

Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities

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Is JROTC an Extra Expense for Local Schools?

The impression of a financial savings

Whenever JROTC is first proposed at a school, parents and school officials are usually given the impression that there will be no extra cost for having the program because it includes a federal subsidy. Details of the school district's true financial obligation are rarely scrutinized and, in some cases, are not even known when school board members vote to enter into a JROTC agreement with the Department of Defense (DoD).

An examination of the relevant facts reveals that, in reality, JROTC is more expensive to offer than most other educational programs. This is largely because the federal subsidy is only partial and two JROTC instructors—who are retired military officers—must be hired to teach a number of students who would normally be supported by a single teacher position.

Often, it is only after instructors are hired and classes have started that the true cost of JROTC becomes apparent to school officials. Then it is too late to back out of the agreement because the school district is required to give notice at least twelve months in advance before it can terminate the program.

How JROTC uses local school district funds

Under the standard JROTC contract, the DoD provides students with books, uniforms and special equipment such as rifles. The school district must provide insurance, building facilities and maintenance, and must assume responsibility for paying instructors' salaries, employment taxes and benefits. School districts commonly pay JROTC instructors the same salaries and benefits as teachers, even though JROTC instructors rarely have college degrees in education.

The DoD pays the district back for only part of the salary expense and none of the employment taxes or benefits. The federal subsidy amount is derived from a formula based on what each JROTC instructor's active-duty military salary and housing allowance would be, minus his or her military retirement pay. Half of this difference is the maximum amount the DoD will pay the school district.

The JROTC contract requires the school district to hire a minimum of two instructors (one a retired officer, one a noncommissioned officer) for any number up to 150 students. Normally, one regular non-JROTC classroom teacher would teach an average of 150 students. Note that students are usually able to take JROTC instead of a required physical education class, and less than one P.E. teaching position would be allocated for 150 students (PE teachers are commonly assigned up to 250 students).

This means that in order to have JROTC, a school district must hire double the classroom staff normally needed for the number of students involved, which is also more than quadruple the number of staff that would be hired to provide those students with physical education. And therefore, because the federal subsidy amount will likely cover less than half the total salaries and none of the expenses for employment taxes and benefits, schools are required to use extra money from their budgets to, in effect, subsidize a high school military training program for the DoD.

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An example of the JROTC personnel cost in a specific school district

The following projected income and expenses are for a first year Air Force JROTC program that began in the fall of 1995 at Vista High School, Vista, California. (Source of financial and enrollment data: Vista Unified School District).

COST TO DISTRICT OF JROTC PERSONNEL

Number of JROTC cadets enrolled = 95

Number of JROTC instructors employed = 2

<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>Expense Amount</u>	<u>Amount Reimbursed</u>	<u>Net Cost to VHS</u>
Instructors' salaries	60813.80	28305.05	32508.75
STRS (retirement)	5017.10	0.00	5017.10
Medicare	881.80	0.00	881.80
Health/Welfare	11712.00	0.00	11712.00
Unemployment	66.90	0.00	66.90
Workers Comp.	894.00	0.00	894.00
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	79385.60	28305.05	51080.55

COMPARISON TO COST OF PERSONNEL FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASSES

Ave. number of students assigned to one P.E. teacher = 250

Number of P.E. teaching slots required
to teach the 95 students enrolled in JROTC = .38

Ave. total cost for one P.E. teacher: 52250.00
x .38

Estimated staffing cost for the 95
students when they were in P.E. 19855.00

51080.55 (JROTC cost)

- 19855.00 (P.E. teacher cost)

**Amount of extra local funds lost as a
consequence of having JROTC at VISTA H.S.**

31225.55*
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*In another case, in 1993 the San Diego Unified School District estimated that a total of \$301,000 in extra funds had to be allocated to subsidize the required instructors for the district's eight JROTC units—an average of \$37,625 per school!

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