

Joe Lombardo
Governor

Jhone M. Ebert
Superintendent of
Public Instruction

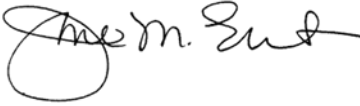


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GUIDANCE MEMORANDUM 23-03

TO: School District Superintendents

FROM: Jhone M. Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction 

DATE: August 2, 2023

SUBJECT: School Year 2023-2024 Class Size Reduction: Annual Plans and Quarterly Reporting

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 388.720(1), each school district, together with their recognized associations representing licensed educational personnel, shall develop a plan to reduce the district's pupil-teacher ratio per class in kindergarten and grades 1, 2, and 3 and submit that plan to the Nevada State Board of Education (State Board). Per NRS 388.710, the data monitored by each school district and submitted to the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) on behalf of the State Board shall be used to measure the effectiveness of the implementation plan developed by each school district to reduce pupil-teacher ratios. Accordingly, and pursuant to NRS 388.723(2), this guidance memorandum serves to provide guidance to school districts on the development of a plan to reduce pupil-teacher ratios, to include the criteria that each plan must include, and examples of policies, plans, or strategies adopted by other states to reduce class sizes.

NEVADA CLASS SIZE REDUCTION POLICIES

NRS 388.700 outlines requirements intended for the reduction of student to teacher ratios for kindergarten through third grade through the development of annual class size reduction (CSR) plans developed at the district level, and various quarterly, annual, and biennial reporting requirements; charter schools are excluded from these requirements. School districts are required to report on a quarterly basis the average daily enrollment of pupils and the number of licensed teachers or long-term substitutes designated to teach on a full-time basis in classes where core curriculum is taught, broken down by school, grade level, and classroom configuration. Per NRS 388.700, only licensed personnel teaching core curriculum classes may be counted for the class size ratio calculation; teachers of art, music, physical education, special education, librarians, and specialists may not be included for calculation purposes.

Each school that exceeds the applicable pupil-teacher ratio must request a variance for the next quarter of the school year, which the Nevada State Board of Education may approve for good cause. Good cause may include, but is not limited to, facility limitations, difficulty hiring, or funding limitations. Each variance must include the justification for the variance and a plan of action specific to that school to reduce the class size ratio. CSR reporting is submitted to NDE quarterly on or before November 1, February 1, May 1, and August 1. NDE then submits a report on a quarterly basis to the State Board summarizing CSR efforts and quarterly variance requests for approval.

Based upon the county population of the school district, districts may elect to implement the regular plan for class size reduction, or the alternative plan for class size reduction. Alternative plans for class size reduction, as identified under NRS 388.720(2), permit districts with county populations less than 100,000 to adhere to larger class size ratios in grades 1-3 but requires that they report for grades 4-6, if taught within an elementary school, and adhere to corresponding ratios.

	Kindergarten	First-Second Grades	Third Grade	Fourth-Sixth Grades
<i>Regular Plan</i>	16:1	16:1	18:1	N/A
<i>Alternative Plan</i>	16:1	22:1	22:1	25:1

QUARTERLY REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Effective SY23-24, **the quarterly reporting methodology piloted during SY22-23 will be implemented across all districts.** Under this new reporting methodology, NDE will provide an updated district-specific workbook to each district on a quarterly basis that includes historical data from the previous quarter, including class sizes and the variances requested. When districts complete the quarterly report, all data entered is compared against the previous quarter’s data to determine whether a Renewal or New Variance would be more appropriate. For example, if J. Doe Elementary had a kindergarten ratio of 20:1 in Q1, and a kindergarten ratio of 20:1 in Q2, they may submit a Renewal Variance. A Renewal Variance is a request for variance certifying that the data, reasoning, and school-level plan from the previously submitted and approved variance remains unchanged. New Variance requests must be submitted if either a) there has been an increase in ratio greater than one (e.g., J. Doe went from 20:1 to 21:1 in kindergarten) or b) a variance is required and there was no variance submitted and approved in the preceding quarter. Guidance on this process is available within *Class Size Reduction Reporting Certification and Submission Guidance*. Quarter 1 reporting, due November 1, 2023, must submit an initial variance request for all classes exceeding the ratio. These variances will then be used to set the baseline variance level for the remaining three quarters of SY23-24.

