StateNotes

Class Size

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State Class-Size Reduction Measures

ECS Information Clearinghouse
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The following table targets states that have attempted to limit the teacher/student ratio to 20 or fewer students per teacher. However, several "marginal" class-size reduction measures that do not meet that ratio also are included.

State	Category (type)	Year Enacted	Description	Notes	Funding
AL	mandate	1997 amended 1998	State board resolution sets a timetable and limits. K-3, 18 students per teacher	Classes with aides reviewed as an exception by the state supt. of education	Through the 1995 Foundation Program Plan
CA	voluntary/ incentive Cal. Chap. 6.10, §52120	1996	Legislation authorized formation of smaller classes and provided funding for those schools choosing to do so. Initial targets: 20 in K-3; grade 4 added in 97-98 Additional $200 million for 8,000 additional classrooms, either through remodeling or use of portables. The appropriation for new facilities is a one-time provision, while class-size reduction funds are expected to be included annually in the state budget.	Legislation also mandated independent evaluation by 3-28-98. Approximately 20,000 new teachers were needed to accommodate the smaller class sizes, which prompted the governor to sign a bill relaxing teacher certification requirements. Raises concerns about districts hiring unqualified teachers. Other unintended consequences: a surge of teachers moving from "less-advantaged" to more desirable districts to fill newly created staff positions; a shortage of substitute teachers; supervision and training of non-certificated teachers, creating a problem for higher education teacher training programs	$1 billion 96-97 ($650 per student in smaller classes), $200 million for facilities $1.5 billion 97-98 ($800 per student)
FL	voluntary No law, just funding	1996	Targets K-3 classrooms with a priority to Kindergarten and 1st grade; 20 students per teacher or 20+ (no more than 30 students) if a full-time aide is provided		1997-98 funding: $100,000,000
IL	voluntary/ grants 105	1997	Reading Improvement Block Grant Program authorized grants to improve reading instruction		

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	Ill.Comp.Stat. 5/2-3.51		through several measures, one of which is to reduce class size K-3.		
IN	pilot initially Ind. Code §21-1-29-1 statewide 88-89 Ind. Code §§1-1-30-1 to 1-1-30-9	1981 1988	"Prime Time" program 88-89: 18 students in Kindergarten, 1st grade 20 students, 2nd, 3rd	Teachers have reported improved student behavior, higher test scores and more efficient classrooms. However, program evaluations indicate a weak relationship between lower class size and student achievement, but significant improvement in teachers' morale and attitudes.	Through funding formula 1995: $77 million
IA	grants IOWA CODE §§ 256E.2 to 256E.6	1999	Early intervention block grant program with goals to provide resources necessary to reduce class sizes in basic skills to 17:1 for K-3. Overall aim is improvement in reading instruction.	Flexibility in how funds used (not limited to class size reduction), but districts must develop class size management plan with goals of 17:1 for grades K-3. Must integrate plan into required comprehensive school improvement plan. Dollars received must supplement, not supplant. Requires annual public reporting on reading proficiency levels and class size.	7-99 to 6-30-2000, $10m; 7-1-2000 to 6-30-2001, $20m; 7-1-2001 to 6-30-2003, $30m each yr. Allocation formula targets low income districts.
LA	mandate LA.Rev. Stat. Ann. §17:174	1986	K-3 classes not to exceed 20 unless authorized in writing by the state superintendent.	Students above the maximum not to be counted for funding purposes. No provision of this measure to take effect until funds appropriated specifically by the legislature.	unknown
ME	voluntary/grants ME. Rev.Stat. Ann.tit. 20, §4252	1989	Local units may elect to target class size within one or more grades, K-3. Recommendation of 15 to 1, with a maximum of 18 to 1.		competitive grant program
MD	Ann. Code of M.D. Sec. 5-212	1999	Requires districts to submit plans and reports describing how they will use additional funds for any/all of several areas; one option is reducing 1st and 2nd grade reading program to no more than 1:20; another is reducing math instruction – 7th grade- to no more than 1:20.	Funds appropriated if, in the opinion of the state superintendent, the plan meets conditions prescribed by the legislature.	
NC	voluntary N.C. Gen. Stat. §115C-301	1993 1995,1997	Measure targeted to K-2, with a 1:23 ratio. Pilot in Burke County Schools, 1991+	Funded 1:23 for each grade, but allowing administrative units to use dollars to reduce K-2 or to hire reading teachers within K-2 or otherwise reduce the ratio within kindergarten through 2nd.	foundation
NV	mandate	1989	Legislature limited class size in K-	Legislature appropriated $450,000 for	Special revenue

