



Comparing School Districts: Selected Statistics

The Anchorage School District is one of the nation’s largest school districts—in 2008-2009, its enrollment was the 94th largest. The U.S. Department of Education periodically compiles and publishes information about the 100 largest districts; data for this comparison brief were published in the November 2010 publication, *Characteristics of the 100 Largest Public Elementary and Secondary School Districts in the United States: 2008–09*. Numbers in these tables (for example of student enrollment or number of teachers) do not always exactly match other sources, because the timing of the counts or other reporting definitions vary slightly. They are, however, comparable from district to district within the report.

We chose Sacramento, California, and Omaha, Nebraska as comparison districts because like Anchorage, their enrollments are just under 50,000 students, they have large minority populations, and they serve the central city of a region, rather than part of a larger metropolitan area. Table 1 shows changes over the decade from 1998-1999 to 2008-2009 in the largest 100 districts in aggregate, and for Anchorage, Sacramento and Omaha. The number of students overall in the largest districts rose just 2.5 percent in that time, but the number of schools and teachers rose much faster.

Table 1. Changes in the 100 Largest Districts, And in Anchorage, Sacramento and Omaha School Districts, 1998-99 to 2008-09			
	1998-99	2008-09	Change, '99 to '09
Students	10,869,903	11,143,875	2.5%
FTE Teaching Positions	593,277	710,155	19.7%
Schools	15,412	16,905	9.7%
Students			
Anchorage	49,587	48,837	-1.5%
Sacramento	51,378	48,155	-6.3%
Omaha	45,118	48,014	6.4%
FTE Teaching Positions			
Anchorage	2,824	2,839	0.5%
Sacramento	2,295	2,306	0.5%
Omaha	2,884	3,386	17.4%
Schools			
Anchorage	92	97	5.4%
Sacramento	76	90	18.4%
Omaha	81	98	21.0%

In Anchorage, the number of students fell slightly, the number of teaching positions increased less than 1 percent and the number of schools was up 5 percent. In Omaha and Sacramento, and in the top 100 districts as a whole, the number of schools increased much faster. Teaching positions increased faster in Omaha and in large districts as a whole.

Table 2 shows more demographic and organizational statistics for the Anchorage and the two comparison districts. Total enrollment is very similar, as are the number of schools and the average school size. Omaha and Sacramento have larger minority populations and more students who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch programs. Pupil-teacher ratios vary across the three districts. Omaha has no magnet or charter schools because (at the time of the report) Nebraska had no legislation enabling such schools. Anchorage had the highest graduation rate of the three districts, and its rate of 72.5 percent is higher than the average of all the hundred largest districts (which is 65 percent).

Table 2. Selected Statistics for Anchorage and Comparison Districts, 2008-2009			
	Anchorage	Sacramento	Omaha
Students, 2008-09	48,837	48,155	48,014
Combined Percent of Black Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Two or more races students	50.8	78.9	60.4
Percent of Students Eligible for Free or reduced-price Lunch	32.7	65.6	62.2
FTE Teaching Positions	2,839	2,306	3,386
Number of Schools	97	90	98
Mean School Membership	544.1	556.6	554.3
Mean Pupil-Teacher Ratio			
Primary	16.5	18.8	13.8
Middle	16.1	18.2	13.5
High	20.8	18.8	17.3
Percent of Title 1 Eligible Schools	51	87.5	43
Percent of Students in Title 1 Eligible Schools	45.5	87.5	48.9
Number of Magnet Schools	7	0	*
Percent of Students in Magnet Schools	6.1	0	*
Number of Charter Schools	8	13	*
Percent of Students in Charter Schools	4.6	8.6	
Averaged Freshman Graduation Rate**, 2007-08	72.5	57.9	59.6

* Not applicable - State does not have legislation authorizing magnet or charter schools.

** Averaged freshman graduation rate (AFGR) is an estimate of the percentage of an entering freshman class graduating in four years. For 2007-08, it equals the total number of high school diploma recipients in 2007-08 divided by the average membership of the 8th-grade class in 2003-04, the 9th-grade class in 2004-05, and the 10th-grade class in 2005-06.

Table 3 shows how the three districts distribute their staffs (total staffs, not just teachers and administrators) by different functions. In all three districts, about half the staff (measure on a Full-time equivalent basis) consists of teachers. Sacramento, at 56 percent, has the highest portion of staff in teaching positions, and the lowest percentage of staff in instructional support positions. Anchorage has a higher percentage of administrative staff (including both school and district administrators) than the other two districts, and all have about one-third of their staffs in guidance, library media, administrative and student support (such as data processing, health, and transportation) roles.

	Total FTE	Teaching	Instructional Support	Administration	Other	Total
Anchorage	5,890	48%	12%	7%	34%	100%
Sacramento	4,147	56%	7%	3%	34%	100%
Omaha	7,678	44%	17%	3%	36%	100%

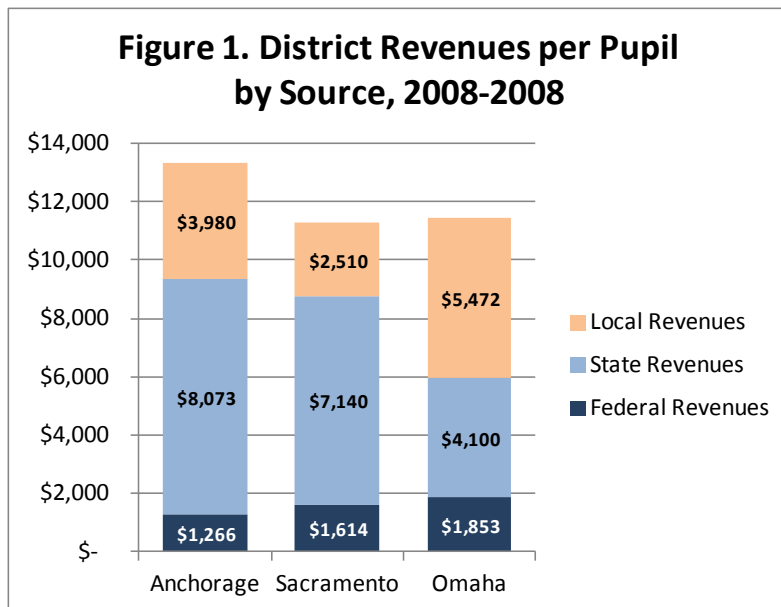


Figure 1 shows local, state and federal revenues by source for the three districts. Anchorage has more total revenue, and more state revenue, than the other two districts. Omaha has the least state revenue and the largest amount and share of local revenue.

Finally, Table 4 shows total and per pupil expenditures and expenditures for instruction for the three districts in 2008. All three districts spend just over half of their total expenditures on instruction, with Omaha the

highest proportion at 56 percent. Anchorage had the highest expenditures and instructional expenditures per pupil, and Omaha the lowest.

	All Expenditures		Instructional Expenditures		Percent of Expenditures for Instruction
	Total	Per Pupil	Total	Per Pupil	
Anchorage	693,415	\$ 14,193	363,382	\$ 7,438	52%
Sacramento	559,994	\$ 11,559	290,622	\$ 5,999	52%
Omaha	474,577	\$ 9,936	264,224	\$ 5,532	56%