

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



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CONTACT PERSON:

NAME: Linda Champion

PHONE: 850-245-0406

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 4, 2013

TO: District School Superintendents
Charter School Directors

FROM: Pam Stewart

SUBJECT: 2013-14 School Class Sizes and Process and Time Line for Appeals

Compliance with class size reduction requirements for the 2013-14 fiscal year is calculated at the classroom level for traditional public schools as required by section 1003.03(1), Florida Statutes (F.S.), and at the school level for charter schools as required by section 1002.33(16)(b)3., F.S. In addition, with the enactment of chapter 2013-250, Laws of Florida, compliance for all public schools of choice is calculated at the school level beginning with the 2013-14 fiscal year. Attachment 1 is a list of traditional public school districts not in compliance, by district. Attachment 2 is a list of charter schools not in compliance. Attachment 3 is a list of district-operated schools of choice not in compliance. The information in the attachments is based upon class size information submitted for the October 2013 full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment survey updated through November 15, 2013.

Statewide, 11,595 out of a total of 447,206 traditional public school classrooms, 1 lab school out of a total of 6 lab schools, 31 out of a total of 600 charter schools, and 37 out of a total of 1,195 district-operated schools of choice are not in compliance with the constitutional requirement to maintain class sizes of no more than 18 students in grades K-3, 22 students in grades 4-8, and 25 students in grades 9-12. For detailed classroom-level data for traditional public schools, please access file DPSxx.GQ.F71167.Yyyys at the Northwest Regional Data Center. Access file DPSxx.GQ.F70408.Yyyys for detailed school-level data for charter schools and district-operated schools of choice.

Section 1003.03(4)(a), F.S., requires a reduction in class size categorical funding for districts and charter schools that are out of compliance with class size requirements. Up to 25 percent of the reduction is reallocated to districts and charter schools that are in compliance with these requirements. The remaining balance is restored to districts and charter schools that are not in compliance but have submitted a certified plan to the commissioner by February 1, 2014, explaining the actions the district or charter school will take to ensure compliance by October 2014. The funding adjustments for traditional schools and district-operated schools of choice will be combined to make a total adjustment for each district.

Reduction Calculation for Districts and Charter Schools Not in Compliance

The reduction in the class size operating categorical allocation is the sum of the amounts calculated by 1) multiplying the number of FTE students that exceeds the maximum for each grade group by the district's FTE student dollar amount of the class size categorical allocation, and 2) multiplying the total number of FTE students that exceeds the maximum for all classes by an amount equal to 50 percent of the base student allocation adjusted by the district cost differential. Beginning in the 2014-15 fiscal year, 100 percent of the base student allocation will be adjusted by the district cost differential. The charter schools reduction, which is independent of the traditional public schools and district-operated schools of choice reduction amounts, is calculated at the school level and is reallocated and restored only to charter schools. The amount of funds reduced for a school district is the lesser of the sum of the traditional, charter and district-operated schools of choice reduction amounts or the undistributed balance of the district's class size categorical allocation.

Reallocation to Districts and Charter Schools that are in Compliance

Up to 5 percent of the base student allocation, not to exceed 25 percent of the total reduction, is reallocated. The reallocations for charter schools are each calculated separately from traditional schools and district-operated schools of choice based on their respective reductions.

Compliance Plan and Restoration to Districts and Charter Schools Not in Compliance

Section 1003.03(4)(e), F.S., requires each district and charter school out of compliance with class size requirements to submit to the commissioner, by February 1, a plan that describes the specific actions that will be taken to fully comply with class size reduction requirements by October 2014. A compliance plan for a traditional public school or district-operated school of choice must be certified by the school board. A charter school's compliance plan must be certified by the charter school's board of directors.

For traditional public schools and district-operated schools of choice, the balance of the reduction remaining after the reallocation to districts that are in compliance will be restored to the class size categorical allocation for those districts that are out of compliance and have submitted a certified plan by the required deadline. The restoration is based on each qualifying district's proportion of the total reduction for all qualifying districts for which a reduction was calculated.

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For charter schools, the balance of the reduction remaining after the reallocation to charter schools that are in compliance will be restored to class size categorical for those charter schools that are out of compliance and have submitted a certified plan by the required deadline. The restoration is based on each qualifying charter school's proportion of the total reduction for all qualifying charter schools for which a reduction was calculated.

A district or charter school shall not have an amount restored that is greater than the amount reduced. Districts or charter schools that submit a compliance plan after the February 1, 2014, deadline will not be eligible to participate in the restoration calculation.

Please use Attachment 4 as a template to submit a brief explanation of each school's plan to meet class size requirements for the October 2014 FTE student survey. Completed plans should be sent to Linda Champion at Linda.Champion@fldoe.org.

Appeal Process

Section 1003.03(4)(c), F.S., authorizes the commissioner to recommend an alternate reduction amount if there is evidence that class size requirements were not met despite appropriate efforts to do so or because of an extreme emergency. A district or charter school may appeal to the commissioner by submitting evidence documenting why the class size requirements were not met. The appeal should be based on extenuating circumstances, such as data reporting errors. Extenuating circumstances presented by a district or charter school will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The deadline for submitting appeals is December 13, 2013. Documentation of each public school's extenuating circumstances will be reviewed. Based upon this review, alternative reduction amounts may be recommended to the Legislative Budget Commission. The commissioner's recommendation must be submitted to the Legislative Budget Commission by February 15, 2014.

All appeals on the basis of *data reporting errors* must be submitted through the web application at the following URL: <http://app2.fldoe.org/ClassSizeAppeal/>. If you need assistance logging into the system, contact Kendra Jahnke at 850-245-9912 or Kendra.Jahnke@fldoe.org.

All supporting documentation for all appeals, including data reporting errors (e.g., teacher/student rosters), must be submitted by the superintendent by December 13, 2013, to Linda.Champion@fldoe.org or mailed to the following address:

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

Process and Time Line for Appeals

- December 4, 2013 - Memorandum from commissioner notifying districts of the October 2013 class sizes. Appeal process begins for districts and charter schools that are not in compliance. Compliance plans may be submitted to the commissioner.
- December 2013 - Memorandum from commissioner notifying districts of initial reduction calculation.
- December 13, 2013 - Deadline for submission of appeals and supporting documentation.
- January 2 - January 9, 2014 - Review of appeals.
- February 1, 2014 - Deadline for district and charter schools submission of class size compliance plans.
- February 15, 2014 - Deadline for the commissioner's submission of an alternate reduction calculation.
- February - May 2014 - Legislative Budget Commission meeting for final approval of reduction calculation or enactment of the 2014-15 fiscal year budget, to include approval of the reduction calculation.
- February - May 2014 - Following approval of the reduction calculation, calculation of reallocations and restorations.

Withholding of Funds

The commissioner may withhold class size categorical funds to the extent necessary to ensure sufficient funds are available to meet the reduction calculation amount. If it is necessary for the commissioner to withhold class size categorical funds, the calculation of the amount to withhold will be made prior to submission of a compliance plan or an appeal. Upon receipt of a compliance plan or successful appeal, the amount of withheld funds, if any, will be adjusted accordingly.

If you have questions regarding the implementation of class size requirements, please call Linda Champion at 850-245-0406.

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cc: District Finance Officers