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	Nev. Rev. Stat. §388.700	revised 1993, 1995	3 to 15 (core subjects) School districts and licensed personnel association(s) must develop plan to reduce class sizes in grades 1-3 within limits of available financial support.	professional development. A questionnaire revealed that principals, teachers and parents believe smaller class sizes are associated with new teaching practices, increased teacher-student interaction, positive student attitudes toward learning and improved grades. Districts reported that fewer special education referrals and less teacher absenteeism were associated with class-size reductions. More in-depth evaluations show student achievement levels remained the same when small classes were compared with larger classes (tested over a three-year period). In some districts, however, students in smaller classes (1-20) did significantly better in reading and moderately better in math than students in classes of 21 and over.	fund for class-size reduction Nev. Rev. Stat. §388.730
OK	mandate 70 Okl. St. @ 18-113.1	1990	Targets grades K, 1-3, 4-6. No more than 20 students may be regularly assigned to a teacher. With the exception of certain conditions (these vary by grade levels above), fiscal and accreditation penalties apply for noncompliance.	If limitations exceeded after the first 9 weeks of the year, no fiscal penalty applies. Physical education, music, vocational not subject to limitation. If classrooms are not available and district meets certain guidelines (has maximum millage allowable or voted indebtedness within 5 prior years), then district not penalized.	Funding addressed through foundation program.
RI	voluntary/grants R.I. Gen. Laws §16-67-2	1987 (eff. 88-89); re-enacted 1996	Districts encouraged to reduce class size to no more than 15 in grades K-3 (The Literacy Program).		Educational Improvement block grants R.I. Gen. Laws §16-5-31 (3)
SC	mandate S.C. Code Ann. §59-20-40 mandate S.C. Code Ann. § 59-139-10	1977 1993	To qualify for funds, each district required to attain 21 to 1 average pupil-teacher ratio in basic skills of reading and mathematics (grades 1-3); districts may apply to the state board for waivers (phased in from 1979 to 1983) Early Childhood Development and Academic Assistance requires districts to design long-range plans which may include reduction in kindergarten pupil-teacher ratio (the class size component here is voluntary, but the plan is mandatory)		Funding is addressed through foundation program (Kindergarten weighted 1.30; primary 1-3, 1.24)

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SD	voluntary/grants S.D. Codified Laws § 13-14-8.1	1993	Youth-at-risk funds (grants) offered as incentives for reducing class sizes in K-3 to 15 or less.		grants for up to 3 years
TN	pilot Tenn. Code Ann. §49-6-3501 mandate 1985 Tenn. Pub. Acts, Ch. 463, 1	1984 1985	Demonstration centers (operated by local boards) established with class maximum enrollment 17. Two hundred teaching positions were funded by the department of education. Every public school system required to have a policy that pupil-teacher ratios not exceed ratio prescribed. Within a building, the average of any grade level cannot exceed the average, although any individual class within the unit may exceed the average (but not the maximum). K-3 avg: 20 (maximum of 25).	Purpose of the demonstration projects and centers was to study the effects of reduced pupil-teacher ratio on the achievement of students in public school. First study began in 79 elementary schools in 1985. Greatest gains in inner-city small classes. Classes with teacher aides achieved slightly higher scores than regular classes, but differences were not statistically significant. (Project STAR - Student Teacher Achievement Ratio) Longitudinal study funded in 1990 (Lasting Benefits Study) -- see p. 6 for details.	All but 5% of costs paid by the department of education. Funding provided through the foundation program (weighting).
TX	mandate Tex. Educ. Code Ann. §25.112 §25.111	1984 1995	School district may not enroll more than 22 students in K-4 classes. Stipulates ratio of not less than one teacher to each 20 students in average daily attendance (K-4).	Numerous exceptions apply.	unknown
UT	mandate Utah Code Ann. §53A-17a-124.5	1992	Through use of appropriations, districts must reduce average class size in grades K-4, with emphasis on K-2. Must use 50% of allocation to reduce class size in K-2, with emphasis on improving reading skills. If average class size is below 18 in K-2, may petition the state board for waiver to use its allocation for reduction in other grades.	20% of district's allocation may be used for capital facilities projects that will help to reduce class size.	Funding formula (weighted pupil units) allocated $46,311,678 in 1997 to be dispersed over four years (ending with fiscal year beginning July 1, 2000); 1996: $19,544,621; 1995: $18,632,768; 1994: $15,451,271; 1993: $11,053,098; 1992:

