

How are Salary Dollars Allocated in New Orleans Public Schools, and How Has that Changed Since 2005?

Olivia G. Carr

This Research Snapshot was initiated by the ERA–New Orleans Advisory Board as part of its annual research agenda.

Overview

This study examines how New Orleans publicly funded schools divide salary dollars between different staff and compares salary trends for teachers, administrators, aides, and counselors. I examine spending by comparing pre-Katrina salaries (2003-04 and 2004-05) to salaries in the city’s majority charter school system (2018-19 and 2019-20). My overall findings reinforce the results of [prior ERA–New Orleans work](#) on school spending and provide updated results and more detail regarding how salaries vary by staff role (all salary dollars are adjusted for inflation):

1. During 2018-20, New Orleans publicly funded schools allocated 50% of all salary dollars to teachers and 19% to administrators. This is a decrease in the percent allocated to teachers since 2003-05 and an increase in the percent allocated to administrators.
2. We also looked more closely at possible reasons behind the changes in allocations and found that teachers’ average salary has decreased by 8% over time, but the number of teachers per student is largely unchanged.
3. Administrators’ average salary is 22% higher than pre-Katrina, and the number of administrators per student has increased by 119%.
4. Aides now earn 32% more on average, and the number of aides per student has doubled over time.
5. Counselors’ average salary is about the same now as pre-Katrina, though there are 48% more counselors per student in recent years.

