

CLASS SIZE REDUCTION

Adopted by Convention Delegates April 1996

Reviewed by Board of Managers August 2022

- WHEREAS,** The California State PTA convention delegates in 1989 adopted a resolution 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,** According to California Department of Education data, there are more students per teacher enrolled in California public schools than any state in the nation, and some school districts have ratios of 30 or more students per teacher; and
- WHEREAS,** Recent research provides compelling evidence that smaller classes help, at least in the early grades, including specific findings that
- reducing class size in grades 1-3 resulted in significant improvement in academic performance, specifically in math and reading skills;
 - the study findings applied to poor and well-to-do, farm and city, minority and majority children;
 - the beneficial effects of smaller classes in the early grades continued into later grades when children are returned to regular- sized classes;
 - smaller classes in the primary grades produced greater academic improvement than regular-sized classes with a teacher’s aide, and students from the small classes continued to perform better than the students from a regular-sized class with or without a teacher’s aide; and
- WHEREAS,** Having fewer children in a classroom reduces the distractions and allows the teacher more time to devote to each child and increases the likelihood that any potential problems will be identified and prevented and that student achievement can be significantly increased; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA and its units, councils and districts urge the citizens and policy-makers of California to make a commitment to reducing class sizes in California public schools; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA, its units, councils and districts conduct a public media/information campaign to educate the public on the lasting benefits to public school students of reduced class size; and the California State PTA develop and make available to PTA units, councils and districts a standardized basic California class size reduction presentation which includes facts and statistics that can be presented to every level—school, community, business and government—to convince all Californians of the need to reduce the class size in California schools; and be it further

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RESOLVED, That the California State PTA, its units, councils and districts seek and support or sponsor legislation to reduce class size, beginning with primary grades 1-3; 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 size.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The California State PTA has long been concerned about the large class sizes in California schools. This concern was expressed in a 1989 California State PTA convention resolution, “Reduction of Student:Teacher Workload (Class Size).” That resolution put the California State PTA on record as supporting an elementary and middle/secondary level academic class size of no more than 25 students per teacher.

California continues to have the highest ratio of students to teachers of any state in the nation. Class sizes in California are calculated by averaging the number of students to the number of teachers. Using California Department of Education enrollment data, EdSource reports a statewide average of 24.1 students for every teacher in the California public schools compared to a nationwide average of 17.3 students. This statewide “average” is misleading because it does not reflect actual academic class sizes of 28 to 38 students in classrooms throughout the state.

Tennessee’s Student Teacher Ratio Project (Project Star) is the most comprehensive study to date of the effects of reducing class size. The study measured the impact on student achievement of reducing class sizes from about 23 students to about 15 students. The research included a large number of schools and students, controlled for differences between students and schools. The results showed higher scores on standardized tests for students in the smaller classes. The achievement gains were sustained through the sixth grade. Gains for disadvantaged students were greater than for middle class students.

The California Legislative Analyst in her report to the Legislature stated, “Unfortunately, there is little data to provide definitive answers on the costs and benefits of different ways to improve student achievement. Project Star, however, shows that smaller class sizes produce broad sustained increases in student achievement. For this reason, we recommend the Legislature adopt the long term goal of reducing average class size to about 20 students per K-3 class in California schools.”

This resolution seeks to reemphasize the PTA position that California schools must significantly reduce class size, especially in grades one through three. We now have clear and convincing evidence that lower class size in the early grades can have a significant, lasting impact on students’ behavior and performance.