

Topic: Class Size Contingency

The Class Size Contingency includes funds for up to forty teaching positions to maintain class sizes in accordance with staffing standards to the extent feasible. In order to more fully implement staffing standards, the Class Size Contingency is necessary because actual enrollment varies from projected enrollment. Without a Class Size Contingency, staffing standards would not be adhered to when enrollment projection variances occur.

Two types of enrollment projection variance exist, school-level and division-level.

School-level Enrollment Projection Variance

One level at which enrollment projections vary is at the school level. For example, even if the total actual enrollment equals projected enrollment, enrollment may be much greater than anticipated at a specific school.

Enrollment at the elementary level is projected to increase by 2.3%. However, based on the application of staffing formulas to the specific situation at each individual school, the Superintendent's Proposed Budget only increases staffing at the elementary level by 2.1%. A 2.3% increase in the number of elementary school teachers would involve an increase of 4.7 additional positions. This number is calculated by determining the difference between a 2.1% and a 2.3% increase above the FY15 number of elementary teachers. Given the potential for school-level variation between actual enrollment and projected enrollment, it is prudent to budget for 4.7 additional positions at the elementary level in a Class Size Contingency.

The following hypothetical scenarios illustrate why the percentage increase in staff does not equal the percentage increase in enrollment. A school might currently have five 5th grade classes with a total of 120 students. Next year, if the number of 5th grade students increased by 15 to 135 students, the staffing standards would not call for a 6th teacher. Conversely, a school might currently have five 5th grade classes with a total of 135 students. Next year, if the number of 5th grade students increased by 10 students to 145 students, the staffing standards would call for a 6th teacher. Note that only the second example involved an increase in staff, even though it involved a smaller increase in students.

Enrollment at the middle school level is projected to increase by 4.9%. However, based on the application of staffing formulas to the specific situation at each individual school, the Superintendent's Proposed Budget increases staffing at the middle school level by only 3.3%. Given the potential for school-level variance between actual enrollment and projected enrollment, it is prudent to budget for 15.5 additional positions at the middle school level in a Class Size Contingency Fund.

Enrollment at the high school level is projected to increase by 4.2%. However, based on a review of school-specific staffing and enrollment data, the Superintendent's Proposed Budget increases staffing at the high school level by 4.4%. Although one could still justify some contingency positions at the high school level, this aspect of the analysis does not necessitate contingency positions at the high school level.

Thus, given the difference between the change in projected enrollment and change in recommended staffing, it is appropriate to budget for a total of 20.2 positions due to school-level variance between actual and projected enrollment.

Division-level Enrollment Projection Variance

Another level at which enrollment projections vary is at the division level. The total actual enrollment may exceed projected enrollment. Although this variance is historically very small, even a small variance can have significant implications in terms of class size.

In the eight fiscal years from FY07 and FY14, actual September 30 enrollment has exceeded September 30 enrollment four times. In these four years, the additional actual enrollment exceeded projected enrollment by .3% (228 students) to 1.2% (651 students). In these years in which the actual enrollment exceeded projected enrollment, the mean variance was .675%.

We recommend placing funds in the Class Size Contingency to account for differences between projected and actual enrollment at the division-level. If we based the amount of funds for this purpose on historical information, it would be reasonable to include funds in the Class Size Contingency Fund for .675% more teachers than funded based on strict adherence to the staffing formula. This would add 27.2 more teachers. However, the proposed Class Size Contingency Fund only includes funds for 9.8 more teachers for the division-level enrollment projection variance.

Total General Education Class Size Contingency

The fund includes 20.2 positions for school-level enrollment projection variance and 9.8 positions for division-level enrollment projection variance. This is a total of 30 General Education positions.

Special Education

Positions funded through the budget are based on projections. In five of the last ten fiscal years, additional special education teachers were created as a result of higher than projected enrollment and IEP requirements. The average of the additional positions created in these five years is 10.3. The range of additional positions was 4.0 to 22.2. Therefore, in addition to 30 General Education positions, the proposed Class Size Contingency includes funding for 10 special education positions.

Distribution of Positions Using Funds from the Class Size Contingency

Consideration would be given to funding positions using the Class Size Contingency if justified by the staffing standards. The School Board will receive information regarding positions that have been funded using the Class Size Contingency. The following situations are examples of times in which positions might not be created using the Class Size Contingency, even though the staffing formulas would justify them:

- space limitations;
- other financial needs of the division;
- additional students are not enrolled until well after the start of the school year; and
- a relatively low average class size would result from adding a class.

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