



# Fact Sheet

## CLASS-SIZE REDUCTION

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### BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM

Following an interim study of pupil-to-teacher ratios, the 1989 Nevada Legislature enacted Assembly Bill 964 (Chapter 864, *Statutes of Nevada*) to establish a class-size reduction program. The measure, codified as *Nevada Revised Statutes* 388.700 through 388.720, was scheduled to proceed in several phases beginning with the early grades and continuing in all grades, up to and including high school.

The first phase reduced the ratios in selected kindergarten and first grade classes for School Year 1990–1991. The next phase was designed to reduce second grade ratios, followed by third grade ratios, and additional kindergarten reductions. After achieving the target ratio of 15 pupils to 1 teacher in the primary grades, the original program proposed that the pupil-to-teacher ratio be reduced to 22:1 in grades 4 through 6, followed by a reduction to no more than 25:1 in grades 7 through 12. Assembly Bill 964 provided that the State Board of Education may grant a school district a variance from the limitation on the number of pupils per class for good cause, including the lack of available financial support specifically set aside for the reduction of pupil-to-teacher ratios.

### CLASS-SIZE FLEXIBILITY OUTSIDE CLARK AND WASHOE COUNTIES

Until the 2005 Legislative Session, class-size reduction had been addressed only in grades K through 3. Based upon a pilot program in the Elko County School District, the 2005 Legislature enacted Senate Bill 460 (Chapter 457, *Statutes of Nevada*), which provided flexibility in implementing improved pupil-to-teacher ratios in grades 1 through 6 for school districts other than those in Clark and Washoe Counties. Pupil-to-teacher ratios were limited to no more than a 22:1 ratio in grades 1 through 3 and no more than 25:1 in grades 4 through 6.

### CURRENT STATUS

The 26th Special Session of the Legislature convened on February 23, 2010, to address the State's ongoing fiscal crisis. The Legislature passed A.B. 4 (Chapter 7, *Statutes of Nevada 2010, 26th Special Session*), which temporarily revised provisions governing class-size reduction to allow school districts flexibility in addressing budget shortfalls. This legislation was intended

to sunset on June 30, 2011. However, with the enactment of A.B. 579 (Chapter 370, *Statutes of Nevada 2011*), the temporary provisions were continued for two more years, through June 30, 2013.

The 2013 Legislature enacted legislation to increase the class-size ratios authorized in statute. Together, S.B. 522 (Chapter 382, *Statutes of Nevada 2013*) and A.B. 2 (Chapter 5, *Statutes of Nevada 2013, 27th Special Session*) had the following impacts on class-size reduction:

- In grades K through 2, the statutory class-size ratio increased from 15:1 to 16:1;
- In grade 3, the ratio increased from 15:1 to 18:1; and
- School districts were required to issue a quarterly report of the average daily attendance in their schools and the ratio of pupils per licensed teacher in grades K through 3, and to request a variance if the district exceeded the prescribed ratio.

The 2015 Legislature enacted S.B. 515 (Chapter 537, *Statutes of Nevada*), resulting in the following impacts on class-size reduction:

- In kindergarten, the statutory class-size ratio was maintained at 16:1;
- In grades 1 and 2, the ratio increased from 16:1 to 17:1;
- In grade 3, the ratio increased from 18:1 to 20:1; and
- In grades 1 through 3, the flexibility allowing school districts to increase class size by up to two students was discontinued.

The 2015 Legislature also passed A.B. 278 (Chapter 499, *Statutes of Nevada*), requiring the Department of Education to establish methods to monitor school district plans for class-size reduction, monitor the content and accuracy of quarterly reports concerning pupil-to-teacher ratios and average daily attendance, review and verify the accuracy of program variance requests, and provide documentation relating to the distribution and use of program funds. The Department also must advise school district boards of trustees concerning its expectations for the use of the funds, including the minimum number of teachers the district is expected to employ. The measure requires the Legislative Auditor to audit the use of money appropriated for the class-size reduction program during the 2013–2015 Biennium, including an analysis of the “plus two” program authorizing school districts to elect to increase class size by two pupils.

## **COST**

The cost of class-size reduction during the 2015–2017 Biennium is \$306.3 million. From the program’s beginnings in 1990 through Fiscal Year 2016–2017, Nevada will have expended approximately \$2.8 billion for the direct costs of funding class-size reduction, excluding any local capital expenditures or operating investments.