

Changes in Class Size legislation:

SB 374 NC Public Schools Flexibility Act was effective July 1, 2013 and eliminated class size ratios in grades 4-12. Class sizes have risen as local school districts have lost over 5,000 teaching positions.

Current challenges:

- Over the last four years, NC's public schools have lost 17,278 positions and laid off 6,167 people (35% teachers, 33% teaching assistants) while the number of public school students has grown by approximately 16,000.
- Funding for classroom resources—including textbooks, materials, and supplies—continues to decline, further compounding the challenges of teaching larger classes with an ever-demanding curriculum.
- Larger class sizes make it difficult for teachers to address the needs of individual students, and may even change the nature of student assignments and assessments.

Strong evidence supports that class size matters in student achievement.

- Studies from Tennessee, Wisconsin, and states throughout the country have demonstrated that students who are assigned to smaller classes in grades K-3 do better in every way that can be measured: they score higher on tests, receive better grades, and exhibit improved attendance.
- The Institute of Education Sciences, the research arm of the US Department of Education, cites “class size reduction as one of four K-12 evidence-based reforms that have been proven to increase student achievement.”
- **There is NO threshold that has to be reached before class size reduction provides benefits.**
 - Any reduction in class size increases the probability that students will be on-task and positively engaged in learning.
- **Large scale programs such as class size reduction in California work.**
 - Every controlled study of the California class size reduction program has shown significant gains from smaller classes. Gains were substantial, especially for disadvantaged students in inner-city schools.
 - Significant gains were seen in student scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessments.
- **Class size matters, not only in the early grades, but also at all age levels.** Numerous studies show that smaller classes are correlated with achievement gains and/or lower dropout rates in the middle and upper grades as well.
- **Class size reduction narrows the achievement gap.** Researchers have found that the reductions in class size that took place nationally in the 1970s and 1980s might account for part or most of the substantial test score gains among poor and minority students — and the narrowing of the achievement gap that took place over the this period.
- **Class size reduction is cost-effective.** In fact, a study by Christopher Tienken and Charles Achilles, shows how a middle school in New Jersey managed to reduce class size and dramatically lower student failure rates at no extra cost.

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Thanks to Leonie Haimson for this research content: see www.classsizematters.org

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