

ALASKA LEGISLATURE SPECIAL COMMITTEE/SUBJECT FILES 8672

3036 SCOMM 137: HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION 2005-2006 722

# Designing a Policy

*The wealth of information on class size can bewilder school board members when the time comes to sit down and design a policy for class-size reduction. No single policy fits the circumstances of all school districts. For example, a district that already has an average class size of 21 students in the elementary grades will have less work to do than a district whose classes average 27.*

These guidelines, expressed in the form of questions board members and district officials can ask themselves, borrow from the recommendations of Joan McRobbie, Jeremy Finn, and Patrick Harman and other authorities whose works are cited.

Although the guidelines are offered with local school boards foremost in mind, the issues they address can also stimulate discussion among legislators who are designing state-level policy on class-size reduction.

## **Funding**

**Your district has applied for and received the funds to design a CSR policy, but how do you decide where it all goes?**

McRobbie and colleagues suggest targeting minority and low-income children in primary grades. Because research across the board demonstrates these children stand the most to gain from smaller class size, allocating funds to them may prove to be the most effective use of resources.

**What factors other than class size should govern the allocation of funds?**

Don't lose sight of why class size is being downsized—to raise student achievement. Small class size is not an end in itself. Consider setting aside money for community meetings, teacher training, and curriculum planning. Flexibility is also important at the local as well as district level. Every school will be different in the way it needs to use funds.

**If state and federal funding are inadequate to meet district**

**goals, can any other sources of funding be tapped?**

In schools with a high proportion of low-income families, Title I funds have become a common means of reducing class size. In Burke County, North Carolina, the district decided to use state funds originally allocated for full-time teacher assistants to fund regular teaching positions instead.

Other districts have implemented creative scheduling so that class size is reduced for a portion of the day. For example, the Oak Park Plan requires all teachers in the school to teach 15 students in core academic areas for three hours a day. For the remaining 2.5 hours, students are taught in regular class sizes of approximately 25 students.

Achilles and Price (1999) recommend examining programs in the district to determine if all currently funded programs are still a high need, or if some could be reduced or eliminated altogether to free up funds. They also suggest increasing the size of some classes at the secondary level as a tradeoff for lowering class sizes in the early elementary grades.

**Will the funding be flat or wealth-adjusted? In other words, does each student receive the same allocation of funds, or is the allocation adjusted by a formula?**

California's program allows \$800 of incentive money for every student in a 20 to 1 primary class. Some districts already had smaller classes and did not have trouble meeting the 20:1 cap within the dollars allocated. Many urban districts, on the other hand, were forced to dig deeply into their own

## **VIEWPOINT**

**"I agree that reducing class size to no more than 15 would improve overall student achievement. It would enable teachers to better monitor and assess individual student performance for the purpose of selecting appropriate teaching and learning strategies. Practically speaking, however, building the required additional classrooms and staffing those classrooms from a decreasing pool of certified teachers would make implementation of this degree of class reduction difficult."**

**- Julia P. Kron, Director, -  
North Carolina Teacher  
Academy**

funds to hire enough teachers and create classrooms, because the allocation of \$800 per student did not meet their needs. This across-the-board rate created some problems for districts that had a difficult time hiring qualified teachers, or for those that had no way of creating space for new classrooms.

Formula-based funding can help offset the kinds of inequities California's school districts encountered. For example, Utah's formula initially allotted 80 percent of the

state's K-6 CSR funding on a per-pupil basis, with 20 percent reserved for districts with rapid growth.

#### **Facilities**

**Will existing facilities accommodate the number of new classrooms that will be needed?**

School officials across the nation have said inadequate facilities are a big problem as they have tried to implement CSR policies. The shortage of facilities in California was the single most important deterrent to implementing CSR fully and quickly (Bohrnstedt and Stecher).

One solution to cramped space is to purchase portable classrooms, as many California schools have done. In a search for 18,000 new classrooms, California school districts also converted libraries, music rooms, computer and science labs, childcare centers, faculty lounges, and auditorium stages into primary classrooms, temporarily or permanently. California school officials used many other strategies to cope with a sudden shortage of facilities. They reconfigured some schools by moving sixth-graders to middle schools, switched to year-round scheduling, changed school boundaries, remodeled schools, cancelled inter- and intra-district transfers, and reopened schools previously closed.

#### **Teaching**

A hallmark of a successful CSR policy, according to McRobbie and colleagues, is to make better teaching and learning the cornerstone. Here are the key questions to consider:

**Will there be enough qualified teachers for the number of new classrooms created?**

Some districts have been able to fund a few extra full-time teaching positions by redistributing resources that had been designated for hiring other personnel. In cases such as California, these very stipulations were made within the legislation

#### **WEBSITES**

### **The following websites provide information and links to issues surrounding class-size-reduction initiatives.**

**[www.classsize.org](http://www.classsize.org)**

Background information and research findings on California's class-size-reduction reform, by a consortium of six research organizations.

**[www.wested.org](http://www.wested.org)**

Reports from WestEd, a nonprofit research and development service agency "dedicated to improving opportunities" for educators.

**[www.ed.gov/pubs/ReducingClass](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ReducingClass)**

**[www.ed.gov/pubs/ClassSize](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ClassSize)**

Two reports from the United States Department of Education, and updates from proposed initiatives.

**[www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ClassSize](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ClassSize)**

Information about the federal Class Size Reduction Program.

**[www.aasa.org/SchoolAdmin](http://www.aasa.org/SchoolAdmin)**

Information and insights from the American Association of School Administrators.

**[www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org)**

An online educational newspaper.

**[www.serve.org](http://www.serve.org)**

Regional educational information from the Southeast states.

**[www.cascd.org](http://www.cascd.org)**

Website of the California Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, "providing resources, indepth analysis, and practical, useable ideas."

**[www.edexcellence.net/library/size/html](http://www.edexcellence.net/library/size/html)**

Ideas in education from the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation.

**[www.ncsl.org/programs/educ/edu.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/programs/educ/edu.htm)**

Links to state educational sites from the National Conference of State Legislatures.

**[www.ecs.org/ecsweb.net](http://www.ecs.org/ecsweb.net)**

Information updates from the Education Commission of the States.

that authorized CSR (McRobbie and others 1998).

**Are existing policies on emergency or alternative credentialing consistent with the district's goals?**

**Will there be a shortage of specially trained teachers, such as in the field of special education?**

**What new programs in professional development must be offered to equip teachers with the skills they will need to gain the greatest advantage from their smaller classes?**

If the district will need to hire many new teachers, some of them inexperienced or unprepared, the policy ought to include provisions for training, mentors, and other resources. Even veteran teachers may need more knowledge and skills if the CSR initiative is accompanied by higher standards, new assessments, and/or accountability measures.

#### **Other Issues**

**Will CSR be optional or mandatory?**

A seemingly optional program can, in reality, be mandatory if districts are reluctant to reject money after experiencing cut after cut, or if CSR's great popularity creates a pressure to adopt class-size reductions.

**Will there be a rigid cap on class size, or is the number of students per class flexible within a range?**

Districts have options such as capping the number of students per teacher, specifying an average across a school or district, or creating differing levels of reductions for different types of schools, such as a requirement that class sizes be lower in high-poverty schools.

**Will small classes be self-contained or team-taught?**

In Nevada, state CSR policy allows the 16:1 ratio in first and second grades to be achieved by having two teachers in a classroom of 32 students. However, many

worry that team-taught classes are not as effective as self-contained classes.

**What will determine the scale of CSR, that is, the span of grades that will be affected?**

Studies indicate that smaller classes produce the maximum benefits in kindergarten and grade 1. Research on California's CSR initiative suggests that if class size is reduced in phases, such as first in grade 1, then 2, then 3, the transition will be less confusing than a large-scale approach or one that moves too quickly (Achilles, January 1999).

**How will the school district evaluate the results of class-size reduction?**

In seeking to determine whether the CSR policy is accomplishing what was intended, or whether the program needs to be revised, policymakers need to consider more than pupil-teacher ratios. Obtain data on achievement, attendance, and other outcomes. Are there more interactions between teachers and students? Do teachers have more time to plan and execute worthwhile learning activities?

**Is the policy compatible with other district objectives?**

Policymakers will naturally want to make sure that CSR is part of a coherent set of policies that seek academic achievement for all students. Researchers who are taking part in California's CSR Research Consortium (Bohrstedt and Stecher 1999) urge policymakers to consider how CSR will interact with current education policies and reforms, as well as new ones. Will the policy benefit all students and schools equally? Some districts are wary of putting so many resources into CSR that they would find it difficult to implement other needed educational reforms.

The above set of questions, while far from comprehensive, should provide policymakers with a good starting point in creating dialogue with other administrators, teachers, parents, and the commu-

#### **VIEWPOINT**

**R**educing the size of elementary classes can make a difference in student achievement, but it is only one of a number of reforms that need to be initiated and funded. Class size must not be allowed to be the latest 'silver bullet' that takes up a disproportionate amount of the time and resources needed to improve achievement. Teacher professional development, parental involvement, equitable access to effective instructional technology programs, alternative placement and programs for disruptive students, and clearly defined standards are equally as, if not more, important initiatives to improve student achievement."

- Miles E. Turner,  
Executive Director,  
Wisconsin Association  
of School District  
Administrators

nity about what their CSR policy should look like. EH

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#### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

For other resources on class size, visit the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management website: <http://eric.uoregon.edu>

In addition to the full text of this *Policy Report*, you'll find abstracts of ERIC documents on class size, a set of website links, and an *ERIC Digest* titled "Capitalizing on Small Class Size."

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## **Attachment B**

Ivor Pritchard, "Reducing Class Size: What Do We Know," U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, November 1999; available online at [www.ed.gov/pubs/ReducingClass/Class\\_size.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ReducingClass/Class_size.html)



# **Reducing Class Size**

## **What Do We Know?**

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### **Introduction**

Research and common sense suggest that smaller classes offer teachers the chance to devote more time to each student so as to improve their learning. A number of states have already implemented class size reduction programs, and others are in the process of development. Skeptics worry that reducing class size will increase costs without producing substantial benefits, however, and class size reduction programs certainly present challenging problems as well as opportunities. Does reducing class size really improve students' education? Should teachers hired to teach in smaller classes be prepared differently? Will hiring more teachers in order to reduce class size exhaust the supply of qualified teachers? The available research evidence contains some useful guidance for educators and policymakers who face these questions as they try to craft the most beneficial class size reduction strategies.

### **Research on Class Size**

Researchers have used various techniques to study how class size affects the quality of education. They have looked at the relationship between class size and student achievement, and have conducted various kinds of studies related to class size and its possible influences on educational practice. In the last 20 years, enough research has been done for researchers to have taken the results of many experiments and data collections and synthesized the accumulated findings into general conclusions. In some analyses, the researchers have used data about student/teacher ratios as a means to examine the class size effects, because the original research lacked a direct measure of class size. Some of the statistical analyses in the last 10 years have been quite large in scale.

Several recent experimental studies have contributed substantially to the research knowledge about class size. Not all the questions about the impact of

class size reductions have been answered, nor have all the debates been settled. Overall, however, the pattern of research findings points more and more clearly toward the beneficial effects of reducing class size.

### Research Syntheses

Several major analyses have used various analytical methods to draw conclusions through reviews of already existing research studies. The methods used and the studies included vary somewhat, but most of them have concluded that reducing class size is related to increased student learning:

- In 1978, Smith and Glass published a *meta-analysis* combining the results of 77 empirical studies pertaining to the relationship between class size and achievement, and soon followed it with a second meta-analysis analyzing the relationship between class size and other outcomes. Overall, they found that small classes were associated with higher achievement at all grade levels, especially if students were in the small classes for more than 100 hours, and if student assignment was carefully controlled. They found that the major benefits of reducing class size occurred where the number of students in the class was fewer than 20. In their second study, they concluded that small classes were superior in terms of students' reactions, teacher morale, and the quality of the instructional environment.<sup>1</sup>
- In 1989, Slavin employed a *best evidence synthesis* strategy to analyze empirical studies that met 3 specified criteria: a study was included only if class size had been reduced for at least a year, classes of less than 20 students were compared to substantially larger classes, and students in the larger and smaller classes were comparable. Slavin found that reduced class size had a small positive effect on students that did not persist after their reduced class experience.<sup>2</sup>
- In 1986, Robinson and Wittebols published a review of more than 100 relevant research studies using a *related cluster analysis* approach. Similar kinds of research studies were "clustered" or grouped together, such as studies of the same grade level, subject area, or student characteristics. They concluded that the clearest evidence of positive effects is in the primary grades, particularly kindergarten through third grade, and that reducing class size is especially promising for disadvantaged and minority students. At the same time, they cautioned that positive effects were less likely if teachers did not change their instructional methods and classroom procedures in the smaller classes.<sup>3</sup>

Other research analyses have concluded that class size reduction does not have an appreciable effect. Tomlinson examined trend data from the 1950s to 1986 in the United States and did not find any consistent relationship between class size and standardized test scores; he concluded that the existing research did not justify a policy to reduce class size, in view of the costs involved and the potential negative impact on the quality of the teaching force.<sup>4</sup> Critics pointed out that this

analysis combined students from all grade levels together, that the reliance on student/teacher ratios was an inadequate measure of class size, and that Tomlinson ignored a host of intervening factors and social changes which may have masked the relationship.<sup>5</sup> Odden reviewed the existing research and argued that a system-wide class reduction policy would produce only modest gains in student achievement and incur an unjustifiably high cost. He opted instead for certain targeted class reduction strategies in conjunction with a series of other interventions, and claimed that his proposals could produce greater benefits with lower costs.<sup>6</sup> An analysis of the relationship between class size and student achievement for Florida students using 1993-94 school level data found no relationship between smaller classes and student achievement; however, the study's authors expressed caution about drawing conclusions from the analysis, based on the limitations of the available data.<sup>7</sup>

More positive conclusions have been drawn from an analysis of a substantial database about the Texas education system. Using data from more than 800 districts containing more than 2.4 million students, Ferguson found significant relationships among teacher quality, class size, and student achievement. For first through seventh grades, using student/teacher ratio as a measure of class size, Ferguson found that district student achievement fell as the student/teacher ratio increased for every student above an 18 to 1 ratio. Measures of teacher quality (that is, teacher literacy skills and professional experience) were even more strongly related to higher student scores.<sup>8</sup>

Hanushek has repeatedly reviewed the available studies that permit a comparison of various school resource inputs—including class size reductions—and student outcomes and has concluded that reducing class size should not be expected to produce better student performance. His analyses have found that the relationships between various school expenditures—including class size reductions—and student achievement are remarkably weak, leading him to call for a drastic re-thinking of public education policy. Others<sup>9</sup> have used somewhat different analytical techniques to examine the same data and have disputed Hanushek's conclusions, arguing that the data do show important effects for student achievement, including the influence of smaller classes.<sup>10</sup> Still others have raised questions about the limitations of the basic analytical approach used here because it relies on student/teacher ratios as a measure for class size, it usually groups the data for all grade levels together, and the data represent student achievement at the level of school or school district average scores instead of representing individual students placed in larger or smaller classes.<sup>11</sup>

### **A National Scale Analysis of Data Related to Class Size**

In 1997, Wenglinsky published research findings concerning the relationship between class size and student achievement based on his analysis of data drawn from three national level databases. The study was designed to investigate the relationship between spending in education and student performance, and combined data from three different databases generated by the National Center for Education Statistics. Based on an analysis of data on

fourth-graders in 203 districts and eighth-graders in 182 school districts from across the United States, Wenglinsky found that class size served as an important link between school education spending and student mathematics achievement at both the fourth- and the eighth-grade levels, although in different ways:

- At the fourth-grade level, lower student/teacher ratios are positively related to higher mathematics achievement.
- At the eighth-grade level, lower student/teacher ratios improve the school social environment, which in turn leads to higher achievement.

For purposes of the analysis, Wenglinsky divided the school districts included in the study according to whether they served above-average or below-average socioeconomic status students, and whether they had above-average or below-average teacher costs. With respect to these four subgroups of districts, the largest effects for mathematics achievement gains occurred in districts where there were below-average socioeconomic status students, accompanied by above-average teacher costs.<sup>12</sup>

### **Recent Experimental Studies of Class Size**

Data from several more recent initiatives have added considerably to the research evidence concerning class size reduction in the United States in the early primary grades. Efforts in Indiana, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Wisconsin have reported important data, with the Tennessee projects currently providing the most complete and well-designed study of class size reduction effects.

