

Money: The Strongest Influence of State School Nurse to Student Ratios

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Abstract:

Purpose: The purposes of this study were 1) to determine if state laws mandating school nurses or health services/activities influence school nurses/student ratios, and 2) to identify other social and political factors that influence school nurse/student ratios.

Method: This descriptive study involved a secondary data analysis of the relationship between state school nurse ratios and the following: mandated school nurse ratio, mandated school health services, mandated specific school health activities, state school nurse consultant present, funding per pupil unit, state political ideology, state population density, and per capita income of state. Data were collected from established data bases from the 50 United States and the District of Columbia. Confirmation of school nursing data was conducted. Due to skewed distribution of the data and some states reporting in ranges, data were collapsed into ordinal data and analyzed using correlation statistics.

Results: No relationship was found between states with laws mandating school nursing or other health service and school nurse /student ratios. Additionally nurse/student ratios were not influenced by having a school nurse consultant, the political ideology of the state, or population density of the state. Results showed a significant relationship between school nurse/student ratios and the amount of funds spent per pupil, level of student services funded, and state per capita income. Additionally the presence of a state school nurse consultant positively influenced state policies regarding immunizations and suicide prevention services.

Conclusion: Ongoing investigation needs to be done to identify other factors that affect school nurse/student ratio. Additionally, a systematic approach to data collection at the state and local level needs to be implemented.