent of total school funding gets to the classroom and that the remaining 40 percent is for “bureaucracy and overhead.” This characterization is patently false.

According to the on-line resource Ed-Data, <http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us/welcome.asp>, **62 percent** of school district general fund expenditures were allocated to direct instruction in 2008-09. Ms. Whitman rounds this down to 60 percent.

Most of the **remaining 38 percent** actually is spent on out-of-classroom direct services to students or other instruction-related programs. These include guidance and counseling, health services, transportation, library and media centers, instructional technology, and instructional supervision. **Another 10 percent** is spent on facilities operations and maintenance.

In fact, **only 5 percent** of the average school district budget is spent on “general administration.” By contrast, **e-Bay spent 32 percent of its gross profit on general and administrative costs** in 1998, when Ms. Whitman was its CEO.

As a result of the small amount spent on general administration, **California has one of the smallest administrator-to-students ratios in the country.** This applies to both school site and central office administration. At the same time, federal and state policies regarding school accountability impose a need for more, not less administration, in areas such as student testing, data-based decision making, and performance-based compensation.

Trying to improve schools by cutting administration is nonsensical. Having a sufficient number of qualified school site and central office administrators is central to implementing effective reforms. California falls far short of meeting this need.