State	Category (type)	Year Enacted	Description	Notes	Funding
					$4,389,540
VA	voluntary Va. Code Ann. §22.1-199.1	1996	Legislature established long-term goal of reducing pupil-teacher ratio and class size for K-3 in those schools with high or moderate concentrations of at-risk students.		State funding based on the incremental cost of providing the lower class sizes according to the greater of the division average per-pupil cost of all divisions or the actual division per-pupil cost. Local districts must provide matching funds based on the composite index of local ability to pay. State Board of Education to budget accordingly.
WI	voluntary/ grants 1995 Act 27 Chapter 118.43	1995	Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE); districts eligible to enter 5-year achievement guarantee contract with Dept. of Public Instruction on behalf of one school if minimum of 30% low-income students and no preschool-grade 5 grant on behalf of that school. (Also implements curricular and programmatic requirements)	Targets K, 1st grade in 98-99; adds grade 2 in 99-2000; adds grade 3 in 2001-2003. Class size reduction is one of several requirements for grants; schools must also extend hours of operation, provide rigorous curriculum, create staff development and accountability programs and pass annual review.	Finance formula funds reduction in class size to 1: 15 in each SAGE classroom.

Small Class Sizes:
Discussion, Rationale, Evidence

The debate over the effectiveness and efficiency of reducing class size remains unresolved. Nonetheless, several state legislatures are appropriating large sums of money to reduce K-3 class sizes to between 15 and 20 students.

Researchers keep the discussion alive as they argue about the merits and methodologies of various class-size studies. For state policymakers, reducing class size is a visible, concrete initiative that can be replicated throughout schools. Meanwhile, teachers and parents proclaim what they see as obvious -- fewer students in a class makes it easier to teach and to learn. In the end, state leaders must weigh the "political points" they earn from teachers and parents against the high cost of reducing class size and the education reforms left unfunded because of this policy.

The class-size reduction discussion intensified in 1990 when the Tennessee legislature funded a longitudinal study on smaller classes and student achievement, and then commissioned a follow-up study to determine the lasting benefits. The first study, known as Project STAR (Student Teacher Achievement

Ratio) studied 7,000 students in 79 elementary schools. Researchers concluded that small class sizes (13-17 students) significantly increased student achievement scores, compared to regular classes of 22 to 25 and regular classes with a full-time teacher's aide. They also found that gains made in kindergarten were maintained through 3rd grade and the greatest gains were made in inner-city small classes.

Tennessee's second analysis, the Lasting Benefits Study, tracked students from grades 4-7 as they returned to normal size classes and concluded these students:

- Were less frequently retained in grade
- Succeeded in narrowing the achievement gap between children living in poverty and more affluent students, and between white and African-American students
- Had higher achievement "across the board" (in science, social studies, math, reading, spelling and study skills)
- Continued to outscore peers from larger classes; however, differences diminished somewhat as years went on

While the results from these two studies appear convincing, critics point out that 1,100 small-class size studies produced mixed findings. They also question whether Project STAR and the Lasting Benefits Study should be viewed as the definitive studies on which to develop and invest in class-size reduction policies.

Overall, the evidence is inconclusive as to whether small classes improve student achievement. The research has produced mixed and contradictory results, including:

- Students in early grades learn more and continue to have an edge over the rest of their peers when they return to normal classrooms. The impact is greatest and longer-lasting if they remain in small classes, however.
- The payoff in terms of student achievement gains does not translate into a cost-effective investment. Tutoring and direct instruction appear to be more cost-effective.
- Kindergarten through 3rd grade students benefit most, as do minority students in urban schools
- Class-size reduction cannot be isolated as the sole factor for increased student achievement
- Reading and math scores improve for some students in comparison to peers in regular-size classes
- Smaller classes force districts to hire significantly more teachers and create more classroom space
- Effectiveness depends on whether teachers adapt their teaching methods to take advantage of small classes and have more focused time with students
- Small classes result in fewer classroom distractions and more time for teachers to devote to each student

Characteristics of High-Quality Initiatives

Reducing class size is most effective when:

- Classes are reduced to between 15 and 19 students. (Little impact has been demonstrated in class sizes of 20 to 40 students.)
- Particular schools are targeted, especially those with low-achieving and low-income students
- Teachers are provided ongoing, high-quality professional development to make the most of the smaller class size conditions
- Teachers are well-qualified and a challenging curriculum is used for every student

