
HOUSE BILL 1970

State of Washington

56th Legislature

1999 Regular Session

By Representatives Keiser, Quall, Stensen, Reardon, Santos, Dunshee, Linville, Morris, Romero, Kagi, McIntire, Conway, Kenney, Regala, Ogden, Edmonds, Lovick, Haigh, Rockefeller, Gombosky, Cody, Edwards, O'Brien, Sullivan, Cooper, Veloria, Schual-Berke, Miloscia, Lantz, Murray, Constantine, Ruderman, Poulsen and Kessler

Read first time 02/12/1999. Referred to Committee on Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to the reduction of class size in Washington's
2 public elementary schools; adding new sections to chapter 28A.150 RCW;
3 and creating a new section.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that:

6 (a) Washington's students are being asked to meet new and rigorous
7 academic standards;

8 (b) Schools and school districts may have considerable difficulty
9 in helping all students reach the high standard on the Washington
10 assessment of student learning;

11 (c) Young students need significant assistance at the very earliest
12 grade levels to acquire the basic foundational skills they will need in
13 order to achieve the high standard on the fourth grade Washington
14 assessment of student learning;

15 (d) Substantial and extensive research studies consistently
16 demonstrate that reducing class size in the early grades can
17 significantly improve student achievement;

18 (e) The research findings on improving student achievement through
19 class size reduction confirms the common sense views of parents and

1 teachers that smaller class sizes give students more individual
2 attention and better opportunities to excel academically; and

3 (f) Some studies associate smaller classes with lower retention
4 rates, lower levels of special education diagnoses and referrals, fewer
5 disruptions in classrooms, higher teacher satisfaction, and a better
6 overall classroom environment.

7 (2) The legislature intends to help schools reduce class size
8 through a phased plan that targets funding first to schools
9 encountering the greatest struggles helping students achieve the
10 state's essential academic learning requirements.

11 (a) Initially, priority for assistance will be offered to
12 elementary schools that are encountering the greatest challenge in
13 their efforts to help struggling students achieve the essential
14 academic learning requirements. The legislature intends to offer this
15 assistance through a grant program intended to assist, in the 1999-2001
16 biennium, approximately the lowest quartile of elementary schools as
17 measured by the percentage of students who met the standard in all four
18 subjects on the Washington assessment of student learning administered
19 to fourth grade students in 1998.

20 (b) Subject to available funding, the legislature intends to expand
21 the program in the 2001-03 biennium to include a priority for any
22 elementary school in the lowest or second lowest quartiles as measured
23 by the percentage of students who met the standard in all four subjects
24 on the Washington assessment of student learning administered to fourth
25 grade students in 2000.

26 (c) Subject to available funding, the legislature intends to expand
27 the program in the 2003-05 biennium to include a priority for any
28 elementary school in the lowest three quartiles as measured by the
29 percentage of students who met the standard in all four subjects on the
30 Washington assessment of student learning administered to fourth grade
31 students in 2002.

32 (d) Subject to available funding, the legislature intends to expand
33 eligibility for this program in the 2005-07 biennium to include all
34 elementary schools.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.150
36 RCW to read as follows:

37 (1) The class size reduction voluntary grant program is
38 established. The purpose of the program is to target state assistance

1 to struggling schools that wish to participate in the program in order
2 to help the students in those schools achieve the state's essential
3 academic learning requirements.