#### *Indiana*

Beginning in 1984, Indiana's *Prime Time* project allocated money to support the reduction of class size to 18 in first-, second-, and then kindergarten and third-grade classrooms. Implementation of *Prime Time* was not rigorously controlled, and the results were mixed. An evaluation of the *Prime Time* project analyzed achievement scores for first- and second-grade students, comparing mean class scores in reading and mathematics from 10 school districts for tests that were administered the year immediately preceding the project with tests administered in the first year of the project. In these districts, the average first-grade class size was reduced from 22 to 19 students, and in second grade from 21 to 20 students. Tests of student achievement found that for students in the smaller classes, the reading scores for first-graders showed the greatest improvement, with smaller gains in mathematics.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Tennessee*

Tennessee's *Project STAR* (Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio) and two associated data collections have made important contributions to the quality of research evidence concerning the reduction of class size. *STAR* was a 4-year longitudinal study of kindergarten, first-, second-, and third-grade classrooms in

Tennessee which began in 1985. *STAR* compared classes of 13-17 students with classes of 22-26 students both with and without an additional instructional aide in the larger classes. Participating teachers did not receive any professional training focusing on teaching in reduced size classes. *STAR* was unusual because it possessed essential features of a controlled research experiment designed to produce reliable evidence about the effects of reducing class size:

- *Study size.* Project *STAR* included 79 schools, more than 300 classrooms and 7,000 students, with students being followed through 4 years of experience in the given class size.
- *Random assignment.* Teachers and students were randomly assigned to the three different kinds of classes in order to ensure that the study was not biased by who was in which type of class.
- *In-school design.* All participating schools implemented at least one of each of the three types of classes in order to cancel out the possible influences coming from variations in the quality of the participating schools that might affect the quality of the classroom activity.

The evidence from student testing in *STAR* showed that the students in the smaller classes outperformed the students in the larger classes, whether or not the larger class teachers had an aide helping them. Project *STAR* found that:

- Smaller class students substantially outperformed larger class students on both standardized (Stanford Achievement Tests) and curriculum-based tests (Basic Skills First). This was true for both white and minority students in smaller classes, and for smaller class students from inner city, urban, suburban, and rural schools.
- The positive achievement effect of smaller classes on minority students was double that for majority students initially, and then was about the same.
- A smaller proportion of students in the smaller classes was retained in-grade, and there was more early identification of students' special educational needs.
- There were no significant differences in academic achievement for students in the larger classes with or without an additional instructional aide.<sup>14</sup>

Subsequent research efforts provided important additional evidence on the positive effects of class size reduction. In 1989, the *Lasting Benefits Study* began a follow-up study to examine whether the effects of the smaller class size experience persisted when students were returned to normal size classes. The study is still ongoing. To date, the research findings include:

- In fourth grade, students from the smaller classes still outperformed the students from the larger classes in all academic subjects.

- In fourth grade, students from the smaller classes were better behaved than students from the larger classes (i.e., student classroom effort, initiative, and disruptiveness).
- At least through eighth grade, a decreasing but still significant higher academic achievement level for the students from the smaller classes persists.<sup>15</sup>

In *Project Challenge*, Tennessee sought to put the *Project STAR* findings to use by implementing smaller class sizes in 16 of the state's poorest school districts. Beginning in 1990, the state phased in smaller classes at the kindergarten through third-grade levels in districts with the lowest per capita income and highest proportion of students in the subsidized school lunch program. The results of this effort were evaluated by examining the effect on the ranking of the school districts according to student performance on a statewide achievement test. The *Project Challenge* districts moved from near the bottom of school district performance in Tennessee to near the middle in both reading and mathematics for second grade.

| <i>Project Challenge</i> districts' average rankings before and after class size reduction, according to second-grade student achievement in reading and mathematics |                                                                                          |                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Total number of districts in Tennessee: 138                                                                                                                          | Average ranking of <i>Project Challenge</i> districts before class size reduction (1990) | Average ranking of <i>Project Challenge</i> districts after class size reduction (1993) |
| Second-Grade Reading Achievement                                                                                                                                     | 99 <sup>th</sup>                                                                         | 78 <sup>th</sup>                                                                        |
| Second-Grade Mathematics Achievement                                                                                                                                 | 85 <sup>th</sup>                                                                         | 57 <sup>th</sup>                                                                        |

In addition, in-grade retention of students was reduced in the *Project Challenge* districts when smaller classes were implemented.<sup>16</sup>

Taken together, the Tennessee studies have been viewed as landmark research. Finn concluded that "this research leaves no doubt that small classes have an advantage over larger classes in school performance in the early primary grades."<sup>17</sup> Mosteller, Light, and Sachs called it "... one of the great experiments in education in U.S. History."<sup>18</sup> Krueger, in an external re-analysis of the *Project STAR* data, re-confirmed the original finding that "students in small classes

scored higher on standardized tests than students in regular classes" even when the data analysis took into account adjustments for school effects, attrition, re-randomization after kindergarten, nonrandom transitions, and variability in actual class size.<sup>19</sup> *Project STAR* and the associated Tennessee studies provide the strongest evidence available to date regarding the positive effects of class size reduction.

#### *Burke County, North Carolina*

A recent initiative to reduce class size in Burke County, North Carolina, has also produced noteworthy data. Beginning in 1990, Burke County pilot-tested and then phased in a class size reduction project in the county school district. In 1995-96, 1,193 first-graders and 1,125 second-graders participated in the initiative. The program's goal has been to reduce class size to 15 students in all first-, second-, and third-grade classes. The Burke County project also included professional development activities covering instruction and assessment, and so the effects are not necessarily simply a function of reducing class size. Evaluation of the initiative has produced the following findings:

- Compared to a matched group of students in classes that had not been phased into the smaller class initiative, students in the smaller classes outperformed the comparison group in first, second, and third grades on both reading and mathematics achievement tests.
- Based on independent observations of classroom activity, the percentage of classroom time devoted to instruction in the smaller classes increased from 80 percent to 86 percent compared to the larger classes, while the percentage of time devoted to non-instructional activities such as discipline decreased from 20 percent to 14 percent.<sup>20</sup>

#### *Wisconsin*

Beginning in 1996-97, Wisconsin began a class size reduction program called the *Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program*. The SAGE Program's objective is to phase in class size reduction in kindergarten through third grade in school districts serving students from low-income families. The SAGE Program reduced class sizes in kindergarten and first grade in 1996-97, added class size reductions in second grade in 1997-98, and added third grade class size reductions in 1998-1999. Its aim is to reduce class size in the appropriate grade levels to a student teacher ratio of 15 to 1 or less. SAGE program classroom arrangements in the first two years of implementation were several, including regular classrooms with 1 teacher and 15 students, 2 teacher teams with 30 students, and 4 other types of arrangements reflecting the constraints of existing classroom settings and teacher assignments. In the 1997-98 school year there were 30 schools from 21 school districts participating in the SAGE program, and 14 schools in 7 districts providing comparison student background and achievement data for an evaluation study of the program that is ongoing.

*SAGE* and comparison school students' academic learning was measured at the beginning and end of the first-grade year, and again at the end of the second-grade year. The students' scores were compared to those of students in matching comparison schools serving similar populations of students, with the following results:

- *SAGE* first-grade students performed consistently better than comparison students in mathematics, reading, language arts, and total scores for the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills.
- The achievement gap lessened between white and African-American students in the *SAGE* smaller classes in the first grade, in contrast to a widening of the gap between white and African-American students in the larger classes of the comparison schools.
- Second-grade *SAGE* students' academic achievement remained higher than that of the comparison school second-graders, but the difference did not increase substantially.

These findings are consistent with the findings in *Project STAR*, but there are two important qualifications to make regarding the *SAGE* project data. First, these are second year evaluation data from an ongoing study, and so the findings of this research may change substantially as the program is phased in and additional data analyses are performed. Second, the *SAGE* project class size reductions were accompanied by other program initiatives: participating schools were also required to implement a rigorous academic curriculum, provide before and after school activities for students and community members, and implement professional development and accountability programs. Data analysis in the second year evaluation suggests that these other components of the *SAGE* program have not had an impact on student achievement, but it is still possible that the other components may exert some influence.<sup>21</sup>

### Summary Research Conclusions

Overall, the pattern of findings drawn from the existing research leads to the following three conclusions:

1. A consensus of research indicates that class size reduction in the early grades leads to higher student achievement. Researchers are more cautious about the question of the positive effects of class size reduction in 4th through 12th grades. The significant effects of class size reduction on student achievement appear when class size is reduced to a point somewhere between 15 and 20 students, and continue to increase as class size approaches the situation of a 1-to-1 tutorial.
2. The research data from the relevant studies indicate that if class size is reduced from substantially more than 20 students per class to below 20 students, the related increase in student achievement moves the average student from the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile up to somewhere above the 60<sup>th</sup> percentile. For disadvantaged and minority students the effects are somewhat larger.
3. Students, teachers, and parents all report positive effects from the impact of class size reductions on the quality of classroom activity.

### State Initiatives

Large-scale efforts to reduce class size have not been limited to Indiana and Tennessee. Some states initiated targeted class size reduction policies some time ago, while others are only in the early stages of development and implementation. In 1984, Texas passed legislation requiring class size to be limited to 22 students in kindergarten through 4th grade, with the provision going into effect for kindergarten through 2nd grade in 1985-86 and for 3rd and 4th grade in 1988-89.<sup>22</sup> Nevada began a class size reduction program in 1990-91, beginning with a target of a 15 to 1 student/teacher ratio for kindergarten and 1st grade, then applying that ratio in 2nd grade and 3rd grade, to be followed by efforts to reduce the ratio to 22 to 1 for 4th through 6th grade, and then 25 to 1 for 7th through 12th-grade.<sup>23</sup> In 1995, Virginia began an effort to reduce class size in kindergarten through 3rd-grade classes for at-risk students, using a strategy in which local systems that devote funds to the voluntary program may receive matching funds from the state.<sup>24</sup> Other states reported to be involved in or considering some sort of class size reduction initiative include Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Utah.<sup>25</sup>

In the 1996-97 school year, California began its *Class Size Reduction Program*, through which it is giving money to school districts for the purpose of reducing

the student/teacher ratio to 20 to 1 in kindergarten through third grade.<sup>26</sup> The California *Class Size Reduction Program* represents an important initiative whose implementation may provide instructive lessons. In the 1997-98 school year, 1.9 million children were assigned to smaller classes in California schools. California school districts hired 18,000 new teachers in 1996, and almost one-quarter of them had no teaching credentials. Districts also have had to use various means to create sufficient classroom space.<sup>27</sup> Class size reduction clearly increases the demand for more classrooms and qualified teachers. Implementation of class size reduction policies on a large scale require careful planning and attention.

The impact of class size reduction reforms, their cost, and their relationship to professional development are major questions facing current education reform in the United States. Only with information about these questions will policymakers be able to make knowledgeable decisions about the cost-effectiveness and feasibility of various reform options.

## Discussion

### Why Do Smaller Classes Make a Difference?

The higher student achievement brought about by class size reduction may result from some of the ways in which reducing class size naturally alters the classroom environment. On being assigned to smaller classes, teachers report that the classroom atmosphere is better, that students can receive more individualized attention, and that the teachers have more flexibility to use different instructional approaches and assignments.<sup>28</sup> One unanticipated result of the Burke County reduced class size initiative was that the teachers found themselves with more classroom space to work with, because they were using the same classrooms with smaller numbers of students.<sup>29</sup> Class size reduction also changes the educational opportunities beyond the classroom, insofar as teachers have a larger portion of time to devote to working with each of their students' parents.

Class size reduction changes numerous features of the classroom situation. There are fewer students to distract each other. Each student in a reduced size class gets more attention on average from the teacher, and more time to speak while the others listen. Reduced class size also reduces the level of noise in a class. One theory offered to explain the positive effects of class size reduction on student achievement simply argues that in smaller classes each student receives a larger portion of the educational resources represented by the teacher's instructional time, and consequently, learns more.<sup>30</sup>

Other researchers have drawn attention to the *quality* of teaching in smaller classes, rather than the *quantity*. The *SAGE* evaluation study used teacher interviews, classroom observation, and other data-gathering techniques to study what happens in smaller classes, and these researchers suggest that students are benefiting from more *individualized* attention. The teachers know each of their students better, and can keep track of how each student is doing on the

learning task of the moment. This knowledge enables the teacher to intervene more effectively to help the individual student make progress.<sup>31</sup>

Researchers also have suggested that smaller classes are more likely to be "friendlier" places, where students develop better relationships with their classmates and with the teacher, encouraging students to become more engaged in classroom learning activities. The smaller the class, the harder it is to escape the positive influence of the classroom educational experience. The explanation for why reduced class size is especially beneficial in the early grades may derive from the fact that in the early grades children are learning how to be students in classrooms where the number of people is larger than the number of people in their families and students are learning a new routine.<sup>32</sup> This socialization theory is also consistent with the research finding in both *Project STAR* and *SAGE* that the largest increase in student achievement occurs in the first year of a student's experience in a smaller class.<sup>33</sup>

These various explanations for why class size reduction increases student achievement are not incompatible with each other, and they do not preclude other potential influences. It may be that class size reduction improves student achievement because there is more time for learning *and* more individualized attention *and* a better introduction to classroom routine. And if teachers were trained to adapt their teaching in other ways that are suited to smaller classes, such as initiating different kinds of student activities that are possible in smaller classes, this might produce an additional benefit.

The focus on class size reduction in the early grades also suggests that smaller classes represent a preventive, rather than a remedial, approach. If smaller classes help students start off on the right foot in learning how to adjust to the classroom situation and get engaged in learning activities, then students avoid the more difficult educational path of falling behind, finding help, and catching up to their schoolmates.

### **When is a Reduction Not a Reduction?**

The question of class size is not simply a matter of less is more. The pattern of research evidence only favors class size reduction if it is substantial and brings the class size below a certain threshold. Reducing class size from 30 to 25, for example, may well have no effect whatsoever. The research evidence from *Project STAR* showed that students in smaller classes with fewer than 18 students did better when compared with students in larger classes. Given the variations among individual students and teachers and the way they interact, it is unlikely that there is a single "magic number" below which class size suddenly produces a beneficial effect. But it is fairly clear that class size must get somewhere below 20 in order to make a real difference.

Reducing the ratio of students to teachers does not necessarily mean a reduction in class size. This issue was a complicating factor in most of the research studies described earlier, where questions were raised about the adequacy of using the student/teacher ratio as a measure of class size. Policy initiatives may aim to

change the ratio of students to teachers, and if reduced class size is key, such initiatives may miss the mark. Some initiatives permit officials to include other education staff besides the classroom teachers in the calculation of the ratio, such as resource teachers in special education, music, and physical education. Consequently, school systems could increase the number of teachers without necessarily reducing class size; and particularly since the number of available classrooms is both a practical and a budget issue, officials may be tempted to solve the ratio problem by adding another teacher to a larger class. The research findings from *Project STAR* and *SAGE* are relevant here: In *Project STAR*, the larger classes with instructional aides did *not* produce the same benefits as the smaller classes; in the *SAGE* program, however, the increase in student achievement occurred in both the 15:1 and the 30:2 student/teacher classrooms.

Reducing class size does not necessarily reduce the teacher's workload, or even the number of students they teach each day.<sup>34</sup> If a teacher is assigned to teach more classes because the number of students in each class is reduced, the teacher spends more time teaching and has no fewer students. Such problems might be resolved by strategies such as year-round schooling, but this still implies either that teachers teach all year or that more teachers get hired. The common assumption is that smaller classes allow teachers to increase the time devoted to each student, either individually or in smaller groups, and thereby improve the quality of the students' education. If this assumption is true, successful class size reduction programs will have to attend to the impact on teachers' workloads.

School arrangements that reduce class size only for particular students or subjects may achieve greater results with lower costs, depending on how they are organized and what exactly makes the smaller class experience better. It may be more important to reduce class size for reading than for physical education, and the research suggests that minority and economically disadvantaged students benefit most from smaller classes. Educators and policymakers should not blindly assume that an across-the-board, across-the-school-day approach to class size reduction is best.<sup>35</sup>

School officials and policymakers also have to face the problem of the effect of class size reduction on the supply of teachers. If the supply of teachers remains the same and class size reduction increases the demand, then it would seem that class size reduction policies will result in the hiring of less qualified teachers. Right now many states are having trouble finding qualified teachers to hire. With the current concerns about teacher quality in general, and the call for professional development focusing on teaching in smaller classes, policymakers want to strengthen teacher quality, not weaken it. It may be, however that class size reduction policies will not have such a detrimental effect on teacher quality. Currently, many teachers leave the classroom after only a few years to pursue some other profession. Class size reduction might lessen this problem of teacher attrition, because of its popularity. If teachers find teaching in a smaller class more personally rewarding, they may stay in the profession longer, decreasing

the frequency of the need to hire and train new teachers. Only the future will tell if this potential benefit of class size reduction will come to pass.

