

Dear NC Senate Members:

School districts across the state are developing and presenting their local budgets and beginning to make personnel/hiring decisions for the 2017-18 school year. The uncertainty about the K-3 class size issue adds significant challenges to the planning process and will become more serious if it lingers into late April/early May when school districts make contract renewal/nonrenewal decisions for existing employees. At the same time, any reduction-in-force (RIF) decisions would also be made.

There are significant concerns among school districts as to whether they will be able to secure enough certified teachers to fill additional K-3 classes. Last year for the first time, we heard from many districts that they were experiencing difficulty in finding enough elementary school teachers. Schools are concerned that they will not be able to find the necessary teachers and instead will be forced to begin the school year with long term substitutes.

We strongly encourage you to address this issue prior to leaving for your spring break recess next week. School district leaders need some resolution so that they can plan appropriately for 2017-18 school year. Employees need to know so that they can make career decisions so that their personal economic situations are secure. Below are some examples of how the lingering uncertainty on K-3 class sizes is affecting school district planning.

New Hanover is looking at a shortfall of \$3.2 million should there be no class size fix and one of the contingency plans includes eliminating assistant principal positions.

<http://www.starnewsonline.com/news/20170320/schools-scramble-to-meet-ncs-new-class-size-rule>

Dr. Terry Stoops of the John Locke Foundations writes that the K-3 class size changes are likely to result in more long-term substitutes in public schools classrooms. This is not educationally-sound.

<https://www.johnlocke.org/update/staffing-may-hobble-class-size-reduction-efforts>

Guilford County is proposing increasing class sizes in grades 6-12 to balance the possible loss of funding.

http://www.greensboro.com/news/local_news/guilford-superintendent-says-budget-protects-schools-from-draconian-cuts/article_c82ec234-882c-5362-bbc3-34aadba52097.html

Some Wake County year-round schools are looking at shifting students to different tracks in anticipation of the class size changes.

<http://www.wral.com/class-size-dilemma-forcing-year-round-school-to-adjust/16613946/>

Wake County is also going to need \$13 million in local monies to preserve specialty teachers if no fix is passed.

<http://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article142706169.html>

Winston-Salem/Forsyth schools is discussing the possibility of eliminating Teacher Assistant positions next school year in order to free up the necessary money for specialty teachers.

http://www.journalnow.com/news/local/schools-could-cut-assistants-to-hire-more-teachers-meet-class/article_9440fea2-c230-5128-8cff-270cefb7d83b.html

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter for public schools.

Sincerely,

Leanne E. Winner
Director of Governmental Relations
N.C. School Boards Association
(919)747-6686 direct dial

Bruce Mildwurf
Associate Director of Governmental Relations
N.C. School Boards Association
(919) 747-6692 direct dial

Richard Bostic
Assistant Director of Governmental Relations
N.C. School Boards Association
(919) 747-6677