

OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY
Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Item
February 20-21, 2014

OFFICE OF ACCREDITATION

17. Approval of recommendations on exceptions to pupil-teacher ratio requirements for grades 1-4.

State Law 37-151-77 and State Board Policy 2100 indicate that the State Board of Education is authorized to waive the pupil-teacher requirements for districts with exceptions to the enrollment ratio of 27:1 in grades 1-4.

Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) staff reviewed the report of sections for twenty-five (25) districts out of compliance with State Law 37-151-77. Thirteen (13) districts were exempt for A or B Performance Classifications.

Total sections out of compliance in 12 districts	57
Sections that corrected data input errors	00
Sections with dropped enrollment since data entry	11
Sections corrected the excessive enrollment	08
Sections over the maximum due to a rotating schedule	01
Remaining sections not able to reduce the classroom ratio	37

An interdepartmental committee met on Thursday, February 13, 2014, to consider requests from eight (08) districts for exceptions to the enrollment ratio of 27:1 in grades 1-4. The waiver requests are detailed in the attached backup material.

If a school district does not meet the class size requirement for grades 1-4 as required by State Law 37-151-77, the state aid for the following fiscal year will be reduced. The reduction will be based on the required pupil-teacher ratio mandated in the statute. A waiver may be granted by the State Board of Education if school districts are making a good faith effort to comply with the statute but complying with the statute is physically impossible, and the cost of temporary classroom space cannot be justified.

Back-up material attached

Recommendation: Approval

CLASS SIZE WAIVERS 2013-2014

District	School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Classes with overload
North Panola	Green Hill Elementary	D	3 rd	3

North Panola School District is requesting a waiver for three (3) 3rd grade classes at Green Hill Elementary.

Other Factors Related to the Overloads:

The district was not aware of this overload before the first day of school. The district did not provide a full-time assistant in each class with an overload. The district did not request a waiver for this school last year. There is no school reasonably close by to which the children over the maximum could be transferred.

Justification of Exemption Request:

1. *Provide a clear description of why an additional class cannot be added to alleviate the overload.* At this time of year, the district does not have quality teaching applicants that are suitable for the position.

2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* There was an influx of third grade students in the school after the start of the second semester. An additional teacher is not available at this time. The district has already added two additional teacher units at Green Hill Elementary school since December to alleviate overcrowding in kindergarten and fifth grade. The new teachers that were added have placed a financial hardship on the district that was not anticipated when the budget was developed.

3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* The district will examine promotions/retentions numbers for the 2014-2015 school year. If there are projected overloads, the district will add the appropriate teaching units at the start of the school year.

District	School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Classes with overload
Noxubee County	Earl Nash Elementary	C	1 st	3

Noxubee County School District is requesting waiver for three (3) 1st grade classes at Earl Nash Elementary.

Other Factors Related to the Overloads:

The district was not aware of this overload before the first day of school. The district did provide a full-time assistant in each class with an overload. The district did not request a

waiver for this school last year. There is no school reasonably close by to which the children over the maximum could be transferred.

Justification of Exemption Request:

1. *Provide a clear description of why an additional class cannot be added to alleviate the overload.* The overload did not materialize until after the start of the 2013-2014 school year. The district budgeted for four (4) first grade teachers during the 2013-2014 school year.

2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* The district is currently financially unable to provide an additional certified teacher.

3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* The district will review its budget and plan accordingly for the 2014-2015 school year. Two pre-registrations are planned prior to the official start of school. If an overload should exist after both pre-registrations, then appropriate staff will be hired.

District	School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Classes with overload
McComb	Otken Elementary	Not Rated	1 st	1

McComb School District is requesting waiver for one (1) 1st grade class at Otken Elementary.

Other Factors Related to the Overloads:

The district was not aware of this overload before the first day of school. The district did provide a full-time assistant in each class with an overload. The district did not request a waiver for this school last year. There is no school reasonably close by to which the children over the maximum could be transferred.

Justification of Exemption Request:

1. *Provide a clear description of why an additional class cannot be added to alleviate the overload.* The district has advertised for a full-time teacher and has not been able to secure a teacher for this position.

2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* The class became overloaded when two students' IEPs were changed to include one period of reading. In addition to the regular teacher and regular teacher assistant, a special education teacher assistant and a half-time special education teacher were assigned to this class period.

3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* The district will hire a certified teacher and create an additional class for the next school year.

District	School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Classes with overload
Jackson Public (2520)	Wilkins Elementary	D	4 th	1
Jackson Public 2520	Sykes Elementary	C	4 th	1
Jackson Public 2520	Oak Forest Elementary	F	1 st	2
Jackson Public 2520	McLeod Elementary	D	2 nd	3
Jackson Public 2520	French Elementary	F	2 nd	1
Jackson Public 2520	Dawson Elementary	F	3 rd	2

Jackson Public School District is requesting waivers for one (1) 4th grade class at Wilkins, one (1) 1st grade class at Sykes Elementary, two (2) 1st grade classes at Oak Forest Elementary, three (3) 2nd grade classes at McLeod Elementary, one (1) 2nd grade class at French Elementary, and two (2) 3rd grade classes at Dawson Elementary.

Other Factors Related to the Overloads:

The district was not aware of this overload before the first day of school. The district did not provide a full-time assistant in each class with an overload. The district did not request a waiver for these schools last year. There is no school reasonably close by to which the children over the maximum could be transferred.

