

HB 85/SB 206 Education - Collective Bargaining - Certificated Employees - Class Size  
Employees - Class Size Cheryl Lynn Owens -  
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Greetings!

I am a teacher in Baltimore City Public Schools. I have taught 1st grade, 4th grade and 5th grade. I am now a fifth-grade teacher.

2013 - 2014 - 27 Students - First Grade

2014 - 2015 - 45 Students - First Grade

2015 - 2016 - 27 Students - First Grade

2016 - 2017 - 40 Students - Fourth Grade

2017 - 2018 - 43 Students - Fifth Grade

2018 - 2019 - 31 Students - Fifth Grade

2019 - 2020 - 22 Students - Fifth Grade

2020 - 2021 - 18 Students - Fifth Grade

2021 - 2022 - 28 Students - Fifth Grade

2022 - 2023 - 31 Students - Fifth Grade

I am a tenured teacher in the Baltimore City Public Schools system. In the aforementioned listing, I am able to illustrate the range of class sizes that I have had during this tenure in City Schools. I was never afforded a paraprofessional to assist me with student learning.

When we do our diagnostic tests with our students, in our learning diagnostic environments we group our students by skill level in the following ranges:

- RED being students in the danger zone,
- YELLOW being the students that are in needs improvement,

- GREEN students being on grade level and
- BLUE students being above level.

As you can see in the past ten years of me teaching in City Schools there has only been one year, where I considered the amount of students in my classroom to be ABOVE CLASS SIZE LEVEL. The optimal classroom size is anything up to 20 students, with this being the BLUE LEVEL. The classroom size of 21 - 30 students is a needs improvement, 31 and above is the DANGER LEVEL.

It is overwhelming to have a large amount of students in one classroom for a myriad of reasons. I will tell you a story of why class sizes matter:

During my second year of teaching. I had 25 students on my initial roster; on the first day of school, I had four more students. I had my teacher's desk all set up in my classroom. We were going over rules and procedures. By day two that number had ballooned to five more students. I still had my classroom all nicely intact. We were now up to 34 students. By the end of the week, I had to remove my teacher's desk and add several student desks into the classroom environment. We were now up to 45 students. When I got the students in August they were essentially kindergarteners. It was a horrible situation. We were in non-air-conditioned classroom. It was sweltering, sticky and sweaty. It was traumatic for these little first graders.

Here are my reasons as to why class sizes matter:

1. Students receive individualized attention
2. Small grouping is able to work
3. Students are able to be noticed, seen and heard
4. Better results in testing
5. Teachers can teach to the multiple modalities
6. Students get better feedback
7. Teachers get to know their students.

In this era of ESSA, Every Student Succeeds, no student can succeed and get what they need in an environment that is overcrowded and underfunded. Students deserve equity and it can only be equitable when students are seen, heard and understood. The environment must be conducive to students being comfortable in their surroundings. The environment without air conditioning is challenging at best. Students must not be on top of one another because of lack of space. In this current climate and environment, we must ensure that there is equity for our students to have a fighting chance. How can

they succeed when there aren't enough materials? How can they succeed when there aren't enough teachers? How can they succeed with so many distractions within one room? No human being can be asked to make this situation work. When I would walk my students to the lunchroom the students had to spiral around like an amusement park ride line in order to get in line for lunch. We must do better by students in marginalized populations. We must look to do better by students who are already dealing with living in food desert and swamp. The least that we can provide them with is one teacher per 20 students. This ratio allows for teachers to address the issues of RED and YELLOW students while attending to the excellent needs of GREEN and BLUE students. Give us the help that we need to put forth a generation that deserve to be treated better by the adults that have the ability to put forth legislation to ensure a healthy future for all future scholars of the world. Please support HB 85/SB 206, our students deserve better!

## **Appendix – View of student classroom sizes**

