



ACCORDING TO PEA:

Class Size

The Florida voters spoke up and demanded smaller class sizes for our schools. Since then the Legislature and Department of Education have been trying to override the public.

The legislature has not fully funded public education or class size reduction and has cut funding in each of the last four years. The Department of Education has whittled the list of 'core' curricula to a fraction of what used to be considered a core subject area and therefore subject to class size.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

In 2002, citizens approved an amendment to the Florida Constitution that set limits on the number of students in core classes (Math, English, Science, etc.) in the state's public schools. Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, the maximum number of students in each core class would be:

- 18 students in prekindergarten through grade 3;
- 22 students in grades 4 through 8; and
- 25 students in grades 9 through 12.

CHANGES TO FLORIDA STATUTE

In 2011 the Florida Legislature instituted changes to 1003.03 to give flexibility in maintaining class size. The new law allows for student enrollment to exceed the class size cap after the October FTE period for specific reasons outlined in the statute on page 3, (2)(b). The 'new' cap allows for 3 additional students in each K-3 classroom and up to five (5) additional students in grades 4-12. If the district has students in classrooms over the cap they are required to submit a plan to bring all the classrooms into compliance the following year.

For more information on core classes and how they are defined, see page 2.

The consequence of not meeting the Constitutional Amendment for class size is a reduction in funds to the district which can be amended/reduced once the plan to meet class size has been submitted.

Beyond the class size amendment and recent changes to the Florida Statutes there is contract language that while it doesn't directly define class size, it does address safety, work load and teaching conditions.

WHEN TO DISCUSS A CLASS SIZE CONCERN WITH ADMINISTRATION:

- If the size of the class exceeds the capacity of the room and creates an unsafe situation.
- If the work load and teaching conditions aren't similar to the other teachers in the school and subject area due to class size.
- If the size of the class isn't manageable or doesn't allow the teacher to implement the required curriculum and teaching strategies.

PEA members that have concerns about the size of their classes should report their concerns to their building rep and the PEA office. We can then assist you in finding solutions to your specific concerns.

TEACHER COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

ARTICLE VIII - STAFFING PLAN

8.1 The Board and the Association agree that optimum class size is an important aspect of the effective educational program. The Polk County School Staffing Plan shall be constructed each year according to the procedures set forth in Board Policy and, upon adoption, shall become Board Policy.

8.1-1 The Board agrees that the Association may appoint four members to the Superintendent's School Staffing Committee to include at least one representative from elementary, middle, & high school.



ACCORDING TO PEA:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Which courses/classes are considered in the calculation of class size?

Courses in academic areas that are defined as core curricula classes are included in the class-size calculation. Chapter 2011-55, Laws of Florida, amended Subsections (14) and (15) of Section 1003.01, F.S., to re-define core-curricular courses by grade groups. The following definitions are currently in Section 1003.01, F.S.:

- (14) "Core-curricula courses" means:
- (a) Courses in language arts/reading, mathematics, social studies, and science in prekindergarten through grade 3, excluding any extracurricular courses pursuant to subsection (15);
 - (b) Courses in grades 4 through 8 in subjects that are measured by state assessment at any grade level and courses required for middle school promotion, excluding any extracurricular courses pursuant to subsection (15);
 - (c) Courses in grades 9 through 12 in subjects that are measured by state assessment at any grade level and courses that are specifically identified by name in statute as required for high school graduation and that are not measured by state assessment, excluding any extracurricular courses pursuant to subsection (15);
 - (d) Exceptional student education courses; and
 - (e) English for Speakers of Other Languages courses.

The term is limited in meaning and used for the sole purpose of designating classes that are subject to the maximum class size requirements established in Section 1, Article IX of the State Constitution. This term does not include courses offered under Sections 1002.37, 1002.415, and 1002.45, F.S.

- (15) "Extracurricular courses" means all courses that are not defined as "core-curricula courses," which may include, but are not limited to, physical education, fine arts, performing fine arts, career education, and courses that may result in college credit. The term is limited in meaning and used for the sole purpose of designating classes that are not subject to the maximum class size requirements established in Section 1, Article IX of the State Constitution.

Are exceptional student education (ESE) classes considered "core" classes?

Yes. ESE courses are considered core-curricula classes.

Does the class-size amendment pertain to both academic and elective courses?

The amendment pertains to core courses. Courses outside the core curriculum, such as physical education classes and fine arts classes, are not included. An elective course can be a core course if it falls under one of the classifications assigned by DOE as core-curricula courses. In Section 15, Chapter 2011-55, Laws of Florida, the 2011 legislature assigned responsibility to the Department of Education (DOE) to specify core-curricula courses.

