

Top 10 Class-Size Chaos Talking Points

1. **“We’ve fully-funded the class-size requirements”**

In FY 2013-14, school districts had to maintain an average class-size ratio of one teacher for every 21 students in grades K-3. Based on the number of students in those grades, it requires nearly 6,600 additional teachers to bring class sizes down to the levels required in FY 2018-19. The General Assembly provided some additional teacher funds in the 2014 and 2016 budgets, increasing teacher funding by approximately \$120 million per year to increase the number of teachers by about 1,850. In order to be able to meet the FY 2018-19 class size requirement, districts still need nearly 4,750 additional teachers, at a cost of about \$300 million.

The General Assembly’s own budget bill shows that the mandate remains unfunded. Following the passage of this year’s budget, General Assembly leaders passed a “technical corrections” bill. The bill includes language admitting to their failure to fund next year’s class-size mandate, saying that it is the General Assembly’s “intent” to provide the funding at some point in the future.

This claim can easily be challenged by school faculty and staff, parents, community members, and students throughout our state who are experiencing the harm caused by the incremental underfunding of our public education system every day.

2. **“We need more data on how districts are spending their teacher money”**

DPI publishes data showing whether a school district has transferred their classroom teacher money for other uses. In FY 2016-17, just four districts transferred any money out of their classroom teacher allotment, totaling just \$1.1 million. In that same year, districts received \$4.1 billion of classroom teacher money. In other words, districts spent 99.972 percent of their classroom teacher money on teachers last year. Clearly, districts are spending their teacher money on teachers and there is no evidence that this is not the case.

3. **“We had no idea it would cause this many issues”**

According to Kris Nordstrom, a former staffer with the General Assembly’s nonpartisan Fiscal Research Division, General Assembly budget writers were warned of the negative impacts of their class size requirements as far back as 2015. In addition to warnings from staff, General Assembly budget writers received warnings from multiple school district finance officers.

4. **“Fixing this can wait until May”**

State law requires superintendents to submit budget requests to their boards of education by May 1 of each year. Additionally, districts must begin the process of making personnel decisions and are required to provide written notice to dismissed teachers, provide procedures for appeals, and make payments for accumulated leave. Such decisions will need to be made well in advance of the start of the short session in May.

5. “The adjournment resolution prevents us from addressing class size in January”

The General Assembly gets to change laws whenever they want to. If leadership wants to change the terms of the [adjournment resolution](#), they can.

Regardless, fixing the unfunded class-size mandate falls within the terms of the adjournment resolution. The resolution permits “Bills making technical corrections to S.L. 2017 57, S.L. 2017 119, or both.” SL 2017-57 is the very budget bill that fails to fund the class-size requirements that go into effect in FY 2018-19. Yet [Sen. Berger](#) and [Rep. Moore](#) are claiming they already fully funded the FY 18-19 class-size requirements. Clearly, there was an error in SL 2017-57 that needs correcting.

6. “School districts have just misspent the money we gave them”

In the two years that the unfunded class-size issue has been debated, not one member has provided any evidence of this claim. As explained above, districts spent 99.972 percent of their classroom teacher money on teachers in FY 2016-17. Additionally, every district in the state supplements teacher positions provided by the state classroom teacher allotment by: 1) hiring additional teachers from funds in other allotments and 2) using federal and local funding. Statewide, districts hire 47 percent more teachers than are provided via the classroom teacher allotment. Districts are *already* going above and beyond to fill holes in the state’s insufficient funding of teachers.

7. “Districts don’t have to build more classrooms, they can just use innovative approaches like co-teaching”

It is unclear where this claim comes from. Have members conducted a physical audit of school capacity across the state? According to a recent polling of elementary teachers, their classrooms would not be able to physically accommodate the number of students necessary to implement co-teaching approaches to meet the class-size requirements. Further, there is zero evidence that students in large co-taught classrooms with multiple teachers receive the same educational benefits as students in smaller classrooms with one teacher.

8. “We’ll fix this with a school bond”

First, there’s no indication that the General Assembly has any intention to pass the Public School Building Bond Act. They did not bring it to a floor vote last year.

Second, the proposed state bond would only provide schools with \$1.9 billion of funding capacity. According to [the 2015-16 Statewide Facility Needs Survey](#), North Carolina school districts have \$8.1 billion of facility needs, and that was before taking into account the additional costs created by the unfunded class-size mandate.

Finally, the unfunded class-size mandate goes into effect July 1, 2018. Clearly, no facilities will be built by any yet-to-be-authorized state bonds before July 1.

9. “This is just a Wake County issue”

A brief review of newspapers across the state shows that the unfunded class-size mandate is creating unnecessary budget and operational issues in the following districts:

- [Asheville City](#)
- [Bertie](#)
- [Brunswick](#)
- [Buncombe County](#)
- [Chapel Hill-Carrboro](#)
- [Charlotte Mecklenburg](#)
- [Clinton City](#)
- [Craven](#)
- [Durham](#)
- [Elizabeth City-Pasquotank](#)
- [Forsyth](#)
- [Greene](#)
- [Guilford](#)
- [Henderson](#)
- [Iredell-Statesville](#)
- [Johnston](#)
- [Lee](#)
- [New Hanover](#)
- [Northampton](#)
- [Onslow](#)
- [Orange](#)
- [Pender](#)
- [Rowan-Salisbury](#)
- [Sampson](#)
- [Surry](#)
- [Warren](#)

10. “I support public schools”

Lawmakers must prove this claim by repealing the unfunded class-size mandate this [January](#).