

# ATTACHMENT 1

## Senate Education Committee testimony

### SB 300 – Class size limits

A sample of testimony (gathered by email) received from ATPE members on Feb. 23, 2009.

To whom it may concern,

My name is Megan Hoskins. I am a first year teacher of second graders. I am writing to plead with the Senate Education Committee not to eliminate class size limits. As a first year teacher, it is my experience that 22 is more than enough children to put under a single person's care. I believe that small class sizes allow teachers to individualize education. Teachers are able to speak with students throughout the day to check for understanding and provide specialized support. Large classes would eliminate this opportunity for teachers. There would be no time for teacher initiated, one-on-one interactions with students. This would be especially problematic for younger students who lack the ability to monitor their own comprehension and progress in school.

Health and safety is another concern in a large classroom. Young children are not always able to use the restroom, wash their hands, navigate the school, eat healthy foods, or play safely on their own. To ensure that children stay safe and clean and healthy, there must be ample adult supervision and direction.

Finally, the action of a large classroom would be a distraction for many young students. Children require organization and quiet in order to work and learn effectively and efficiently. Too much movement can disrupt even the most focused second graders.

Please consider the maturity of young children. Do not put one teacher in charge of 30 and expect them to be willing and able take some responsibility in the classroom. Even the very best and most well behaved children in the world require time, attention, and care. A teacher with too many students will not be able to provide this care. Especially, a first year teacher, like myself.

Thank you for your time,

Megan Hoskins  
Second Grade Teacher  
Bear Branch Elementary  
Humble ISD

When I first started teaching in the fall of 1972, I had a first grade class of 35 students. I had students seated at desks in rows and I had children seated at tables around the perimeter of the classroom.....we were everywhere there was space. It was difficult to maintain each student's attention....I had to keep moving around the room. Students seated with their backs to the chalkboard, which was considered the front of the room, had to physically turn around to see the board.

The hardest part of having such a large group was trying to teach reading. We used guided reading groups even back in those days. I think I had 8 to 10 in each group (too large) and that left a few. Some of my students were quite low and needed extra attention....and I couldn't get to them. I called my mother-in-law, who had just retired from that same school district, and told her of my dilemma. She had been a first grade teacher for forever. She agreed to

come and work with my lowest group of students. She came the first morning and worked with her group. When she left she said, "I'll be back this afternoon to work with them again. They need all the help they can get." This exceptional, retired teacher came to my classroom twice a day for most of the year to make sure each child in my room got the attention he/she needed to learn reading. She volunteered.....no money was involved....with the principal's approval.

The smarter children in the class will learn what they need to know no matter what the situation is. The average and low performing students need extra support and time with the teacher. With more than 22 students in a classroom, how do you decide which student(s) gets the short straw for the day?

The emphasis these days is to keep resource and inclusion students in their home classroom...fewer students are being "pulled out" for academic learning. IEP's require targeting specific needs of these specific students. And all students today are best served with individual observation records of progress. Having a group larger than 22 students makes this task difficult.

Education is progressive.....not retroactive.

Nancy Halverson  
Alvin ISD

I am writing regarding the possibility of changing the class size limit from 1:22 to a school average of 1:22. I strongly oppose this change. I am a kindergarten teacher and as it is I believe that 1:22 is too great a ratio. The children are young and in need of more attention and supervision than a 1:22 ratio offers. I currently have a co-teach classroom with about a third of the students having special needs. My ratio is much smaller - 3:20 (2 teachers and one paraprofessional with 20 children) and we struggle to meet the child needs as it is. Crowd control takes over and replaces teaching as each additional child is added to the classroom, which can cause the quality of teaching to decrease. It also terrifies me to think that my co-teacher and I would be counted in a formula that determines class size in a different grade level as well as my own. The school ratio has nothing to do with my particular class. This bill makes no sense to me. Please reconsider this proposition. If you are seeking quality education then don't change the one thing that studies consistently show to improve student achievement and performance - a small class size. If you change anything along these lines, then please reduce the ratio to a smaller number such as 18 or 16 to 1. Thank you.

Kay Porteck,  
North East ISD Kindergarten teacher

**As an elementary principal, I want to state that I believe eliminating class size limits would have disastrous consequences for the education of students in grades K through four. Instead of considering the elimination of the 22 to one ratio, the legislature should be considering lowering the ratio to 20 students to one teacher. I believe campus wide averages for 22-1 would be misleading to parents and allow for some classes to be overloaded and other classes to be assigned fewer students.**

Maudie Monroe  
Principal  
Midway ISD

I am an educator, constituent, ATPE member, as well as a parent. I feel that we need to keep the current teacher to student ratio in its current form for several reasons. It allows us to have time to challenge those students who are over-achievers as well as give those students who struggle extra assistance. With the larger classes, this is impossible. It causes learning gaps & students tend to "fall through the cracks." Even the students who started the school year as over-achievers tend to just "average-out" with a larger class b/c the teacher isn't able to challenge them as they need. Thank you so much for listening to my view on this and considering keeping our current class to teacher ratio.

Sincerely,

Kerri Graham  
Midlothian ISD

Senator Averitt,

I'm writing you concerning SB 300. I am not in favor of the campus wide 22-1 class size average. The districts already have waivers from class size limits in certain situations. These waivers allow school districts the time to comply. Classrooms with the 22-1 ratio afford the teacher the time needed to provide students with a quality education. We all know that students learn more in smaller environments. In K-4, the students need this opportunity to learn and to prepare for the upper grades. After fourth grade, school moves at a more rapid pace; and if our students aren't prepared in the lower grades, they become disheartened. With the high dropout rate, students need every advantage we can give them.

I ask that you vote against SB300. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Skip Omenson  
Gatesville ISD

Our public schools are populated with children from diverse backgrounds and living within families that are struggling with the global economic issues. In order to meet every child's needs, the classroom must not be filled to the brim. This cheats the individual student and restrains the teacher's abilities to allow each child the time and attention to reach beyond his or her challenges. A cap must be maintained - NOT a mere average. Perhaps some of our honored legislators, especially the few who have been classroom practitioners, have forgotten the overwhelming responsibility of educating the future leaders of our city, state, country, and world. Please do not hesitate to contact me for additional comments.

