School Budget Cuts Lead to Less Field Trips

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Description

Three heavily Latino-populated areas - Miami-Dade County, San Antonio and Los Angeles - have experienced extreme education budget cuts affecting field trips. These cuts mean fewer kids in elementary and high schools are going to art museums, concerts, scientific exhibitions and nature sites.

Keywords


Transcript

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Education cuts coast to coast means fewer kids are going to art museums, concerts, scientific exhibitions, cultural institutions and nature sites. Three heavily Latino-populated areas – Miami-Dade County in Florida, San Antonio, Texas and Los Angeles, California – have experienced severe cuts in feel-good, supplemental learning excursions in elementary through high school.

These cuts have a direct impact on the number of field trips taken by schools like the 186th Street Elementary School in Gardena, Los Angeles. Teachers at the school – whose student population is 65% Latino – used to be able to take children on 3 district approved field trips per class, per year. Now budget cuts have forced the school to cut out field trips completely. Even the lure of free admission to a venue or experience isn’t enough – teachers have “no way” of providing transportation since the schools have to pay for the buses themselves said Ana Infante, an English language development literacy coordinator at 186th Street Elementary.

It’s a feeling that Gabriela Martinez, Associate Vice President for Education at the Museum of Latin
American Art in nearby Long Beach, shares. “Exposure to Latino art and artists really works wonders in raising a kid’s self-esteem and developing crucial thinking skills,” says Martinez. Student visits to the museum in 2011 dropped 19% from attendance in 2010 and Martinez, who recently launched and designed an interdisciplinary social studies arts curriculum that incorporates concepts like immigration, industrialization, cultural affairs and social criticism with works of art in the museum, says that she predicts that the budget and transportation cuts will cause student visitation to drop even further this year. State support for field trips is also lagging in San Antonio, where state lawmakers cut $4 billion dollars in public education funding last year. The effect of the federal cuts and discretionary grants has had a huge impact on schools in the Northside Independent School District in San Antonio.

In Florida, the current economic climate – the worst it’s been in a decade – has made a projected $2 billion dollar shortfall for the calendar year a primary issue on the legislative agenda. The program partners with cultural and arts organizations to offer students K-12 a different cultural field experience each year and is “an effort to ensure that students will be exposed to enriching cultural experiences, despite years of budget cuts,” said Alberto Carvalho, Superintendent of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, who spearheaded the program’s creation in 2009.

Orlinda Garcia, the program’s community liaison, says that budget cuts in Miami-Dade County push her to arrange for students to attend activities and cultural events that ordinarily wouldn’t be made available to them.

While no one knows what cuts lay in the future for Miami-Dade county schools, Garcia knows one thing for certain about the value of field trips.