

REDUCTION OF STUDENT:TEACHER WORKLOAD (CLASS SIZE)

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 5, 1989

Reviewed by Board of Managers April 2010

- WHEREAS,** The future of the State of California, and indeed, that of the United States is directly dependent upon the quality of public education; and
- WHEREAS,** The People of California, by the passage of Proposition 98, expressed their desire to have one of the finest public school systems in America; and
- WHEREAS,** Proposition 98 specifically provides that expenditure for education of those revenues in excess of the state appropriation limit (Gann Limit) shall be used for the purpose of improving classroom instruction, and the proposition's first stated purpose is lower pupil-teacher ratio; and
- WHEREAS,** A positive student-teacher relationship is the cornerstone of successful student achievement; and
- WHEREAS,** As student:teacher workload decreases, classroom management skills and instructional strategies which enable teachers to address the educational needs of all students become more effective, resulting in increased student achievement; and
- WHEREAS,** California public school classes have become so seriously overcrowded that California now has the largest class size of any state in the nation; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA support a student:teacher workload that does not exceed students per teacher at the elementary level and for middle/secondary level academic classes, and that PTA work to achieve this goal; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA work to ensure that as student:teacher workload reduction is implemented, it is accompanied by staff development that supports teacher acquisition of those classroom management skills and instructional strategies that enable teachers to more effectively address student educational needs on an individualized basis; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA recommend to the Superintendent of Public Instruction that he urge school districts to make every effort to structure classes in accordance with these student:teacher workload goals; and be it further

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Reduction of Student:Teacher Workload (Class Size) - continued

RESOLVED, That the California State PTA seek and support collection and publication of School Accountability Report Card data regarding actual student:teacher workload at the elementary level and for middle/secondary level academic classes; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to initiate a letter-writing campaign to their respective state senators and assembly members, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and Governor of the State of California urging implementation of this resolution.

* Student:teacher workload = Actual classroom teacher-to-student contact.

BACKGROUND SUMMARY

The pre-eminence of the student-teacher relationship dates back over 2,000 years to the Golden Age of Greece, and neither textbooks nor equipment can take the place of individualized attention to each student's needs. It is absolutely essential that each and every student receive adequate teacher attention in order that the student's academic potential is achieved. Literature and research emphasize that class size reduction alone does not guarantee significant changes in educational environments ("Class Size and Instruction," pages 7 and 8, by Cahen, Filby, McCutcheon and Kyle, 1982.) Overcrowded classrooms also reduce each child's opportunities for participation, and thereby limit the development of the communications skills which are so important to occupational success and citizenship.

Class sizes in California are calculated by averaging. The 1988 statewide class average is represented by the State Department of Education to be 27 students to one teacher. Yet, the notion of "average" class size is a misleading one because it does not take into account actual class size. Academic classrooms throughout California often have as many as 32 to 38 students.

Although Proposition 98 makes specific reference to reducing class sizes, the differences between average and actual are not adequately defined. This resolution seeks to clarify the issue of class size in order to ensure that all students in the State of California have equal access to a quality education.