
Education Committee

HB 2837

Brief Description: Establishing a legislative task force on common school class size in school districts with more than forty-five thousand students.

Sponsors: Representatives Farrell, Pollet, Frame and Walkinshaw.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the Legislative Task Force on Common School Class Size in School Districts with More Than 45,000 Students (task force).
- Directs the task force to review discrepancies between, and barriers to better aligning, class sizes established in statutory allocation provisions for school districts, and actual class sizes in schools of districts with more than 45,000 students.
- Requires the task force to report findings and recommendations to the education committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2017 and December 1, 2018.

Hearing Date: 2/11/16

Staff: Ethan Moreno (786-7386).

Background:

Legislative funding to support school districts in offering the minimum instructional program of basic education is allocated according to a distribution formula established in statute and additional formula allocations provided in the omnibus appropriations act. The funding allocations provided through the prototypical formula are for allocation purposes only, except that funding allocated for class size reductions in grades kindergarten through third (K-3) is provided in proportion to the school districts' actual weighted average class size for grades K-3, not to exceed a class size of 25.23 full-time equivalent (FTE) students per teacher.

The distribution formula establishes school prototypes for elementary school, middle school, and high school. The use of prototypical schools for the distribution formula does not constitute legislative intent that schools should be operated or structured in a similar fashion as the

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prototypes. Additionally, school districts are not required to maintain a particular classroom teacher-to-student ratio, or to use allocated funds to pay for particular types or classifications of staff.

The minimum allocation for each level of prototypical school is based on the number of FTE classroom teachers needed to provide instruction over the minimum required annual instructional hours established in statute, and to provide at least one teacher planning period per school day. The allocations for the 2015-16 school year, as established in the omnibus appropriations act, are based on the following general education average class size of FTE students per teacher:

<i>Grade Level</i>	<i>Students</i>
Kindergarten	22.00
Grade 1	23.00
Grade 2	24.00
Grade 3	25.00
Grades 4-6	27.00
Grades 7-8	28.53
Grades 9-12	28.74

There are 295 school districts in Washington and approximately 1 million public school students. According to January 2015 enrollment data of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), Seattle Public Schools is the largest district with approximately 50,500 FTE students. Spokane Public Schools and Tacoma Public Schools are the second and third largest districts, with 29,300 and 27,900 FTE students, respectively.

Summary of Bill:

The Legislative Task Force on Common School Class Size in School Districts with More Than 45,000 Students (task force) is established. The task force must review:

- discrepancies, if any, between class sizes established in statutory allocation provisions, and actual class sizes in the elementary, middle, and high schools of school districts with more than 45,000 students; and
- barriers, if any, to better aligning class sizes established in statutory allocation provisions with actual class sizes of schools in districts with more than 45,000 students. Examples of barriers to better class size alignment include, but are not limited to: staffing; building capacity; and funding and allocation provisions.

Authorization for the task force expires June 30, 2019.

The members of the task force must be appointed as follows:

- The President of the Senate must appoint one member from each of the two largest caucuses of the senate.
- The Speaker of the House of Representatives must appoint two members from the largest caucus of the House of Representatives, and one member from the second largest caucus of the House of Representatives. The appointed legislative members must represent legislative districts with school districts with more than 45,000 students.

- The Governor must appoint nonvoting members representing:
 - Parent-teacher associations, one each from an elementary school, middle school, and high school parent-teacher association in a district with more than 45,000 students;
 - Boards of school directors from districts with more than 45,000 students; and
 - Principals, one each from an elementary school, a middle school, and a high school in a district with more than 45,000 students.

Additionally, the OSPI must cooperate with the task force and maintain a liaison representative, who will be a nonvoting member.

Staff support for the task force must be provided by Senate Committee Services and the House of Representatives Office of Program Research.

The task force must report its findings and recommendations, including actions taken by districts with more than 45,000 students to better align class sizes established in statutory allocation provisions with actual class sizes of the district, to the Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the appropriate education committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Preliminary recommendations must be provided by December 1, 2017, with final recommendations submitted by December 1, 2018.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.