Kindest regards,

Marie O. Dooley  
Bettye Haun Elementary  
Plano ISD

I am a kindergarten teacher in for the Plano ISD. I teach in a Title 1 school. Currently I have 20 students in my class. Three are ESL, ten are low SES, and the remainder of the students come from middle class families. The majority of my

students, as are all the students in my school, are very needy. They are needy academically, socially, and economically. For me to meet the needs of all 20 children is a daunting task.

There are many studies on this very subject. From these studies one can conclude that smaller classes do produce substantial improvement in early learning. Other observations that have been made in these studies confirmed that the children who were originally enrolled in smaller classes continued to perform better than their grade-mates (whose school experience had begun in larger classes) when they were returned to regular-sized classes in later grades.

A new study involving a large sample of students followed for 13 years shows that four or more years in small classes in elementary school significantly increases the likelihood of graduating from high school, especially for students from low-income homes.

"Three or four years of small classes (13-17 students) are needed to affect graduation rates, and three or four years have been found necessary to sustain long-term achievement goals,"

Students in smaller classes scored higher on standardized tests than did those in larger classes, (2) the smaller classes had fewer behavioral problems, and (3) teachers of smaller classes reported themselves as more productive and efficient than they were when they taught larger classes

I know from personal experience that I am much more able to affect the academic and social achievement of my students in a positive manner when I am fortunate to have a small class.

Spend a little extra to provide low class sizes for elementary students and maybe we won't be dealing with the effects of underachievers and drop-outs in the older grades.

Andra Harris  
Plano ISD

Please know that by experience changing class sizes from 22 to 34 and sometimes 36 is incredibly difficult for students. With more and more students facing economic crisis at home, the one stabilizing factor may be school. Students that move from elementary 4th with a class size of 22 to 5th grade with the numbers increasing to 30 and sometimes 34 creates an atmosphere of teaching to the masses--hopefully a few will catch on. What about those that didn't? Why change the horse in mid stream?

Barbara H. Ball  
Plano ISD

I implore you do not change the way class sizes are computed. Keeping the 22 to 1 ratio based on the number of students in an actual class is the only way to keep classes from exploding. For example, special education classes such as life skills may only have two or three students and by including this class in the ratio automatically causes an increase in the other classrooms. I teach 6<sup>th</sup> grade science and when you look at the statistics, the average class size for my school is only 18 students per teacher. In actuality, I have four out of six classes that are 30 or more students. Don't be misled by statistics, use actual numbers in the classroom and do not change the ratio.

Philip Burrow, M.ED.  
Katy ISD

Please do not allow the class-size in kindergarten to exceed 22 -1. If anything the class size needs to be reduced. On the years that the number of students in my class is lower than 22 students, there are fewer disruptions during lessons and we are able to accomplish more during the day. I am also able to give more one on one attention to my students when it is needed.

Jane Burlison  
Northside ISD

As a primary grade educator for the past 14 years I feel very strongly about maintaining the student teacher ratio in K-4 to 22 to 1. I have taught K, 1, 2, and 3 over the years and I know that the smaller classes benefit the students. I have been fortunate enough to have smaller classes ranging anywhere from 16 to 22 children. I have been able to give individual attention on a daily basis to children but the larger the class the more difficult it becomes.. This year I have 19 second graders all needing that attention and it is difficult to provide them with as much as they need in this pivotal school year. Children in these grades are extremely varied in their development and experiences. The more attention a teacher can provide, the more successful the children will become. We can pay for smaller classes in the formative years or we will pay heavily for remedial education as they grow older without the foundation smaller classes provide.

Sharon Spader  
Second Grade  
Bethany Elementary  
Plano ISD

It is hard to keep track of 22-- 5 year olds in Kindergarten. Making sure that all are on task and learning new material would be a great disadvantage if the number were to go larger. This would result in less actual teaching time because the number of students needing redirection would increase. Their developmental attention span would cause greater interruptions as the numbers increase.

Also, elementary classrooms are usually not big enough to handle larger numbers. Kindergarten needs more room since they are still learning about personal space. It is difficult enough to seat 22 students where they can see, behave, and get the extra attention they need; and larger numbers would make it much more difficult.

In my experience, the number should be lowered not raised.

Sincerely,  
Holly Spraberry  
Italy ISD  
Class Size Does Make a Difference

When I began teaching in the mid 1970's there were no class room size limits. Since I was the only kindergarten teacher at my campus, I had all the students. Therefore I averaged around 28 to 35 five year olds in a section. The morning section was a low socio economic group of kids, bused in from a

very poor part of our community. The afternoon class was all the neighborhood Kindergarten students. The state only furnished things for 24 students. When I asked my principal to help with this issue, the Administration Building said the average was 15 students in a classroom twice a day. So here I was, a new teacher teaching around 28 to 33 students in a section twice a day, while others had 15 or less. I was never given an aide, battle pay, or any help at all. (It wasn't budgeted.) Needless to say I was one of the people who spoke out for classroom caps. Is it fair for some students to have 15 classmates while others have 30? You may say, "It will not happen." Yet it did!

How does that apply today? In my school today, our self contained special needs students have around 5 students and 2-3 adults with them at all times. So if you average that total with the others, the classrooms will be very high. There are too many variables to say let's do an average. I have been a part of that kind of thinking. It isn't fair to the students who have large classes.

In an age when so many of our students are ELL or bilingual, or just plain poor, the smaller class sizes enable the teacher to have more time to work with the students. If the class limits are removed and averages are put in place, the amount of progress will probably be much less. A student who is so needy for one on one instruction, will never get very little if at all. A teacher can only be divided so many times before she loses her effectiveness.

I urge our legislators to think of the students and not the money. Our future is our students. Let us not short change their educational experience with no class size limits.

Sincerely,  
 Pamela Slaughter  
 Second grade teacher  
 Irving ISD

In my seventeen years of teaching, I have had the experience of teaching high school classes (with no class size limit) as well as elementary classes (with class size limits). I have found that the optimum number of students in a regular education classroom is 18-20. More students than that limits a teacher's ability to focus on the needs of each student.

Please keep in mind that teachers are not being asked to teach only the curriculum anymore. More and more teaching responsibilities are added every year. Present-day teachers are now responsible for educating children in the academic subject as well as leadership, character, internet safety, manners, conflict resolution, study skills, etc., etc., etc.

