



1. What is the relationship between class size and student achievement?

Class size, or the number of students under the direction of a single teacher for purposes of learning, has caused considerable discussion in recent years. More than 1,100 studies have examined the relationship between class size and student achievement, and the results are mixed.

The 1985 Tennessee State University STAR study (project STAR) randomly assigned students to small classes (13-17 students, with or without aides). They were kept in these small or large classes from kindergarten through 3rd grade, and their achievement was measured at the end of each year. The study concluded that decreasing class size from 25 to 15 students in grades K-3 improved student performance, but providing a teacher's aide in a regular-size class of 25 had no effect on student performance. Project STAR researchers reported that by the end of 12th grade, students who were in smaller classes early in their school careers tend to drop out less frequently, to take more challenging courses, and to be more inclined toward college. The project STAR data did not support overall reductions in class size.

Other research indicates no link between reduced class size and student performance. Research by Dr. William Sanders, of the University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center, shows that class size has little effect on student performance and that the effect of the teacher is the most important factor in student performance regardless of class size.

Economists, such as Eric Hanushek, often contend that class size reduction as an educational reform is not cost effective; is one of the most expensive education reforms for benefits gained; and that there is no credible evidence that across the board reductions in class size boost pupil achievement. He concludes: "There is little systematic gain from general reduction in class size. Besides, they've been shrinking for decades. Today's 22 kids per classroom is down from the 1950's - with no commensurate gains in learning." (Source: "The Evidence of Class Size," Eric A Hanushek, University of Rochester, February 1998)

	<p>Nationally, between 1950 and 1995, student-teacher ratios fell by 35 percent, yet information that is available from the National Assessment of Education Progress in 1997 indicates that our 17 year olds were performing roughly the same in 1996 as in 1970. There were some differences by subject area, but the overall picture is one of stagnant performance.</p> <p>International experience suggests that there is NO relationship between student-teacher ratios and student performance. Asian countries that trounce the United States on international assessments have vastly larger classes, often forty or fifty students per teacher.</p>
<p>2. What has been the experience of other states (and other countries) regarding class size reduction efforts?</p>	<p>Since the mid 1980s, twenty states have launched initiatives aimed at reducing class size, mostly in grades K-3. States spent an estimated \$2.3 billion on such efforts in the 1999-2000 school year according to the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management. In addition, the federal government's Class Size Reduction Program, established in 1998, is providing roughly \$1.2 billion a year to help states hire and train new teachers as part of an overall goal of lowering class size in the early grades to no more than 18 students nationwide.</p> <p>Some states and districts are finding that class size reduction is both difficult and extraordinarily expensive for the benefits received. For example, California's four-year-old effort to reduce classes to no more than 20 students in the lower grades is costing more than \$1.5 billion a year and has led to critical shortages of qualified teachers, particularly in schools serving poor and minority students. In Detroit, where the school district last year implemented a \$13.2 million program to reduce primary-grade class sizes, progress has been hampered by shortages of both classrooms and teachers.</p>
<p>3. How much funding does the state provide for class size reduction?</p>	<p>Money to reduce class sizes in the earliest grades was earmarked in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) between 1995 and 1998. The 1995 appropriation was for \$40 million. For the next two years, 1996 and 1997, the Legislature designated \$100 million statewide for class size reduction. In FY 1999-2000, the Legislature appropriated \$100 million in capital funds for class size reduction and created a Supplemental Academic Instruction Categorical that provided districts with \$527 million that districts could choose to use in a variety of ways to improve student performance, including class size reduction.</p>

	<p>In the 2000-2001 <i>GAA</i> and the 2001-2002 <i>GAA</i> (S.A. 151), the Legislature appropriated \$56,190,521 for class size reduction from the educational aids trust fund, which is federal money. In the 2000 and 2001 Legislative Sessions, the Legislature provided the Department of Education with grant money to the Institute for School Innovation for the continuation of a research study to determine the effect of class size on academic achievement in reading, writing, and mathematics: \$1.5 million in 2000 and \$1.44 million in 2001 (S.A. 130A). The Legislature funded the Supplemental Academic Instruction Categorical with \$662,632,143 in the 2000-2001 <i>GAA</i> and \$676,658,381 in the 2001-2002 <i>GAA</i> (S.A. 118) in a flexible pot of money to assist students in gaining a year's worth of knowledge in a year's time. Districts may choose to use their funds in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to: modified curriculum, reading instruction, tutoring, after school instruction, mentoring, extension of school year, intensive skills development in summer school, and class size reduction.</p>
<p>4. What is Florida's policy regarding class size reduction?</p>	<p>In 1998, the Legislature created s. 236.687, F.S., which allows one FTE teacher to be used to meet the goal of 1 to 20 teacher-student ratio in grades K through 3. If the district has a critically low-performing school, the required ratio is one teacher to 15 students.</p> <p>For the purposes of receiving funding from any funds appropriated in the <i>GAA</i>, the district must give first priority to identified critically low performing schools; second priority to kindergarten and grade 1; third priority to grades 2 and 3.</p>
<p>5. How much information has been collected on the progress of Florida's class size reduction efforts?</p>	<p>The Florida Department of Education has collected data on grades K through 3 class sizes for years 1994 to 1999. The data collection is based on the districts' own submissions to the DOE automated Student Information Data Base. A report was issued each year to document the changes in class sizes from the previous years, but the report does not evaluate whether the class size reductions impact student performance.</p> <p>The 1998 law required DOE to conduct a complete study of the efficacy of the 1998-99 reductions in class size. The report was to focus on obtaining verifiable data regarding the benefits in terms of student achievement and performance. All schools participating in the class size reduction program were to be involved. The study was completed on March 3, 2000. Many of the schools that participated in the study had</p>

	<p>additional resources, staff development, supplemental teacher salaries, and other reform initiatives in place. The study reported high levels of satisfaction among principals and teachers and perceived impacts on student achievement through reported findings from local evaluations and local achievement results. However, the reported impact on student achievement in kindergarten through third grade has not yet been shown to extend to grades four and five on statewide assessment.</p>
<p>6. What characteristics increase the effectiveness of class size reduction?</p>	<p>Although better student performance cannot be guaranteed through class size reduction, it is generally agreed that class size reductions are more effective when they have the following characteristics: (1) class sizes are reduced in the primary years, particularly kindergarten through the third grade; (2) classes are reduced to fewer than 20 students; (3) reduced class sizes are made available to disadvantaged and high risk students; and (4) class size reductions are coupled with professional development opportunities for teachers.</p>
<p>7. What are the applicable statutes and rules?</p>	<p>Section 236.687, F.S. -- Maximum class size goals.</p> <p>2001-2002 General Appropriations Act, S.A. 118; S.A. 130A; S.A. 151</p> <p>2000-2001 General Appropriations Act, S.A. 5A</p> <p>2000-2001 General Appropriations Act, S.A. 78</p>
<p>8. Where can I get additional information?</p>	<p>Florida Department of Education Publications "A Study of the 1998 Florida Maximum Class Size Act"</p> <p>Florida Department of Education Publications "Class Size for Grades K to 3, 1998-1999" Previous editions for earlier years available, beginning with 1994-95</p> <p>Bill analysis for House Bill 367 (1998 Legislative Session)</p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives Committee on General Education (850) 414-9780</p>