

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2007 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 478 (Senator Zirkin)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Education - Reporting Requirement - Class Size

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop a uniform data collection method to track the number of students who regularly participate in each classroom teacher's class as of September 30 of each year. Local school systems have to implement the method and report the results to MSDE by November 1 so that MSDE can report on the data by December 1 of each year.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures increase by \$34,100 in FY 2008 to develop and implement a class size reporting method to be used beginning in fall 2008. Future year expenditure estimates reflect annualization, regular salary increases, and inflation. General fund expenditures could also increase in future years to build capacity for a more consistent and precise class size measure into MSDE information systems. Revenues would not be affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	34,100	80,500	84,600	88,800	93,300
Net Effect	(\$34,100)	(\$80,500)	(\$84,600)	(\$88,800)	(\$93,300)

Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate effect

Local Effect: Local school systems could report class sizes in a format developed by MSDE with existing personnel and resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Although schools and school systems report student enrollments and teacher data to MSDE, class sizes are not specifically reported to MSDE.

Background: Maryland does not currently report class sizes, but student-teacher ratios, which are not the same but may give some indication of school systems that have smaller class sizes, can be developed from data reported by MSDE. **Exhibit 1** compares the number of students enrolled as of September 30, 2005 to the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers reported for October 2005. From the two numbers, a student-teacher ratio is calculated and shown in the final column of the exhibit. The ratios range from a low of 11.7 students per teacher in Worcester County to a high of 16.3 teachers per student in Charles County.

Exhibit 1
Public School Student to Teacher Ratios in Fall 2005

<u>School System</u>	<u>Headcount Enrollment</u>	<u>FTE Teachers</u>	<u>Students per FTE Teacher</u>
	<u>Sept. 2005</u>	<u>Oct. 2005</u>	
Worcester	6,452	550.6	11.7
Somerset	2,760	230.8	12.0
Garrett	4,574	362.0	12.6
Allegany	9,313	723.0	12.9
Kent	2,310	172.3	13.4
Dorchester	4,450	329.8	13.5
Wicomico	14,425	1,048.3	13.8
Howard	47,785	3,453.1	13.8
Baltimore	103,386	7,389.0	14.0
Caroline	5,320	369.0	14.4
Montgomery	136,388	9,409.0	14.5
Cecil	16,036	1,090.3	14.7
Talbot	4,294	289.8	14.8
Baltimore City	84,307	5,685.0	14.8
Washington	20,709	1,383.3	15.0
St. Mary's	15,908	1,053.7	15.1
Queen Anne's	7,437	492.5	15.1
Anne Arundel	72,278	4,758.4	15.2
Frederick	38,945	2,562.4	15.2
Prince George's	128,391	8,408.3	15.3
Harford	39,317	2,528.8	15.5
Carroll	28,698	1,830.3	15.7
Calvert	17,107	1,077.6	15.9
Charles	25,624	1,573.6	16.3
State	836,214	56,770.9	14.7

Source: Maryland State Department of Education

Although class size reductions continue to be popular with the public, data on the success of the programs is mixed. A report from the American Educational Research Association (AERA) states that research generally supports the benefits of class size reductions, but also notes that implementation costs are high. The report cites California's effort to reduce class sizes, which led to critical shortages of qualified teachers and school capacity problems. Research from Tennessee and Wisconsin has shown that smaller class sizes have the greatest benefits for minority, inner-city students, but the studies done in these states did not involve statewide initiatives that might result in high quality teachers leaving impoverished schools for new jobs in more affluent districts. The AERA report suggests that, to maximize the benefits of class size reduction efforts, initiatives should (1) begin in kindergarten or first grade and continue for two to four years; (2) maintain class sizes of 13 to 17 students; and (3) target at-risk students.

MSDE advises that there are a number of factors that complicate accurate reporting of class sizes. Some of the factors are discussed briefly below.

- Many schools use alternative scheduling techniques that separate small groups of students for more intensive services for a portion of the day while other students remain in larger groups.
- Elementary arts classes may include multiple grades or classrooms taught by a single teacher.
- Special education classes are typically smaller but may include students from multiple grades learning multiple subjects.
- Some classes may, at times, consist of a single student.
- In middle and high schools, students' schedules often change at the end of each semester or marking period, meaning class sizes may likewise change.

State Expenditures: General fund expenditures would increase by an estimated \$34,120 in fiscal 2008, which accounts for the October 1, 2007 effective date and assumes that the first time school systems would report class sizes is in fall 2008. The estimate reflects the cost of hiring one full-time education program specialist in April 2008 to develop the uniform class size data collection method and train local school system employees in the method. In future years, the program specialist would be responsible for refining the method, auditing school system reports, and ensuring compliance with the requirements. A salary, fringe benefits, contractual costs for developing and printing training materials, one-time start-up costs, and ongoing operating expenses are included in the estimate.

	<u>FY 2008</u>	<u>FY 2009</u>
Salaries and Fringe Benefits	\$19,052	\$77,702
Contractual Services	10,000	0
Operating Expenses	<u>5,068</u>	<u>2,838</u>
Total State Expenditures	\$34,120	\$80,540

Future year expenditures reflect (1) full salaries with 4.5% annual increases and 3% employee turnover; and (2) 1% annual increases in ongoing operating expenses.

MSDE advises that attempting to collect class size data without automating the process would be imprecise and estimates that developing and implementing an effective and precise system would cost several million dollars. MSDE will be adding unique student identifiers to its data sets by next school year and has plans to continue modernizing its data tracking systems in the coming years. Assuming funding for the expansion of education information systems continues, developing the capacity to measure class sizes more consistently across school systems could be built into the new systems. There would, however, be added costs to ensure that future systems have this capability.

Local Expenditures: Although the bill would require additional administrative responsibilities for local school systems, the added responsibilities could be met with existing personnel and resources.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 439 (Delegate Cardin, *et al.*) – Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

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mll/rhh

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