Also, classes are no longer homogeneously grouped, so that today's Texas teachers are teaching the grade level curriculum to students with a wide range of abilities. On our campus, the average fifth grade class contains students who are performing at a second grade level as well as students who are performing on an 11th grade level. And the teacher must meet the needs of all.

This, of course, requires lots of planning, lots of intervention, lots of one-on-one teaching. If you want Texas teachers to be successful, why set them up for failure by changing class size limits? A result may be an increased loss of certified teachers teaching...an increase over the current 83,000-plus certified teachers in Texas who are not teaching today.

More importantly, changing the class-size limit will result in some larger classes at the elementary level, and that undermines the success of the students. Imagine a

class that, because of "averaging" class sizes, is in a class of 30 with one teacher. Are you okay with that class containing your child?

I urge you to contribute to the success of Texas children and Texas teachers.

Thank you,  
Rachel Dawson  
Math Intervention Teacher  
Liberty Hill ISD

It is essential that we keep our classes at 22 or less. As a bilingual 4th grade teacher, I'm aware of the difficulties of teaching the high numbers of English Language Learners due to the constant influx of immigrants. My concern is that the result of raising the class size will be horrific TAKS scores which will demonstrate the difficulty of effective teaching and learning directly related to class size, since the legislature does not provide additional funds for Teacher Aides.

Gloria Wilkinson  
Navasota ISD

To Whom It May Concern:

As an Texas educator for the past fifteen years, I have experienced many wonderful students in various classes. During two different years my classes grew over the recommended 22-1 student ratio. These years presented many challenges that one might not consider as a lawmaker. First of all, our district had to order additional classroom materials, such as textbooks, for my students. Since these tools were not readily available, we had to share supplies. This obviously had a negative impact on student achievement. Secondly, imagine grading all those extra papers! If a classroom completes only 3 written assignments per day, that's 66 papers to grade, record, and average. Multiply that by a five-day week, and you will realize that the educator is grading 330 pages per week! (That would be in addition to planning lessons, searching for pertinent websites to support learning, meeting with parents to discuss student progress, monitoring student achievement, and keeping track of TEKS mastered by each learner. Add in teaching time, and teachers rarely have opportunity to breathe!) I can personally attest to the fact that smaller classes are more easily managed in an efficient and effective manner.

One of my favorite years of teaching occurred when I had fourteen students. I got to know each family personally. It was a pleasure to know about personal experiences of each learner. We had time to delve deeper into units of study. I had more time to attend to difficulties of my special needs students. My Gifted/Talented students received the attention that they deserved on special projects. We enjoyed a more relaxed environment due to the fact that I was readily available to assist students. That year proved to me that smaller classes are absolutely more effective platforms for learning.

This year my daughter, Kinley, initially had 23 students in her kindergarten class. Though her teacher is a seasoned veteran and outstanding educator, she has confided in me that this year has been a challenge. I have walked through the classroom and seen students waiting in line to conference with the teacher for Writer's Workshop. Kindergarten students rarely have the patience to maintain the focus necessary to wait! My daughter is very bright, and I want her to be offered every opportunity to excel. She deserves a classroom that meets her needs. I cannot imagine anyone believing that changing our current class size laws would be beneficial to my daughter or any other student. It is every parent's dream to see their child blossom as a learner. It is obvious that smaller class sizes are necessary to achieve this goal. (You can imagine my relief when another teacher was added to the kindergarten team for extra support.)

Our district strives to maintain excellence. As a teacher I demand it from myself. I expect it from my students. I seek it from my classroom parents. I would expect no less than excellence from the great State of Texas. Changing the class size ratio laws would UNDOUBTEDLY have a negative effect on Texas children. I am disappointed that such a law would even be suggested, but I have faith that our legislators will make the right decisions for our children.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

For the kids,

Alicia Cate  
Third Grade Teacher & Recycling Coordinator  
Maypearl ISD

To Whom It May Concern:

As a parent of children who have graduated from high school and an Assistant Physical Education Teacher, I recommend that the teacher ratio to student remain the same or less students per classroom. I am a parent of children with ADD and ADHD and the smaller the class size the better they did in school. As an Assistant Physical Education Teacher the smaller the class sizes for PE the less social problems we had with our students.

Diane Ellis  
Tyler ISD

I personally do have an issue with the class size bill. As a teacher of a current class of 21, it would be outrageous to see it go to a campus wide average. With the decision to mainstream all special education students, in addition to having to modify for students with other impairments such as dyslexia and those students who have not been identified due to lack of parental involvement, it is miraculous that teachers actually have time to teach. Giving one teacher 26 students and another 18 just because the "average" is still within legality is far beyond words. Class-size limits for elementary-aged students were put in place for a reason. The smaller the classes, the better the foundation for upcoming grade-levels.

Sincerely,  
Marla Duron  
Ricardo ISD

I taught 2nd grade and feel that the 22 to one could be 20 or less to meet the needs of high and low students. It doesn't need to be any higher than current law. As for as across the board, I feel that this low ratio should remain until 12th grade.

I also taught Pre-K. and I feel that a ratio of 17 to 1 is a great size for these young children.

Thanks, Peggy Ford  
Central ISD

Senate Education Committee members:

I am a kindergarten Bilingual teacher in Humble Independent School District. I am thoroughly opposed to eliminating the strict 22-1 class size limits. These limits are in place because research shows that teachers are more effective when they have a lower number of students to teach. We are able to effectively



manage our classrooms and teach at-risk students requiring intervention in small groups. This is directly related to Response to Intervention (RTI). If our classes were larger than 22, we would lack the classroom space as well as the resources and materials to teach to larger class sizes. Moreover, MOST of the teaching would be taught to the whole group, a practice that took place when you and I were in school, but is not as effective in today's learning environment. Larger class sizes would NOT allow us to differentiate the teaching because it would simply be too many students to handle. While lifting the restriction of class sizes suggests that districts could maintain potentially SMALLER class sizes, we know that this is simply not the case. Districts will do the opposite. They will add a few children so that they would not have to add an additional staffing unit once there are more than 22 to a class for financial purposes. If you want good teaching and your TEXAS students master the TEKS, then we demand that class sizes have a 22 maximum. How about someone propose to lower class sizes? I am sure that your own children would not learn all that they could possibly learn if their classroom had 30 children in it. Let's keep moving forward and doing the right thing for children and families. Let's not regress to methods that have been proven ineffective such as larger class sizes.