Actions for Policymakers

If state policymakers decide to invest in class-size reduction, they may want to consider the following actions:

- Estimate the cost of funding the proposed class-size reduction plan, then:
  - Determine the state's commitment and any district contribution that will be necessary
  - Indicate whether state funding is permanent, temporary or contingent upon available revenue
  - Address the need for additional, qualified teachers and classroom space
  - Provide sufficient funds for the grades and schools covered under the initiative
- Target the program and dollars to low-income, low-achieving schools to allow significant class-size reduction in a few schools, rather than modest reductions statewide.
- Provide professional development funds so teachers can adapt their teaching methods for the smaller classes
- Evaluate the small class-size initiative on a regular basis to determine its benefits and cost-effectiveness
- Assist schools and districts to combine class-size reduction with other school-improvement plans for maximum impact

Comments to Policymakers

As more states adopt or consider legislation to reduce class size, the discussion should focus on the costs of creating smaller classes and whether the costs are justified by the returns. Moreover, if class size is believed to make a difference, then policymakers need better information about why small classes are beneficial to student achievement and how this information can be used for other reform efforts. Finally, state leaders should be prepared to deal with the unintended consequences if class size is reduced on a statewide scale; for example, the need for additional, qualified teachers and classroom space and the issue of teachers choosing more desirable districts.

Suggestions for Evaluation: California Example

The following was adapted from Report to the State Board of Education: A Plan for the Evaluation of California's Class Size Reduction Initiative 10/20/97.

QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE CLASS SIZE REDUCTION PROGRAM

The Class Size Reduction program (CSR) consortium proposed a research plan to find information on many topics, broken into seven categories. The answers to some of these questions will come from data (test scores, for example), while many others will require observations, surveys, and conversations with policymakers, teachers and administrators, and parents.

Policymaking at the state, district, and school levels

- What are policymakers' goals and expectation for CSR? Their concerns?
- Do they have common expectations about the influence on student learning? Do these match or differ from teachers' or school boards' expectations.
- How do educational policies, regulations, and labor agreements help or hinder implementation?

Resource allocation within and among schools

- What is the effect on districts' revenues and expenditures? On spending for school operations and facilities, across grades, for instructional support services and programs? On resources across primary and secondary schools and across district programs?
- How did schools find space for new classrooms? If there were tradeoffs, what were they and are they permanent?
- How does CSR money affect equity of funding among districts, schools, and groups of students given the different resources already available to districts?

Intersection with other education reforms

- What is the relationship between CSR and large categorical programs (Special Education, Title 1) and programs for English learners?
- Do district or school characteristics (high or low revenue, for example) affect implementation?
- Is CSR integrated with a district's master plan? Or existing reform efforts? What interaction, if any, will there be with new state curriculum standards?
- Does CSR intersect with other reform efforts, or is it a diversion?

Teacher quality, assignment, and training

- What is the impact of CSR on recruiting and assigning teachers? What is the influence of collective bargaining?
- What are the qualifications and experience of teachers in the smaller classes and in classes with limited-English or minority or special-needs students?
- What professional development and support do teachers get? Does it change according to their experience? Does it vary by district?
- What do teachers report about their satisfaction and attitudes as a consequence of CSR? How do these affect student learning?

Classroom practices

- How has CSR affected teaching practices?
- What methods of instruction are used for English language learners in CSR classes? Does instruction differ across districts, classrooms, or categories of students?
- How is the classroom atmosphere changed?
- What is the impact on personnel to support teachers?

Student outcomes

- Has achievement in reading and math improved? Has promotion, retention changed? What do the next grade teachers report?
- Have transitions into or out of special programs changed?
- What is the impact on students' attendance, behavior, completing homework?
- Are English language learners ready to read sooner?
- Do student outcomes vary according to school, teacher, classroom practices, or the characteristics of the student?
- Have changes in classroom practices affected student outcomes?

Parental involvement

- How have parents been involved in decisions about participation, allocation of resources and space, and pupil assignments?
- Are parents more directly involved with their child's teacher or in the classroom?
- Do they believe their children's education is improved? Is there a change in their satisfaction with teachers, the school, or the district? Do they think the total school program has improved?
- Have parent involvement programs grown or declined? Parent participation?

This last segment used with permission: EdSource, *Evaluating California's Class Size Reduction Program*, February 1998. To order the evaluation, send $4 plus $1 shipping and handling to:

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