### **What Do Teachers Do or Not Do, and How Might They Do Better?**

Effective professional training may augment the positive effects of reduced class size beyond whatever gains are generated by reduced class size alone. Reduced classes offer teachers the opportunity to teach differently from the way they teach in larger classes. They don't have to spend as much time lecturing, for example, or having all the students doing worksheets at their own desks. Having more time for students means that teachers can organize classroom learning activities differently and have students demonstrate their achievement through exercises that don't have to be read or corrected in the shortest time possible. In the Burke County project, for example, the reduced class size initiative was coupled with professional development activities designed to enable teachers to use different instructional strategies and different assessment methods. Wisconsin's *SAGE* Program also includes professional development efforts. If schools are going to devote substantial energy and resources to reducing class size, the extent of the benefits derived from such efforts may depend in part on how teachers take advantage of the smaller class size to improve the quality of students' educational experiences.

Teachers do not necessarily change their behavior when they move to smaller classes. In one observational research study, even though the teachers assigned to smaller classes thought they were teaching differently, the independent observers saw no discernable difference in teacher behavior.<sup>36</sup> Research studies suggest that teachers do not just automatically change their behavior to optimize the potential benefits of smaller class size,<sup>37</sup> and there is a considerable body of research that shows that creating substantial changes in teachers' classroom behavior is no easy feat. Both teachers who are used to teaching in larger classes and teachers newly hired due to the hiring needs associated with class size reduction initiatives will need to have professional training and support to enable them to utilize more fully the advantages of smaller classes. It is clear that many schools will face this challenge in the coming years. The best <sup>38</sup> ways to meet that challenge remain to be found.

## **Conclusion**

Reducing class size to below 20 students leads to higher student achievement. However, class size reduction represents a considerable commitment of funds, and its implementation can have a sizable impact on the availability of qualified teachers. Strengthening teacher quality also leads to higher student achievement. There is more than one way to implement class size reduction, and more than one way to teach in a smaller class. Depending on how it is done, the benefits of class size reduction will be larger or smaller.

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### **Attachment C**

National Conference of State Legislatures, "Small Learning Communities," June 2002; available online at [www.ncsl.org/programs/employ/slc.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/programs/employ/slc.htm).





## Education

### Small Learning Communities

June 2002

#### Summary

In the last fifty years, the average size of high schools has changed from having fewer than 1,000 students to now having over 1,500 students. Research overwhelmingly supports the notion that students in kindergarten through high school are more successful when they attend small schools. In fact, smaller learning environments positively affect grades, test scores, attendance rates, graduation rates, drug and alcohol use, and school safety. Moreover, smaller, more personalized learning structures seem to provide the setting for other high school reforms, perhaps because change is easier to implement in a smaller setting. In *Schools that Work: America's Most Innovative Public Education Programs*, the author suggests that making schools smaller is the first step toward enhancing school conditions and improving student outcomes (1992). Analysis of various high school reform efforts also underscores "scaling down" as a common contributor for success. Smaller schools can more readily provide students with mentors, tutors and advisors; make learning more meaningful by linking it to life-experiences and community; and provide adequate time and support for mastery of knowledge and skills.

#### Variations on Small Learning Communities

Schools-within-schools are small, autonomous programs housed within larger school buildings. Schools-within-schools are generally responsible to the district rather than to the host school's principal, and are formally authorized by the superintendent and/or board of education. Schools-within-schools have their own culture, program, personnel, students, budget and school space. Both students and teachers choose to affiliate with schools-within-schools.

Career Academies are "schools-within-schools" organized around career themes. They integrate academic and vocational instruction, provide work-based learning opportunities for students and prepare students for postsecondary education and employment, with the personalized learning environment of a small community. Teachers and students integrate academic and occupation-related classes as a way to enhance real-world relevance and maintain high academic standards. Local employer partnerships provide program planning guidance, mentors and work internships. Career academies place an emphasis on building relationships between students and adults—teachers as well as work-site supervisors and other employer representatives. The school-within-a school structure supports constructive relationships between and among students and teachers by grouping students together each year to take core courses with the same group of teachers, thus increasing the support students receive.

House plans divide students in a large school into groups of several hundred, including students from 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Students take some or all courses with their house members and from their house teachers. House arrangements may be yearlong or multi-year arrangements. House plans personalize the high school experience but usually have limited effect on curriculum or instruction. Each house usually has its own discipline plan, social activities and student government.

Magnet Programs use a specialty core focus such as math, science, creative arts, or a career theme or cluster, to attract students from the entire school district. Some magnet programs have competitive admission requirements while others are open to any interested student. Students in a magnet program stay together for their core classes and may take other courses with non-magnet students.

Small schools are the most independent model. They are created through restructuring the students, staff and space of an existing school. Even when they are housed within a larger school building, small schools are more like small freestanding schools than like "programs" within comprehensive schools.

#### What the Research Shows

Smaller schools support academic achievement. Student achievement in small schools is at least equal, and possibly higher, in small schools relative to larger schools. The findings on academic achievement are equally divided; approximately half the studies show that students do no worse in small schools than in larger ones; while the other half finds students in small schools do better on measures such as school grades, test scores, honor roll membership, subject-area achievement, and higher-order thinking skills assessments (Cotton, 1996).

Here are a few examples from *The Class-Size Reduction Program, Boosting Student Achievement in Schools Across the Nation: A First-*

*Year Report*, suggesting that small schools breed academic achievement:

- The 2000 RAND study entitled, *Improving Student Achievement: What State NAEP Test Scores Tell Us*, examined 1990, 1992, 1994 and 1996 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data from representative samples of 2,500 students in 44 states to look at the effect of state characteristics, including class size, on student achievement. The study showed that, controlling for students' family backgrounds, states with the lowest pupil-teacher ratios in the early grades had the highest NAEP scores.
- The American Institutes for Research analyzed the performance of a national sample of schools on their respective state assessments. The study concluded that reduced class size is significantly related to higher academic performance, particularly in reading. The positive impact of smaller classes on reading achievement also was found in middle and high schools. This study showed that students benefited not only from small class sizes but gained additional benefit from attending high schools with lower enrollment overall.

Smaller schools promote academic equity. Smaller schools help close the achievement gap between students from higher income, mostly white and Asian-American families and students from lower-income, mostly African American and Hispanic-American families (Klonsky, 1998). For ethnic minority students and students of low socioeconomic status, the effects of small schools are especially positive, helping reduce the damaging effects of poverty on student achievement; conversely, large schools have an especially negative impact on those students relative to all students (Cotton, 1996; Howley and Bickel, 2000). In fact, the correlation between poverty and low achievement is as much as ten times stronger in larger schools than in small ones (Howley and Bickel, 2000).

Student attitudes and behavior are more positive in smaller schools, with minority and low socioeconomic status students most profoundly affected. Multiple studies have associated small schools with students' positive attitudes toward school, as well as the lower incidence of negative social behaviors such as truancy, classroom disruption, vandalism, aggressive behavior, theft, substance abuse and gang participation (Cotton, 1996). The Independent Educational Priorities Panel recently completed a study of the first year of the class-size reduction program in New York City. Among improvements reported as a result of smaller classes were:

- Noticeable declines in the number of disciplinary referrals;
- Improved teacher morale;
- A focus on prevention rather than remediation; and
- Higher levels in classroom participation by students (*The Class-Size Reduction Program, Boosting Student Achievement in Schools Across the Nation: A First-Year Report*).

Extracurricular participation rates are higher in smaller schools. Of all the research on small school impacts, the most well documented finding is that students in small schools participate in extracurricular activities to a greater extent and in a wider variety (Cotton, 1996). This is especially significant since extracurricular participation is associated with other desirable outcomes, such as positive attitudes and social behavior. Students in small schools generally enjoy participating in extracurricular activities more than students in larger schools.

Attendance is higher and dropout rates lower in smaller schools. Smaller schools have higher attendance rates than larger schools, and attendance improves for individual students who transfer from large to smaller schools. Small schools have a relatively greater impact on attendance of minority and low socioeconomic status students and have lower dropout rates and higher graduation rates than large schools; states with the largest school and school districts have the highest dropout rates (Cotton, 1996).

Students feel better about themselves and others in smaller schools. Students' perceptions of themselves academically and generally are higher in small schools, and they feel more connected to teachers and to each other. Interpersonal relations are better both among students and between students and teachers (Cotton, 2000).

Smaller schools prepare students for college as well or better than larger schools. Students from small high schools do as well or better than students from larger schools on college-related variables such as entrance examination scores, acceptance rates, attendance, grade point average and completion (Cotton, 2000).

Larger schools reach a point of diminishing returns on cost-effectiveness. Larger schools tend to have large, costly bureaucracies to manage and control their large numbers of students (Public Education Association, 1992) whereas smaller schools often save money by doing away with the complex large-school infrastructure. When measured against cost per student graduated, small schools are considerably less expensive to operate than either large or medium-sized schools because the dropout rates of small schools are so much lower (Raywid, 1999; Cotton, 2000).

#### State and Local Practices

At present, there are numerous initiatives in progress, both at the state and national level to reduce class size. Foundations and private organizations are also investing in smaller learning communities.

The Smaller Learning Communities Initiative is a federal Department of Education effort that grants money to local education agencies to plan, develop and implement smaller learning communities (goal of not more than 600 students) in large high schools (1,000 or more students). As of 2001, the program saw its budget nearly triple to \$145 million. Funds can be used to create schools-within-schools, career academies, restructure the day, institute personal adult advocates, develop teacher advisory systems and other innovations designed, create a more personalized high school experience for students and improve student achievement and performance.

Foundation support. The commitment of more than \$200 million to start new small schools nationwide or restructure large high schools into smaller schools-within-schools by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The teaming of the Gates Foundation with the Carnegie Corporation and the New York City-based Open Society Institute to form a new consortium in December of 2000. Together, they pledged \$30 million to create more small schools.

State Initiatives (Reducing Class Size, What Do We Know? 1999): States have taken legislative and administrative action to reduce class size.

- In 1984, Texas passed House Bill 72 requiring class size to be limited to 22 students in kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in 1985-1986 and for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade in 1988-1989.
- Also in 1984, Indiana began its *Prime Time* project that allocated money to support the reduction of class size to 18 in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and then kindergarten and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classrooms.
- Nevada began a class reduction program in 1990-1991, beginning with a target of a 15 to 1 student/teacher ratio for kindergarten through 1<sup>st</sup> grade, then applying that ratio in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, to be followed by efforts to reduce the ratio to 22 to 1 for 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade, and then 25 to 1 for 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade.
- In 1990, Tennessee initiated *Project Challenge* to implement smaller class sizes in 16 of the state's poorest school districts. The state phased in smaller classes at the kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade level in districts with the lowest per capita income and highest proportion of students in the subsidized school lunch program. The *Project Challenge* districts moved from near the bottom of school district performance in Tennessee to near the middle in both reading and mathematics for second graders.
- Beginning in 1990, Burke County, North Carolina pilot-tested and then phased in a class size reduction project. In 1995-1996 1,193 1<sup>st</sup> graders and 1,125 2<sup>nd</sup> graders participated in the initiative. The program's goal has been to reduce class size to 15 students in 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes. The Burke County project also includes professional development activities. Students in these classes outperformed the comparison group on both reading and math achievement tests.
- In 1995, Virginia began an effort to reduce class size in k-3<sup>rd</sup> grade classes for at-risk students, using a strategy in which local systems that devote funds to the voluntary program may receive matching funds from the state. SAGE phased in class size reduction in k-3<sup>rd</sup> grade in school districts serving students from low-income families. In 1997-98 there were 30 schools from 21 districts participating in the SAGE program and 14 schools in 7 districts providing comparison student background and achievement data for an evaluation study of the program that is ongoing. Current results indicate that the achievement gap lessened between white and African-American students in SAGE smaller classes in contrast to those in larger classes and that SAGE first graders consistently outperformed comparison students in math, reading and language arts.
- Wisconsin began a class size reduction program called the *Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program* in 1996-97.
- In the 1996-1997 school years, California began its *Class Size Reduction Program*, through which it is giving money to school districts for the purpose of reducing the student/teacher ratio to 20 to 1 in k-3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- Other states reported to be involved in or considering some sort of class size reduction initiative include Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New York, Oklahoma and Utah. State programs encouraging smaller learning communities are not limited to this list.

Business supported initiatives.

#### Career Academies

The concept of career clusters and small learning communities are joined together in the career academy approach that operates within high schools.

- The National Academy Foundation (NAF) describes its academies as a place where "students take classes around a career theme - Finance, Travel & Tourism or Information Technology - with the same team of teachers for two to four years. Partnerships with employers, the community, and local colleges bring resources from outside the high school to improve student motivation and achievement." NAF focuses energy on curriculum and staff development, local advisory boards that link with businesses, paid student internships and quality assurance. NAF program sites operate in 39 states.

The California legislature passed a law in 2001 (enter 709 for chapter number and 2001 for the year to find the statute at the link) that authorized the development of 100 new information technology NAF sites in their state. California has supported and funded the development of career academies for more than a decade. (Enter 574 for the chapter number and 1993 for the year at the link's prompt.)

- Henry Ford Academy's core mission is to develop graduates who are ready for the future-whether that means college, skilled-trade apprenticeships, or jobs in the global, technological workplace. Founded in 1997, by Ford Motor Company, the academy has fewer than 500 students, where enrollment is by lottery. According to the Academy the curriculum includes: mathematics, science, communication skills, and humanities; 'hands-on' learning experiences for students and teachers; worldwide linkages for students and teachers with information, mentors, scholars and peers; new ways of measuring student progress as well as traditional testing programs; and community involvement. The school is located on the grounds of Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village. Museum exhibits help students understand how innovations have shaped manufacturing and how principles of design can be used to communicate ideas to others. Industry partnerships provide job shadowing and internship experiences to further expand students' knowledge. Representatives from Learning Designs, Inc., Michigan State University, and Wayne County RESA, and others support curriculum development, which is academic/college-prep, with context-based business projects. The business partners are involved in a wide range of activities-playing a guiding role in defining the mission of the school, encouraging employees to act as mentors to students, and providing students with internship and job-shadowing opportunities in the workplace. They also give students access to the latest communications technologies and computers. The instructional day is divided into three two-hour blocks of time. The academic curriculum, which is aligned with state standards, is presented through the lens of manufacturing. In the morning, students study manufacturing arts (social studies and English). Mid-day activities include physical education, German and lunch. They also receive academic coaching during a 30-minute period in which Ford Motor Company employees visit the school to provide remediation and/or enrichment for individual students. In the afternoon, students focus on manufacturing sciences (math and science). Throughout the instructional day, teachers aim to link artifacts from the Henry Ford Museum to daily lessons.

#### Issues of Sustainability

Although smaller learning communities may lead to benefits for students, implementing and sustaining smaller school units is not always easy. For one, recruiting more teachers at a time when teacher shortages loom is a daunting task. Furthermore, research points to the need for professional development for teachers accustomed to teaching larger classes so that they may take full advantage of smaller classes (Reducing Class Size, What Do We Know? March 1999). (For more information about teach quality issues click here.)

Another study found that the lack of flexible procedures at the district and sometimes the state level stunted the successful implementation of smaller learning communities within large high schools. In fact, insufficient faithfulness to the small school concept (either in design or implementation), insufficient autonomy and separateness of the sub-unit or sub-school; and failure of cultural change to accompany structural change resulted in these schools failing to yield positive outcomes (Raywid, 1996).

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This issue summary was a collaborative effort between NCSL's Learn, Work and Earn Project and the Institute for Educational Leadership's Center for Workforce Development. It was made possible by a grant from the U.S. Departments of Education and Labor.

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# POLICY REPORT

Number 1

REPORTING ON POLICY ISSUES IN K-12 EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

Spring 2000

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## Class Size

### *Can School Districts Capitalize on the Benefits of Smaller Classes?*

**M**ore than 20 states and the federal government have initiated efforts to reduce class size. Class-size-reduction (CSR) initiatives enjoy enormous public support and appeal to the common sense of parents and educators alike.

Until recently, class size in U.S. public schools averaged about 25 students. This is too large, some say, for teachers to give students the individualized attention they need to succeed. Initiatives at the state and federal levels have sought to lower the average class size to 15 to 18 pupils.

The Clinton Administration's Class Size Reduction Program is helping school districts hire 100,000 new teachers to reduce class sizes in the elementary grades to a nationwide average of 18 students. Congress raised the program's funding from \$1.2 billion this school year to \$1.3 billion in the 2000-01 school year, and the Department of Education estimates that 29,000 teachers have already been hired through the program.