[http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ReducingClass/Class\\_size.html](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ReducingClass/Class_size.html)

<http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-922/size.htm>

#### IN WHAT SETTINGS ARE SMALLER CLASSES MOST BENEFICIAL?

In general, research findings show that smaller classes are likely to be most beneficial for younger (elementary school) students, economically or educationally disadvantaged students, and exceptional students at both ends of the scale--gifted and disabled.

Research has shown that smaller classes are most beneficial in reading and mathematics at the elementary level, while at the secondary level class size tends to make little difference for student achievement in most subject areas. The areas where smaller classes are most likely to be advantageous at the secondary level are those that emphasize acquisition of skills rather than mastery of content--areas such as industrial arts, fine arts, music, and writing.

Annie Gamboa, M.Ed.  
Kindergarten Teacher  
Humble ISD

As a teacher with 18 years in the classroom, I have seen the positive effects of the strict 22:1 class size limit. I am able to meet with students individually on an almost daily basis. With 22 students my resources are stretched, but manageable.

With the proposed 22:1 class size average, this will include all certified teachers being used "on paper" to balance what appears to be a lower class size. This is not true. The class sizes will grow considerably, teachers will become stressed, and burnout will occur at an alarming rate. Parents will immediately notice the lack of personal instruction. If I am not able to meet a child's needs and the parents seek outside paid tutoring, then I have failed as an educator.

Classrooms in Texas are not equipped to manage any class size larger than twenty-two. I see these lower class sizes touted on school district information to give the illusion of smaller class sizes.

I taught for one year in Georgia public schools and I had 33 second graders. This was not even manageable. I could not meet the needs of each student in a timely manner. I had a full-time educational

assistant in my classroom. The actual physical classroom was much larger to accommodate more students.

Andrea Plowman  
Pflugerville ISD

As a 4th grade teacher, it would be detrimental to us and the students to eliminate the 22-1 rule. We have many special needs students that we must accommodate and pay attention to. In order for our students to gain the quality education that they deserve, we must keep our numbers low.

Jena Hutchinson  
Magnolia I.S.D

I taught first grade one year with 36 students in the class while a new school was being built. In that critically important year, I never felt that the students received the best instruction from me. There were six guided reading groups that met every day. It was impossible to give each student the individual attention they needed.

Carolyn Marek  
Caldwell ISD

To Whom it May Concern,

It is essential to the wellbeing of young children to maintain small class sizes in order to promote and provide the best quality instruction and education of those children. Please vote to continue to enforce and provide for Texas Public classroom size to remain 1-22 for grades K-4. Grade 5 class size should not exceed 24.

Sincerely,  
Sandra Hedrick  
Birdville ISD

After being in the classroom for over 20 years, I firmly believe that class size needs to be limited, especially at the elementary level. If the class size limit is replaced with a school average limit, individual classrooms could have well over 22 students. For example, a resource or functional living class with 4 or 5 students could be averaged with a first grade class of 30. Learning suffers when class sizes get larger.

Individual students do not get as much attention; students are distracted by the close proximity of other students; discipline problems can increase. In my experience, students in smaller classes learn better. When I've had 30-40 students in my classroom, I know student achievement has suffered. I am more likely in a larger class to have to throw curriculum at the students and have less time to make sure each individual child understands the material. Learning suffers.

On a personal note, I had 45 students in my own third grade class. Believe me, the environment was not conducive to learning. I taught myself that year. Fortunately, I was a motivated student who was able to learn on my own. Not every child is capable of teaching himself/herself. Kids need teachers who have enough time in the classroom to help them.

I strongly recommend keeping a per-classroom limit as opposed to a school-wide average limit.

Suzy Groff  
Bandera ISD

To Whom It May Concern:

As a classroom teacher and parent, the idea of allowing more than 22-1 students in a classroom would be a detrimental decision. Students as a whole are very needy in today's world and 22 in one class is more than enough for one teacher. Student success is maximized when personal help and attention are available. Teachers are able to manage grading loads and have more time to create appropriate lessons when class sizes are held to a manageable level. Student safety is also easier to ensure.

Susan Lyckman  
Menard ISD

I am a professional educator for Central Junior High in Pollok, Texas. I am for smaller class sizes. However, our current schedule requires us to have more classes to keep the smaller class sizes (eight periods). It is not good to have to teach the same lesson 7 times and have only a 45 minute conference to prepare lessons, grade papers, meet with parents, make an agenda for team meetings that have to be taken care of before or after school. There is not enough time in the day. So, I would suggest that in order to have smaller classes we need more teachers not more class periods. It is especially hard for me because I teach all the students.

Thank you, Beth Due  
6th grade social studies

As a third grade teacher it would be very detrimental to my students to have more than 22 in a class. This is the first year for TAKS testing and they are already told that to fail the reading test means repeating the grade level. That is a lot (of pressure) to put on an 8 year old. In addition, as teachers try to pull out small groups to work more individually with students, there is less time for one on one with larger numbers in the classroom. The size of the rooms in many older schools is also very limiting.

Janet Godfrey  
Third Grade Teacher  
Katy, TX

Please consider carefully the idea of doing away with class size limits. As an elementary teacher, it is crucial to be able to meet individual needs of students. The larger the number of students, the more difficult this is to achieve. Research shows that the most effective instruction happens in small groups. Even within a 15-20 student classroom size, those students are broken into even smaller group sizes of 3-5. If you increase the number of student to teacher ratio, small group instruction will be made even more difficult.

Any teacher can tell you that it is increasingly difficult to meet the needs of today's students. They come to us from broken homes, lower income families, bilingual homes, etc. Every day the challenge of meeting all of the needs of students is more and more difficult. If you increase the number of students in a classroom, imagine how much more difficult that situation becomes.

Thanks,  
Tracy Pierce  
Nocona ISD

Please reconsider taking the class size cap from 22-1 to 22-1 school wide. As the principal at an Early Childhood Elementary, we receive students who have never been in school prior to kindergarten. This means that there are social skills lacking as well as long period of time it takes to acclimate students to a school environment. Kindergarten teachers already do not have instructional assistants in their classes. If we give them more students, teachers will be spending more time on management and less time on instruction. With our state standards becoming more rigorous even at the kinder level we cannot afford to put more stress on teachers in an overcrowded classroom. Please reconsider Senate Bill (SB) 300. It can only harm Texas children.