New Variance Requests

For each variance requested, the justification should be specific to the school and address the area of greatest need. Districts may select **one** justification from the following list:

- Difficulty hiring, staffing shortages.
- Difficulty hiring, funding shortfall.
- Facility limitations, generalized.
- Facility limitations, funding shortfall.
- Funding limitations, other (please specify).
- Other (please specify).

Each variance must include a school-level plan; this plan must be specific to the contexts and needs of the school. A generalized statement is not adequate.

ANNUAL PLAN REQUIREMENTS

Districts are required under NRS 388.720 to submit annual plans to align the district’s pupil-teacher ratio with the targets identified under the regular and alternative plans. Annual plans must be submitted to NDE by **October 1, 2023.**

Part I – Identifying Information & Plan Selection

For school year 2023-2024 (SY23-24), districts are required to identify:

- Their school district.
- The total number of elementary schools in their district.
- The kindergarten enrollment for SY23-24, and the combined grades 1-3 enrollments for SY23-24 for their district.
- Updated contact information for all class size reduction and reporting personnel in their district.

- Whether the district will be utilizing a regular plan, alternative plan, or a regular plan with elective reporting.

Part II – Ratios and Variances

Estimated Ratios

Based on the number of enrolled students in each grade and the number of educators employed for the school year, the district must provide the estimated district-wide class size ratios for the school year. Supporting documentation, to include the total number of educators contracted for SY23-24, disaggregated by the count of substitutes, substitute teachers in long-term positions, and educators by license classification; the total number of vacancies; the total number of vacancies calculated pursuant to NRS 391.135; and the total number of students enrolled in grades K-3 disaggregated by grade.

Estimated Variances

Based on those ratios combined with the allocation of educators across schools within the district, districts must report the estimated number of variances by grade the district will be requesting for the school year, with supporting information to include the number of schools they anticipate will require a variance; the number of classrooms within each school that will require a variance, disaggregated by grade; and the number of schools that will be requesting a variance due to facility limitations.

Part III – District Plan to Reduce Class Size Ratios

Strategies to Reduce Class Sizes

Please describe the three primary strategies that the district will be utilizing in their efforts to reduce class size ratios, to include class configurations (i.e., team teaching), recruitment efforts, placement or assignment of teachers (i.e., targeting specific schools or grades), and facility arrangement (i.e., expanding or combining classroom facilities, zone variances, etc.). These strategies should align with the use of funds, variance justifications, and the school-level plans for class size reduction. What programs are involved in these efforts?

Strategies to Mitigate the Impact of Class Sizes

Pursuant to NRS, paraprofessionals, student teachers, specialists, and educators licensed in special education, art, music, library sciences, or physical education do not qualify for calculation of the class size ratio. However, NDE recognizes that additional educators and support staff in the classroom may have a sizeable impact on the quality of education received. Please describe additional strategies in place to mitigate existing class size ratios in excess of the target ratio, particularly around the use of support personnel and/or station rotations with small group instruction, reading specialists, etc.

Use of Funds

Please describe the anticipated use of funds, identified by funding stream (i.e., federal grant, state, etc.) to support class size reduction efforts in your district. Please note that while categorical class size reduction funding was rolled into the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP) for flexible use, funding within the PCFP may still be allocated toward class size reduction efforts. Please provide approximate amounts of funding by use (i.e., recruitment efforts, new educator salaries, etc.), alignment with identified strategies, and as applicable, school-level class size reduction efforts.

SY23-24 Goals

Please describe the specific goals identified for SY23-24 as it relates to class size ratios. How does the district intend to assess and monitor progress toward this goal?