States are spending an additional \$2.3 billion on their own CSR initiatives during the 1999-00 school year, and several states plan to spend more on CSR in the future.

Why the sudden interest in class size? The issue's political appeal is certainly one reason, but many states have turned to CSR as one strand of their efforts to raise standards for student

achievement. Research has found that smaller classes in the early grades promote effective teaching and learning.

While initiatives to reduce class size have been praised by many, others remain skeptical. Some policymakers and researchers believe the costs of reduction are prohibitively high and the money would be better spent to support other proven types of school reform. If districts hire the most qualified teachers and support them with ongoing professional development, class size becomes an irrelevant issue, say skeptics of the push toward smaller classes.

Other questions relate to how CSR initiatives are implemented, how to deal

*This Policy Report seeks to help policymakers:*

- understand the benefits of CSR
- assess realistically its costs
- consider research-based alternatives
- make sure, when CSR is undertaken, that its benefits are realized in the classroom

with shortages of qualified teachers and classroom space, what teachers must do to take advantage of smaller classes, and what student outcomes can be expected from the reform.

Policy and fiscal issues aside, in many states the debate is no longer over whether class-size reduction makes a difference, but how and under what circumstances (Perez 1998, McRobbie 1998). How can your state or district best design a successful CSR policy?

## Policy Report

Number 1, Spring 2000

Reporting on Policy Issues in K-12  
Educational Management

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# When Does Small Class Size Help Student Achievement?

**S**tudies over the last twenty years have provided researchers and educators with the opportunity to observe reduced-size classrooms and gather data on student achievement. Class-size reduction has been deemed successful when students show marked improvement in learning through formal evaluations.

Success is most likely for students in smaller classes under the following conditions:

- When the student-teacher ratio is reduced significantly.

No one is completely sure how small classes should be to maximally benefit students. Project STAR, a leading study from Tennessee, defined small classes as those with 13-17 students. Regular-sized classes were defined as those with 22 or more students. When tested, students in small classes consistently outperformed students in regular-sized classrooms (Pate-Bain, Achilles, and others 1992). The most notable student gains came from low-achieving students with impoverished socioeconomic backgrounds (McRobbie 1998; Illig 1996). In light of these results, many states have begun shrinking class size to 17-20 students per teacher.

Clearly, a drop from 35 students to 18 students is dramatic, and some specialists believe class-size reduction must be this substantial before significant student gains will be evident. Merely reducing class size from 25 down to 20 is an ineffective form of implementation.

- When reduction initiatives are implemented in grades K-3.

The most effective class-size reduction initiatives have focused

---

**Class-size reduction has been deemed successful when students show marked improvement in learning through formal evaluations.**

---

on the early grades. Project STAR focused on grades K-3. Similarly, California's Class-Size Reduction (CSR) initiative targets kindergarten through third grade.

When reduction initiatives are implemented in early grades, young students are more likely to get the extra attention they need to learn basic skills in reading, writing, and math. These students, research is now showing, will carry the effects of a small class with them throughout the remainder of their academic careers. Tennessee's Lasting Benefits Study, a followup to Project STAR, has found that the gains due to small classes were still evident in reading and math through grade 8. (Nye with Hedges and others 1999).

- When certain services and technologies are available to achieve the small-class effect.

When well-trained teachers employ effective instructional techniques, students achieve more. No organizational reform, smaller class size included, will substitute for high-quality teaching, as many studies have documented (McRobbie and others 1998). If

professional development that guides teachers in small-class instruction is used in conjunction with effective teaching practices, a strong curriculum, and smaller classes, researchers will be more able to examine the true effects of class-size reduction (Beall 1998; U.S. Department of Education 1998).

Teachers and students must have sufficient classroom space and access to materials and services. Some schools seeking to reduce class size have struggled with this issue, whereas others already have the resources available. In California, with the implementation of CSR, school districts have scrambled to accommodate more classes with fewer students, some-

#### VIEWPOINT

**W**ith [California's] class-size reduction program, and the fact that the waiting room of the marketplace of educators is languishing with dusty seats, you can bet the Sunday tihe that many poor, inner-city children are suffering through the dubious blessing of being taught in smaller classes by less-experienced teachers.... Poor teaching by the underqualified nullifies any potential benefits of smaller classes."

- Randy Ross,  
Vice President, Los  
Angeles Annenberg  
Metropolitan Project

### **TEACHERS REPORT on the benefits of small classes**

Teachers from around the nation who teach in smaller classes report the benefits of having fewer students in their classrooms. Overwhelmingly, they observe the following characteristics of smaller classes:

#### **Within the curriculum, teachers...**

- find that learning can take on more variety, breadth, depth, and richness.
- have more time for covering additional material and use more supplementary texts and enrichment activities.

#### **When instructing, teachers...**

- have a better handle on teaching materials, more organization, and more forms of creative instruction.
- have more opportunity for indepth teaching of basic content.
- use concrete materials to engage students in authentic learning experiences.
- have more opportunities for individualized interaction with students.
- complete basic instruction more quickly as students participate more and spend more time on task.
- devote more time to instruction and have to spend less time on classroom management.

#### **While assessing, teachers...**

- can use meaningful assessment tools.
- spend less time on paperwork and grading.

#### **While in a smaller class, teachers...**

- experience a greater sense of personal satisfaction.
- feel a greater sense of achievement.
- enjoy teaching more.
- deal more individually with misbehavior problems and diagnose causes before major problems occur.

Overall, both students and teachers have better attitudes toward smaller classes. The atmosphere is one of less anxiety and tension. Studies of smaller classrooms have found a climate of warmth, reduced levels of frustration, and positive attitudes toward teaching and learning.

times having to schedule classes in hallways or in portable classrooms.

Class-size reduction should be viewed not as an end but as a means to an end. Teachers still need access to specialists, special programs, and other schoolwide services. Although there is evidence that the need for special services and programs is reduced in smaller classrooms, class-size reduction is a reform that should be used in conjunction with a variety of other practices.

A major advantage of small classes, teachers uniformly report, is that they can devote more time to instruction because they do not need to spend as much time on classroom management. These possibilities are realized when all

the conditions for a positive small-class experience are in place and a teacher can truly take advantage of a reduction in student numbers.

Wise policymaking seeks to produce the greatest student gains from finite education dollars. To reach this goal while attempting to reduce class size, policymakers must pay particular attention to the conditions noted above (a target of 13-17 students per class in the primary grades, with adequate training and support for teachers). Although specific scenarios may differ from state to state, research has shown these basic elements to be of utmost importance in the implementation of class-size-reduction initiatives. CL

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## BEYOND ACADEMICS:

### What Students Gain From Smaller Classes

Much attention has been paid to the cognitive and academic benefits students obtain in smaller classes. Other benefits abound.

#### Students in smaller classes...

- learn basic skills and subject matter better, more easily, and faster.
- think more creatively and divergently.
- develop more positive attitudes, perceptions, and human relationships.
- function more effectively as members and leaders of groups.
- achieve higher attention and lower absence rates.
- are more fluent and proficient in writing, listening, and speaking skills.
- demonstrate less aggressive behavior such as fighting, shoving, pushing, or crowding.
- have fewer fears about being ridiculed or bullied.
- are more motivated and have a better self-concept.
- participate promptly, eagerly, and enthusiastically.

### What should be the focus of district-level class-size policy?

Gaining the benefit from smaller classes begins with a districtwide policy that establishes concrete goals (such as a maximum of 18 students in K-3 classes) and sets clear priorities on use of funds. Consider the following points when creating a policy:

- Target money and other resources to minority and low-income students who stand the most to gain from CSR.
- Make better teaching and learning the cornerstone of CSR. "No organizational arrangement, including small class size, can compensate for poor teaching" (McRobbie, Finn, and Harman 1998). Use some funding for training inexperienced teachers.
- Assess facility needs and plan for reconfiguration of existing physical plants or for new construction. Decide whether CSR is worth displacement of other programs or activities.
- Apply for waivers to leverage federal and state funds in pursuit of district priorities. Set aside funds for activities such as community meetings, teacher training, and curriculum planning.
- Continually evaluate the results of CSR. Monitor not just changes in pupil-teacher ratios but teachers' classroom practices, the unforeseen displacement of other programs, and unexpected costs.

SOURCE: "Capitalizing on Small Class Size," by Jessica O'Connell and Stuart C. Smith, *ERIC Digest*, Number 136, April 2000, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management.

# Teaching Practices in Small Classes

**D**o teachers change their instructional practices when their classrooms have fewer students? Do we know which teaching practices make a difference in smaller classrooms? What issues should professional development address?

It could be assumed that effective teachers would be successful in any classroom, whether large or small. Research during the past couple of decades has brought a consensus on a handful of traits that characterize effective teaching:

- Gifted teachers hold high expectations for their students.
- They give clear and focused instruction in a highly efficient classroom setting.
- Good teachers monitor their students' learning and reteach students when necessary.
- They set high behavioral standards and also maintain personal interactions with their students.
- They are characterized as motivated and enthusiastic.

These characteristics are necessary in any classroom setting. To get the most out of smaller classes, however, policymakers must ensure that these practices actually occur in small-class settings.

Teachers in a variety of studies have identified the following advantages of small class size:

- More time for teaching and learning, and more space in which to do so.
- A greater ability to monitor and evaluate their students.
- An enhanced atmosphere that leads to tailored instruction at each student's ability level.
- Better classroom management with fewer students (Pate-Bain, Achilles and others).
- More time to assist individual students in a relaxed, interactive environment.
- Better use of teaching methods and materials through increased small-group work and more varied, imaginative, and organized activities (Perez 1998).

A reduction in class size doesn't automatically ensure that classrooms will be characterized by these elements. Research in fact has shown that

most teachers do not change their teaching practices when they move to smaller classes (Ziegler 1997). Evaluation findings from the California CSR initiative's first three years found only slight differences in the ways teachers covered curriculum and the types of activities they employed (Bohrnstedt and Stecher).

Wisconsin's SAGE program found that although teachers assigned to smaller classes thought they were teaching differently, observers saw few discernible differences between large-class and small-class instruction.

Must teachers change their teaching practices for a reduction in class size to benefit student achievement? Many people seem to assume so, but the research offers little guidance. As Bohrnstedt and Stecher point out, "no well-developed theory suggests why teaching in smaller classes should be different than in larger classes."

Instead of focusing on specific teaching techniques that work best in

## VIEWPOINT

**I**f you aren't working harder, you probably aren't doing it right. You now have fifteen, not one big class. If all you are going to do is pass out work sheets, go back to a bigger class."

-Janice McMahan,  
Principal, North  
Carolina

**T**eachers with smaller classes report that their students enjoy school more and have fewer absences, and that they are able to cover material more thoroughly with greater student comprehension. Smaller classes also give teachers more time to spend on students who need extra help, plan enrichment and remedial activities, or check work during class to provide immediate feedback."

- Jane Walters,  
Tennessee  
Commissioner of  
Education

## VIEWPOINT

**W**hile the research evidence on the effects of class size suggests no real effects, the research does show dramatic differences in the performance of teachers. The research confirms some teachers are much better than others and differences in teacher effectiveness completely dwarf any possible differences due to class size variations. Given this, it seems much more productive to channel money toward attracting and retaining particularly effective teachers than toward continuing to pursue a failed policy."

-Eric A. Hanushek  
Professor of  
Economics and  
Political Science,  
University of  
Rochester,  
New York

smaller classes, most studies look at effective teaching practices in general and examine whether teachers engage in more of these practices in smaller classes. Smaller class size may simply enhance the instructional strategies already employed by effective teachers.

Bohrnstedt and Stecher recommend that school officials pay careful attention to teaching practices in

small classes so they can design professional-development programs to equip teachers with suitable new skills.

Charles M. Achilles (1999), a principal researcher in the Tennessee STAR project, asserts that teachers may not need to change their teaching strategies to obtain the benefits of CSR. He contends that teachers may be able to do more with fewer kids using the same strategies educators

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**Smaller class size may simply enhance the instructional strategies already employed by effective teachers.**

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have long known to be most effective, such as the following:

- Instruction is guided by a preplanned curriculum.
- Students are carefully oriented to lessons.

### California and Tennessee

The early success of Tennessee's widely known "STAR" program spurred similar CSR initiatives, including California's. Here is how the two states' efforts compare.

#### Tennessee

- A controlled experiment in a limited number of schools, with teachers and students randomly assigned.
- Class size reduced from 22-26 to 13-17 students.
- Adequate space for smaller classes.
- Credentialed teachers.
- Nearly all students spoke English.
- Standardized objectives for English and math.
- Existing test scores aligned with standards.

#### California

- Statewide implementation in four grades (K-3), beginning with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades.
- Class size reduced from an average of 28.8 (max. 33) to a maximum of 20 students.
- Extremely limited space due to rapidly growing enrollment.
- Existing shortage of teachers, some hired with credentials.
- Nearly one-third of students were English-language learners.
- Standards and objectives under development.
- No statewide test until 1998; it was not aligned with new standards.

**I**mprovements in our schools will occur in small steps with a lot of hard work. Reducing class size in the early grades—particularly in urban schools—is a small step, but a real step in this direction. Small classes have a broad spectrum of benefits."

- Jeremy D. Finn, Professor, State University of New York, Buffalo

**I**would rather have my child in a classroom with 35 children and an excellent teacher than in a classroom with only 20 children and a teacher who was below par."

-Edward Fry (retired), Department of Learning and Teaching Rutgers University

- Instruction is clear and focused.
- Learning progress is monitored closely, and when students do not understand, they are retaught.
- Class time is used for learning, not discipline.
- Personal interactions are positive.
- Instructional groups formed in classrooms fit instructional needs.

In smaller classes, Achilles reasons, classroom management is easier and basic instruction can be completed quicker, allowing teachers additional time to practice effective teaching techniques, such as planning for lessons and dividing the class into groups. Additional time is also available to cover additional materials.

Pointing to data from Project STAR and other studies, Achilles asserts that smaller class size automatically guarantees that teachers will use effective teaching practices, regardless of whether they have small-class experience or not.

Effective teachers are skilled teachers. In smaller classes, the key to teachers' success with student achievement is the know-how to be effective with fewer students. Conditions that foster good teaching will lead to improved learning for students. Small classes can facilitate these favorable conditions, but only with well-planned implementation guidelines. CL

PR

## California Study May Offer New Insight into Teaching Practices

**C**alifornia is undertaking a study mandated by the legislation that authorized that state's CSR initiative. The RAND Corporation and the American Institutes for Research (AIR) are taking lead roles in this study. Other partners in the CSR Research Consortium are WestEd, EdSource, Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), and the University of California at Riverside.

The study will address four main issues: the effects of small-class size on student achievement, its effects on special populations, the staffing requirements districts face, and what state teaching qualifications will be affected. The main focus of the study will be the practices teachers can use to improve small-class instruction.

According to George Bohrnstedt at AIR, researchers will look at achievement gains as a function of CSR, the number of new teachers hired because of CSR and the credentials they do or do not have, the kinds of districts where teachers work, and whether per-pupil expenditures rise or fall. This evaluation is expected to last until March 2002.

The consortium's first report (Bohrnstedt and Stecher 1999) is available at [www.classsize.org](http://www.classsize.org)

# The Costs of Reducing Class Size

Class-size-reduction initiatives have spurred discussion about their effects on student achievement, teacher quality, school facilities, and the organization of the educational system. But no reform can take place without one key element—money, and in the case of CSR, lots of it.

A major consideration for state legislators and for school and district officials who are deciding whether to undertake CSR is, of course, its cost. Much of the debate revolves around the issue of whether reducing class size is cost-effective.

Although some aspects of the financial impact of CSR can be readily calculated, an avalanche of other unanticipated financial and nonfinancial costs may devastate CSR efforts.

Currently, California is confronted with a teacher-quality crisis of huge proportions that is in large part a result of recent class-size-reduction requirements. Implementation of that state's 1996 Class Size Reduction program "has arguably created the greatest immediate need for personnel and facilities in the history of California public education," stated the Joint Legislative Audit Committee (1999), a nonpartisan watchdog unit of the state's government. (See sidebar on page 10 for details.)

Another recent study, *Teaching and California's Future: The Status of the Teaching Profession*, sponsored by the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning and conducted by SRI International, found that more than 10 percent of public school teachers in California have not met the state's minimum requirements (Shields and others 1999). In addition, over 1 million of the state's 5.7 million students are enrolled in schools that have such a large percentage of underqualified teachers that the schools are effectively "dysfunctional" (Shields and others).

According to the task force that guided the study, correcting the problem of unqualified and underqualified teachers in California will cost between \$1.3 and \$1.8 billion (Shields and others).