Regards,  
Sonia Barclay  
Principal  
Somerset ISD

Teaching students to read is the most important thing primary grade teachers do. The most successful way of doing this is in small groups. This allows the teacher to spend time meeting the needs of individual students. The more students that are placed in a classroom, the more difficult it is to spend time with individual students. I have taught a variety of ages from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. When I taught 5<sup>th</sup> grade, I had 25-27 students in a class, and it worked great. When I have taught 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, I have had up to 22 students in a class. I have found that the students are most successful when there are 18-20 students per class. The more students per class, the less time the teacher has to work with individual students. This is most essential at the younger grades.

Jenny Davidson  
Keller ISD

Please consider very carefully that a teacher must TEACH not just babysit a class of students. When class size is too large, the students are often without desks, without books, without discipline, and the number of papers to grade and parent contacts to keep up with becomes unmanageable. How can we make personal relationships and mentor an overabundance of students? The bonds are not formed, the trust is not established, and the students fall between the cracks. Please keep our class size limits so that we can do what we love to do – TEACH.

Linda Bundy  
Cinco Ranch High School  
Katy ISD

Bottom line: my smaller classes do better academically, behavior problems are less; simply because I can spend more time with each student. My normal class size is much larger than 22....I average 24-25 in my classes, largest class is 29...I teach 8<sup>th</sup> grade in Nacogdoches ISD.

Richard Joslyn  
Nacogdoches ISD

My concern with this change in the class size is that it will affect all classrooms. There are additional teachers on any elementary campus who do not teach a reg. class that would be factored in using a campus wide average. The younger students need the smaller class sizes to remain as they are now, to get the instruction that they need to be successful in school. The change would cause more students to be considered for Special Ed. services. I am against this change for sure. I taught before we had the 22 to 1.

Jackie Cundieff  
Llano ISD

- Repeal of this law would be detrimental to the children of Texas. Our classrooms are overcrowded already. We strive to teach to the individual child and teach every subject reading, language, science, social studies, math, handwriting, spelling, and writing to each child. This is a near impossible task right now as we coordinate not only the regular education children, but also ESL children, and special needs children. There is no more room in our classrooms..... nor time in the day.... for teachers to be able to truly teach the children. If there are more children all we will be able to do is baby sit! I have been teaching 36 years.....I remember 40 in a classroom.....it was a zoo!

Peggy Premeaux  
Katy ISD

I have taught for over 25 years and I do not think we should do anything to harm the 22:1 ratio for K-4<sup>th</sup> grade. We have so many children coming to us with learning difficulties and social issues. It would be detrimental to their education to place them in larger class-size classrooms. We must do all we can to insure our children have the best classroom environments possible—too many of our children find their teacher and class to be their “safe zone”.

Eddie Hill  
Tyler ISD

I teach at a middle school. This year we opened a new school and rezoned attendance. Our school went from 600 to 1000+ kids!!! We hired a few new teachers for each subject/grade, but the class sizes were huge. We have kids squeezed into classrooms. In the past our campus always had great scores and we were very successful. This year because of the huge number of students in every class we cannot spend the time we need to with each student. I understand that the class size ratio is for elementary school but if in a junior school we can see how class size effects students' education I am sure an elementary school would be even greater affected.

**K. Nicole Bright**  
**Highlands Junior School**  
**6th Grade Math**  
Goose Creek ISD

I have taught in a Title I school for 9 years. I have found it difficult to meet the individual needs of my students even with 18 or 19 students in my classes. Raising the class size limit will reduce the amount of time I am able to spend helping each student, even more. Pre-K - Second Grade is a critical time in a child's development. Many of my children come to school lacking those pre-reading skills necessary to become independent readers. Raising the class ratio would be detrimental to my students' success in school.

Courtney Land  
Humble ISD

Really, I can't imagine teaching classes with any more than 22 kids in a class. I have taught 4th grade with a cap of 22 and I was relieved to know that there was a cap. Students lack one on one instruction when there are more of them in the classroom. I now teach 5th and 6th graders where there is no cap and it is so much harder having more children in a classroom. I teach in Carroll ISD

Kendall Mitchell  
Science Lab, DIS  
Carroll ISD

Please fight to limit the class size to 22 – 1. I teach in a small title I school and for several years we were able to keep our class sizes to about 15. The impact was HUGE. Our school became an exemplary campus and a TBEC honor roll school. Our class sizes have slowly grown over the past couple of years and this year we were not named a TBEC school. When you have more students per class your time to work one on one with struggling students is diminished. In my opinion the rate should be reduced to about 18 – 1. I bet the amount of learning would increase greatly. Let's do what is best for Texas students!

Elaine Schumacher  
Beaumont ISD

I strongly oppose eliminating the strict 22-1 class-size limits in Kindergarten through the fourth grade and replace it with a 22-1 campus-wide average. It is hard enough getting to all kids and helping them achieve success in the class sizes we have now. I am a second grade teacher, in McKinney ISD, with 17 kids who all need my help all the time to be successful.

Please rethink what you are planning on doing as this will make it harder to keep teachers in the classroom and harder to make others want to do the hardest job in the world - teach young minds!

Thanks for your time.

Brandes Lunsford  
2nd Grade Teacher  
Press Elementary  
McKinney ISD

As a high school teacher, I receive the "tidal wave" from the trickle-down effect. When students receive less one-on-one attention due to class size, mastery suffers. By the time they reach high school, their gaps are enormous.

In today's mainstreamed classroom, teachers struggle to meet each child's needs. Adding more students per class gives teachers less time to do this.

I can't believe that any rational person, who has been a student, would think that SB 300 is good for our children.

Karen Barrett  
Central ISD

My experience has been that one or two more children in a class can greatly impact the time you can spend with your struggling students to give them the extra edge they need to succeed. If we as educators are ultimately responsible for the success of our students, give us the fighting chance that we need. Please leave the class size limits in place.

*Dawn Bird*  
*Red Oak ISD*

I am the Discovery Lab Teacher at Humble Elementary in Humble ISD kindergarten through 5th grade classes come to my science lab for hands on science investigations. Prior to this teaching assignment, I was a 5th grade teacher for 16 years so I have a feel for the class size issue.

You probably think that I would jump at the chance to say, "yeah, change it so that fifth can have 22 also."

