

Guidance on Reducing Class Size Using Federal Funds

The federal Class-Size Reduction (CSR) program, authorized by the 2001 Elementary Secondary Education Act of 1965, has a primary **goal** of improving student achievement, particularly in reading, by reducing class size in kindergarten through 3rd grade (K-3) to 18 students. Support for the federal CSR program was based on research that found that small classes could have a positive influence on student achievement.

For example, research from Tennessee's Project STAR (Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio) found that students who had been randomly assigned to small classes (13 to 17 students) in grades K-3 outperformed their peers in regular classes (22 to 25 students) and in regular-plus-aide classes on standardized and curriculum-based tests (Achilles et al., 1996). Additionally, by eighth grade, those students who had been placed in small classes through Project STAR were still outperforming students who had been placed in regular classes or regular-plus-aide classes in K-3 (Finn, 1998; Nye, 1995).

While the Tennessee STAR research occurred several years ago, it is still an influential study of class size reduction. Small classes are especially important in the early grades so that all children learn to read well, which will increase their ability to succeed in advanced subjects and later grades. Teachers in small classes can provide students with more individualized attention, spend more time on instruction, cover more material effectively, and provide students and parents with more detailed feedback on each child's progress.

To maximize the impact of CSR on student achievement, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) has recommended the usage of Title II, Part A for the purposes of CSR only in grades K-3, which is consistent with the above-mentioned example.

While the federal **goal** is to reduce class size to 18, in all instances of using federal funds to support teacher units, a district must first ensure all state requirements have been met, as outlined in state statute and policy, [Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards](#). The standards require specific student-teacher ratios, as outlined in MS Code §37-151-77, which must be met before federal funds can be used to supplement state and local funds.

To address funding teacher units in grades 4 and above, Title I, Part A is an option if data supports the academic need. Title I, Part A funds are not intended to be used to reduce class size. However, the funds can be used to hire additional highly qualified teachers who work with students to provide additional services that increase the amount and quality of instructional time. For example, a Title I paid teacher may be used to provide intense interventions with half the students in a class for reading or math instruction, while the other half remains with the regular classroom teacher. Teachers used in this manner are identified as interventionists.

Resources

- Web page for the **U.S. Department of Education Class-Size Reduction Program**: <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/other/class-size/index.html>
- Web page for **A Descriptive Evaluation of the Federal Class-Size Reduction Program**: <http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/other/class-size/report.pdf>

For more information contact: Mississippi Department of Education * Office of Federal Programs * 359 N. West St. Jackson, MS 39202 * (601) 359-3499