

# HB 98

## Establishing Class Size Maximums

Representative Zack Fields

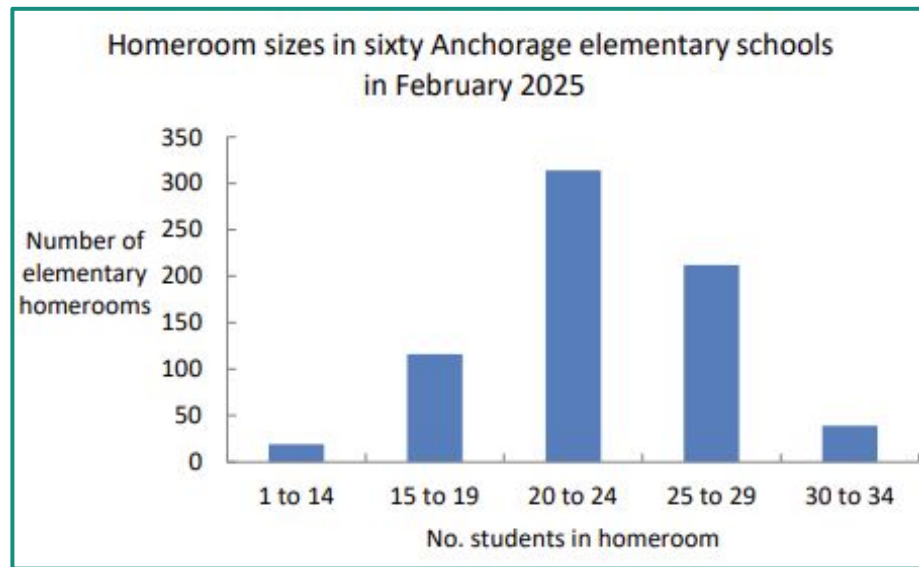
House Education Committee

March 28, 2025

# Alaska's Class Sizes are Rising.



Alaska is one of three states that have increased the PTR over the last decade. **The current average PTR for elementary school is 18.**

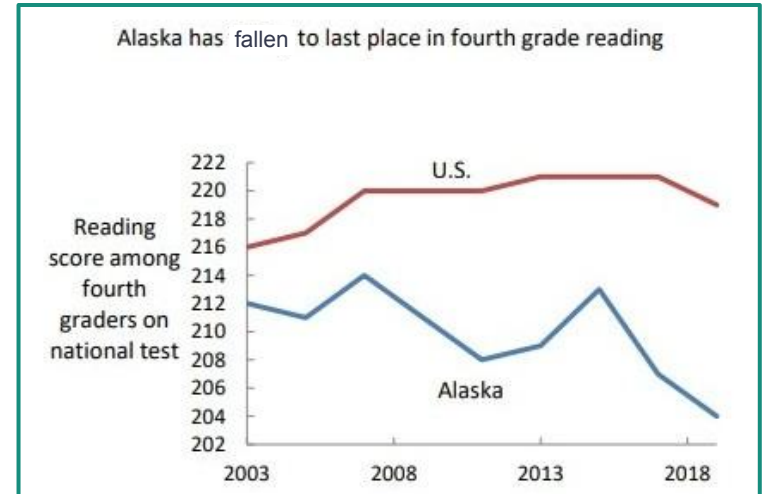
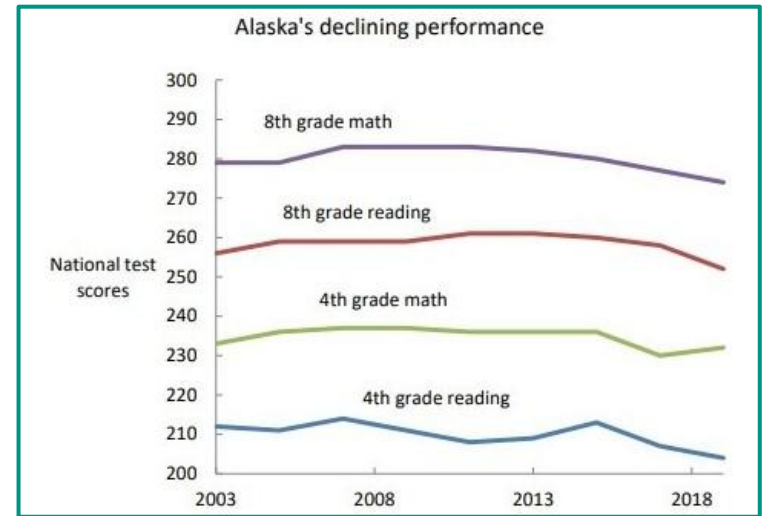


This chart represents students in 700 elementary school homerooms. **The average number of students per homeroom is 23.**

# Alaska's student performance has been on the decline for decades.

Alaska's 4th and 8th grade math and reading scores have declined on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2024).

