

School Nurses in U.S. Public Schools

DATA POINT

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This Data Point uses school questionnaire data from the 2015-16 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) and from the 2011-12 and 2007-08 Schools and Staffing Surveys (SASS). These data include nationally representative information for public K-12 schools, principals, and teachers in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. This Data Point compares the presence of full-time, part-time, and either type of school nurse from the 2007-08, 2011-12, and 2015-16 school years and the differences in the presence of school nurses by selected school characteristics.

The American Academy of Pediatrics [recommended](#) in June 2016 that schools have at least one full-time registered nurse available for students' health needs.¹ SASS and NTPS surveys of schools from the 2007-08, 2011-12, and 2015-16 school years asked how many staff worked as full-time or part-time nurses at their school and provide trend information on the prevalence of school nurses up to this time point.

Neither credentials nor demographic characteristics of school nurses were collected in SASS or NTPS, though these have been researched by the National Association of School Nurses.²

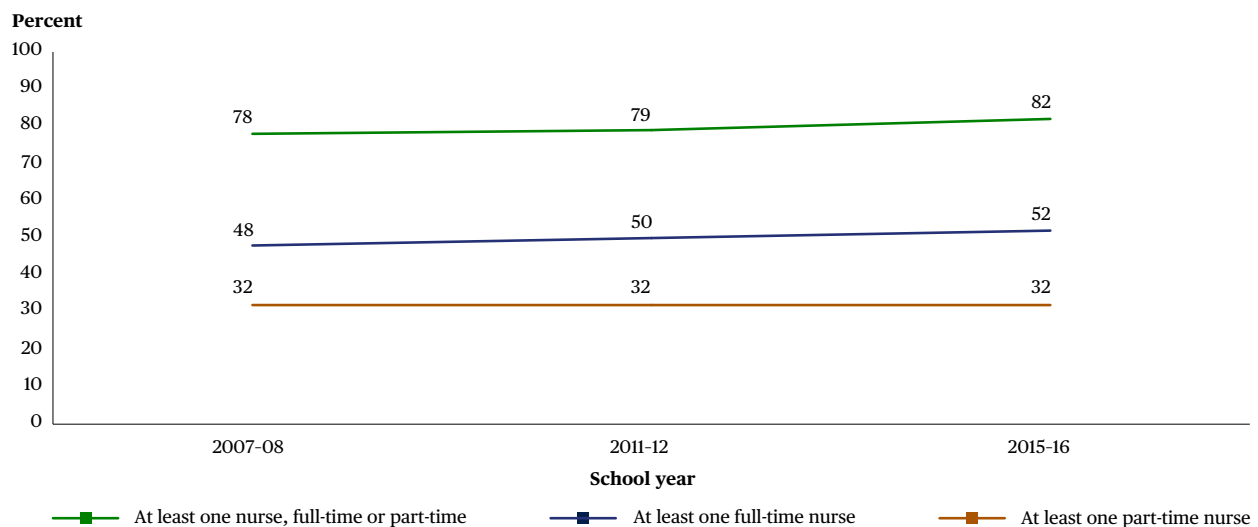
Has the presence of school nurses in U.S. public schools changed over time? (FIGURE 1)

- During the 2015-16 school year, just over half (52 percent) of

public schools had a full-time nurse. Counting part-time nurses, over three-quarters (82 percent) had at least one full-time or one part-time nurse.

- The percentage of public schools with a full-time nurse increased by 4 percentage points between 2007-08 and 2015-16 (48 to 52 percent), as did the percentage with either a full- or a part-time nurse (78 to 82 percent).

FIGURE 1. Percentage of public schools with at least one full-time, part-time, or any nurse: 2007-08, 2011-12, and 2015-16



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) "Public School Data File," 2007-08 and 2011-12; National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Data File," 2015-16.

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- There was no change in the presence of at least one part-time nurse in schools (32 percent).

How does the presence of school nurses differ by school characteristics? (FIGURE 2)

Data from NTPS and SASS also include details about the public schools served by school nurses.

- In the 2015-16 school year, a higher percentage of traditional public schools than public charter schools had at least one school nurse (84 percent compared to 52 percent).
- Differences by urbanicity were not as pronounced. Eighty-four percent of public schools in towns and suburbs had a full- or part-time nurse, which is higher than the 81 percent of city schools and 78 percent of rural schools with a full- or part-time nurse.