**NO!!!!** I believe smaller class sizes in the earlier grades are so important. When the teachers bring their classes to lab, the classes that have the most difficult time are the ones with the largest class sizes. It takes longer for initial instruction, longer for questions, longer for discipline issues, and longer for review. Therefore the lessons have to be scaled down for the larger classes so that we don't run overtime and create a backup in the hall where the classes wait.

It would be wonderful if all grades could have the guarantee of 22-1, but as I read Senate Bill (SB) 300 it appears to me that the campus average means that if the upper grades are larger than the lower grades, then schools will have to fill up to 22-1....cut from higher....add to lower.

no win...no win.

I know the members of the Senate Education Comm. are trying to find ways to save money, but the logistics of this would be a nightmare, moving teachers from campus to campus as one class is eliminated at one school and added to another. This is never a healthy atmosphere for a student. Been there done that as a student, parent, teacher.

Please forward my message to the Senate Education Comm.

Cordially,  
Shelia Dougherty-Smith  
Science Coach  
Humble Elementary

I have been a teacher for thirty-three years and feel the bill that limits class size in K-4 classrooms is one of the most beneficial bills ever passed to help our students achieve. I have taught 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade and have had large classes where reaching our students is more difficult. We have early intervention programs in place because we realize that it is harder for a student to catch up in Junior High than it is in elementary. If you go to a campus average you can average in small classes such as special education and make the numbers look doable even if you have a first grade with 28 students. Our students today have more educational challenges in front of them than ever before. Let's not add to this by not keeping an effective bill in place.

Nancy DeWeese  
Caldwell ISD

I have been teaching since 1980 in grades K-3. My class sizes before the 22 to 1 bill were close to 1 teacher to 30 students. Having a smaller class now enables me to spend more time with students who are having a difficult time understanding a concept or completing assignments. I firmly believe that having a lower ratio reduces the number of students who are referred for Special Ed, or who may eventually drop out. With fewer students, I can make the "connection" with a child that may make the difference between success and failure. I now teach second grade, and with the ratio at 22 to 1, I can continue to give my students the attention and care they deserve. Please vote to keep these ratios in place. Our future depends on it.

Julie Mihalko  
Lackland ISD

My name is Rob Krach and I have been teaching K-3 in a Title 1 school for 16 years. If the cap is taken away for class size, it would make my job 10 times harder. Often, I deal with students that are well below grade level. It takes a lot of on-on-one teaching to reach most of these students. Most of my students are 1 or 2 years behind and need to be taught in small teacher-student ratios. We cannot assume all students are at the same academic level. At the elementary level, education cannot take the form of higher education, kids need more than the lecture you get in High School and college courses. We cannot teach younger students in the same way. My experience has taught me that when working with young children the delivery of education has to be personalized and not mass produced.

Thank you,

Rob Krach  
Humble ISD

We need to keep the class size limit to 22 - 1. We must meet the needs of gifted and talented, ESL, special needs and the average learner within the classroom. It is difficult now to do this well with 22 students with various instructional needs. With the curriculum and the TEKS being so rigorous even at a first grade level, we need to keep the number of students in our classrooms to a minimum so that all students receive a quality education. It is essential that the foundation of the child's education be laid in a solid manner so they can build on it as they get older. Thank you for fighting for this important issue!

Lori Dean, First grade teacher  
Hurst-Eules-Bedford ISD

To whom it may concern:

This message is in regard to Senate Bill 300.

Eliminating this restriction will allow classes to be formed in which academic success cannot be achieved. It is imperative that students receive direct as well as group instruction at this sensitive age. The social development implications of the removal of the 22-1 rule would prove disastrous as well - students must feel at home in their classroom in order to grow as an individual. Another consideration that must be made is the effect this will have on resources. The computer labs that one sees in elementary schools rarely contain enough have computers to fully accommodate a full class of 22 students and adding more students won't help that situation. There are also physical limitations to the number of desks that may be placed into a classroom without compromising the safety of children and staff. Finally, how can a single teacher properly keep order over more than twenty-two children under the age of six? How can you expect to keep and recruit teachers for such a job? I would urge our lawmakers to consider those questions even if they have ready answers to the other concerns voiced here.

Please do all you can do discourage this bill's passage.

It is right to cut costs at a time like this, however we must act with prudence or we will face the consequences. There are many other areas in which the costs of public education may be pruned that do not compromise instruction, student development, student achievement, and the safety of the people who learn and work in our schools.

Respectfully,  
Matthew Busceme  
Humble ISD

I have taught Pre-K, Kinder, 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup>.

In Pre-K and Kinder, the best class ratio was 18 students. It was easy to regroup them into small groups. I could easily assess them within a day or two on primary skills.

In 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grades, it was better to have a limit at 21. Many students require parent conferences and interventions for success. You are also dealing with state assessments that the students need to pass to be promoted. There is a big difference in 21 and 25 students in a room.

In 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, the classes should not be larger than 25. With this level of student, it is not just academics, it is puberty. That sounds crass, but many are dealing with adult situations at home and in their lives. The teacher needs time to build a knowledge basis of what is going on in each of these students' lives. Larger classes give the feeling that they are like "cattle", herded in, taught, then let go. Some of these students have little to no adult supervision or interaction at home.



Diana Bush  
Medina Valley ISD

I am very much against this. If the districts are allowed to do a 22-1 school average, they will include aides to compute an overall average. This will allow classes to grow to about 30 (like they used to be when I started teaching) and too big to give kids the attention they need. It will allow for an extra reading group per class and all the paper work with it.

Also, school wide averages will allow some classes to have 15 and others 30. I had 33 one year in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. It was too big for students to get the attention they needed. One year I had 25 first graders. Please keep the 22-1 ratio.

Gina Henderson  
Red Oak ISD

I teach 5th grade where the class size is much larger. I generally have between 28 and 32 students in each class. It makes it very difficult to get around to everyone, to know them as personally, to have time for each of them on a personal level. Teaching is so much more effective and personal if you have fewer students in your class! I firmly believe that to maximize student learning, you DEFINITELY NEED TO KEEP CLASS Size to 22:1 in size.

