

# Recession hits California students at school and at home, report finds

January 22 2010, By Alison Hewitt

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(PhysOrg.com) -- The recession has had a devastating impact on the state's public schools, with major layoffs, budget cuts and homeless students moving in with staff and faculty, according to a new UCLA report.

The [recession](#) has had a devastating impact on California public schools, where [layoffs](#) have led to larger class sizes, [budget cuts](#) have eroded [textbook](#) supplies and after-school programs, and homeless [students](#) are moving in with staff and faculty, according to a report issued today by UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education and Access.

"The recession has created acute new social-services needs for students," said John Rogers, director of IDEA at UCLA's Graduate [School](#) of Education & Information Studies. "The families coming to the schools need to have access to social services to be healthy and ready to learn, but principals tell us social services can't keep up with the need."

The annual [California Educational Opportunity Report](#), issued by IDEA and the University of California's All-Campus Consortium on Research for Diversity (UC ACCORD), surveyed 87 principals from K-12 schools across the state. The principals described dire conditions for their students, not only in school but also at home. One principal described "an epidemic of hunger," with students whose only food came from free school meals.

In Los Angeles, an estimated one in three children now live in poverty,

compared to one in five in 2007. Children statewide fare little better, where an estimated one in four live in poverty, compared with one in six before the recession, according to the report.

"Principals and teachers across the state have taken extraordinary steps to meet the new needs of their students," Rogers said.

Principals reported staff and faculty taking up collections to help students' families pay their bills and donating food and clothes.

"In extraordinary cases, some have taken in homeless youth to live with them," the report noted. "We make referrals" to social services, the report quotes one principal saying, "but they're having a hard time keeping up."

High-poverty schools are the hardest hit. Those schools — the 30 percent where most students receive free and reduced-price lunches — were more than four times as likely to have faced layoffs as low-poverty schools, and they received only an eighth as much in donations meant to offset budget cuts.

Across the board, schools are reducing or axing summer school, after-school programs, field trips, and music and art programs.

"Programs once viewed as essential are being eliminated," Rogers said.

The report included six key findings:

- The recession has created an unprecedented need among public school students for social services, which schools are unable to meet.
- Layoffs are prevalent and have created larger class sizes in 67 percent of schools - 74 percent in elementary schools.
- Budget cuts have forced 76 percent of schools to hold back on

purchasing basics like textbooks and other instructional materials.

- Extracurricular programs are being chopped: 70 percent of schools reduced or eliminated summer school, and at many schools, parents are being asked to pay for after-school programs once covered by the schools.
- Professional development and teacher training budgets have been slashed.
- Local efforts to fundraise actually widen the gap between high- and low-poverty schools, with high-poverty schools unable to raise as much as more affluent schools.

"This is an extraordinary year," Rogers said. "The recession has dramatically increased the number of students living in poverty ... it makes little sense to protect education funding if [social services](#) are too decimated to support the students' families."

Provided by University of California Los Angeles

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