

COUNCIL FOR EDUCATION POLICY, RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT

PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE CLASS SIZE AMENDMENT

STUDY OUTLINE

Background

In November 2002, Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment that limits the number of students in Florida's classrooms by the 2010-11 school year. The class size maximums are: 18 students per classroom in grades Pre-K through three; 22 students in grades four through eight; and 25 students in grades nine through twelve. These class size limits do not apply to extracurricular classes. The amendment provides an implementation schedule which requires a reduction of the average number of students in each classroom by at least two students per year beginning in 2003-04, until the maximum classroom capacity limits are met. To comply with these provisions, the amendment places the responsibility of providing funding on the state, not the local school districts.

In 2003, the Florida Legislature enacted Senate Bill 30A, which implements the provisions of the class size amendment and defines the progress that districts must make in reducing class size. The implementing bill provided definitions for "core-curricula" and "extracurricular courses." "Core-curricula courses" are defined as mathematics, language arts/reading, science, social studies, foreign language, English for Speakers of Other Languages, exceptional student education, and courses taught in traditional self-contained elementary school classrooms. "Extracurricular courses" are all other courses. The terms of the class size amendment apply only to "core-curricular" courses.

Under the provisions of Section 1003.03, F.S., school districts over the class size limits established in the amendment must reduce their class sizes by at least two students per year until 2010-11 according to the following schedule and measures:

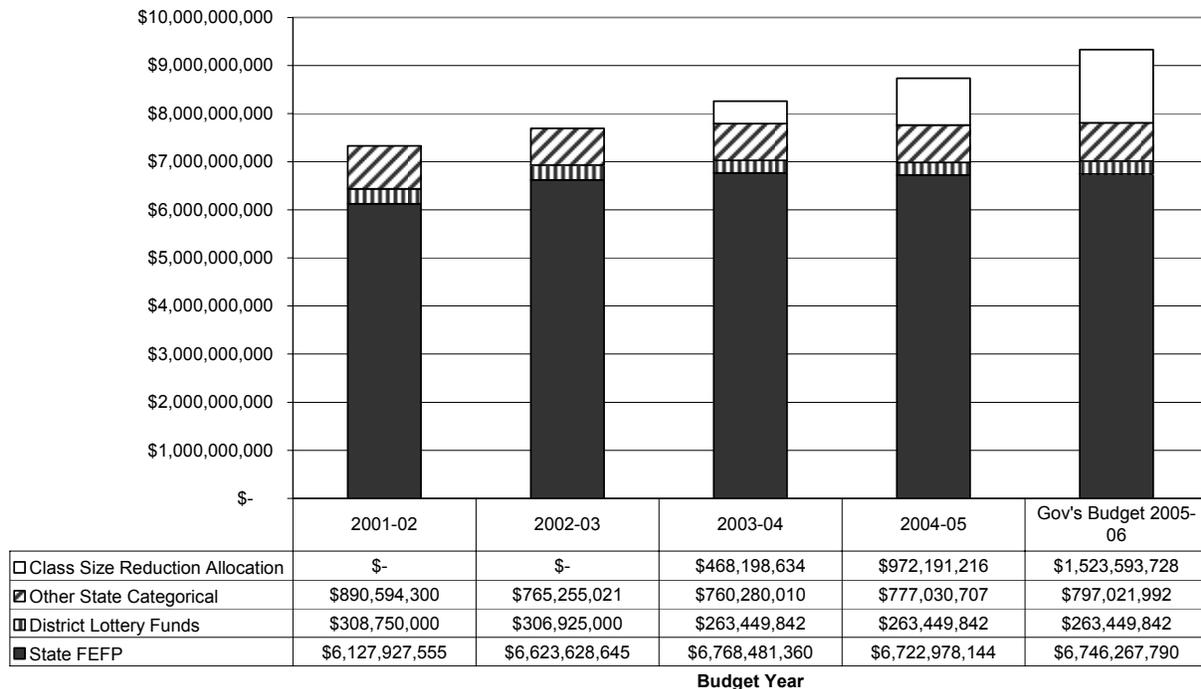
<u>Time Frame</u>	<u>Measure</u>
2003-04 to 2005-06	District-level average class size for each of the three grade groupings (PK-3; 4-8; and 9-12)
2006-07 to 2007-08	School-level average class size for each of the three grade groupings
2008-09 to 2009-10	Classroom-level maximum class sizes

In 2003-04, eight districts were not in compliance, in accordance with the use of district averages, in all three grade groupings. In 2004-05, sixteen districts are not in compliance. According to the Department of Education, if school averages were used to define compliance in 2004-05, 64 districts would not be in compliance.