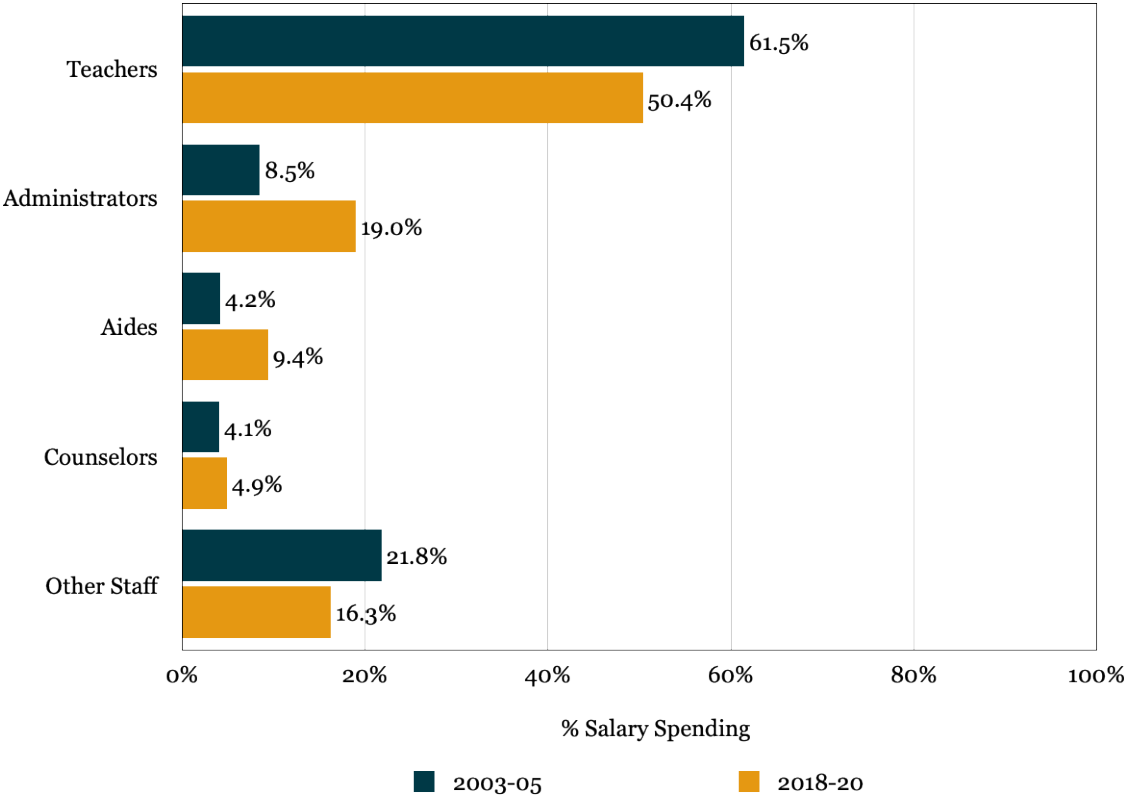
Background

The vast majority of school “resources” are people. In 2017-2018, New Orleans allocated 48% of its education budget to salaries. Following a series of school reforms after Hurricane Katrina, almost all New Orleans schools transitioned from traditional public schools to publicly funded, privately run charter schools. School reforms affect salary spending in a variety of ways, and in New Orleans, charter reforms afforded schools and charter management organizations (CMO) a greater degree of flexibility in hiring and budget spending.

This flexibility has led community members to question, however, whether a significant share of salary dollars have shifted from teachers to administrators. In this study, I analyze changes in salary allocations, average salaries, and the number of staff per student for teachers, administrators, aides, and counselors in pre- and post-Katrina New Orleans. I also compare these changes to those in neighboring Jefferson Parish over the same period.

Key Finding #1

In 2018-20, New Orleans publicly funded schools allocated 50% of all salary dollars to teachers and 19% to administrators. This is a decrease in the percent allocated to teachers since 2003-05 and an increase in the percent allocated to administrators.



Note: Salary dollars have been adjusted for inflation. Personnel categories include all staff in the Orleans Parish school district (e.g., school employees, CMO employees, district central office staff).

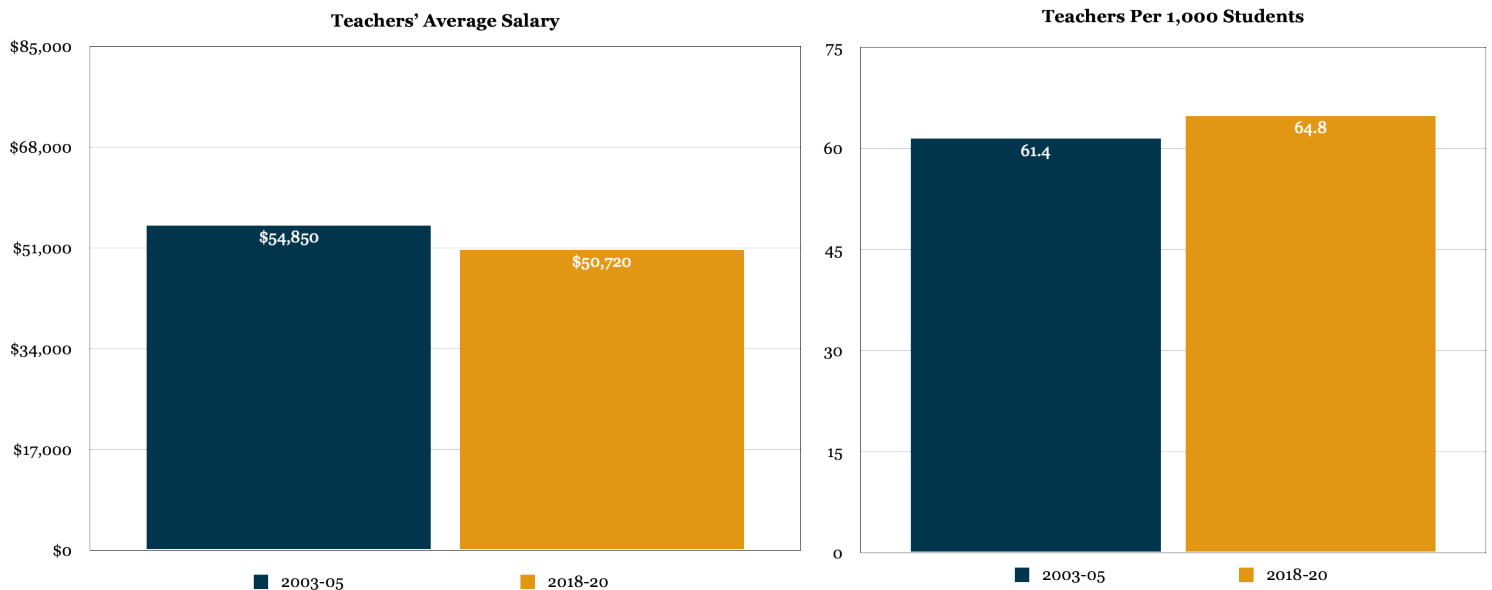
The share of salary dollars for teachers decreased from 61.5% in 2003-05 to 50.4% in 2018-20. In contrast, administrators accounted for 8.5% of salary spending in 2003-05 and 19.0% of salary spending in 2018-20. For this snapshot, administrators and managers include all district and school employees who are identified as officials, administrators, or managers. These employees include school, district, and CMO leaders, such as principals and instructional support coaches. More information on the specific roles within each category is available in the methodological notes of this snapshot. The share of salary spending for aides and counselors also increased over time.