NATIONAL TRENDS – CLASS SIZE REDUCTION

Pursuant to NRS 388.723(2)(a)(2), NDE shall provide guidance to include examples of policies, plans, or strategies adopted by other states to reduce class sizes. In total, 34 states have class size ratio requirements for K-3, including Nevada. While class size reduction has long been contentious given the investment, since its

introduction in the 1990s it has remained in practice consistently due to continued studies demonstrating CSR as an evidence-based practice for student achievement.

Familiar Barriers

Funding

The predominant methodology for reducing student-teacher ratios across the U.S. has been the consistent allocation of funds for these efforts, particularly for the purposes of teacher recruitment and retention. Historically, Nevada has had biennial appropriation bills with categorical funding dedicated to class size reduction efforts. Effective school year 2021-22 (FY22), the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP) rolled categorical funding, including the appropriation for class size reduction, into the flexible adjusted base per-pupil funding allocation. Funding within the PCFP is still intended for the reduction of class sizes.

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

The primary crux of smaller class sizes, following the funding that enables capacity, is teacher recruitment and retention: having the number of educators necessary to meet target class size ratios. In Nevada, many of these efforts are centered in the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force, Teachers and Leaders Council, Nevada System of Higher Education Teacher Pathways Task Force, and Commission on Professional Standards. The corresponding requirement is adequate teacher preparation and strong professional development to provide educators the tools they need to provide high-quality and highly effective small-group instruction.

Opportunities: Classroom Configuration

A U.S. Department of Education (USED) report¹ showed that 57% of schools implementing class size reduction placed CSR teachers in separate classrooms – the primary methodology used throughout Nevada. USED further reported that 24% hired teachers to reduce class sizes in specific subjects, and 17% created additional sections for priority subjects. 10% implemented team teaching; however, more recent trends have shown an increase in team teaching as an avenue for class size reduction.

Pilot programs and research emerging from Arizona State University’s Next Education Workforce² (NEW) strategies³, including a study on the effect of NEW strategies on educator satisfaction from Johns Hopkins⁴ showed that NEW educators collaborated more frequently with other educators and were significantly more satisfied with their job, coworkers, and students. In addition to providing a supportive, flexible, and innovative environment for teachers, particularly in the wake of pandemic fatigue, team teaching provides a dynamic and responsive classroom environment for students with greater opportunities for individualized learning – which may be explored in alignment with competency-based education efforts – and inclusive classrooms. It further provides opportunities for dynamic strategies, such as station rotation and/or rotation models, thinking classrooms, and countless other methodologies.

CONCLUSION

Please ensure that all Annual Plans are submitted by October 1, 2023 via sidcompliance@doe.nv.gov. NDE anticipates hosting an office hour to respond to questions on Tuesday, August 22, 2023. Should you have any questions regarding the content of this guidance memo or the requirements for annual or quarterly class size reports, please reach out to Amelia Thibault, Office of Division Compliance at 775-687-2451 or acthibault@doe.nv.gov.

cc: Megan Peterson, Deputy Superintendent, Student Investment Division

¹ A Descriptive Evaluation of the Federal Class-Size Reduction Program. Mary Ann Millsap, et. al., USED. 2004. <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/other/class-size/index.html#:~:text=To%20reduce%20class%20size%2C%2057,10%20percent%20used%20team%20teaching.>

² <https://workforce.education.asu.edu/>

³ <https://education.asu.edu/about/news/what-happens-when-schools-adopt-next-education-workforce-models>

⁴ https://education.asu.edu/sites/default/files/2022-08/ASU_NEW_Technical_Report_13July22.pdf

Amelia Thibault, Office of Division Compliance

Attachment(s): Annual Class Size Reduction Plan Template

PART I: IDENTIFYING INFORMATION AND PLAN SELECTION

Please provide information below specific to your district, along with relevant contact information.

