

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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Commissioner of Education



MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 27, 2005

TO: District School Superintendents

FROM: John L. Winn

SUBJECT: 2006 District Class Size Averages, Transfer Calculations, and Process and Timelines for District Appeals

Through faithful implementation of the class size constitutional amendment by school districts, significant progress has been made in reducing class sizes in Florida. The attached statewide summary of district-level class size averages is based upon class size information updated through November 29, 2005 (Attachment I). It reflects that, since 2002-2003, district class size averages have declined from 23.07 to 18.16 students in prekindergarten through third grades, 24.16 to 20.48 students in fourth through eighth grades and 24.10 to 22.96 students in ninth through twelfth grades. Six districts did not meet class size reduction requirements and this occurred in the prekindergarten through third grade grouping. The proposed transfer calculation for those districts is provided in Attachment II.

Transfer Calculation

Section 1003.03(4)(a), F.S., requires a budget modification for any district that did not reduce district-level class size averages as required by law. The law directs the Department to calculate, for each district that is not in compliance, an amount which is proportionate to the amount of class size reduction not accomplished. The calculation is the amount that will be transferred from a district's class size reduction operating categorical to a fixed capital outlay account for class size reduction in the affected district.

Last year's transfer calculation following appeals totaled \$1,076,719 and affected nine districts; this year's proposed transfer calculation prior to appeals is \$4,767,202 and affects six districts. Two districts were removed from noncompliance by an adjustment for unexpected student growth. An adjustment for unexpected student growth is applied to all districts in the proposed transfer calculation.

Preliminary calculations indicate that school districts have complied with the State Board of Education's co-teaching policy. It appears that no district failed to comply with the class size reduction requirements due to an increase in the percentage of co-taught classroom periods in 2005-06 over the percentage of co-taught classroom periods reported during the 2004-2005 school year. A final calculation will be made during the appeals process.

Appeal Process for the Transfer Calculation

Section 1003.03(4)(a), F.S., allows a district to submit evidence documenting why the district did not meet the class size reduction requirements. The appeal should be based on extenuating circumstances that prevented the district from complying despite appropriate efforts to do so. The submission of appeals by those districts that are not in compliance with the class size reduction requirements is currently in process. As previously stated, unexpected student growth has already been factored into the transfer calculation and, therefore, an appeal for unexpected growth is not required. Documentation of each district's extenuating circumstances will be reviewed by the State Board of Education. Based upon these reviews, alternative transfer assessments may be recommended to the Legislative Budget Commission.

Process and Timelines for Appeals

December 13 - Appeals process began for those districts that are not in compliance with class size reduction requirements.

December 27 - Memorandum from the Commissioner provided to school districts.

January 6 - Deadline for district submission of appeal and supporting documentation.

January 9-11 - Review of districts' appeals.

January 17 - State Board of Education meeting for final determination of transfer calculations.

February 16 - Legislative Budget Commission meeting for final approval of transfer calculations.

Format for Appeals

All appeals with supporting documentation should be submitted by the superintendent and addressed as follows:

Linda Champion
Deputy Commissioner, Finance and Operations
Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1214
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400

Appeals may be emailed to tara.jackson@fldoe.org, or faxed to (850)245-9378.

If you have additional questions regarding the implementation of class size reduction requirements, please contact Linda Champion at (850)245-0406, or linda.champion@fldoe.org.

JLW:lej
Attachments