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MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 6, 2006

TO: District School Superintendents

FROM: John L. Winn, Commissioner

SUBJECT: 2006-07 Class Size Update

As you know, the October 2006 student and staff membership survey was recently completed. District and Department staff are currently reviewing and editing districts' data submissions for use in the third 2006-07 Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) calculation and to determine compliance with the class size requirements. The results of this survey, which have been the subject of much discussion, will be available for release the week of November 13th. This memorandum provides a review of the activities that have occurred during the last few months to facilitate this process.

The 2006 Legislature made changes to the class size legislation to authorize the continued use of team teachers in the calculation of the class size averages. Section 1003.03, F.S., was amended to include specific requirements for team-teaching. Specifically, the changes allow, for the purpose of the class size calculation, the use of additional team-teaching in schools for the following purposes:

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.

As noted above, the changes direct that:

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 three 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 one year after assignment.

Since the passage of the revised legislation, the Department has taken action to assist districts in meeting the requirements of the new class size legislation and the constitutional amendment.

A May 2006 memorandum was sent to each superintendent providing the number of teachers needed to be in compliance at the grade level within each school. This calculation was based upon the 2005-06 class size averages.

In June 2006, subsequent to the passage of the legislatively amended class size requirements, presentations were made to district personnel at the Florida School Finance Officers Association Conference, the Department's Information Data Base Workshop, and the Regional Legislative Update meetings regarding the changes in law and the impact of the new requirements on the data systems and compliance calculation.

The DOE Data Base Workshop covered details regarding new data elements, the precise steps in the class size calculation process, the edit process, and the availability of programs necessary to calculate school average class sizes.

Last August, districts' school finance officers and student data base contacts were provided recalculated school average class sizes for each grade group. This memorandum also provided notification that the Department would offer the opportunity to run preliminary class size calculations against current year data for three weekends. Specifically, the data submitted to the Department on September 15th, 22nd, and 29th were processed and current year school average class size reports were made available. District staff was provided another reminder on September 14th that data processing runs would occur on each of the three scheduled weekends. Unfortunately, not all districts participated each weekend and several districts chose not to submit test data during any of the available times.

For the October 2006, Survey 2, the final processing of districts' data was allowed one week earlier than normal. For those districts choosing to take advantage of that early submission, an additional weekend for processing class size data and receiving school-level reports was available this year. The first weekend for processing school-level class size data was the weekend of October 21st.

An additional presentation is scheduled November 8th at the Florida School Finance Officers Association Conference to review the current status of the 2006-07 class size averages.

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In order to meet expectations for the provision of additional public information regarding the use of team-teaching, the Department has developed a password protected web site to collect additional data. That web site asks for details regarding each district's use of team-teaching strategies. The web address for the site is <http://datatest.fldoe.org/eiasData/ClassSize/login.aspx>. The initial page provides instructions for identifying which strategies the district uses and the reasons for the use of team-teaching. Upon completion, the data are submitted to the Department. Collection for this web site will continue until December 15, 2006. The results of each district's submission will be made available as part of the Department's class size web site.

The Department continues to work with district staff to achieve class size compliance in accordance with legislative and constitutional requirements. If you need additional information regarding the processing of student and staff data or accessing the new web site, please contact lavan.dukes@fldoe.org.

JW:lcj

cc: Finance Officers