Kelly Hemingway  
Humble ISD

I am an elementary Spanish teacher in Garland Independent School District. I feel the 22:1 cap is vital to give students the very best possible service. Over this amount produces less 1 on 1 time as well as fatiguing the teachers! Since I go to over 43 different classrooms a week to do Spanish activities with the children, I feel it is vital for me to have the 22:1 limit firmly in place. Thank you, Debbie Naegle

Debbie Naegle  
Garland I.S.D.

To whom it may concern:

I understand that you are considering replacing the 22-1 class ratio for Kindergarten - 4th grade with a 22-1 campus wide average system.

I feel that this will be a detriment to the education of young Texas school children. I am a 28 year teacher and now teach Reading Recovery to struggling First grade readers. They struggle as it is to survive in a busy classroom. Without a smaller class size, these children will be at a much greater disadvantage to learn basic reading and math skills.

Please do not eliminate the 22-1 class size limit for K-4th grades.

Thank you,  
Linda Erwin

To whom it may concern:

I have been an educator for 18 years. Without fail! The smaller the class, the quicker the success and readiness to move on to the next learning phase.

Thanks,  
Vennessa Childerss  
Central ISD

I think it would be a travesty to eliminate class size limits...Our District has pushed the limit anytime they are able. Of course, I'm not suggesting they don't want what is best for our students but they are doing what they need to do to support the survival of our schools. It truly gets harder as a teacher each year, for a variety of reasons, to manager 30 plus kids in a room at one time. I also find, now that I'm a counselor, that it is hard to convince parents that we can manage our students' need as well as we should.

Thank you,

Caren Barnes  
Humble ISD

I have been teaching kindergarten in a Title 1 school for the past 8 years. There is a **SERIOUS** need to not only keep a class size limit in place, but to also **reconsider lowering that limit in Title 1 schools.** The gap in knowledge between what our students come to us in August knowing and the TEKS/benchmarks we are responsible for teaching them is widening each year! It is becoming almost impossible to meet student needs and teacher responsibilities with class sizes of more than 16 students, much less class sizes of 22 or more! **PLEASE, please take this into consideration...**  
Thank you!

Linda Miller  
Humble ISD

As a Kindergarten teacher of 32 years I have had the experience of having no limit on the number of children in my classroom. Let me say that if we are expected to teach the children all the TEKS then the best way to do it is by allowing us to have a smaller class size. I have had up to 36 Kindergartners in my class. You can not give the individual attention to those children who really need the extra help. It is hard enough with the 22:1 ratio. Children today come to us with far more problems than they did 32 years ago. Eliminating the class size cap would be devastating for the elementary students.

Kendra Andrews  
Humble ISD

My name is Denise Deckard. I am a Kindergarten teacher in the Manor Independent School District. It is my belief that children learn best with smaller class sizes. I have had classes with twenty six children, and classes with sixteen children. All classes have either been Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten.

Experience shows that smaller class sizes, allows the teacher to spend individual time with each student and provide the assistance that is needed. It allows the children get individualized area specific, instruction. Smaller teacher to student ratios enable small group facilitation. Please do not allow larger classroom sizes. It is not in the best interest of the children, classrooms, schools, or communities.

Denise Deckard  
Manor ISD

I completely agree with the 22-1 ratio for K-4, actually I wish that it also included 5th grade. Until you are in a room with students all day long, it is hard to understand the huge difference each and every child makes to the classroom atmosphere. Classroom management has to be adjusted for each student.

Yvonne P. Harris, M. Ed.  
Instructional Technology Specialist  
Humble ISD Instructional Support Center

I have heard that the Senate Education committee is considering doing away with the 22 to 1 class size for Kdg. - Fourth grade.

As a kindergarten teacher for over 20 years I am asking you to please not do this! If anything, the class size should be smaller for kindergarten. Over the past 5- 10 years I have seen my students come to school with fewer social and academic skills than they have in the past. With the pervasive influence of TV and video games, many students these days are not used to sitting and listening, sharing, taking turns, etc.

In short, kids need more attention these days and it would be next to impossible for me to meet those needs with more than 22 children in my class.

Thank you,  
Laura Clapp  
Humble ISD

To Whom It May Concern:,

Anyone who has spent time in an elementary classroom *recently* knows that 22 to 1 as a maximum is really too many so to think that the classroom limit could be changed to a campus average is horrifying! I have been in the classroom for 28 years. When I began teaching, I had an average of 27 in my third grade class. At that time, a class of 27 students was manageable; however, we are not teaching the same students today. Our kids come with a myriad of problems and situations that greatly affect their education and their well being. To put it mildly, we are no longer teaching June Cleaver's kids who come from a home with a stay at home mom and a loving, providing father. Classrooms today should be gauged like the weather with the "feels like" number added to the equation. Twenty two students may walk through the door, but when they begin to unpack their emotional baggage, it may feel like 50!

In addition, if the size of my classroom increased, I may be forced to get a part time job as I already provide supplies for a significant portion of my students. Test scores will drop, discipline will suffer and teacher morale will plummet. I implore you to leave the ratio as is. I further invite you to come and spend a *full* day or two in *one classroom* not just pop in for a few minutes to get the feel of what it is really like.

Education has changed and teachers fully accept the challenge; however, we need some support if we are to continue to see our students reach their full potential.

Jo Ann Minchew  
Pasadena ISD

It should go without saying that a teacher cannot give nearly as effective instruction to 30 kids as she can 20. Teachers are expected not only to deliver whole group instruction, but also small group. With 22 students in the room, "small" groups are already 5-6 children in size and only get to meet with the teacher once a day (or even less). Allowing that number to increase would only further dilute the teacher's teaching. His/her effectiveness would be diminished with each additional student sent to her classroom.

Every child deserves accommodations to fit his or her learning style. A teacher, however, is only one person and can only be reasonably expected to make a certain number of modifications. Any children that require modifications beyond that teacher's time or energy constraint will miss out and not receive all that they deserve in an educational setting.

Texas says they are for education and a good education at that. If that is true, its impossible for Texas to also be for eliminating class size restrictions.

Sarah Szczepaniec  
Humble ISD

Smaller classes allow for every child to get more of the individual attention young learners need. With smaller classes, teachers have more time per student per day to address any kind of learning problem or just to give more encouragement to each student. This is crucial for student success and for students to develop a positive attitude toward school.

As students mature in the middle grades, they are better able to handle the larger class size.