4 (2) The program shall be administered by the office of the
5 superintendent of public instruction. In its administration of the
6 program, the responsibilities of the office of the superintendent of
7 public instruction shall include, but need not be limited to:

8 (a) Adoption and distribution of rules and program guidelines;

9 (b) Use of simple, brief, and clear application processes, forms,
10 and reporting requirements that help make the program accessible to
11 schools with minimal administrative teams;

12 (c) Selection of grant recipients;

13 (d) Approval of the release of funds from the smaller classes for
14 struggling schools account under section 5 of this act;

15 (e) The annual adjustment of grant amounts, which may reflect
16 compensation increases and other fiscal changes adopted by the
17 legislature;

18 (f) Preparation of a study that evaluates the effect of the program
19 on student achievement, classroom environment, and teacher
20 satisfaction. The study shall include, but need not be limited to, a
21 class size study of participating and nonparticipating elementary
22 schools, using a representative sampling technique of actual student-
23 teacher classroom ratios for both types of schools. The results of the
24 study shall be provided to the governor and the house of
25 representatives and senate education and fiscal committees by December
26 1, 2002; and

27 (g) Distribution of a report by November 15th of each even-numbered
28 year to the governor, and the education and fiscal committees of the
29 legislature, the educational community, and other interested parties.
30 The report shall focus primarily on the results of grant recipients and
31 the program as a whole, and shall include any recommendations for
32 program improvements.

33 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.150
34 RCW to read as follows:

35 Subject to the conditions of section 4 of this act, any public
36 elementary school may participate in the program subject to the
37 following requirements:

1 (1) The school must reduce actual class size in kindergarten
2 through second grade classes to a ratio of no more than sixteen
3 students to each classroom teacher. If a school already has achieved
4 a ratio of sixteen students or fewer to each classroom teacher, the
5 school may use grant funds either to further reduce class size in
6 kindergarten through second grade classes, or to reduce class size in
7 any or all third through fifth grade classrooms.

8 (2) The school shall provide to the office of the superintendent of
9 public instruction a plan that indicates how the school will meet the
10 requirements of subsection (1) of this section. In addition to any
11 required elements, the school is encouraged to integrate its class
12 reduction plan with plans for any federal funds designated for class
13 size reduction in elementary schools.

14 (3) At the request of the office of the superintendent of public
15 instruction, no more often than once annually, the school shall provide
16 data on the actual ratio of students to classroom teacher in each
17 classroom in the school.

18 (4) Grant recipients that meet the requirements of subsections (1)
19 through (3) of this section are eligible to retain grant funds for a
20 minimum of five years. At the end of the five-year period, the office
21 of the superintendent of public instruction may require the recipients
22 to reapply for future funding.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.150
24 RCW to read as follows:

25 Subject to available funding, the office of the superintendent of
26 public instruction shall select grant recipients based on the
27 requirements in section 3 of this act and on the following priorities:

28 (1) During the 1999-2001 biennium, priority shall be given to an
29 elementary school that was in the lowest quartile of elementary schools
30 as measured by the percentage of its fourth grade students who met the
31 standard in all four subjects on the 1998 Washington assessment of
32 student learning.

33 (2) During the 2001-03 biennium, priority shall be given to any
34 elementary school that was in one of the two lowest quartiles of
35 elementary schools as measured by the percentage of its fourth grade
36 students who met the standard in all four subjects on the 2000
37 Washington assessment of student learning.

1 (3) During the 2003-05 biennium, priority shall be given to any
2 elementary school that was in one of the three lowest quartiles of
3 elementary schools as measured by the percentage of its fourth grade
4 students who met the standard in all four subjects on the 2002
5 Washington assessment of student learning.

6 (4) During the 2005-07 biennium, all elementary schools shall have
7 equal priority in applying for grant funds.

8 (5) No school receiving a grant under this program shall lose
9 eligibility for continued funding based solely on improved test scores
10 on the Washington assessment of student learning.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.150
12 RCW to read as follows:

13 The smaller classes for struggling schools account is created in
14 the custody of the state treasurer. All receipts from appropriations
15 and funds received from public and private sources must be deposited
16 into the account. Expenditures from the account may be used only to
17 reduce class size in elementary schools in accordance with sections 2
18 through 4 of this act. Only the superintendent of public instruction
19 or the superintendent's designee may authorize expenditures from the
20 account. The account is subject to allotment procedures under chapter
21 43.88 RCW, but an appropriation is not required for expenditures.

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