

CLASS SIZE REDUCTION FLEXIBILITY

Adopted by Convention Delegates April 29, 2005

- WHEREAS, In 1989 California State PTA convention delegates adopted a resolution entitled “Reduction of Student:Teacher Workload (Class Size)” directing the California State PTA to “support a student:teacher workload that does not exceed 25 students per teacher at the elementary level and for middle/secondary level academic classes”; and
- WHEREAS, In 1996 California State PTA convention delegates adopted a resolution entitled “Class Size Reduction” directing the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts to “seek, support and sponsor legislation to reduce class sizes, beginning with grades 1 through 3”; and
- WHEREAS, The California Legislature and the Governor created the Class Size Reduction (CSR) Program for grades K through 3 as part of the 1996-1997 Budget Act; and
- WHEREAS, After previous years of growth, participation in the CSR Program statistically declined during the 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years, and class size averages have statistically increased at nearly every grade level (K-12); and
- WHEREAS, The CSR Research Consortium, the Legislative Analyst’s Office and the California Department of Finance have issued reports citing some of the actions taken for the purpose of remaining under the CSR 20:1 cap which include bussing children to other schools, reorganization of classes, and the creation of combination classes of students from different grade levels; and
- WHEREAS, In 1997 the Legislative Analyst’s Office recommended that the 20:1 cap be redefined to require a 20:1 student/teacher class size average for all CSR classes *district wide* while allowing individual class maximums of up to 22 students in order to minimize the displacement of students and reduce state and local costs; and
- WHEREAS, The CSR Research Consortium (2002), after four years of extensive research and analysis of California’s CSR Program, recommended that local school districts be given the flexibility to increase class sizes by up to two per class as long as the class size average *within a school* remains at 20 or less; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA, and its units, councils and districts, support legislation that will amend the CSR Program to allow school districts to increase class sizes by up to two per class as long as the class size average of CSR classes within each school remains at 20 or less; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the California State PTA, and its members throughout the state continue to work with local school districts to encourage them to participate in California's CSR Program; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the California State PTA, and its members throughout the state urge their local school districts to work toward reducing class sizes to no more than 25 students per teacher in grades 4-12 in academic classes.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The California State PTA has long advocated for smaller class sizes in California schools. The 1989 convention resolution, "Reduction of Student:Teacher Workload (Class Size)," formalized the position as supporting no more than 25 students per teacher. In 1996 another resolution entitled "Class Size Reduction" called for the further reduction of class sizes, beginning with grades 1-3. This resolution's background statement recommended "the Legislature adopt the long term goal of reducing average class size to about 20 students per K-3 class in California schools." The California State PTA position statement adopted July 1996 and revised in March 2002 further defined smaller class sizes as "no more than twenty children and a qualified certificated teacher in each kindergarten through 3rd grade classroom throughout all California public schools." ("Reduced Class Sizes in Grades K-3," Position Statement 4.4.52)

Research gleaned from Tennessee's STAR study and Wisconsin's SAGE program has confirmed that reducing the size of classes in the early grades can produce large and lasting gains, particularly for disadvantaged students. In 1996 the California Legislature passed the Class Size Reduction (CSR) Program which provides a financial incentive to school districts that reduce classes in kindergarten through third grade to twenty or fewer students. In September 2002 the CSR Research Consortium noted, "CSR initially created windfalls for some districts, was revenue neutral for others, and placed a substantial financial burden on others." Over 90% of California's school districts participated in the program in its first year, and participation grew incrementally through the 2001-02 school year. However, the number of non-participating districts has since doubled, from six in 2001-02 to thirteen in 2003-04, a return to 1998-99 school year figures. Moreover, class sizes have increased in nearly every grade level. California continues to have the second highest pupil-teacher ratio in the country.

The CSR Research Consortium, the Legislative Analyst's Office and the California Department of Finance have noted that CSR's rigid 20 to 1 student-teacher ratio has resulted "in the bussing of children to other schools, the shuffling of children between classes, and the creation of combination classes solely for the purpose of remaining under the 20:1 cap." Hence, the Legislative Analyst's Office and the CSR Research Consortium, in order to reduce the displacement of students and reduce the state and local financial impact of the CSR program, have repeatedly recommended that the 20:1 cap be adjusted to allow school districts the flexibility to increase class sizes by up to two per class, the former *district wide*, the latter *within a school*, so long as the class size average remains at 20 or less.

In the past few years, numerous legislative attempts to modify the strict 20:1 cap have failed. In September 2004, the governor signed into law an amended form of SB 311 (Chapter No. 910, Statutes of 2004), supported by the California State PTA. Previously if a classroom exceeded an enrollment of 20.44 students, based on the average number of students for one teacher between the start of the school year and April 15, the district would lose its entire CSR apportionment for that classroom. Education Code Section 52124(e) now allows classes to exceed the 20:1 cap in

return for a sliding scale of funding loss: 20 percent funding loss for classes greater than or equal to 20.5 but less than 21.0; 40 percent funding loss for classes greater than or equal to 21.0 but less than 21.5; 80 percent funding loss for classes greater than or equal to 21.5 but less than 21.9; 100 percent funding loss for classes greater than or equal to 21.9 students. However, since SB 311 has been chaptered, the Legislative Analyst's Office has again restated the need for CSR flexibility. (*Legislative Analyst's Office Recommended Legislation*, December 6, 2004).

In keeping with the recommendations of the CSR Research Consortium and the Legislative Analyst's Office, this resolution seeks to modify the California State PTA's definition of "Reduced Class Sizes in Grades K-3" to be an average of no more than twenty students and a qualified certificated teacher in each kindergarten through third grade classroom *within a school* while allowing individual classroom maximums of up to twenty-two students without penalty. Recognizing that class sizes at all grade levels in California are increasing, this resolution also seeks to reaffirm the California State PTA's commitment to reducing class sizes to no more than 25 students per teacher in grades 4-12 academic classes.