The following are among recommendations made by the 20-member task force, which consisted of educators and policymakers:

- raising beginning wages from \$32,000 to \$40,000
- phasing out waivers and emergency permits in the next five years
- providing 100 percent "forgivable" loans of at least \$20,000

to students who complete a teacher licensure program and teach in hard-to-staff schools for at least four years (Shields and others)

Despite the overwhelming costs California will incur to ensure that all students are taught by qualified teachers, some argue that CSR can actually save costs in the long run. For example, if—as claimed by its proponents—small class sizes result in improved student behavior in school, there will be a reduction in vandalism costs and less need for corrective measures such as Saturday school (Achilles and Price).

## Expenditures on Class-Size Reduction, 1999-2000 School Year

### Federal Class Size Reduction Program \$1,200,000,000

### State Initiatives and Programs\*

|                 |              |               |                |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Alaska          | Indiana      | Minnesota     | South Carolina |
| \$1,582,594     | \$35,609,520 | \$137,700,000 | \$34,158,671   |
| California      | Iowa         | Nevada        | Utah           |
| \$1,534,254,000 | \$10,000,000 | \$82,900,087  | \$67,027,003   |
| Florida         | Louisiana    | New York      | Washington     |
| \$10,000,000    | \$31,939,287 | \$75,000,000  | \$99,000,000   |
| Illinois        | Maryland     | Ohio          | Wisconsin      |
| \$5,000,000     | \$11,600,000 | \$130,995,486 | \$18,200,000   |

**Total state expenditures: \$2,284,966,648**

**Total state and federal expenditures: \$3,484,966,648**

The Clearinghouse verified these figures with state departments of education in March 2000.

\*Only state expenditures that have been allocated as part of a legislated state initiative or program are listed here. As the table on pages 14-15 indicates, several states (such as Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and Wyoming) mandate or encourage maximum student-teacher ratios and expect districts to meet the targets with general education dollars (state and local).

Students in smaller classes in primary grades may continue on a path that reduces the need for special education, makes grade retention less likely, and increases the likelihood of high school graduation—all cost savers (McRobbie and others).

#### **Making Sure CSR Pays Off on Its Promise**

Few would disagree with the assertion that CSR is not worth the cost if it does not bring about its intended benefits. But to attain those benefits, school districts may need to do more than simply hire more teachers and put them in classrooms with fewer students. A Texas study highlights this issue.

Researchers Richard Murnane and Frank Levy (1996) describe an experiment in Austin, Texas, where the school district, as part of a desegregation plan in the late 1980s, allocated an extra \$300,000 per year for five years to each of 15 low-income elementary schools, with the hopes of raising student achievement and attendance. All schools used their funds to hire extra teachers to reduce class size. In 13 of the 15 schools, student achievement and attendance remained extremely low. The two other schools experienced a soaring increase in both attendance and student achievement.

The difference between those two schools and the other 13? The 13 schools "went about business as usual," retaining the same curriculum and teaching methods. The two succeeding schools raised standards, revised curriculum, set up health clinics, and invested in teacher training in addition to hiring new teachers. The key to successfully funding CSR, some believe, is doing more than pouring in large amounts of money and "hoping for the best." Policymakers must ensure that funds are put to the best possible use (Black 1999).

### **Federal Funding of Class-Size Reduction**

Early in 1999, the Clinton Administration pledged \$1.2 billion to support class-size reduction. This money was released to states on July 1, 1999, as a "down payment" on the administration's plan to ensure a "world-class education" to America's children, thereby ensuring "America's future prosperity."

The administration's long-range goal is to spend more than \$12 billion on class-size reduction by 2005 to help school districts hire 100,000 new teachers and reduce class sizes in the elementary grades to a nationwide average of 18 students.

In November 1999 Congress appropriated \$1.3 billion for the program's second year, a \$100 million increase over fiscal 1999. At the insistence of Congress, the new legislation also gives school districts more flexibility in use of the funds. In the 2000-01 school year, districts will be able to spend up to 25 percent of the aid on professional development, up from 15 percent in the original legislation.

Other provisions of the new law likewise place a premium on teacher quality. Federal funds can no longer be used to hire teachers with emergency certificates, and teachers previously hired under the program must become certified within one year. Small school districts and districts with a shortage of teachers now have more flexibility in using the money for training.

The U.S. Department of Education, in a report released in November 1999 that was based on

preliminary data from nearly 46 percent of the nation's school districts, gave these estimates about the program's effectiveness:

- More than 29,000 teachers have been hired with FY 1999 Class Size Reduction Program funds.
- Approximately 1.7 million children are expected to benefit directly in the 1999-2000 school year by being educated in smaller classes.
- School districts are concentrating this first installment of funds so that it makes a big difference for some students immediately. Average class size has been reduced by more than five students in the grade levels and schools where the vast majority of teachers hired with these funds teach.
- 42 percent of the teachers are teaching in first grade. In their schools, average class size fell from approximately 23 students to approximately 17 students.
- 23 percent of the teachers are teaching in second grade. In their schools, average class size fell from 23 students to less than 18 students.
- 24 percent of the teachers are teaching in third grade. In their schools, average class size fell from more than 23 students to just over 18 students.
- To strengthen teacher quality, school districts are using approximately 8 percent of the funds they received to support professional development for teachers.

SOURCE: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ClassSize/localsuccess.html>

## Questions to Ask When Calculating the Cost of CSR

As California's experience makes clear (see accompanying sidebar), estimating the cost of CSR is an inexact science that must take into account not only personnel and facilities but administrative requirements and displacement of other mandated programs. Here are several questions policymakers can ask when trying to calculate CSR's actual costs:

1. What is the initial class size?  
The greater the drop to a smaller class, the larger the cost.
2. Is there a rigid cap or is there flexibility in the number of students per teacher? A rigid cap increases the cost by decreasing the final average class size.
3. What is the cost of teachers who must be hired for CSR? The number of teachers needed, the salary scale of each district, and the experience level of the teachers hired will determine this cost. Teacher costs will increase with time as teachers move up the salary ladder. In addition, teachers will require professional development and support, which adds up to additional costs.
4. How many new classrooms are needed? Additional facilities to house new classes will be needed. Some schools have rented vacant space in nearby retail shopping malls or other commercial buildings, which can be converted to early childhood centers (Achilles and Price 1999).
5. What costs will be incurred when a once-closed school is reopened? Examples are the need for potential renovation, utilities hookups, and resumption of custodial and clerical services.
6. What are the potential savings of CSR? Some districts may

## Impact of CSR on Personnel and Facilities in California

When California's nonpartisan Joint Legislative Audit Committee surveyed school districts to discern the effects of the CSR program on personnel and facilities, it found a hodgepodge of consequences, some anticipated, others not. Here are a few of the findings:

- An estimated 142,000 students in grades K-3 are being taught by teachers who have not completed a state-certified training program.
- There is a shortage of at least 21,312 classroom teachers in the state, and a shortage of 1,116 administrators.
- California's public schools have an immediate need for at least 11,310 new classrooms at an estimated cost of \$760.6 million.
- "Facility shortages have translated into a marked reduction of specialized programs and mandated student services such as special education, childcare, libraries, and computer labs. School districts have reported no other option but to displace many of these programs

and services in order to fulfill the facilities demands of the CSR Legislation."

- Many districts, especially in urban settings, reported a lack of available land for constructing new schools.
- "The administrative requirements of CSR are time consuming and restrictive and cause many school districts to lose CSR funding."
- "Many districts are losing playgrounds to portables."
- "CSR may not be a viable approach in the smallest school districts which only have one or two classrooms and cannot break down the classes into smaller sizes due to a lack of funding for staff."
- Even though small school districts have fewer administrative staff members and receive less funding from the program, "they are required to perform the same administrative duties and submit just as much paperwork."

SOURCE:  
*Joint Legislative Audit Committee (1999)*

experience cost reductions due to reduced grade retention, less vandalism, and so forth.

7. Will the program be equally cost-effective for smaller and larger districts? Will smaller districts need supplemental funding to cover administration of CSR?
8. Will CSR demand so many resources of districts that they are forced to terminate or reduce other programs and services? What level of funding

will be required to prevent displacement of other programs?

For examples of CSR program costs, see the table on pages 14-15 on current state initiatives. There are ways to reduce the costs associated with class-size reduction. (For more information, see "Designing a Policy.") EH

PR

Education  
Committee

April 18, 2006

HB 228  
Representative Holm

Pupil-Teacher Ratio  
Grades K-3

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Current  
Pupil-Teacher  
Ratios

5

6

7

**Representative Jim Holm**  
**Alaska State Legislature**  
District 9

**Session**

Capitol Building, Room 513  
Juneau, AK 99801  
Phone: (907) 465-3466  
Fax: (907) 465-2937



**Interim**

119 N. Cushman St.  
Fairbanks, AK 99701  
Phone: (907) 456-7423  
Fax: (907) 451-9293

April 12, 2006

House Education Committee Members:

Attached are current pupil-teacher ratios for grades K-3 for the following school districts in Alaska:

ANCHORAGE

FAIRBANKS

JUNEAU

KETCHIKAN

# ANCHORAGE

---

**From:** Patricia McRae [mailto:mcr\_ patricia@asdk12.org]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 22, 2006 2:48 PM  
**To:** Rep. Jim Holm  
**Cc:** Comeau\_Carol; Christensen\_Jan; Wiget\_Larry; Siegfried\_Robin  
**Subject:** Information request

Dear Representative Holm,

Yesterday I received a copy of your letter in which you asked about the pupil teacher ratio in the primary grades in the Anchorage School District. Your interest in this important area is appreciated.

Our budgeted figure (that is, the figure that we use to budget staff positions) for class sizes are as follows:

Kindergarten 20.75

First grade 21.25

Second grade 24.25

Third grade 24.25

We have been fortunate to be able to add an additional 44 teaching positions in our 60 elementary schools in kindergarten and first grades as a part of "class size reduction" which is funded through the NCLB Title IIa grant. This allows for class sizes of 18 in numerous kindergarten and first grade classrooms throughout our school district.

Every year in October we complete a "class size report" that details the sizes of classrooms in our district. Our class size report for October, 2005 contained the following information about class sizes in the kindergarten through third grades:

642 total classes

Of these: 99 or 16% were under 18 students (this occurs because of the 44 "class size reduction" positions)

174 or 27% were in the 18-20 student range

225 or 35% were in the 21-23 student range

123 or 19% were in the 24-26 student range

21 or 3% were in the 31-32 student range

As you can see, 43% of our classes this year are in the 18-20 student range (273 classrooms), and 57% (or 369 classrooms) are not. I hope that this is helpful information. I'm happy to assist if you have any additional questions.

Thank you again,  
Patricia

Patricia McRae, Executive Director  
Elementary Education  
(907)742-4254

# FAIRBANKS

---

**From:** Ann Shortt [ashortt@northstar.k12.ak.us]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 21, 2006 8:27 AM  
**To:** Rep. Jim Holm  
**Cc:** royce.chapman@gci.net; rchapman@alaska.com; ahkriska@fairbanksnative.org;  
jennifer\_schmidt@health.state.ak.us; jschmidt@mosquiconet.com; raad@acsalaska.net;  
alan.wieder@eielson.af.mil; hull@gci.net; lhajdukovich@gci.net;  
SharonMcConnellGillis@hotmail.com; ronald.johnson@wainwright.army.mil; ringstj@bp.com; Nick  
Stayrook; Mike Fisher  
**Subject:** Information you requested

Hi Jim,

Per your request, here's our pupil teacher ratios for K-3. I've broken it down in a number of ways for you:

K-3 - PTR 23.4

Grades 1,2,3 - 22.4

Kindergarten - since we flex with a small morning group and small afternoon group and large group for 2.5 hours in the middle of the day. PTR - 27.3 The approximate size for the AM group is 14 - 15 and the afternoon 12 - 13. The school board's budget for 2006/2007 has a kindergarten PTR at 25.5

First Grade PTR 21.4

Second Grade 23.3

Thrid Grade 23.2

We do have this information on our website, if you would like additional information or to check other grade levels, etc.

Hope this helps.

Sincerely,

Ann

*Dr. Ann Shortt, Superintendent*

*Fairbanks North Star Borough School District*

*ph: 907-452-2000, ext. 401*

*fax: 907-451-0541*

# JUNEAU



## JUNEAU SCHOOL DISTRICT CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU

10014 CRAZY HORSE DRIVE • JUNEAU, ALASKA 99801-8529 • (907) 523-1700

Via Facsimile (907-465-2937) & U.S.P.S. - One-Page Document

April 6, 2006

Representative Jim Holm  
Alaska State Legislature  
Capitol Building, Room 513  
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Dear Representative Holm:

Superintendent Cowan passed your March 20, 2006 letter requesting information on the pupil-teacher ratios for grades kindergarten through third grade, to me.

At the present time, the Juneau School District has targeted grades kindergarten to two with a pupil-teacher ratio of 22 to 1. Grade three has a targeted ratio of 25 to 1.

The Governor's proposed base student allocation of \$5,352 for FY 2007 is not enough for the District to maintain these ratios in future years. Unless more money is forthcoming, next year the ratios will change to 25 to 1 for kindergarten through second grade, and third through fifth grade will become 26 to 1.

Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

David L. Means  
Director of Administrative Services  
Phone: (907) 523-1770  
Facsimile: (907) 523-1772  
E-Mail: david\_means@jsd.k12.ak.us

C:\Word\11\ DLM-L-06-4-6

# KETCHIKAN



**KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BUSINESS OFFICE  
333 SCHOENBAR ROAD  
KETCHIKAN, AK 99901**

March 21, 2006

Representative Jim Holm  
Capitol Building, Room 513  
Juneau, AK 99801

Dear Representative Holm,

Below is the information requested about pupil-teacher ratios for grades K-3 for the Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District:

**FOR YEAR ENDING 2004**

|                          | K        | 1           | 2        | 3        |
|--------------------------|----------|-------------|----------|----------|
| HOUGHTALING              | 20/19/19 | 20/20/20/20 | 18/18/19 | 16/16/14 |
| WHITE CLIFF              | 17       | 21          | 20       | 17       |
| POINT HIGGINS            | 24       | 25          | 15/16    | 14/13    |
| KETCHIKAN CHARTER SCHOOL | 23       | 25          | 20       | 22       |
| TONGASS SCHOOL OF A & S  | 22       | 12/13       | 11/10    | 10/10    |

**FOR YEAR ENDING 2005**

|                          | K        | 1        | 2           | 3        |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|
| HOUGHTALING              | 25/24/25 | 18/20/18 | 20/22/20/22 | 19/19/20 |
| WHITE CLIFF              | 20       | 14       | 15          | 18       |
| POINT HIGGINS            | 22       | 20       | 12/5*       | 20       |
| KETCHIKAN CHARTER SCHOOL | 24       | 20       | 22          | 23       |
| TONGASS SCHOOL OF A & S  | 19       | 10/10    | 14/14       | 11/10    |

\* 12 2nd and 5 third graders

**FOR YEAR ENDING 2006**

|                          | K        | 1           | 2        | 3           |
|--------------------------|----------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| HOUGHTALING              | 20/20/20 | 22/21/22/21 | 18/18/17 | 21/17/18/20 |
| WHITE CLIFF              | 16       | 22          | 19       | 21          |
| POINT HIGGINS            | 21/20    | 23          | 19/19    | 14/14       |
| KETCHIKAN CHARTER SCHOOL | 25       | 26          | 17       | 21          |
| TONGASS SCHOOL OF A & S  | 21       | 12/11       | 10/11    | 14/16       |

Let me know if I can be of any other assistance to you.

Sincerely,

Lance R. Mertz, CPA  
Business Manager

# MAT-SU

From: Nancy Munoz [Nancy.Munoz@matsuk12.us]  
Sent: Friday, April 14, 2006 12:36 PM  
To: Rep. Jim Holm  
Subject: Pupil teacher ratios

I just received a copy of your March 20th memo requesting information on class size for our district.

We are currently using the following ratios:

Kindergarten is 20:1

First grade is 21:1

Second grade is 22:1

Third grade is 26:1

Sorry for the delay, but this just reached my desk.