As per the requirements of the amendment, the state provides funds to pay the cost of reducing class sizes. The class size reduction funds, both operating and capital outlay, are allocated equitably among all the districts based on established operating and capital outlay formulae. Therefore, even if a school district is in compliance with the terms of the class size amendment, each school district

will still receive an equitable share of the class size reduction allocation. A school district, if in compliance, may use these funds for any purpose, giving priority to increasing teacher salaries. For this fiscal year, the class size reduction allocation is \$972 million, up from \$468 million in 2003-04. The Governor's 2005-06 budget recommendation for the class size reduction allocation is \$1.5 billion.

**State Operating Funding for Public Schools by Category,
2001-02 to 2005-06 (Proposed)**



Sources: Final calculations of the FEFP (2001-02 to 2003-04), third calculation of the FEFP for 2004-05, and the Governor's Recommended Budget for 2005-06

State capital outlay funds are provided for class size reduction facilities that are in excess of the facilities in the districts five-year capital facilities plan. \$700 million has been appropriated for class size reduction-related capital outlay since the amendment's adoption (\$600 million in 2003-04 and \$100 million in 2004-05). It is anticipated that both the capital outlay and operational funding demands will increase substantially in the coming years when compliance is determined by school averages and then classroom maximums.

Each district is responsible for determining the details of how it will meet the class size requirement and is provided flexibility to meet the requirement. If a district is not in compliance with the class size amendment, an amount of the district's class size reduction operating allocation, proportionate to the amount of class size reduction not accomplished, is transferred to capital outlay (Section 1003.03(4)(a), F.S.). In 2003-04, approximately \$1.5 million of the \$468 million operating allocation was transferred to capital outlay. This year, \$9.2 million was transferred. If school averages were used in 2004-05, the Department of Education estimates that about \$157 million of the \$972 allocated would need to be transferred to capital outlay.

School districts are provided with various implementation options (Section 1003.03(3), F.S.) to comply with the amendment. Tools include:

- Encourage dual enrollment courses
- Encourage courses from the Florida Virtual School
- Require no more than 24 credits to graduate from high school
- Maximize use of instructional staff (e.g., changing teacher loads, use of adjunct educators)
- Use innovative methods to reduce school construction costs
- Use joint-use facilities
- Adopt alternative methods of class scheduling
- Redraw school attendance zones
- Operate school beyond normal operating hours
- Use year-round schools or other nontraditional calendars

Beginning in 2006-07, school districts not in compliance in the previous year will be required to implement one of the following policies: (1) year-round schools; (2) double sessions; (3) rezoning; or (4) maximize use of instructional staff.

Policy Issues

This analysis will focus on two major areas: (1) funding for class size reduction and (2) the impact of the class size reduction amendment on various outcomes. First, there will be an accounting of the funds that have been allocated thus far for class size reduction. To the extent that data is available, an investigation of how schools are spending their class size allocations will be undertaken.

Second, this analysis will examine the effects of the amendment on various issues, including, but not limited to the following:

1. The number of teachers teaching out of field
2. The ability of school districts to hire teachers
3. The ability of school districts to raise teacher salaries
4. Any limitations on enrollments in selective programs (e.g., magnet schools, AP or IB programs)
5. The ability of school districts to fund equipment purchases and/or upgrades
6. Any change in student behavior (e.g., decreases in the number of referrals)
7. Any change in student achievement

Next Steps

Preliminary contacts have been made with the Florida Association of District School Superintendents and the Department of Education to determine to what extent the questions raised above can be pursued. Understandably, with compliance yet to be measured at the school or classroom level and the amendment only in practice for one and one-half years, any measurable impact of class size reduction on student behavior or achievement will be near-impossible at this time. However, district data may provide (if available) preliminary findings on the other issues.

Completion Date

To be determined. Tentatively scheduled for late Summer or early Fall 2005.