Justification of Exemption Request:

1. *Provide a clear description of why an additional class cannot be added to alleviate the overload.* There is no physical space to accommodate an additional classroom. Also, it is not fiscally sound to add a teacher unit.
2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* There was an increase in student population.
3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* Zone lines will be revisited in the area to reduce overcrowding in addition to adding another grade if student population dictates.

District	School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Classes with overload
Leake County	Leake Central Elementary	D	3 rd	2
Leake County	Leake Central Elementary	D	4 th	1

Leake County School District is requesting waivers for two (2) 3rd grade classes and one (1) 4th grade class at Leake Central Elementary.

Other Factors Related to the Overloads:

The district was not aware of this overload before the first day of school. The district did not provide a full-time assistant in each class with an overload. **The district requested a waiver for this school last year and it was granted.** There is no school reasonably close by to which the children over the maximum could be transferred.

Justification of Exemption Request:

1. Provide a clear description of why an additional class cannot be added to alleviate the overload. The school is the largest school in Leake County School District as a result of a court order by the U.S. Department of Justice to consolidate schools in 2010. As a result of the consolidation, Leake Central Elementary absorbed the students from two elementary schools that closed in the district. Each year since the consolidation, the district has added additional teacher units for projected enrollment. For the past three years, the enrollment has exceeded or not met the projected numbers. The district created additional teacher units for Leake Central Elementary for the 2013-2014 school year to meet projected enrollment. Unfortunately, the district has not been able to hire qualified teachers for the positions and has had several teachers to resign during the school year. Leake Central Elementary currently has two teacher vacancies that would possibly alleviate the classroom overages.

2. Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload. The district has not been able to retain and employ enough highly qualified teachers for the 2013-2014 school year. The district has employed two retired teachers for the 1st semester to assist with other vacancies.

3. Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year. The district will continue to aggressively recruit highly qualified teachers. Leake County School District participates in college career days and posts all vacancies on the district web page. The district will employ additional staff to accommodate the classroom overages.

District	School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Classes with overload
Okolona	Okolona Elementary	F	2 nd	2

Okolona School District is requesting a waiver for two (2) 2nd grade classes at Okolona Elementary.

Other Factors Related to the Overloads:

The district was not aware of this overload before the first day of school. The district did provide a full-time assistant in each class with an overload. The district did not request a waiver for this school last year. There is no school reasonably close by to which the children over the maximum could be transferred.

Justification of Exemption Request:

1. Provide a clear description of why an additional class cannot be added to alleviate the overload. An additional class cannot be added to Okolona Elementary due to lack of available classroom space. All classrooms located in the K-4 building at Okolona Elementary are currently used for classroom instruction with one office that houses the Lead Teacher, School Counselor, and Secretary.

2. Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload. At the beginning of this school year, we had twenty-six (26) students in both sections of 2nd grade classes. As the school year progressed, we had two (2) additional students to transfer within the Okolona School District. In our attempt to meet the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) Resolution Agreement pertaining to Americans with Disability Act, we had to move 5th grade classes to Okolona High for school year 2013-2014. The three story building which is adjacent and part of the Okolona Elementary campus cannot be used for additional classroom space until after we have met all compliance standards stated in the OCR Agreement. However, after we have successfully met Americans with Disabilities Act requirements mandated by the OCR, we should have adequate classroom space for additional classrooms to alleviate overloaded classrooms.

3. Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year. We will transfer one 4th grade teacher unit to 3rd grade next school year to alleviate overcrowding in our 2nd grade classes. We will also add an additional teacher unit to 5th grade at Okolona High next school year to ensure that we remain compliant to Standard 34.2.

District	School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Classes with overload
Canton Public	McNeal Elementary	NR	1 st	6
Canton Public	McNeal Elementary	NR	2 nd	4
Canton Public	Myers School	C	1 st	1
Canton Public	Jimmie Goodloe	NR	1 st	1

Canton Public School District is requesting a waiver for six (6) 1st grade classes and four (4) 2nd grade classes at McNeal Elementary, one (1) 1st grade class at Myers School, and one (1) 1st grade class at Jimmie Goodloe.

Other Factors Related to the Overloads:

The district was not aware of this overload before the first day of school. The district did provide a full-time assistant in each class with an overload. The district did not request a waiver for this school last year. There is no school reasonably close by to which the children over the maximum could be transferred.

Justification of Exemption Request:

1. *Provide a clear description of why an additional class cannot be added to alleviate the overload.* The district plans to alleviate the overload by hiring both a first and second grade teacher.

2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* The district has experienced unusually high number of transfers into the district this school year.

3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* The district will continue to monitor enrollment numbers and make any necessary adjustments required to resolve any overload issues.

District	School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Classes with overload
Natchez-Adams	McLaurin Elementary	C	1 st	3

Natchez-Adams School District is requesting a waiver for three (3) 1st grade classes at McLaurin Elementary.

Other Factors Related to the Overloads:

The district was not aware of this overload before the first day of school. The district did provide a full-time assistant in each class with an overload. The district did not request a

waiver for this school last year. There is no school reasonably close by to which the children over the maximum could be transferred.

Justification of Exemption Request:

1. Provide a clear description of why an additional class cannot be added to alleviate the overload. The district is unable to establish a new class at this time due to there is no available qualified certified teachers that hold an elementary certification at this time.

2. Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload. McLaurin Elementary has this student overload due to the reorganization of three of the elementary schools obtaining grades K-5 grade.

3. Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year. McLaurin Elementary will continue the attempt to hire a certified teacher in order to clear the overload error message.