I carried out additional analyses on more specific roles. I find, for example, that the share of salary spending on New Orleans’ school leadership, such as principals and assistant principals, increased the most of all administrator types, nearly doubling the 4.2% salary spending share in 2003-05 to 8.3% in 2018-20. Aides also saw a large increase in the share of salary spending, changing from 4.2% in 2003-05 to 9.4% in 2018-20.

Next, I consider how these changes in salary allocations, by job type, are due to changes in average salary versus changes in the number of people hired into these roles.

Key Finding #2

Teachers’ average salary has decreased by 8% over time, but the number of teachers per student is largely unchanged.

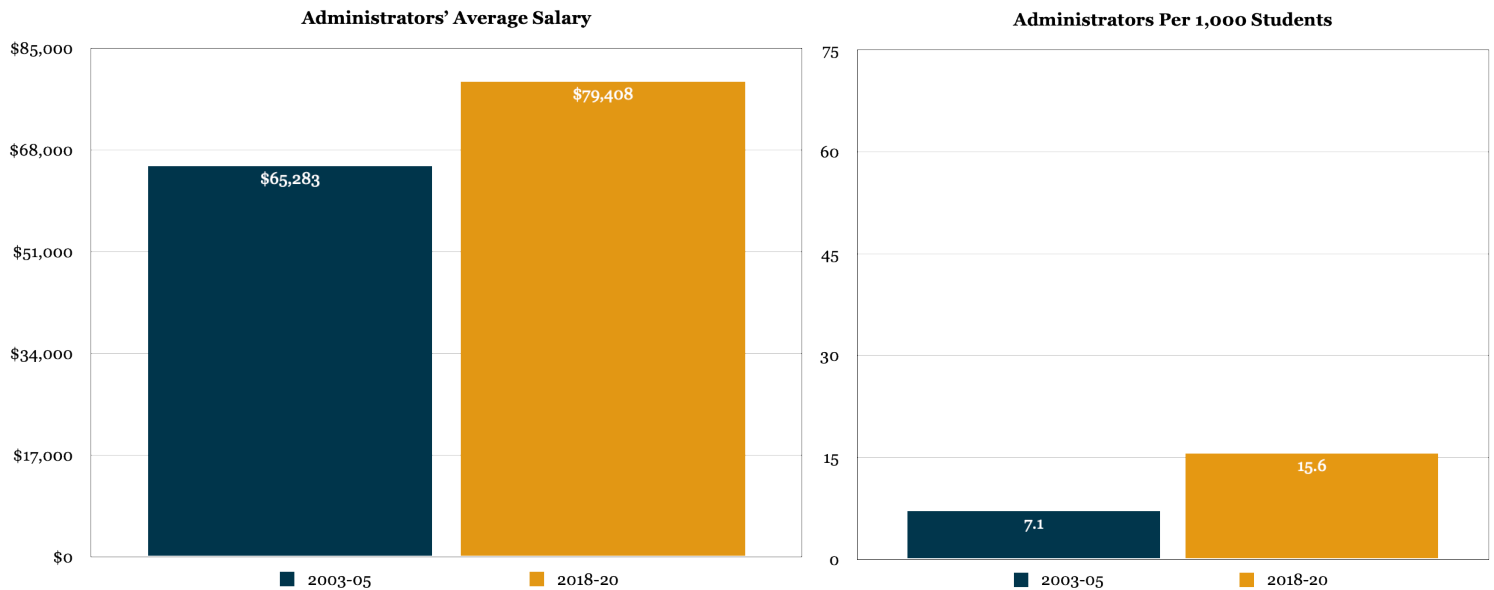


Note: Salary dollars have been adjusted for inflation.

