



North Carolina Association of Educators

## Restoring Class Size Limits: The Key to Reforming Student Achievement

NCAE is committed to success of all students and will work to restore class size limits in grades 4-12 to levels maintained in 2008-09. The Association is further committed to putting a moratorium on granting waivers to increase class size.

Nearly one in 10 positions totaling more than 16,000 jobs have been eliminated from North Carolina's public schools, according to a North Carolina Justice Center report. While loss of education positions have affected all public school employees, the impact has been greatest on the classroom where more than one in every three teacher positions are being left unfilled. This drastic elimination of teacher positions, along with elimination of "limits" being removed in class size for grades 4-12, continue to hurt student learning and achievement, as well as classroom instruction. Additionally, a third (33 percent) of positions lost were teacher assistants, who provide vital one-on-one assistance to at-risk students or those who may struggle or need additional help with learning. Academic achievement for students is greatly increased when class size is reduced. When class size is increased fewer positions are created in a school. Although directed in the budget, school districts did little to protect the classroom, when nearly 9,000 fewer classroom teachers were employed in North Carolina's public schools in 2011-2012. The only mandate was in the protection of K-3 classrooms, where no additional students would be allowed under the law. Grades four through 12 were left unprotected explicitly. Across the state, educators report large increases in class size, with many classrooms reaching close to 40 students per class. However, class size has increased tremendously in middle schools and even more in high schools.

### **Smaller class size in North Carolina benefits students and communities, according to the NC Education Research Council:**

- Gains associated with small classes generally appear when the class size is reduced to fewer than 20 students.
- Gains associated with small classes are stronger for the early grades.
- Gains are stronger for students who come from groups that are traditionally disadvantaged in education – minorities and immigrants.
- Gains from class-size reduction in the early grades continue for students in the upper grades. Students are less likely to be retained, more likely to stay in school, and more likely to earn better grades.
- Academic gains are not the only benefit of lowering class size. A recent study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* revealed that reducing class size in elementary schools may be more cost effective than most public health and medical interventions. This is because students in smaller classes are more likely to graduate from high school, and high school graduates earn more and also enjoy significantly better health than high school dropouts.

**Smaller class size also reaps benefits for education:**

- Smaller classes allow teachers to devote more time to each student and to provide individual instruction when needed.
- Students are more engaged in the smaller class because the teacher can involve them more in the class.
- Teachers spend less time on classroom management because they have fewer discipline problems.
- Teachers can spend more time teaching and cover more material because they are less distracted by discipline issues.
- Teacher morale and retention improves as a result of a better teaching environment.
- Teachers can spend more time preparing stimulating lessons because they can spend less time grading student papers.