Where can I see the list of core versus non-core classes?

<http://www.fldoe.org/articulation/CCD/1112.asp> link to the DOE course code directory.

How is compliance with this amendment determined?

District staff is expected to provide documentation, such as class rosters, teachers' grade books, and other such items to verify the accurate reporting of the student and teacher information used to calculate the class size. District staff is also expected to provide evidence that data on the assignment of students to particular classes are accurate; that is, students are taught in the classrooms for which they have been reported as enrolled.



ACCORDING TO PEA:

STATE STATUTE

1003.03 Maximum class size.—

(1) CLASS SIZE MAXIMUMS.—Each year, on or before the October student membership survey, the following class size maximums shall be satisfied:

(a) The maximum number of students assigned to each teacher who is teaching core-curricula courses in public school classrooms for prekindergarten through grade 3 may not exceed 18 students.

(b) The maximum number of students assigned to each teacher who is teaching core-curricula courses in public school classrooms for grades 4 through 8 may not exceed 22 students. The maximum number of students assigned to a core-curricula high school course in which a student in grades 4 through 8 is enrolled shall be governed by the requirements in paragraph (c).

(c) The maximum number of students assigned to each teacher who is teaching core-curricula courses in public school classrooms for grades 9 through 12 may not exceed 25 students.

These maximums shall be maintained after the October student membership survey, except as provided in paragraph (2)(b) or due to an extreme emergency beyond the control of the district school board.

(2) IMPLEMENTATION.—

(a) The Department of Education shall annually calculate class size measures described in subsection (1) based upon the October student membership survey.

(b) A student who enrolls in a school after the October student membership survey may be assigned to an existing class that temporarily exceeds the maximum number of students in subsection (1) if the district school board determines it to be impractical, educationally unsound, or disruptive to student learning to not assign the student to the class. If the district school board makes this determination:

1. Up to three students may be assigned to a teacher in kindergarten through grade 3 above the maximum as provided in paragraph (1)(a);

2. Up to five students may be assigned to a teacher in grades 4 through 12 above the maximum as provided in paragraphs (1)(b) and (c), respectively; and

3. The district school board shall develop a plan that provides that the school will be in full compliance with the maximum class size in subsection (1) by the next October student membership survey.

(3) IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS.—District school boards must consider, but are not limited to, implementing the following items in order to meet the constitutional class size maximums described in subsection (1):

(a) Adopt policies to encourage qualified students to take dual enrollment courses.

(b) Adopt policies to encourage students to take courses from the Florida Virtual School and other virtual instruction options under s. 1002.45.

(c)1. Repeal district school board policies that require students to have more than 24 credits to graduate from high school.

2. Adopt policies to allow students to graduate from high school as soon as they pass the grade 10 FCAT and complete the courses required for high school graduation.

(d) Use methods to maximize use of instructional staff, such as changing required teaching loads and scheduling of planning periods, deploying district employees that have professional certification to the classroom, using adjunct educators, or any other method not prohibited by law.

(e) Use innovative methods to reduce the cost of school construction by using prototype school designs, using SMART Schools designs, participating in the School Infrastructure Thrift Program, or any other method not prohibited by law.

(f) Use joint-use facilities through partnerships with Florida College System institutions, state universities, and private colleges and universities. Joint-use facilities available for use as K-12 classrooms that do not meet the K-12 State Regulations for Educational Facilities in the Florida Building Code may be used at the discretion of the district school board provided that such facilities meet all other health, life, safety, and fire codes.

(g) Adopt alternative methods of class scheduling, such as block scheduling.

(h) Redraw school attendance zones to maximize use of facilities while minimizing the additional use of transportation.

(i) Operate schools beyond the normal operating hours to provide classes in the evening or operate more than one session of school during the day.

(j) Use year-round schools and other nontraditional calendars that do not adversely impact annual assessment of student achievement.

(k) Review and consider amending any collective bargaining contracts that hinder the implementation of class size reduction.

(l) Use any other approach not prohibited by law.

(4) ACCOUNTABILITY.—

(a) If the department determines that the number of students assigned to any individual class exceeds the class size maximum, as required in subsection (1), based upon the October student membership survey, the department shall:

1. Identify, for each grade group, the number of classes in which the number of students exceeds the maximum and the total number of students which exceeds the maximum for all classes.