Nancy Chiappinelli Munoz  
Supervisor of Finance & Budget  
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District  
501 N Gulkana  
Palmer, AK 99645  
Phone: 907-746-9235 FAX: 907-761-4077

"Great minds talk about ideas.  
Average minds talk about events.  
Weak minds talk about people."  
Eleanor Roosevelt

Education  
Committee

April 18, 2006

HB 228  
Representative Holm

Pupil-Teacher Ratio  
Grades K-3

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Fiscal  
Notes

# FISCAL NOTE

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**2005 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

Fiscal Note Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bill Version: HB228-EED-TLS-05-03-05  
 () Publish Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): \_\_\_\_\_ Dept. Affected: Education & Early Development  
 Title "An Act imposing a maximum pupil-teacher ratio for grade RDU TLS  
student discipline and safety, of student health Component Student and School Achievement  
 Sponsor Rep. Holm  
 Requester \_\_\_\_\_ Component No. 2796

**Expenditures/Revenues** (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

| OPERATING EXPENDITURES | FY 2006 | FY 2007 | FY 2008 | FY 2009 | FY 2010 | FY 2011 |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Personal Services      |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Travel                 |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Contractual            |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Supplies               |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Equipment              |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Land & Structures      |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Grants & Claims        |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Miscellaneous          |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| <b>TOTAL OPERATING</b> | *       | *       | *       | *       | *       | *       |

|                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b> |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|

|                               |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )</b> |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|

**FUND SOURCE** (Thousands of Dollars)

|                                         |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1002 Federal Receipts                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 1003 GF Match                           |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 1004 GF                                 | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 1005 GF/Program Receipts                |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 1037 GF/Mental Health                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Other (Specify Type--Do not abbreviate) |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                            | * | * | * | * | * | * |

Estimate of any current year (FY2005) cost: 0.0  
 Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2006 budget proposal: ☐

**POSITIONS**

|           |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Full-time |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Part-time |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Temporary |  |  |  |  |  |  |

The costs related to this bill are indeterminate at this time.

Prepared by: Barbara Thompson, Director Phone 465-8727  
 Division Teaching & Learning Support Date/Time 5/3/05 9:34 AM  
 Approved by: Karen Rehfeld, Deputy Commissioner Date 05/03/2005  
 Agency Education & Early Development

# FISCAL NOTE

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
**2006 LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

Fiscal Note Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Bill Version: \_\_\_\_\_

HB 228

() Publish Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): \_\_\_\_\_

Dept. Affected: Education & Early Development

Title An Act imposing a maximum pupil-teacher ratio  
for grades kindergarten through three in public schools

RDU K-12 Support

Component Foundation Program

Sponsor Representative Holm

Requester Health, Education & Social Services

Component No. 141

**Expenditures/Revenues**

(Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

| OPERATING EXPENDITURES | FY 2007 | FY 2008 | FY 2009 | FY 2010 | FY 2011 | FY 2012 |
|------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Personal Services      |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Travel                 |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Contractual            |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Supplies               |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Equipment              |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Land & Structures      |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Grants & Claims        | *       | *       | *       | *       | *       | *       |
| Miscellaneous          |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| <b>TOTAL OPERATING</b> | *       | *       | *       | *       | *       | *       |

|                             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>CAPITAL EXPENDITURES</b> |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|

|                               |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| <b>CHANGE IN REVENUES ( )</b> |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|

**FUND SOURCE**

(Thousands of Dollars)

|                                         |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1002 Federal Receipts                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 1003 GF Match                           |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 1004 GF                                 | * | * | * | * | * | * |
| 1005 GF/Program Receipts                |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| 1037 GF/Mental Health                   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Other (Specify Type--Do not abbreviate) |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                            | * | * | * | * | * | * |

Estimate of any current year (FY2006) cost: 0.0

Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2007 budget proposal: ☐

**POSITIONS**

|           |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| Full-time |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Part-time |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Temporary |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**ANALYSIS:** (Attach a separate page if necessary)

\*The department cannot determine the fiscal impact of this proposed legislation.

In grades Kindergarten through 3rd, the per pupil teacher ratio must not exceed 20 to 1.

This bill may impact the pupil teacher ratios at higher grade levels.

Prepared by: Eddy Jeans, Director

Division: School Finance

Approved by: Roger Sampson, Commissioner

Agency: Education & Early Development

Phone 465-8679

Date/Time 3/13/06 1:48 PM

Date 03/13/2006

**SCOMM**

**137:25**



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
REPRESENTATIVE WOODIE SALMON

**Memorandum**

Date: March 30, 2005

To: Representative Mark Neuman  
Chair, House Special Committee on Education

From: Representative Woodie Salmon

A handwritten signature in cursive, enclosed in a circle.

Re: Hearing Request

---

I respectfully request you to schedule a hearing on HB 233 at your earliest possible convenience.

HB 233 is a bill to require school districts to enact policies to prevent bullying in Alaska's public schools. Attached please find the required back-up information on this bill.

Please feel free to contact Moira Smith at 465-4527 if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Thank you.



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
REPRESENTATIVE WOODIE SALMON

SPONSOR STATEMENT

**HB 233: Preventing Harassment in Schools**

Alaskan parents expect that their children will be safe from emotional and physical harassment by their classmates. Unfortunately, research shows that this harassment, commonly known as bullying, is in fact quite common. This bill asks school districts to adopt policies on bullying and to develop tools to punish the bullies.

According to a nationwide survey of 1,000 students by the Families and Work Institute conducted in 2002, 32 percent of the students surveyed said they'd been bullied at least once in the month prior to the survey, and 12 percent had been bullied five times or more in the same time period. A similar survey, in 1998, showed that 30 percent of the 15,700 students surveyed had been bullied or had bullied another.

The Alaska Association of School Boards' (AASB's) policy on bullying recognizes that bullying disrupts a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate. Many Alaskan school districts already have policies on bullying or are in the process of developing such policies. The Alaska State Legislature should act to ensure that all of Alaska's children are safe in our schools.

I respectfully urge your support for HB 233.



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
REPRESENTATIVE WOODIE SALMON

SECTIONAL ANALYSIS

**HB 233: Preventing Harassment in Schools**

**Section One** includes legislative findings emphasizing the importance of safety in schools.

**Section Two** adds harassment and bullying to the list of issues school districts' disciplinary and safety policies must address.

**Section Three** inserts a new section outlining the recommended content of anti-bullying policies. It includes a definition of "harassment, intimidation, or bullying", requires that district policies include reporting and enforcement mechanisms, and recommends that district personnel receive training in the new policy.

**Section Four** amends the statute exempting teachers and other school employees from liability for any civil damage resulting from the enforcement of the new bullying policy.

**Section Five** requires that the Department of Education and Early Development adopt a model policy to assist school districts in development of their own policies.

**Section Six** requires that school districts' bullying policies be in place by September 1, 2006.

**Section Seven** sets the effective date.



ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
REPRESENTATIVE WOODIE SALMON

Changes in CS HB233

1. Section 1: the legislative findings include recognition of school districts that have already taken steps to prevent harassment, intimidation, or bullying in public schools.
2. Section 3: counselors are mentioned in proposed AS 14.33.125(a)(9)(e) in order to recognize the important role they play in addressing disciplinary actions and post-intimidation distress and the importance of their participation in any collective effort to address bullying.
3. Section 3: the definition of harassment in proposed AS 14.33.125(a)(9)(h) was amended to ensure that the language includes no unconstitutional proscription of speech.
4. Section 6: the language was amended to allow the Department the ability to recognize a school district's preexisting policy.

24-LS0804F  
Mischel  
4/19/05

**CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 233( )**

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA  
TWENTY-FOURTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

**BY**

**Offered:**  
**Referred:**

**Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES SALMON, Cissna**

**A BILL****FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 "An Act relating to preventing harassment, intimidation, or bullying in public schools;  
2 and providing for an effective date."

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

4 \* **Section 1.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section  
5 to read:

6 **FINDINGS.** The legislature finds that

- 7 (1) a safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn  
8 and achieve high academic standards;  
9 (2) harassment, intimidation, or bullying, like other disruptive or violent  
10 behavior, is conduct that disrupts both a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to  
11 educate its students in a safe environment;  
12 (3) students learn by example;  
13 (4) school administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers are to be commended  
14 for demonstrating appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing

1 to tolerate harassment, intimidation, or bullying;

2 (5) some school districts have taken appropriate steps toward preventing  
3 harassment, intimidation, or bullying in public schools.

4 \* Sec. 2. AS 14.33.120(a) is amended to read:

5 (a) Each governing body shall adopt a written school disciplinary and safety  
6 program. The program required under this subsection must include written

7 (1) standards for student behavior and safety that reflect community  
8 standards and that include, at a minimum, basic requirements for respect and honesty;  
9 standards required under this paragraph must be developed and periodically reviewed  
10 with the collaboration of members of each school, parents, teachers, and other persons  
11 responsible for the students at a school; a governing body may require that standards  
12 developed under this paragraph be consistent for all schools in an attendance area or  
13 the district;

14 (2) standards relating to when a teacher is authorized to remove a  
15 student from the classroom for

16 (A) failure to follow student behavior and safety standards; or

17 (B) behavior described under AS 14.30.045(1) or (2);

18 (3) procedures for notifying teachers of dangerous students consistent  
19 with AS 47.12.310(b);

20 (4) standards relating to when a teacher, teacher's assistant, or other  
21 person responsible for students is authorized to use reasonable and appropriate force to  
22 maintain classroom safety and discipline as described under AS 11.81.430(a)(2);

23 (5) policies necessary to comply with provisions of state and federal  
24 law, including 20 U.S.C. 1400 - 1485 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act);

25 (6) standards to address needs of students for whom mental health or  
26 substance abuse may be a contributing factor to noncompliance with the school  
27 disciplinary and safety program;

28 (7) policies for implementing a student conflict resolution strategy,  
29 including the nonviolent resolution or mediation of conflicts and procedures for  
30 reporting and resolving conflicts;

31 (8) policies necessary to implement the provisions of AS 14.33.125,

intended to prevent harassment, intimidation, or bullying in school;

(9) procedures for periodic review and revision of the school disciplinary and safety program.

\* Sec. 3. AS 14.33 is amended by adding a new section to read:

**Sec. 14.33.125. Preventing harassment, intimidation, or bullying in school.**

(a) Each governing body shall adopt a policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying on or immediately adjacent to school grounds, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided transportation, or at any official school bus stop. The policy must include

(1) a statement prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying of a student;

(2) a definition of harassment, intimidation, or bullying at least as inclusive as that in (h) of this section;

(3) consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who commits an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying;

(4) a procedure for reporting an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, including a provision that permits a person to report an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying anonymously; however, this paragraph may not be construed to permit formal disciplinary action solely on the basis of an anonymous report;

(5) a procedure for prompt investigation of reports of violations and complaints, identifying either the principal or the principal's designee as the person responsible for an investigation;

(6) the range of ways in which a school shall respond once an incident of harassment, intimidation, or bullying is identified;

(7) a statement that prohibits reprisal or retaliation against a person who reports an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, and the consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person who engages in reprisal or retaliation;

(8) consequences and appropriate remedial action for a person found to have falsely accused another as a means of retaliation or as a means of harassment, intimidation, or bullying; and

(9) a statement of how the policy is to be publicized, including notice

1 that the policy applies to participation in school-sponsored activities.

2 (b) Notice of the governing body's policy under this section shall appear in  
3 any publication of the school district that sets out the comprehensive rules, procedures,  
4 and standards of conduct for the school and in any student handbook.

5 (c) A school employee, student, or school volunteer may not engage in  
6 reprisal, retaliation, or false accusation against a victim, witness, or individual with  
7 reliable information about an act of harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

8 (d) A school employee, student, or school volunteer who has witnessed or has  
9 reliable information that a student has been subjected to harassment, intimidation, or  
10 bullying, whether verbal or physical, is encouraged to report the incident to the  
11 appropriate school official designated by the governing body's policy.

12 (e) Schools and school districts are encouraged to form bullying prevention  
13 task forces, programs, and other initiatives involving school staff, counselors, students,  
14 administrators, volunteers, parents, law enforcement, and community members.

15 (f) To the extent funds are appropriated for these purposes, each school district  
16 shall

17 (1) provide training on the school district's harassment, intimidation, or  
18 bullying policies to school employees and volunteers who have significant contact  
19 with students; and

20 (2) develop a process for discussing the district's harassment,  
21 intimidation, or bullying policy with students.

22 (g) Information regarding the governing body's policy on harassment,  
23 intimidation, or bullying shall be incorporated into each school's current employee  
24 training program.

25 (h) In this section, "harassment, intimidation, or bullying" means a gesture or  
26 written, oral, or physical act taking place on or immediately adjacent to school  
27 grounds, at a school-sponsored activity, on school-provided transportation, or at an  
28 official school bus stop that

29 (1) a reasonable person under the circumstances should know has the  
30 effect of harming a student or damaging the person's property, or placing a student in  
31 reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or damage to the student's property;

(2) has the effect of insulting or demeaning a student or group of students in a way that disrupts or interferes with the school's educational mission or the education of a student; or

(3) is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by an actual or perceived characteristic involving race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, or sensory handicap, including hearing loss or deafness, visual loss or blindness, or a combination of hearing and visual loss and has the effect of disrupting or interfering with the school's educational mission or the education of a student.

\* Sec. 4. AS 14.33.140 is amended to read:

**Sec. 14.33.140. Civil liability for enforcing disciplinary and safety program.** A teacher, a teacher's assistant, a principal, or another person responsible for students is not liable for civil damage resulting from an act or omission (1) arising out of enforcement of an approved school disciplinary and safety program adopted under AS 14.33.120 or a policy prohibiting harassment, intimidation, or bullying adopted under AS 14.33.125; and (2) arising out of and in the course of employment unless the act or omission constitutes gross negligence or reckless or intentional misconduct.

\* Sec. 5. The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to read:

**REQUIRED MODEL POLICY.** To assist school districts in developing policies for the prevention of harassment, intimidation, or bullying, the Department of Education and Early Development shall develop a model policy required under AS 14.33.125 applicable to kindergarten through grade 12. This model policy shall be issued not later than December 1, 2005.

\* Sec. 6. The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to read:

**FIRST REQUIRED POLICY.** A governing body that does not, on the effective date of this Act, have a policy consistent with AS 14.33.125, as enacted by sec. 3 of this Act, shall adopt an initial policy required under AS 14.33.125 by September 1, 2006.

\* Sec. 7. This Act takes effect July 1, 2005.

# LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH REPORT

MARCH 11, 2005



REPORT NUMBER 05.197

## ALASKA SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICIES ON BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

PREPARED FOR REPRESENTATIVE SHARON CISSNA

BY KATHLEEN L. WAKFIELD, LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

You asked about Alaska school districts' policies regarding bullying and/or harassment. Specifically, you wished to know how districts define bullying and harassment, and how they determine the motivating factors behind the behavior.

### POLICIES ON BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

We contacted all school districts in Alaska about their policies regarding bullying and/or harassment. We received responses from 17 districts: Copper River, Delta/Greely, Fairbanks North Star Borough, Haines Borough, Iditarod Area, Juneau, Kenai Peninsula Borough, Klawock, Lower Yukon, Mat-Su Borough, Mt. Edgecumbe, Northwest Arctic, Pribilof, St. Mary's, Southeast Island, Valdez, and Wrangell. We received the following responses:

- ◆ Three of these school districts have no policies on bullying or harassment: Lower Yukon, St. Mary's, and Valdez. All three districts indicated that they are developing such policies.
- ◆ Copper River, Klawock, and Mt. Edgecumbe have specific policies that prohibit bullying.
- ◆ Juneau includes bullying in its policy prohibiting harassment.
- ◆ Administrators in the Mat-Su Borough School District recently developed a policy on harassment that includes bullying. The school board will address this proposed policy at its next meeting.

- ♦ Kenai, Pribilof, and Southeast Island districts have no specific policies against bullying, but include references to bullying under "Violent and Aggressive Behavior" and/or "Positive School Climate."
- ♦ Eight districts include sexual orientation or sexuality as a protected class in their policies on bullying and/or harassment. These districts are Copper River, Fairbanks North Star Borough, Haines, Juneau, Mat-Su, Mt. Edgecumbe, Northwest Arctic, and Pribilof.

The Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB) Policy Reference Manual also contains policies on harassment, bullying, violent and aggressive conduct, and sexual harassment. The AASB policies specifically address sexual orientation as a protected class. According to AASB officials, 43 school districts use the AASB policy system.<sup>1</sup> For example, the Iditarod, Northwest Arctic, and Pribilof school districts use the AASB policy on harassment, and administrators in Valdez are recommending that the board adopt this language on harassment, as well.<sup>2</sup> Since the policy on bullying was only released in January 2005, AASB officials do not know how many districts have adopted it, although they expect that most districts will eventually do so.

Most district policies require the school principal or a designee to investigate all reports of bullying and/or harassment, and to prepare a written report of the incident and findings. Policies provide for a range of sanctions for students found guilty of bullying or harassment, up to and including expulsion for the most serious offenses.

The attached table contains the definitions of bullying and/or harassment for the 17 districts that responded to our request, and for the AASB.