School District	
Total # of Elementary Schools	
Kindergarten Enrollment for SY23-24	
Combined Grades 1-3 Enrollment for SY23-24	

Authorized Contact #1	
Contact's Title	
Contact's Email	
Contacts Phone	
Authorized Contact #2	
Contact's Title	
Contact's Email	
Contacts Phone	

Districts may select any of the following, as applicable:

- *Regular Plan* – reporting and variances for grades K-3 as prescribed in NRS 388.700(1)
- *Regular Plan with Elective Reporting* – reporting and variances for grades K-3 as prescribed in NRS 388.700(1); opted into reporting and variances for grades 4-6 in alignment with NRS 388.720 for the purposes of data expansion
- *Alternative Plan* – reporting and variances for grades K-6 as prescribed in NRS 388.720

Plan Selection	
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PART II: RATIOS, VARIANCES, AND SHORTAGES

Please provide the following information for the 2023-24 school year related to the projected district-level class size ratios and the anticipated number of variances by grade.

Projected District-Level Class Size Ratios

Based on the number of enrolled students in each grade and the number of educators employed for the school year, the district must provide the estimated district-wide class size ratios for the school year.

Projected Ratios

K	1	2	3	4	5	6

Supporting documentation, to include the total number of educators contracted for SY23-24, disaggregated by the count of substitutes, substitute teachers in long-term positions, and educators by license classification; the total number of vacancies; the total number of vacancies calculated pursuant to NRS 391.135; and the total number of students enrolled in grades K-3 disaggregated by grade should be provided as attachments.

Anticipated Number of Variances by Grade

Based on the above ratios combined with the allocation of educators across schools within the district, the district must report the estimated number of variances by grade the district will be requesting for the school year.

Projected Variances

K	1	2	3	4	5	6

Supporting information, to include the number of schools the district anticipates will require a variance; the number of classrooms within each school that will require a variance, disaggregated by grade; and the number of schools that will be requesting a variance due to facility limitations, should be provided as attachments.

PART III: DISTRICT PLAN TO REDUCE CLASS SIZE RATIOS

Strategies to Reduce Class Sizes

Please describe the three primary strategies that the district will be utilizing in their efforts to reduce class size ratios, to include class configurations (i.e., team teaching), recruitment efforts, placement or assignment of teachers (i.e., targeting specific schools or grades), and facility arrangement (i.e., expanding or combining classroom facilities, zone variances, etc.). These strategies should align with the use of funds, variance justifications, and the school-level plans for class size reduction. What programs are involved in these efforts? Please provide attachments as necessary.

Strategies to Mitigate the Impact of Class Sizes

Pursuant to NRS, paraprofessionals, student teachers, specialists, and educators licensed in special education, art, music, library sciences, or physical education do not qualify for calculation of the class size ratio. However, NDE recognizes that additional educators and support staff in the classroom may have a sizeable impact on the quality of education received. Please describe additional strategies in place to mitigate existing class size ratios in excess of the target ratio, particularly around the use of support personnel and/or station rotations with small group instruction, reading specialists, etc. Please provide attachments as necessary.

Use of Funds

Please describe the anticipated use of funds, identified by funding stream (i.e., federal grant, state, etc.) to support class size reduction efforts in your district. Please note that while categorical class size reduction funding was rolled into the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP) for flexible use, funding within the PCFP may still be allocated toward class size reduction efforts. Please provide approximate amounts of funding by use (i.e., recruitment efforts, new educator salaries, etc.), alignment with identified strategies, and as applicable, school-level class size reduction efforts. Please provide attachments as necessary.

SY23-24 Goals

Please describe the specific goals identified for SY23-24 as it relates to class size ratios. How does the district intend to assess and monitor progress toward this goal? Please provide attachments as necessary.

PART IV: CERTIFICATION

Please include the signature of the district superintendent and an education association representative on this certification prior to submission of this application.

I, [Click or tap here to enter text.](#), hereby certify that:

- To the best of my knowledge the information contained in this application is correct and in accordance with Nevada Revised Statute 388.720;
- That the plan contained herein has been developed with the following recognized associations representing licensed educational personnel: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#); and
- That the local Board of Trustees has authorized me to file this plan and such action is recorded in the minutes of the Board’s meeting held on [Click or tap here to enter text.](#).

Education Association:		Date:	
Signature:			

District Superintendent:		Date:	
Signature:			