2. Determine the number of FTE students which exceeds the maximum for each grade group.



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3. Multiply the total number of FTE students which exceeds the maximum for each grade group by the district's FTE dollar amount of the class size categorical allocation for that year and calculate the total for all three grade groups.

4. Multiply the total number of FTE students which exceeds the maximum for all classes by an amount equal to 50 percent of the base student allocation adjusted by the district cost differential for the 2010-2011 fiscal year and by an amount equal to the base student allocation adjusted by the district cost differential beginning in the 2011-2012 fiscal year and thereafter.

5. Reduce the district's class size categorical allocation by an amount equal to the sum of the calculations in subparagraphs 3. and 4.

(b) The amount of funds reduced shall be the lesser of the amount calculated in paragraph (a) or the undistributed balance of the district's class size categorical allocation. The Florida Education Finance Program Appropriation Allocation Conference shall verify the department's calculation in paragraph (a). The commissioner may withhold distribution of the class size categorical allocation to the extent necessary to comply with paragraph (a).

1(c) In lieu of the reduction calculation in paragraph (a), if the Commissioner of Education has evidence that a district was unable to meet the class size requirements despite appropriate efforts to do so or because of an extreme emergency, the commissioner may recommend by February 15, subject to approval of the Legislative Budget Commission, the reduction of an alternate amount of funds from the district's class size categorical allocation.

(d) Upon approval of the reduction calculation in paragraphs (a)-(c), the commissioner must prepare a reallocation of the funds made available for the districts that have fully met the class size requirements. The funds shall be reallocated by calculating an amount of up to 5 percent of the base student allocation multiplied by the total district FTE students. The reallocation total may not exceed 25 percent of the total funds reduced.

(e) Each district that has not complied with the requirements in subsection (1) shall submit to the commissioner by February 15 a plan certified by the district school board that describes the specific actions the district will take in order to fully comply with the requirements in subsection (1) by October of the following school year. If a district submits the certified plan by the required deadline, the funds remaining after the reallocation calculation in paragraph (d) shall be added back to the district's class size categorical allocation based on each qualifying district's proportion of the total reduction for all qualifying districts for which a reduction was calculated in paragraphs (a)-(c). However, no district shall have an amount added back that is greater than the amount that was reduced.

(f) The department shall adjust school district class size reduction categorical allocation distributions based on the calculations in paragraphs (a)-(e).

(5) TEAM-TEACHING STRATEGIES.—

(a) School districts may use teaching strategies that include the assignment of more than one teacher to a classroom of students and that were implemented before July 1, 2005. Effective July 1, 2005, school districts may implement additional teaching strategies that include the assignment of more than one teacher to a classroom of students for the following purposes only:

1. Pairing teachers for the purpose of staff development.
2. Pairing new teachers with veteran teachers.
3. Reducing turnover among new teachers.
4. Pairing teachers who are teaching out-of-field with teachers who are in-field.
5. Providing for more flexibility and innovation in the classroom.
6. Improving learning opportunities for students, including students who have disabilities.

(b) Teaching strategies, including team teaching, co-teaching, or inclusion teaching, implemented on or after July 1, 2005, pursuant to paragraph (a) may be implemented subject to the following restrictions:

1. Reasonable limits shall be placed on the number of students in a classroom so that classrooms are not overcrowded. Teacher-to-student ratios within a curriculum area or grade level must not exceed constitutional limits.
2. At least one member of the team must have at least 3 years of teaching experience.
3. At least one member of the team must be teaching in-field.
4. The teachers must be trained in team-teaching methods within 1 year after assignment.

(c) As used in this subsection, the term:

1. "Team teaching" or "co-teaching" means two or more teachers are assigned to a group of students and each teacher is responsible for all of the students during the entire class period. In order to be considered team teaching or co-teaching, each teacher is responsible for planning, delivering, and evaluating instruction for all students in the class or subject for the entire class period.

2. "Inclusion teaching" means two or more teachers are assigned to a group of students, but one of the teachers is responsible for only one student or a small group of students in the classroom.

The use of strategies implemented as outlined in this subsection meets the letter and intent of the Florida Constitution and the Florida Statutes which relate to implementing class size reduction, and this subsection applies retroactively. A school district may not be penalized financially or otherwise as a result of the use of any legal strategy, including, but not limited to, those set forth in subsection (3) and this subsection.

(6) COURSES FOR COMPLIANCE.—Consistent with the provisions in ss. 1003.01(14) and 1003.428, the Department of Education shall identify from the Course Code Directory the core-curricula courses for the purpose of satisfying the maximum class size requirement in this section. The department may adopt rules to implement this subsection, if necessary.