The average teacher salary in New Orleans publicly funded schools decreased by \$4,130, a 7.5% decrease, from 2003-05 to 2018-20, though the overall number of teachers per student remained relatively unchanged. However, there was a 14.4% decrease in the number of teachers per student for teachers of students with disabilities and academically gifted students.

Key Finding #3

Administrators' average salary is 22% higher than pre-Katrina, and the number of administrators per student has increased by 119%.

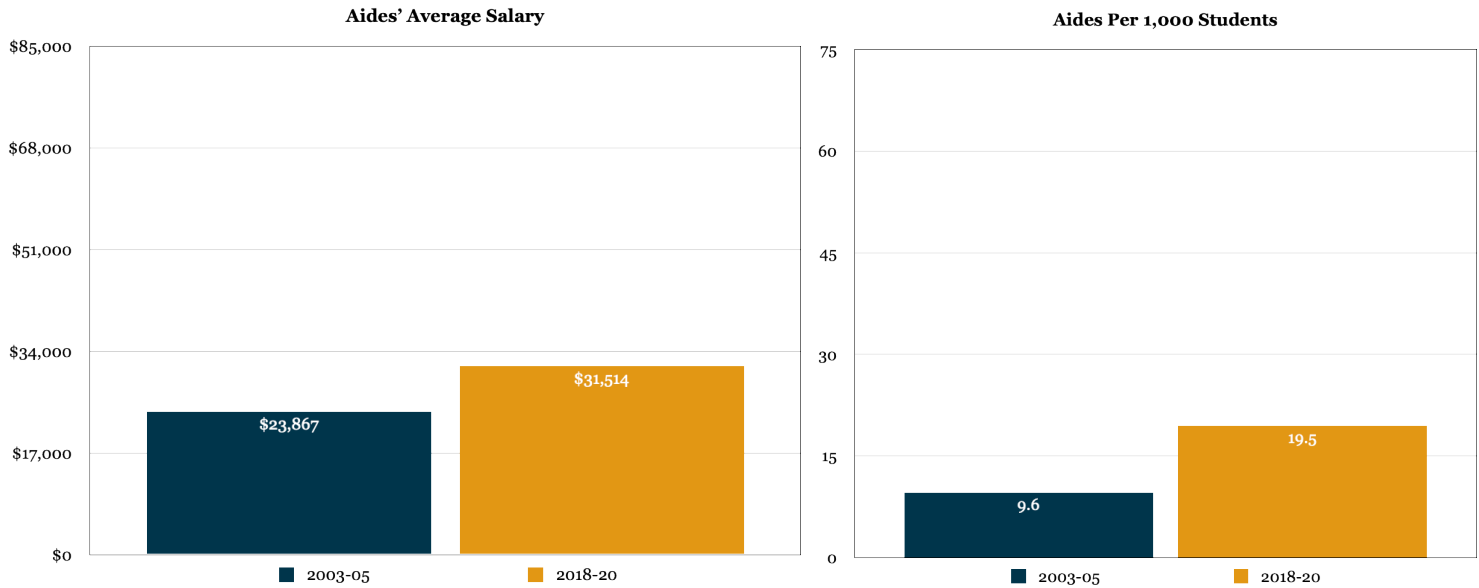


Note: Salary dollars have been adjusted for inflation.

From 2003-05 to 2018-20, both the average salary for administrators and the number of administrators per student increased. These changes, however, were not uniform across all types of administrators. Orleans Parish School Board administrators and “other” administrators (e.g., budgeting services managers, supervision of psychological services) experienced increases of \$29,000 or more in average salary, while school leadership (e.g., principals, assistant principals) experienced a small \$1,643 decrease in average salary. The addition of instructional services administrators and CMO administrators contributed to the increase in administrator salary spending, as both of these roles were virtually non-existent pre-Katrina. In 2003-05, there were less than 10 full-time equivalent instructional services and CMO administrators; by 2018-20, there were more than 250. The number of administrators per student increased for all categories except Orleans Parish School Board administrators, which saw a 52% decrease in the number per student.