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- Higher percentages of public primary and middle schools (86 and 87 percent, respectively) had at least one full-time or part-time nurse than high schools (75 percent) or combined schools (60 percent).
- Among public schools that participated in the free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) program, those with higher FRPL eligibility rates had lower rates of school nurses. Seventy-nine percent of schools with FRPL

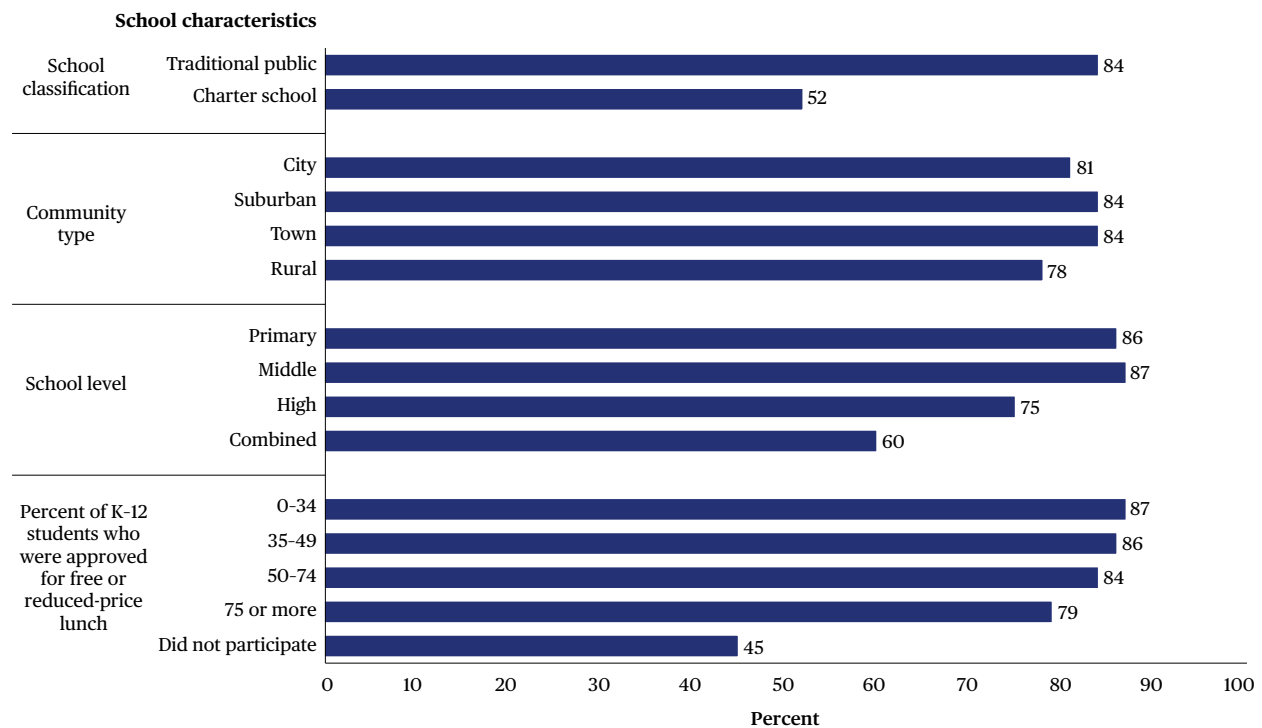
eligibility rates of 75 percent or higher had a full- or part-time nurse, increasing to 87 percent where FRPL eligibility was under 35 percent. Less than half of public schools (45 percent) that did not participate in the program had a school nurse.

Endnotes

¹Holmes, B.W., Allison, M., Ancona, R., Attisha, E., Beers, N., De Pinto, C., Gorski, P., Kjolhede, C., Lerner, M., Weiss-Harrison, A., and Young, T. (2016). Role of the School Nurse in Providing School Health Services. *Pediatrics*, 137(6): e20160852.

²Willgerodt, M.A., Brock, D.M., and Maughan, E.M. (2018). Public School Nursing Practice in the United States. *The Journal of School Nursing*, 34(3): 232-244.

FIGURE 2. Percentage of public schools with at least one full-time or part-time nurse: 2015-16



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Data File," 2015-16.