## OTHER STATES' LAWS

Other states have also grappled with the issue of bullying in schools over the past several years. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, lawmakers in Hawaii, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, South Carolina, and Texas have introduced legislation this year that addresses school bullying. New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington have already passed legislation requiring school districts to adopt policies on bullying. In addition, a lawmaker in Washington introduced a bill this year—SB 5849—to expand the state's anti-bullying law to include "cyber-bullying," or the use of "electronic means" such as communication via electronic mail, internet-based communications, pager service, cell phones, and electronic text messaging.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Personal communication from Sharon Young, Associate Executive Director, Association of Alaska School Boards, March 7, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Personal communications from Joyce Turner, Board Secretary, Iditarod Area School District, February 28, 2005; Robert Boyle, Superintendent, Northwest Arctic School District, February 24, 2005; Malcolm Fleming, Superintendent, Pribilof School District, February 24, 2005; Ernie Manzie, Superintendent, Valdez City School District, February 27, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> We include a copy of SB 5849 as Attachment A.

In addition, the U.S. Congress has also considered bullying in schools. In 2004, Representative John Shimkus of Illinois introduced H.R. 4776 to amend the Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act to include bullying and harassment prevention programs. The bill died in committee.

## FIRST AMENDMENT CONCERNS

While states and school districts continue to work to address bullying and harassment in schools, some challenges have been mounted due to concerns about violations of the First Amendment's free speech clause. For example, in 2001 an anti-harassment policy adopted by the Pennsylvania State College Area School District was challenged in district court.<sup>4</sup> The plaintiffs—two students, and a school board member who also volunteered in the schools—argued that the policy prohibited their ability to express their beliefs about Christianity and certain moral topics such as homosexuality.

The district court disagreed with the plaintiffs, and granted the defendants' motion to dismiss. The plaintiffs appealed the case to the U.S. District Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, which reversed the judgment, finding that the policy was "unconstitutionally overbroad since it appeared to cover substantially more speech than could be prohibited under the Tinker substantial disruption test." Maintaining that a substantial amount of offensive, distasteful speech still would not constitute actionable harassment under either federal or state law, the appeals court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs.

Also in 2001, a Christian Coalition group opposed SB 5528 and HB 1444, anti-bullying bills introduced in the Washington legislature. The group argued that the bills were "a cover for gay-rights efforts that could eventually force schools to teach about homosexuality in a positive light."<sup>5</sup> Members of the coalition also contended that "anti-bullying policies in schools could violate the free-speech rights of students who expressed opposition to homosexuality."<sup>6</sup>

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I hope you find this information to be useful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have questions or need additional information.

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<sup>4</sup> *David Warren Saxe v. State College Area School District*, 240 F.3d, U.S. App. (2001).

<sup>5</sup> Mary Ann Zehr, "Legislatures Take on Bullies with New Laws," *Education Week*, May 16, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Washington lawmakers subsequently passed HB 1444, and the governor signed it into law, in 2002. We include copies of HB 1444 and RCW 28A.300.285 as Attachment B. We also include a copy of "Ask the Children: Youth and Violence—Students Speak Out for a More Civil Society, Summary and Discussion Guide," prepared by the Families and Work Institute and The Colorado Trust, as Attachment C.

### School District Policies on Bullying and Harassment—Definitions

| School District                     | Definition of Bullying                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Definition of Harassment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Association of Alaska School Boards | Bullying is the repeated intimidation of others by inflicting or threatening physical, verbal, written, electronic, or emotional abuse, or damage to another's property. Bullying may include, but is not limited to, conduct such as physical abuse, damage or theft of another's property, social exclusion from activities, verbal taunts, name-calling, rumors, innuendoes, drawings, jokes, gestures, pranks, and put-downs relating to real or perceived differences, including another's culture, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, body size, physical appearance, clothing, personality, age, socioeconomic status, ability or disability, or other distinguishing characteristics. [Board Policy 5131.43(a)]  | Harassment means intimidation by threats of or actual physical violence; the creation by whatever means of a climate of hostility or intimidation; or the use of language, conduct, or symbols in such a manner as to convey hatred, contempt, or prejudice or to have the effect of insulting or stigmatizing an individual. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, harassment on the basis of race, sex, creed, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or disability. [Board Policy 5145.5(a)] |
| Copper River School District        | Bullying is repeated intimidation of others by the real or threatened infliction of physical, verbal, written, electronic, or emotional abuse, or damage to another's property. Bullying may include, but is not limited to, conduct such as physical abuse, damage or theft of another's property, social exclusion from activities, verbal taunts, name-calling, rumors, innuendoes, drawings, jokes, gestures, pranks, and put-downs relating to real or perceived differences, including another's culture, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, body size, physical appearance, clothing, personality, age, socioeconomic status, ability or disability, or other distinguishing characteristics. (Board Policy 5143) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

|                                              |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Delta/Greely School District                 |  | Harassment means intimidation by threats of, or actual, physical violence; the creation by whatever means of a climate of hostility or intimidation; or the use of language, conduct or symbols in such a manner as to convey hatred, contempt or prejudice, or to have the effect of insulting or stigmatizing an individual. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, harassment on the basis of race, sex, creed, color, national origin, religion, marital status, or disability. (Board Policy 5005)                                  |
| Fairbanks North Star Borough School District |  | Harassment includes but is not limited to any oral, written, or physical conduct relating to race, creed, sex, national origin, marital status, political or religious beliefs, physical or mental conditions, family, social or cultural background, or sexual orientation that is sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent that it substantially interferes with or limits an individual's academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive academic environment. (Board Policy 1012)                             |
| Haines Borough Schools                       |  | Harassment means intimidation by threats of or actual physical violence; the creation by whatever means of a climate of hostility or intimidation; or the use of language, conduct, or symbols in such a manner as to convey hatred, contempt, or prejudice or to have the effect of insulting or stigmatizing an individual. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, harassment on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, or disability. [Board Policy 4119.12(a), and 5145(a)] |

|                               |                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Iditarod Area School District | No policies—adopted AASB policies on discrimination and sexual harassment. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Juneau School District        |                                                                            | <p>...the Board does not tolerate discrimination against, or harassment of, any member of the Juneau school community on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, age, political or religious beliefs, mental or physical condition or disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, social background, economic status, culture, or sexual orientation. Discriminatory harassment includes, but is not limited to, bullying, slurs, epithets, threats, derogatory comments, unwelcome jokes, teasing, stereotyping, sexual advances or requests for sexual favors, physical assault or abuse, or other forms of verbal or physical harassment which adversely affect a person's employment or education or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or working environment. Harassment includes creation of a climate of hostility and intimidation; or the use of language, conduct, or symbols in such a manner as to convey hatred, contempt, or prejudice or to have the effect of insulting or stigmatizing an individual or group. (Board Policy 1120)</p> |

|                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Kenai Peninsula Borough School District                | <p>No specific policy, but includes the following language on bullying under other sections:</p> <p>Violent and aggressive conduct: Violent and aggressive acts include, but are not limited to, possession, threat with or use of a weapon, physical assault, verbal abuse, intimidation, extortion, bullying, gang participation, harassment, stalking, defiance, and racial slurs.</p> <p>Positive School Climate: Students shall be subject to disciplinary procedures for bullying other students or for using insults, slurs, or fighting words which may disrupt school activities. (Board Policies 3522.6 and 5137)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>Harassment means intimidation by threats of or actual physical violence; the creation by whatever means of a climate of hostility or intimidation; or the use of language, conduct, or symbols in such a manner as to convey hatred, contempt, prejudice or to have the effect of insulting or stigmatizing an individual. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, harassment on the basis of race, sex, creed, color, national origin, religion, marital status, disability, or any other real or perceived difference. (Board Policy 4119.12)</p> |
| Klawock City School District                           | <p>Bullying takes many forms: gossip, cruel comments, insults, snubbing, put-downs, threats (physical or verbal) and violent attacks. It is deliberate, hurtful behavior that is often repeated and a form of anti-social behavior that has no place at school. It is the intent of this policy to make sure all members of our school community remain vigilant and consistent to help insure that bullying behavior is actively resisted and stopped, and that we provide a safe school environment for all students. Any acts of bullying, at any level, will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary action. (Board Policy 5131.95)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Lower Yukon School District                            | No formal policy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | No formal policy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District <sup>1</sup> | <p>Harassment, bullying, and discrimination are prohibited. Abusive language, sexual harassment, inappropriate physical contact, racial or ethnic slurs, hazing, and other similar provocative actions are included in these categories of prohibited conduct. Harassment is behavior which is intended to trouble or annoy someone. It is the exertion of power by one person over another; it may be based on misunderstanding or a deliberate act and often contains a subjective perspective. Discrimination and harassment may be based on culture, ability, physical appearance, size, sexuality, or religion, among other things. Bullying is defined as an aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. Harassment, bullying, and discrimination can take many forms such as hitting, tripping, kicking, punching, unwanted touching, name-calling, swearing, threatening, spreading rumors, ignoring, staring, gesturing, "standing over," preventing someone from joining in an activity, hiding, sending mean notes or e-mails, or damaging someone else's property. [Board Policy 5144.1(12)]</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

|                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mt. Edgecumbe                    | Bullying is the repeated intimidation of others by inflicting or threatening physical, verbal, written, electronic, or emotional abuse, or damage to another's property. Bullying may include, but is not limited to, conduct such as physical abuse, damage or theft of another's property, social exclusion from activities, verbal taunts, name-calling, rumors, innuendoes, drawings, jokes, gestures, pranks, and put-downs relating to real or perceived differences, including another's culture, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, body size, physical appearance, clothing, personality, age, socioeconomic status, ability or disability, or other distinguishing characteristics. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Northwest Arctic School District |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Harassment means intimidation by threats of or actual physical violence; the creation by whatever means of a climate of hostility or intimidation; or the use of language, conduct, or symbols in such a manner as to convey hatred, contempt, or prejudice or to have the effect of insulting or stigmatizing an individual. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, harassment on the basis of race, sex, creed, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or disability [Board Policy 5145.5(a)]  |
| Pribilof School District         | No specific policy, but includes the following language on bullying under "Positive School Climate:" The schools shall not tolerate any comments or gestures which are vulgar or obscene or which denigrate others on account of gender, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, handicap or disadvantage. Students shall be subject to disciplinary procedures for bullying other students or using insults, slurs, or fighting words which may disrupt school activities. (Board Policy 5137)                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Harassment means intimidation by threats of or actual physical violence; the creation by whatever means of a climate of hostility or intimidation; or the use of language, conduct, or symbols in such a manner as to convey hatred, contempt, or prejudice or to have the effect of insulting or stigmatizing an individual. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, harassment on the basis of race, sex, creed, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or disability. [Board Policy 5145.5(b)] |
| St. Mary's School District       | No policy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | No policy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Southeast Island School District                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | No specific policy, but includes the following language on bullying under "Positive School Climate:" The schools shall not tolerate any comments or gestures which are vulgar or obscene or which denigrate others on account of gender, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, handicap or disadvantage. Students shall be subject to disciplinary procedures for bullying other students or using insults, slurs, or fighting words which may disrupt school activities. (Board Policy 5137) |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Valdez City School District                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | No policy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | May adopt Association of Alaska School Boards language for harassment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Wrangell Public Schools                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | No policy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Harassment on the basis of sex, color, race, religion, national origin, age, mental or physical disability, marital status, changes in marital status, pregnancy, or parenthood is specifically prohibited. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, slurs, epithets, threats, derogatory comments, unwelcome jokes, teasing, unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors, displaying offensive words, objects or pictures and other verbal or physical conduct which adversely affects an individual's educational opportunities, or has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's education or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive education environment. (Board Policy IV-044.) |
| <p><b>Notes:</b> Please note that those districts that submitted their policies on bullying may also have policies on harassment. Most districts also have policies specific to sexual harassment. 1. This is the proposed policy for the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, which the board will address at their March 16, 2005 meeting.</p> <p><b>Sources:</b> Alaska Association of School Boards; school district superintendents.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

# COMMENTARY

September 2004 Vol. XXXIV No. 7

## State Conference Speakers Set



Steve Van Bockern

An educator with 40 years of experience in Alaska joins a noted author and advocate for troubled youth as the featured speakers at the 51<sup>st</sup> annual conference of the Association of Alaska School Boards.

Marshall Lind, recently retired from the University of Alaska, where he served as chancellor of the Fairbanks campus, will address the

AASB general session on Saturday, Nov. 6. Lind has a lifetime of educational leadership in Alaska, first as a teacher in the Kuskokwim Delta, then as commissioner of the Department of Education for 13 years under four administrations, and finally at the university.

Lind has been asked to speak on the challenges and opportunities he sees facing education in Alaska.



Marshall Lind

### The High Cost of School Bullies

By Andie Stone  
AASB Policy Attorney

Incidents of bullying can be very detrimental to an individual student, to the school climate and to your district's pocketbook.

In two recent cases in Alaska, the economic significance of bullying hit home. One of those cases involved allegations that a classroom teacher had repeatedly picked on a student during class. The other case involved allegations that a student was bullied by his peers. In both instances, the student who was allegedly bullied attempted suicide. Also in both cases, the lawsuits asserted that the school district had knowledge that the actions were occurring yet failed to take appropriate steps to halt the behavior and protect the student. In each instance, the districts denied the allegations and vigorously defended themselves and their employees against the claims. The case involving the teacher ended in a jury verdict for the student who settled while the case was on appeal; the other resulted in a large settlement entered into and primarily funded by the district's insurance carrier.

**What is bullying?** Various definitions of bullying exist. The most commonly cited definition explains that "a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students." Bullying includes the following elements: Bullying is *repeated* intimidation of a student by others. The intimidation can involve real or threatened physical or emotional abuse. It can be accomplished through physical, verbal, written or electronic means. Bullying is typically demonstrated through actions such as teasing, insults, rumors, jokes, taunts, exclusion, challenges, name-calling, pranks, or the destruction of a student's property. Bullying may also take the form of illegal harassment and discrimination if it is tied to the victim's race, ethnicity, national

*Continued on p. 6*

On Friday, Nov. 5, author Steve Van Bockern will highlight the general session with an address focused on troubled youth and how schools can avoid contributing to their sense of helplessness and futility. Van Bockern is a founder of Reclaiming Youth International, based in Lennox, S.D.

For the last decade, Van Bockern has advocated that educators consider the Native American values of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity as tools for nurturing students.

"Children who feel unloved and unattached are often children of rage and rebellion. They become locked in defiant opposition to adults, who reciprocate with counter-aggression. The child becomes 'adult-wary,' forever biting the hand that didn't feed him or her," he wrote in 1995.

"Although defiant youth may seem to relish freedom from adult control, life empty of attachment is actually the opposite of true independence. . . . Unattached youth may noisily proclaim their pseudo-independence ("Nobody

tells me what to do!") but they are only revealing what they really feel: "Nobody really cares."

Van Bockern co-authored a book entitled **Reclaiming Youth at Risk: Our Hope for the Future** in 2001.

The annual conference, scheduled for Nov. 4-7 at the Anchorage Hilton Hotel, attracts most school board members from across the state for a wide variety of training opportunities. Workshops are available for new board members and board presidents, while experts will provide delegates a chance to learn the intricacies of education funding, student testing, technology updates and engaging communities

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# Bullies- Four Steps Toward an Effective Remedy

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origin, religion, sex or sexual orientation. More often, though, bullying is based on distinguishing characteristics or perceived differences with the student, which include appearance, dress, mannerisms, or a generalized perception that the student doesn't fit in.

Bullying creates a school climate in which students may feel unsafe and unable to engage in learning. Additionally, as just seen, a perceived failure to take appropriate steps to protect students can subject school districts to suits by students and their parents for money damages. The legal defenses available to school districts is beyond the scope of this article. However, there are affirmative and defensive steps that districts can and should take to prevent bullying and therefore prevent a lawsuit for occurring in the first place.

## 1. Establish a clear anti-bullying policy

Many districts have harassment policies in place which are probably broad enough to encompass bullying as well. However, in light of the national and certainly state focus on this issue, a separate bullying policy is recommended. An effective anti-bullying policy contains the following elements: a clear statement that bullying will not be tolerated; a definition of bullying (being careful to utilize language that does not violate a student's free speech rights); identification of the individuals who will be responsible for responding to and investigating complaints; and procedures to protect victims of bullying.

## Policy on bullying

The AASB has been considering a policy statement on bullying to recommend to school districts. In the meantime, sec. 5131.41 (a) of the AASB policy reference manual offers the following guidance on violent and aggressive conduct:

"...The Superintendent shall develop procedures for the reporting of violent and aggressive behavior to appropriate law enforcement authorities... (which) include, but are not limited to, possession, threat with or use of a weapon; physical assault; verbal assault; intimidation; extortion; bullying; gang participation; harassment; stalking; defiance; and racial slurs."