Key Finding #4

Aides now earn 32% more on average, and the number of aides per student has doubled over time.

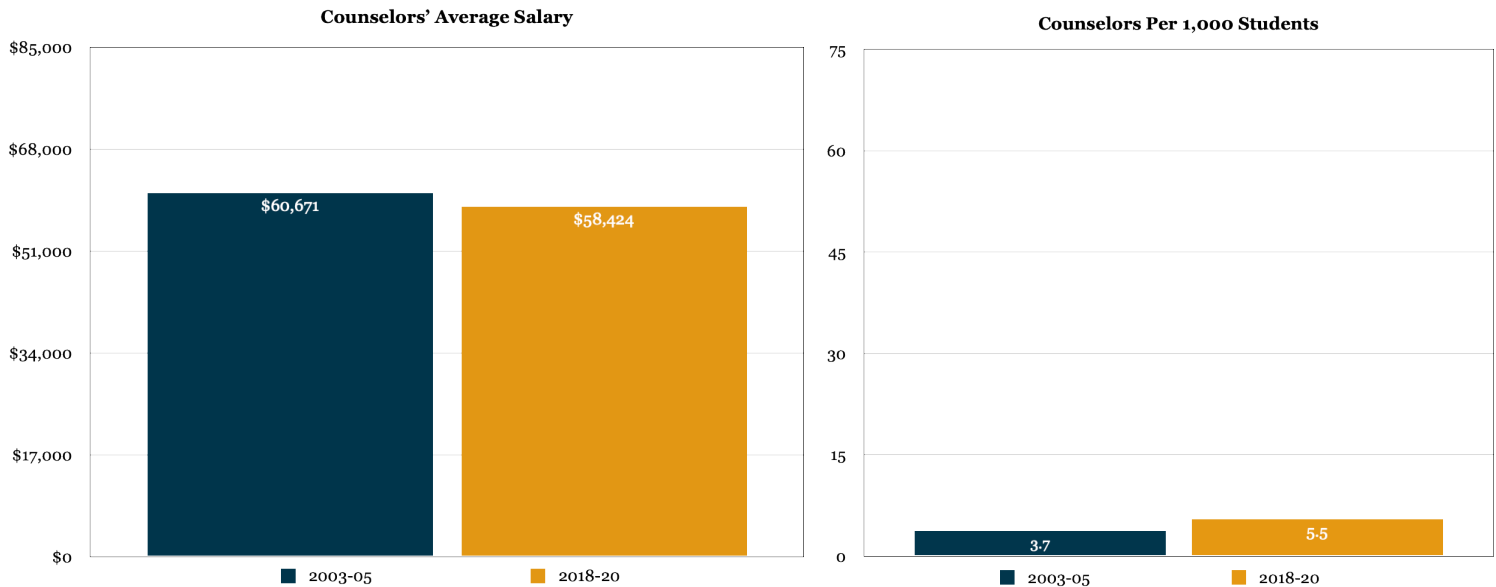


Note: Salary dollars have been adjusted for inflation.

The share of salary spending that went to aides more than doubled from 2003-05 to 2018-20, due to increases in average salary and the number of aides per student. The average salary of aides, most of whom were instructional aides, increased by \$7,647, and the number of aides per student increased by 104.2% over these years.

Key Finding #5

Counselors' average salary is about the same now as pre-Katrina, though there are 48% more counselors per student in recent years.