Anne M. Lahart  
6th and 7th grade language arts teacher  
Faubion Middle School  
McKinney ISD

I would like to have input on the reduction of class sizes. I have taught in 5<sup>th</sup> grade for almost 20 years, and we are always left out of the ratio. There are many reasons why the 5<sup>th</sup> grade should be included in this formula. The first and most important reason is the TAKS tests. These students have to pass two of the three tests to move on to the sixth grade. Teaching at its best is done in smaller settings. When you have too many in a classroom then behavior becomes the biggest problem and therefore less learning is happening. Another reason is their age, hormones are increasing and it is very difficult to teach large numbers at one time. The size of the students is another issue. They need to have space and putting more than 22 in a classroom makes it very difficult.

These are a few of my thoughts as to why the ratio should include more than K-4<sup>th</sup>.

Dolly Coldwell  
Center Point ISD

Please do not eliminate the 21-1 teacher ratio size in grades K-4. These are the foundation years and the students need as much individual assistance from their teachers as they can get. This is extremely important! In the lower grades just adding another student makes a huge difference!

Martha Holcombe  
Humble ISD

It is very important to limit the class size to 22 students per teacher. It is very difficult when their knowledge ranges from low to high all in the same room. I know from experience because I have had 22 this year and have 21 right now. My classroom is very full with 22 desks, computer tables, worktables, etc. I wouldn't know where to put 26 students. When I was in my first years to teach I once had 26 students in first grade. That is a year I will never forget. The room was wall to wall desks and the grading of papers never ended. I took work home. I still take papers home today. There is so much re-teaching to do during the day.

Sandra Liska  
George West I.S. D.

To Whom It May Concern:

I am for limiting class size to 22-1 on all grade levels. With the continuing trend toward inclusion and the many different levels of learning per classroom, 22 students is as many as any one teacher should have to deal with at a time. It is difficult enough to teach so many different learning styles and learning abilities at once, but the more students there are, the more students have the opportunity to fall through the cracks. The system can only work if that same system is not overworked.

Smaller class sizes promote better learning experiences for our students. They are able to have more one on one time with the teacher and there are fewer distractions to keep them from being successful.

Thank you for your time,

Shannon Abney  
Central Independent School District  
Central High School

Dear Sirs:

As an elementary teacher who has taught grades 1 through 4, smaller classes have a much greater impact on the students learning and behavior. When they are too large, we end up with a slew of problems. We end up being baby sitters.

This is especially hard when working with students who are learning to read, write and converse in English.

I remember one year when I taught 1st grade, I ended up with 33 students and not enough desks. This classroom was enough to make me feel inadequate and frustrated to the point of almost throwing in the towel by the end of the year.

Several years later, I ended up having 18 4th grade students which was unusual. That was a wonderful year for me and my students because they ended up discovering and learning wonderful experiences that even their parents would come to me and tell me how happy they were.

If you have children, think how you would want your child's classroom to look and feel like. They are your best indicators on whether to keep the 22-1 size classroom.

Sincerely,  
Maria Zarate  
Rio Grande City ISD

My name is Amanda Vaughn and I am a Pre-Kinder teacher at Somerset ECE in the Somerset ISD. I believe the smaller ratio to teacher is best because more students who are in need of extra one on one help can receive what they need. In my past 3 years as a Pre-Kinder teacher my class size has been from 20 students all the way up to 25 students for full day Pre-Kinder. Even though I have an assistant, these numbers are very high for the age and maturity level of my students. There have been days when several students were absent, leaving me with 16 students and that is a very manageable number with this age level. I feel that 22 to 1 is still a little too high and that 20 to 1 would be an ideal number for Kinder on up. I also believe with less number of students more parental contact can be done more effectively and parents would feel safer knowing that their child's teacher can protect them from harm in the event if they had to....You never know these days. I know this would increase the number of teachers needed for each grade level but then again the students' needs should be the priority here.

Thank you for your time,  
Amanda Vaughn  
Somerset ISD

Please keep the class size to 22 students per class for grades K-4.

I am a first grade teacher with 22 students. I teach 5 different reading groups daily to begin to meet the academic needs of my students.

Having more than 22 students in a primary level classroom would negatively affect the progress of the students.

Sincerely,  
Mary Mau  
1<sup>st</sup> grade  
Shields Elementary  
Red Oak ISD

HI- I am from TYLER ISD and I am writing to let you know how much I oppose the bill that seeks to eliminate strict 22-1 class-size limits in Kindergarten through the fourth grade and replace it with a 22-1 campus-wide average.

Thank you

Robin Ewing  
Tyler ISD

As it stands 22-1 is still too great a ratio. If this ratio were to disappear or increase then No Child Left Behind would also have to be revoked.

Daphne Trumbull  
Park Lakes Elementary  
Humble ISD

To Whom It May Concern:

I strongly favor a 22 - 1 ratio class size in all Elementary School grades.

Behavior and classroom management, which are basic to student learning and achievement, are enhanced when student numbers are manageable. Teachers are able to hone in on individual progress more effectively.

Personally I experienced the most success in student performance when the number of students in my classes was 20-22. Daily I witness teachers whose classes are overloaded and who feel frustrated, stressed and demoralized by the problems the "rat pack" mentality causes in their crowded classroom.

Even so-called Classroom Size Reduction Staffers, or Aides, who are shared among high-enrolment grade levels, do not adequately address the need for lowered class sizes. Teachers' attention can be focused in an adequate, professional manner if they are not spread so thin. Class size limits of 22 in all grades would be a boon in the upper grades, where hormonal, peer-pressured students pose enough social problems distracting from academics, without herding them into small classrooms.

If class size limits in K-4 are done away with, the only measure that would be better is one that requires class size limits in all Elementary grades. Please make the class size limitation across the board, not just in grades K-4.

Diana Massey  
Mesquite ISD

It is simply common sense that a class with a lower student to teacher ratio is more apt to achieve better outcomes academically, whether it be in relation to standardized test scores or basic classroom management.

Personally, I think 22 students is too much for 1 teacher already. Ideally, a student teacher ratio of 18 (or less) to 1 would be better for the overall desired success within the classroom.

Misty Gonzales  
Bandera ISD

ATPE received many more communications from members who had from 12 to 5 PM on February 23, 2009 to submit their comments. We will do our best to compile and deliver to the committee the additional information on educators' reaction to changing class size limits.