An optional policy recommends placing violent or aggressive students on a "compulsory behavior management plan" developed in concert with a parent, teacher, principal and other appropriate individuals.

## 2. Adopt and publish an appropriate complaint procedure

A complaint resolution procedure should be in place that describes the process for making a complaint; states the names, titles, and phone numbers of individuals with whom a complaint can be made; provides assurance that complaints will be handled properly; and outlines consequences for bullying, including the provision for both discipline and counseling services as appropriate.

## 3. Implement an anti-bullying campaign in your schools

Studies on bullying are in agreement that an intervention program is critical to limiting, and hopefully halting, bullying in your schools. A good intervention program creates school-wide awareness of bullying and involves all players—students and staff—in its prevention. Measures are put in place at the school, class and individual levels. Once a bullying intervention program is selected, school personnel need to be trained on its techniques. A school district should be careful not to overlook training for all individuals who interact with students during times prone to bullying, i.e., on the playground and on the school bus. Following selection of a program and appropriate training, the program needs to be effectively implemented. Once in place, its effectiveness should be routinely checked through use of student, staff, and parent surveys, discipline statistics, etc. If it is not working as effectively as it should or could, figure out why and make adjustments.

## 4. Investigate and respond appropriately when bullying occurs

Responding appropriately is critical. All complaints of bullying at school or school-related activities must be investigated and, if substantiated, steps must be taken that are reasonably calculated to stop the bullying and prevent its recurrence. Once a school has learned of alleged bullying incidents, it may not choose to ignore them. This is true even in those cases where the victim won't identify the bullies or tells the school that he or she does not want any action taken. Importantly, even before fully investigating allegations of bullying, school personnel will need to consider whether there is a need to take immediate steps to protect the student victim. If bullying is substantiated, the school must take reasonable steps to prevent recurrence and ensure that the victim is not restricted in participating in school or school activities.

In the event of a lawsuit, there are strong legal defenses available to school districts in defending against claims resulting from alleged bullying. Despite these legal protections, the prevention of school violence and bullying should remain a top priority in your districts. Preventative actions help minimize the threat of legal action and, more importantly, allow students to learn in a climate where their well-being is fostered.

(Editor's Note: The author is an attorney practicing with Jernain, Dunnagan & Owens in Anchorage.)

## First Line of Defense Against Bullies - Students

By Jamie Kamik  
Alaska ICE Staff

Many of the prevention and intervention efforts associated with bullying are directed at the bully and the victim. These are vital and valuable efforts, and a large part of an effective anti-bullying policy. What is often overlooked, however, is that it takes more than just a bully and a victim for bullying to occur within a school. In many cases, other students are aware of bullying and harassment within their school and do not take action to prevent it, nor do they report incidents of harassment to their teachers or other school staff. These "bystanders" can play a critical role in effective bullying prevention and intervention efforts, whether that involves telling a bully to stop, protecting and supporting a student being harassed, or informing a teacher or other school staff member about a bullying incident.

A good place to start bullying prevention efforts is to make sure that these "bystander" students, themselves neither bullies nor victims, feel connected to their school and have strong, healthy and positive relationships with the teachers and other adults within that school. This helps these students to feel empowered to speak up and defend a classmate from bullying, or to inform a teacher or other adult when

incidents of bullying occur. A student who does not feel connected to their school is less likely to intervene during an instance of bullying, and more likely to ignore the problem. A student who does not have positive relationships with adults in their school may not feel safe if they decide to report instances of bullying, or may not feel as though they will be listened to or taken seriously by school staff.

Teachers and school staff cannot be everywhere at once, but it is often the students who can perform the most effective prevention and intervention efforts within a school. By working to create a supportive, open, friendly, and caring environment, and helping students feel connected to their school, school board members, teachers, school staff, parents and other adults can often stop bullying before it starts.

Note: The Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has developed some great resources on bullying, and launched a national initiative on bullying prevention. The materials are available on their website at the National Mental Health Information Center, Center for Mental Health Services, which can be accessed at <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/15plus/aboutbullying.asp>

ALASKA COUNCIL



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## Alaska Council of School Administrators

18 April 2005

Representative Mark Neuman  
Chair, House Education Committee

Dear Chair Neuman and House Education Committee members:

The Alaska Council of School Administrators supports HB 233, *Preventing Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying in Public Schools*.

Our organization is very concerned about stopping behavior that is damaging to Alaska's students, and is also concerned that every school environment be safe. We support any and all efforts to create positive learning environments for children.

Though most school districts already have policies in place to address these issues, for those districts that do not, the bill provides assistance from the Department of Education and Early Development in drafting a policy for consideration. That technical assistance is very important if districts are to comply with the proposed change.

Mary A. Francis  
Executive Director



The Honorable Mark Neuman  
Chair, House Education Committee  
State Capitol, Room 409  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1132

April 19, 2005

Dear Rep. Neuman,

After reviewing House Bill 233, an act relating to preventing harassment, intimidation or bullying in public schools, I wanted to convey the support of the Association of Alaska School Boards for this legislation.

This bill, as introduced, is in alignment with the policy now followed by more than 40 school districts in Alaska. That model policy has been part of AASB's recommendations to districts since the issue of bullying in our public schools has come to the forefront.

I commend the sponsors for their attention to this issue, and I assure the committee that this problem is one that Alaska's school districts are addressing.

Sincerely,

Carl Rose,  
Executive Director

April 18, 2005

Dear Rep. Neuman,

At Alaska Gateway we are in dire need of general funds. Earlier in the legislative session, I testified on the state of our school district. At the present time, I am still going to have to cut 5 certified teachers and 8 classified positions. Even with a student base allocation of \$4919, I am far from balancing our district's budget to provide an adequate education for our students. Our teachers are frozen in their contracts, medical benefits have gone up 16% and recently bulk fuel and gasoline have skyrocketed over the \$2.19 mark. Electric costs in this area have tripled in the last couple of months. As each month goes by, our budget stretches less and less. SB 173 would solve all of our problems to date. Even if there was no increased student base allocation, we could maintain the status quo for a couple of years. Each year our cost factor has not allowed us the extra money for the increases in fuel, energy, supplies and materials, shipping, travel etc., etc., etc. We have had to make up these losses out of the general fund taking away teachers, supplies and materials, aides, and student activities, and many other things that affect our students and their adequate education. Even with the new proposed funding level, we will be \$673,449 short. Over the past month, I have visited every community in my district (7 in all) asking them for their input in how to cut the expenses in the district. They say we have already cut so much. They cannot believe that their Alaska legislature would treat them in this manner. They are angry at what is happening to our rural schools.

We need this cost factor to be adopted so we can compete with the rising costs of education. I am not speaking of frills or add-ons as others have spoken for on other teleconferences I have attended. I'm talking about the everyday education of students in Alaska Gateway which is far from the frills larger school districts speak of. Our last extra program (music in Tok School) will go out the window in this budget cut. Vocational education will also be slashed so the teacher can cover some classes in the core curriculum in Tok School. If our high school students are to graduate with 21 credits required by the state in the separate fields of English, Math, Science, and Social Studies, we must have highly qualified teachers in those areas or teachers who can become highly qualified. We do not, and we will not be able to even think about hiring these highly qualified teachers. Two high school teachers will be cut from Tok School this year leaving the rest of the teachers to cover all the subject areas needed for students to graduate.

Please pass SB 173 without changes to the cost factors. Something more has to be done to save our students from an inadequate education not provided in the student base allocation. Thank you for your time and for thinking seriously about passing this bill on.

Sincerely,

Carol Doyle, Alaska Gateway Superintendent 



## Tackling the Schoolyard Bully: Combining Policy Making with Prevention

Finessa Ferrell-Smith, Research Analyst

NCSL Children and Families Program

As the safety of U.S. schools has become an important public policy issue, interest in the problem of school bullying has intensified. New research indicates that this type of adolescent victimization occurs frequently, particularly in middle school grades, and can result in serious consequences for both bully and victim. In 2002, a report released by the U.S. Secret Service concluded that bullying played a significant role in many school shootings and that efforts should be made to eliminate bullying behavior.

Although the media often have focused on high-profile incidents of school violence, such as school shootings, it is also beginning to pay more attention to understanding why some kids bully others, what the consequences of this sort of victimization are and what can be done to stop it. John Stossel's ABC news special on bullying; Showtime's original movie, *Bang! Bang! You're Dead*; and the decision by Erika Harold, the reigning Miss America, to focus on bullying prevention have highlighted the role bullying plays in the broader picture of school violence and the growing importance of the issue.

As awareness of harassment, intimidation and hate in the school setting has grown, state legislatures have begun to address this problem as well. At least 16 states have passed anti-bullying laws, and similar measures were considered in 23 states in the 2001-2002 legislative sessions. Currently, 14 legislatures are considering bills that address the issue of bullying.

### What Is Bullying?

Before legislatures were required to define bullying in more precise terms, characterizing "bullying" had largely been a question of individual judgment--"we know what it is when we see it." Bullying includes harassment, intimidation to varying degrees, taunting and ridicule. Sometimes, bullies are motivated by hate and bias, sometimes by cultural norms, peer pressure or the desire to retaliate. Bullying may occur within the context of initiation rituals and be labeled "hazing," or it can be overtly or implicitly about gender, constituting sexual harassment. Sometimes, there is no readily identifiable reason for bullying; when kids are asked who school bullies target, their answers can be disturbing precisely because they are not extraordinary: bullies pick on kids who are "weaker," "smaller," "funny looking," or "dumb."

Although no standard or universally understood definition of bullying exists, certain elements usually are present (see sidebar). The first element is a pattern of behavior over time--repeated exposure to intentional injury or discomfort inflicted by one or more students against another. This behavior may include physical contact, verbal assault, social ostracism, obscene gestures or other aggressive acts that cause the victim to feel fearful or distraught. More serious instances of bullying can result in physical injury or emotional trauma. A second common element is a perceived imbalance of power, which allows one student-or group of students-to victimize others.

#### Female Bullying

Although the traditional bullying model has been particularly male-centered and focused on physical aggression, more attention is being paid to bullying by girls. Boys generally bully in direct and physical ways; girls who bully often do so indirectly by teasing and spreading rumors.

Researchers in the area of female bullying suggest that there are three different types of adolescent female aggression: relational, indirect and social. Examples of relational aggression include damage or the threat of damage

to a relationship, friendship or group inclusion; ignoring someone to punish or get one's way; and using negative body language or facial expressions. Indirect aggression allows the perpetrator to avoid confronting her target and makes it seem as though there has been no intent to hurt the recipient. The bully uses others to inflict pain by spreading rumors. Finally, social aggression damages the recipient's self-esteem or social status within a group by rumor spreading or social exclusion.

Although relational aggression can be as psychologically or emotionally destructive as the more direct and physical bullying behavior of boys, many school harassment policies focus on physical or direct violence and do not address relational aggression. In addition, female bullying is less likely to come to the attention of school personnel, even though students report that it is common.

#### Sidebar 1: Types of Bullying

The National School Safety Center recently identified several types of bullying, all of which involve either **direct** action such as physical contact or **indirect** action such as verbal, emotional, sexual or passive-aggressive harassment.

- Direct and physical bullying includes punching, poking, strangling, suffocating, pinching, shoving, hitting, biting, spitting, hair pulling, finger bending, ganging up or cornering, stabbing, excessive tickling, burning, poisoning, theft and shooting.
- Verbal bullying includes such acts as name-calling; put-downs; insults or verbal threats; cruel jokes; or demands for servitude, money or property.
- Emotional bullying includes rejecting, terrorizing, defaming, humiliating, blackmailing, rating or ranking a person or his or her characteristics, manipulating friendships, playing mean or embarrassing tricks, peer pressure, isolating, hateful graffiti, hateful looks, indecent gestures, and ostracizing on the basis of social status.
- Sexual bullying can include many of the actions listed above, as well as exhibitionism, voyeurism, sexual propositioning, sexual harassment and abuse involving actual touching, physical contact or sexual assault.
- Hate-motivated bullying is based on bias and, in some cases, can legally constitute a hate crime. Behavior can include taunting about race, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, and physical or mental disabilities.

Source: Adapted from Hilda Clarice Quiroz, Program Developer, National School Safety Center, *Understanding, Preventing and Responding to School Bullying*, April 2002, p. 8.

#### The Prevalence of Bullying: What Do Kids Say?

Until recently, national data on the prevalence of bullying in American schools have been largely unavailable. Instead, studies often were conducted at the state, district or even individual school level, drawing conclusions that are difficult to generalize to the broader national population. In 2002, however, the Families and Work Institute produced a report based on a nationally representative sample of 1,000 students in grades five through 12. Responses indicated that 32 percent of the sample had been bullied at least once in the month prior to the survey, and 12 percent had been bullied five times or more in the same time period. Twenty-three percent reported that they had bullied someone else at least once in the past month; 6 percent reported they had been bullied-or-that they had bullied someone five times or more.<sup>1</sup>

These data also appear to reinforce the findings of a 1998 survey of 15,686 students in grades six through 10 that was conducted by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD). That survey found that 30 percent of the sample had been involved in bullying behavior, either as perpetrator or victim.<sup>2</sup>

The Families and Work Institute also found that, although kids fear serious acts of violence, it is "emotional violence"-including gossip, teasing, social isolation and cruel put-downs-that disturbs them the most. According to the kids surveyed, 66 percent had been teased or gossiped about "in a mean way" at least once in the month prior to the survey, and 25 percent reported being the object of cruel teasing or gossip five times or more in the same period.<sup>3</sup> Again, these findings are consistent with the 1998 data collected by NICHD, particularly for girls. Table 1 indicates what those students frequently encountered.

Table 1. Most Frequent Types of Bullying Behavior Encountered in 1998

| Type of Behavior                        | Males | Females |
|-----------------------------------------|-------|---------|
| Belittled about religion or race        | 8.8%  | 7.2%    |
| Belittled about looks or speech         | 19.8% | 20.5%   |
| Hit, slapped or pushed                  | 17.8% | 11.1%   |
| Subjects of rumors                      | 16.7% | 17.3%   |
| Subjects of sexual comments or gestures | 17.5% | 20.5%   |

Source: The NICHHD findings were published in "Bullying Behaviors Among U.S. Youth," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 285 (April 25, 2001): 2094-2100.

### The Link between Bullying and School Violence

Perhaps the most striking research to date has linked the effect of severe and repeated bullying to serious acts of violence. In 1999, the *Safe School Initiative*, a partnership between the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education, examined 37 incidents of targeted school shootings and school attacks involving 41 attackers, beginning with the first case in 1974. The Secret Service collected and analyzed all available information about each incident and conducted in-depth interviews with 10 of the shooters.<sup>4</sup>

This research led to 10 key findings, one of which was that most of the attackers felt persecuted, bullied, threatened, attacked or injured by others prior to the incident. In several of these cases, the harassment the attackers endured was severe, long-standing, torturous and a significant factor in the attackers' decision to use violence. Witnesses in one case, for example, indicated that "...nearly every child in the school had at some point thrown the attacker against a locker, tripped him in the hall, held his head under water in the pool or thrown things at him."<sup>5</sup> In fact, the Secret Service found that more than half of the attackers cited revenge as a motive and more than three-quarters of attackers were known to hold a grievance against an individual or group of individuals before the attack. Released in May 2002, the *Safe School Initiative* final report concluded: "The prevalence of bullying found in this and other recent studies should strongly support ongoing efforts to reduce bullying in American schools."<sup>6</sup>

### Other Negative Effects of Bullying

Research has shown that long-term consequences associated are with bullying others and being bullied. Research conducted in 1993<sup>7</sup> indicates that children who are bullied often suffer from depression and low self-esteem well into adulthood. Moreover, the act of bullying can become a "gateway" to other negative behaviors in adolescence such as vandalism, shoplifting and drug use and to more serious crimes committed in adulthood. Sixty percent of males who were bullies in grades six through nine were convicted of at least one crime as adults, compared with 23 percent of males who did not engage in bullying others. Further, 40 percent of these former school bullies had three or more convictions by age 24, compared with 10 percent of their non-bullying peers.<sup>8</sup>

The 1998 NICHHD survey found that students who were bullied reported more loneliness and more difficulty making friends than students who were not bullied. Further, those students who bullied others were more likely to have poor grades, smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, even though female bullying may not leave physical scars, the psychological effects can be carried into adulthood. Because girls are socialized to be nurturing caretakers and to value relationships, these connections are very important to them. As a result, fear of isolation and solitude can be severely damaging and destructive to girls.<sup>10</sup>