



## K-3 Class Size Issue Brief

### Background

For many years, local school districts were granted by the State Board of Education the flexibility to have K-3 classes average three students above the allotted ratio and a maximum of six students above the allotted ratio in any K-3 class. This flexibility allowed dollars to be generated for program enhancement teachers in subjects such as art, music, and physical education. A provision in the 2016 budget bill<sup>1</sup> took away this flexibility starting with the 2017-18 school year, by ensuring that the average K-3 class size does not exceed the funded allotment ratio of teachers to students. Also, by the end of the second school month, the maximum size of an individual K-3 class must not exceed the allotment ratio by more than three students (it was previously six students). The legislative intent of the provision was to align those average and maximum limits to match the lower class sizes that the General Assembly had funded in recent years.

The 2017 General Assembly approved HB 13<sup>2</sup> to delay strict class size averages until FY 2018-19. This legislation also required local school boards to provide detailed reports biannually to the Superintendent of Public Instruction, including: source of funds for each teacher and number of students assigned to each class.

The General Assembly changed the K-3 class size law again in 2018 in order to phase in the average and maximum class sizes as shown in the chart below.<sup>3</sup>

		Avg Class Size		Max Class Size
2018-19	K-3	1:20		1:23
2019-20	K-3	1:19		1:22
2020-21	K-3	1:18		1:21
2021-22	K	1:18		1:21
	Grade 1	1:16		1:19
	Grades 2-3	1:17		1:20

<sup>1</sup> S.L. 2016-94, Sec. 8.33

<sup>2</sup> S.L. 2017-9

<sup>3</sup> S.L. 2018-2, Parts II through V

The 2018 act created a Program Enhancement Teacher Allotment for K-5, and defined program enhancement classes as follows:

- Arts disciplines, including dance, music, theater, and the visual arts;
- Physical education and health programs;
- World languages;
- Other supplemental classes as defined by the SBE.

The funding for program enhancement teachers is phased-in over four years to correlate with the class size reductions. In FY 2018-19, \$61.4 million is appropriated and has been distributed to LEAs at a ratio of 1:191 of K-5 program enhancement teachers.

Although the funding seems to have positive intentions, the reality is that some districts had difficulty in filling teacher vacancies before class size reductions and are now faced with the need to recruit additional K-3 teachers. On top of that, the Department of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education reported an 8.7% teacher attrition rate in the 2016-17 school year.<sup>4</sup>

### **NCSBA Position**

NCSBA is appreciative of the additional funding but is also concerned that the General Assembly has not addressed the capital costs of the K-3 class size legislation. Some LEAs may have to renovate or expand existing facilities or add mobile units in order to comply with class size mandates. NCSBA requests that the General Assembly grant the State Board of Education the authority to waive K-3 class size requirements in a school district if the local board of education can demonstrate that space is not available in the district.

Furthermore, NCSBA requests that the General Assembly grant the State Board of Education the authority to waive K-3 class size requirements in a school district if a local board of education can demonstrate that the necessary certified teachers are not available for employment. A major concern is that the K-3 class size mandate will cause many more classrooms across the state to be led by long-term substitute teachers. Districts need flexibility during the four-year phase-in of the K-3 class size legislation.

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<sup>4</sup> 2016-17 State of the Teaching Profession in North Carolina, February 15, 2018, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and State Board of Education