

March 20, 2017

Members of the North Carolina Senate  
16 W. Jones Street  
Raleigh, NC 27601

Dear Esteemed Senator,

Last month the N.C. Association of School Administrators (NCASA) submitted to Fiscal Research information on how classroom teacher funding is being used at the local level. School districts have been responsive, cooperative and transparent in providing the requested information. The responses overwhelmingly show they are using the classroom allotment to fund teachers in Grades K-3, Grades 4-12 and in enhancement subjects (art, music and PE), all needed and allowable from this one funding stream.

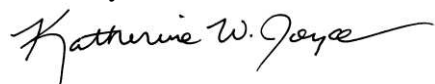
Most districts have made an effort to lower class size in K-3 since 2011, although not at the pace or the funded ratio the Senate would prefer. However, the vast majority of school districts are complying with the current law allowing them to operate K-3 classrooms with a district average of 21 students and individual classrooms with a maximum of 24 students. This district average and individual class size maximum did not change in the law in recent years as additional funds were provided.

Those few districts not in compliance with current law likely have no alternatives to their current staffing pattern. Some are struggling with enrollment growth, lack of facility space and capital funding, time constraints for permitting and placing mobile units, and/or a shortage of teachers and available K-3 educators they can hire. Students do not arrive at a school in sets of 16, 17 or 18 to easily facilitate a new classroom in K-3. Instead, districts must determine the best placement for a small number of students when one or more classrooms exceed mandated limits.

By eliminating previous exceptions to the mandated class sizes in K-3 effective for 2017-18, districts statewide must soon determine if they can secure additional county funds to retain approximately 5,500 teachers – most of whom are providing instruction in art, music and PE as well as serving Grades 4-12 – or initiate the layoff process that must begin this spring to meet mandated due process requirements. Districts need support from the Senate in the next couple of weeks to either relax the new mandate as proposed in House Bill 13, or delay its implementation and allow more time for the districts and General Assembly to collaborate on identifying the most conducive approach for lowering K-3 class sizes.

We look forward to partnering with you on this issue to find a resolution that meets school districts' needs and the goals of the General Assembly. If you have any questions, or if I can be of further assistance, please contact me at 919-828-1426 or [kjoyce@ncasa.net](mailto:kjoyce@ncasa.net).

Sincerely,



Katherine W. Joyce  
Executive Director