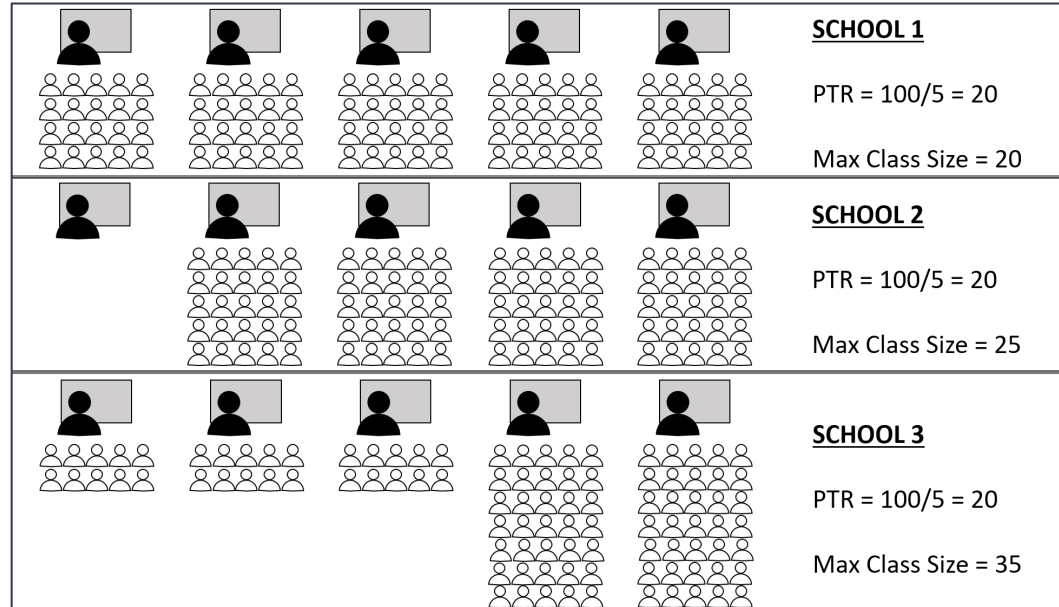
- Alaska's reading scores are among the lowest in the Nation (51 of 52 U.S. jurisdictions)
- 47% of 4th grade students scored at or above the NAEP basic reading level.
- 57% of 8th grade students scored at or above the NAEP basic reading level.
- 64% of 4th grade students scored at or above the NAEP basic math level.
- 54% of 8th grade students scored at or above the NAEP basic level



**Class Size** and **Pupil-Teacher-Ratio** both relate to the number of students in a school, **but they are different.**

- PTR is the overall ratio of students to teachers in a school.
- In some cases, “Teacher” can be defined to include other administrators like librarians, counselors, and school psychologists.
- Class size measures the number of students in a classroom
- Large class sizes can be hidden by using an average, such as PTR.
- PTR is a budget staffing formula, not a class size or class cap.

# Class Size $\neq$ Pupil-Teacher-Ratio



Graphic by Ketan Dehmukh, PhD

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# Class Size Matters.

Rigorous bodies of research consistently show the importance of class sizes and student achievement.

**HB 98** establishes class size maximums in to **improve student outcomes** and create a **more conducive learning environment** in which Alaskan children may thrive.

In the class size study known as **STAR**, students were randomly assigned to one of three class sizes: **Small** (13-17), **Medium** (22-26), **Large** (22-26).

Students in small classes **consistently showed higher achievement** in reading and math compared to those in larger classes.

**Picus-Odden Associates** reaffirmed these findings in an Evidence-Based Model study to increase student standards and proficiency in Alaska's schools.

## Key Findings:

- The benefits of small class sizes were particularly pronounced in K-3
- Smaller classes narrow the achievement gap:
  - Minority and low-income students showed even greater gains from smaller class sizes
- Studies show positive effects of small classes even after students returned to regular sized classes in later grades.
- Smaller class sizes enhance student-teacher interaction and improve teacher retention.