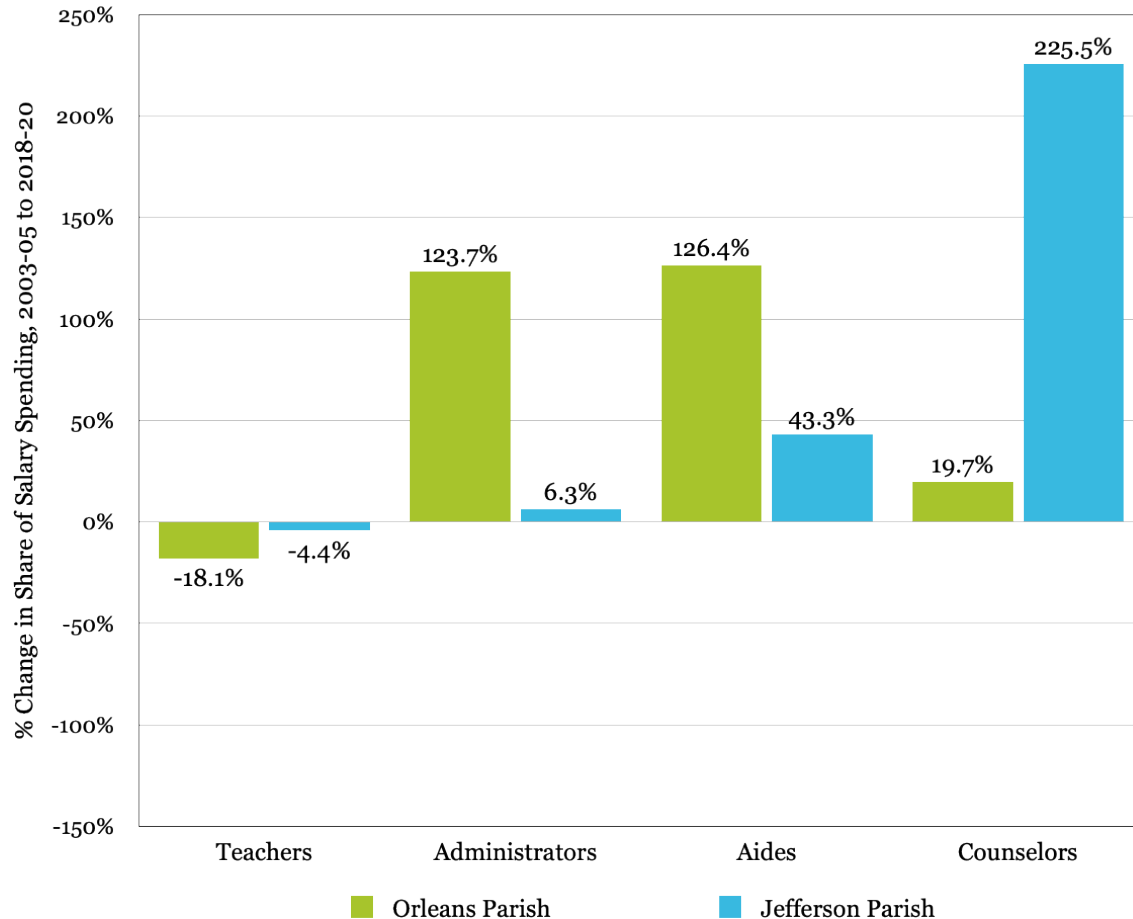


Note: Salary dollars have been adjusted for inflation.

The share of salary spending that went to counselors increased by 19.7% over time, driven by an increase in the number of counselors per student. Counselors' salaries are about the same in 2003-05 and 2018-20, with only a \$2,247 decrease in average salary over time. The number of counselors, though, increased by 48.1%, from 3.7 to 5.5 counselors per 1000 students.

