

Dispirited

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attention-deficit disorders, autism, or learning disorders, while others use English as a second language.

Another effect, Cohen said, has been elimination of specialists who teach music, art, shop and P.E. Classroom teachers have to pick up the slack, which usually eliminates prep periods they may have used in the past.

"One result is that teachers are spending more and more time outside the classroom preparing lesson plans and grading assignments," Cohen said.

Half of the survey respondents said one of the most significant changes they face as a result of budget cuts has been the advent of "no-frills teaching," which translates into more lectures, fewer special projects, less group work and cooperative learning, fewer electives and fewer hands-on learning opportunities.

"In other words, most of what we have learned in the last 25 years of educational best practices are going out the window because of the budget squeeze," Cohen said.

Teachers also are being affected on the bottom line, the OSU survey found. Nine out of 10 teachers report that they have experienced a negative salary effect from budget woes, either through salary reduction, the number of "cut days" lopped off the school year or through additional personal investment in the classroom.

Wrote one: "I have paid for more materials this year...file folders, glue sticks, etc. We haven't had a real raise in years."

Others say they are spending less on the classroom out of necessity -- they simply cannot afford it. More than one-fourth (28 percent) of the respondents say they or their partners have had to get another job to make ends meet, or that they were seeking additional employment. And they have had to do major belt-tightening. Noted one teacher: "We have had to eat a lot of oatmeal because of the salary cuts."

Cohen said 73 percent of the teachers surveyed say their health has been adversely affected by the public school budget crisis. Stress, depression, anxiety, sleeplessness, and weight problems are commonplace, she pointed out.

"Despite the impact of the budget on teachers, their greatest concern is what effect the fiscal crunch has on the school children and their ability to learn," Cohen said. "Teachers in the sample are an altruistic group, yet clearly the stresses on teachers cannot mean good things for students."

"When nearly three-fourths of the teachers feel their health is at-risk, that means that burnout and attrition are serious risks," she added. "Hopefully, this study will provide support for teachers in the field and encourage Oregon to provide a stable funding base. It also means that we need to prepare prospective teachers in our schools for the reality of teaching."

OSU students assisting in the survey were Aaron Barnes, L. Earl Fonville, Andy Hordichok, Jeannette Smith, and Kathleen Smith.



ALARMING SITUATION - Illinois Valley Fire District firefighters responded to a reported structure fire on Wednesday, Jan. 14 at 8:25 a.m. They found a small amount of smoke in a mobile home in the 200 block of Schumacher Street at Hussey Avenue. District Division Chief Joe Feldhaus said that there was no fire, but that the problem appeared to be related to a dusty wall heater. American Medical Response stood by at the scene with firefighters.



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