

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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Commissioner of Education



MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 29, 2006

TO: District School Superintendents
Charter School Directors

FROM: John L. Winn

SUBJECT: 2006-07 School Average Class Sizes and Process and Time Lines for Appeals

Since 2003-04, the initial year of implementation of class size reduction requirements established by the class size constitutional amendment, districts have shown significant progress in reducing class sizes. When the February 2003 statewide baseline for each grade grouping is compared to the October 2006 statewide class size averages, we find that grades K-3 have been reduced by 6.12 students; grades 4-8 have been reduced by 4.75 students; and grades 9-12 have been reduced by 1.91 students.

For the first three years of class size requirements, compliance has been determined from the district average. However, beginning in 2006-07, compliance with the class size constitutional amendment is measured at the school level. Attachment I reflects the school average class sizes for your district based upon class size information updated through November 10, 2006. Statewide, there are 177 traditional public schools and 88 charter schools in 42 districts that are not in compliance with the class size reduction requirement to reduce class size by two students from the previous year or meet the constitutional maximums of 18 students in grades K-3, 22 students in grades 4-8, and 25 students in grades 9-12. This memorandum does not include the transfer calculation, which will be provided in a separate communication.

Transfer Calculation Process

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

for class size reduction. In order to establish a prior year school-level baseline for new traditional public and charter schools, the October 2005 district class size average has been assigned. As stated earlier, the initial transfer calculation is currently in progress and will be provided in a separate communication.

Appeal Process for the Transfer Calculation

Section 1003.03(4)(a), F.S., allows a district, including its charter schools, to submit evidence documenting why the class size reduction requirements were not met. The appeal should be based on extenuating circumstances that prevented the traditional public or charter school from complying despite appropriate efforts to do so. Extenuating circumstances may include unexpected student growth and documentation of teachers hired after the October 2006 survey. Other extenuating circumstances presented by districts or charter schools will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The period for submission of appeals will begin immediately. Documentation of each traditional public and charter school's extenuating circumstances will be reviewed by the State Board of Education. Based upon this review, alternative transfer assessments may be recommended to the Legislative Budget Commission.

Process and Time Lines for Appeals

November 29 - Memorandum from Commissioner notifying districts and charter schools of the October 2006 school-level class size averages. Appeals process begins for those that are not in compliance with class size reduction requirements.

December (upon completion) - Memorandum from Commissioner notifying districts and charter schools of the initial transfer calculation.

January 2 - Deadline for submission of appeal and supporting documentation.

January 3-January 12 - Review of appeals.

January 16 - State Board of Education meeting for final determination of transfer calculations.

February (to be determined) - Legislative Budget Commission meeting for final approval of transfer calculations.

Format for Appeals

All appeals with supporting documentation should be submitted by the superintendent or charter school director 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:lcj

Attachments

CC: District finance officers