Additional Findings

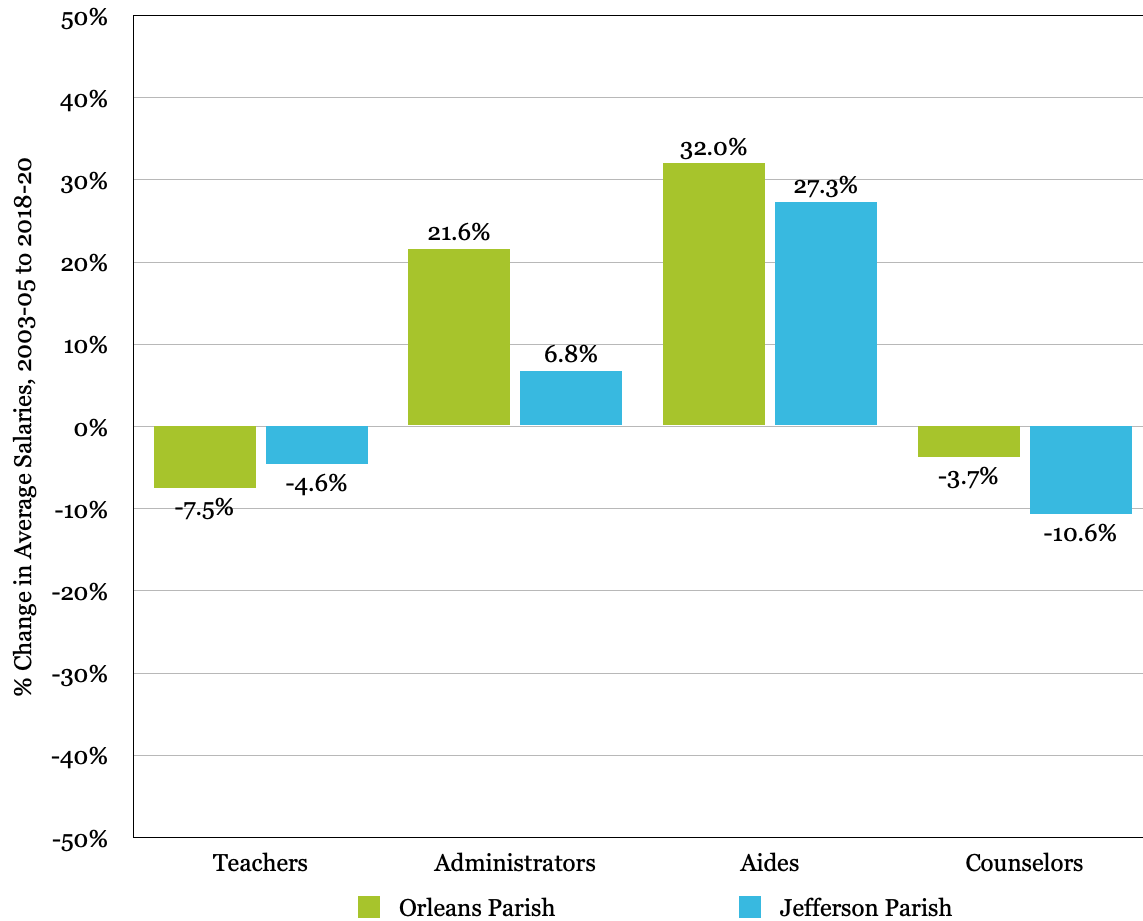
For comparison, the nearby Jefferson Parish school system generally saw much smaller changes in the shares of salary spending.



Note: Salary dollars have been adjusted for inflation.

From 2003-05 to 2018-20, Jefferson Parish adjusted how it allocated salary dollars in ways similar to Orleans Parish. While the share of salary dollars allocated to teachers in Jefferson Parish decreased by 4.4% and the share paid to administrators and managers increased by 6.3%, these changes were small. The share of spending on aides increased by 43.3%, compared to the 126.4% increase in Orleans Parish. Additionally, Jefferson Parish substantially invested in counselors by more than tripling their share of salary spending over time.

Changes in average salaries for teachers, administrators, aides, and counselors were generally smaller in Jefferson Parish than Orleans Parish.



Note: Salary dollars have been adjusted for inflation.

From 2003-05 to 2018-20, the average salaries for administrators and aides increased in both Orleans Parish and Jefferson Parish. Average salaries for teachers and counselors, however, decreased in both parishes.

Methodological Notes

For this study, I compared 2-year averages of percentages of salary spending between 2003-05 and 2018-20, using personnel and school administrative records for all staff in New Orleans' public schools and administrative offices, including Recovery School District staff and administration. These anonymized data provided by the Louisiana Department of Education include exact dollar amounts that are paid to each staff person for all each jobs and work sites. I divided all job classifications into fourteen longitudinally consistent categories (detailed in the chart below), summed each salary total (in 2020 dollars) by job category, then calculated the percent of total salary dollars, average salary per full-time equivalent staffer, and full-time equivalent staff to student ratio for the two time periods for each job type.



About the Author

Olivia Carr is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Education Research Alliance for New Orleans.

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In this series of reports, we analyze data to inform New Orleans education policy and practice by answering questions asked by either our Advisory Board or NOLA Public Schools (NOLA-PS).

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