

OFFICE OF CHIEF ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER
Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Item
Consent Agenda
April 19, 2018

OFFICE OF ACCREDITATION

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

Background Information: Mississippi Code Annotated § 37-151-77 and State Board Policy Chapter 19, Rule 19.1 – Class Size, indicates 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.

If a school district does not meet the class size requirement for grades 1-4 as required by Miss. Code Ann. § 37-151-77, the state aid for the following fiscal year shall 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.

Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) staff have reviewed the records of districts out of compliance with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-151-77 and have determined that ten (10) districts do not meet the class size requirements and do not qualify for the exemption allowed in Standard 28.2 of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2017* for schools meeting the highest levels of performance.

The waiver requests for the ten (10) districts are detailed in the attached backup material. Two (2) of the districts, Jackson Public School District and Leflore County School District, have an accountability rating of “F”.

Note: Four (4) of the ten (10) districts requesting waivers for school year SY 2017-2018 also requested waivers for SY 2016-2017 school year:

- Clarksdale Municipal School District (different school from 2016-2017)
- Jackson Public School District (two (2) of the 10 schools requested waivers in SY 2016-2017)
- Leake County School District (same school as SY 2016-2017)
- South Tippah School District (same school as SY 2016-2017)

Back-up material attached

Recommendation: Approval

CLASS SIZE WAIVER REQUESTS FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2017-2018

1. Clarksdale Municipal School District

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
Booker T. Washington International	C	2 nd	2	28/28

Clarksdale Municipal School District is requesting a waiver for two (2) 2nd grade classes at Booker T. Washington International Studies Magnet School.

Clarksdale Municipal School District provided the following response:

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.* The overload in both second grade classes are due to special need students having to participate in regular educational instruction for social interaction. The overage includes one (1) student in each class.

2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* These students are special needs students placed in regular education classes for social interaction.

3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* The District will ensure the administrator is trained on how to schedule special needs students to not allow for classroom overloads.

2. Coahoma County School District

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
Friars Point Elementary	C	2 nd	1	29

Coahoma County School District is requesting a waiver for one (1) 2nd grade class at Friars Point Elementary School.

The Coahoma County School District provided the following response:

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.* Coahoma County School District is presently experiencing difficulties with recruiting and/or hiring licensed /certified teachers. The District presently has an accreditation status of Probation due to a lack of ability to recruit/hire licensed teachers.

2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* Due to the inability to recruit/hire certified teachers, there was not available certified teachers to teach an additional class. Due to the overload, an assistant teacher was placed in the classroom to assist.

3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* The District is actively recruiting – attending recruitment fairs, announcing and posting open positions, and assisting uncertified personnel with professional development in efforts to “Grow Our Own” teachers. We are hopeful that we will be able to hire a certified teacher for the position or assist personnel with receiving certification.

3. Gulfport School District

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
Central Elementary	C	4 th	3	29/29/29

Gulfport School District is requesting a waiver for three (3) 4th grade classes at Wilkins Elementary.

Gulfport School District provided the following response:

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.* It is not financially viable to hire a teacher or teacher assistant for a one (1) to two (2) student overload. This school has a high transient population and could be over or under standard 28.2 on any given day.
- 2. Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* As Standard 28.2 reads, schools meeting the highest levels of performance are exempt, Gulfport School District meets the highest level of performance but not the school. Central Elementary accreditation is a C.
- 3. Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* Should an overload exist as we go into the 2018-2019 school term, proper staff will be hired to alleviate the overload.

4. Jackson Public School District

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
Galloway Elementary	F	1 st	1	31
		2 nd	2	28/32

Jackson Public School District is requesting a waiver for one (1) 1st grade class and two (2) 2nd grade classes at Galloway Elementary.

Jackson Public School District provided the following response:

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.* There are no certified teachers available and recommendations are being made.
2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* No certified teachers available for hire.
3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* Recruit additional certified teachers.

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
Green Elementary	F	1 st	2	30/30
		3 rd	2	28/29

Jackson Public School District is requesting a waiver for two (2) 1st grade classes and two (2) 3rd grade classes at Green Elementary.

Jackson Public School District provided the following response:

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.* There are adequate teacher slots at Green Elementary, however, the principal is unable to fill all vacancies with certified teachers.
2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* The principal has been unsuccessful with filling vacancies with certified teachers.
3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* The principal and District level staff will continue to aggressively recruit certified teachers for the upcoming school year.

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
McLeod Elementary	D	1 st	3	31/31/33

Jackson Public School District is requesting a waiver for three (3) 1st grade classes at McLeod Elementary.

Jackson Public School District provided the following response:

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 requested a waiver for this school last year and the waiver 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.* There are no additional classrooms available.
2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* There are no additional schools in the area that can accommodate students.
3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* Review numbers in other grades and look at moving a teacher from another grade that is certified to assist with making another classroom.

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
Watkins Elementary	D	1 st	1	30
		2 nd	1	29

Jackson Public School District is requesting a waiver for one (1) 1st grade class and one (1) 2nd grade class at Watkins Elementary.

Jackson Public School District provided the following response:

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 requested a waiver for this school last year and the waiver 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.* There are adequate teacher slots at Watkins Elementary, however, the principal is unable to fill all vacancies with certified teachers.
2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* The principal has been unsuccessful with filling vacancies with certified teachers.
3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* The principal and District level staff will continue to aggressively recruit certified teachers for the upcoming school year.

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
Wilkins Elementary	F	2 nd	1	29

Jackson Public School District is requesting a waiver for one (1) 2nd grade class at Wilkins Elementary.

Jackson Public School District provided the following response:

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.* The District is diligently trying to recruit a certified and qualified teacher to fill the current second grade vacancy that exist.
2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* Currently, there are no certified applicants available to hire to fill the vacancy.
3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* The District and school is aggressively recruiting and searching for certified and qualified teachers to fill current vacancies.

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
Woodville Heights Elementary	F	3 rd	2	32/33

Jackson Public School District is requesting a waiver for two (2) 3rd grade classes at Woodville Heights Elementary.

Jackson Public School District provided the following response:

Other Factors Related to the Overloads:

The District was 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.* The teacher slot was taken at the end of the 2016-2017 school year by the District. The principal is unable to find a certified teacher for 3rd grade.
- 2. Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* There are only two (2) 3rd grade slots assigned to Woodville Heights by the District level administrators.
- 3. Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* The District will have to revisit the teaching slots assigned to 3rd grade. The District is aggressively recruiting and searching for certified and qualified teachers to fill current vacancies.

5. Leake County School District

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
Leake Central Elementary	C	4 th	4	28/28/28/28

Leake County School District is requesting a waiver for four (4) 4th grade classes at Leake Central Elementary.

Leake County School District provided the following response:

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 request 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.* Leake Central Elementary has seven (7) 4th grade classes with one (1) student per class in excess. The District predicted additional enrollment for the 2017-2018 school year and placed an additional teacher on the 4th grade team. The District will budget an additional teacher unit for the 4th grade for the upcoming school year.

2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* The classroom overages are a result of unpredictable increase and decline in enrollment. The District attempted to be proactive by placing an additional teach unit on the 4th grade team due to classroom overages in 4th grade for the 2016-2017 school year.

3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* The District will review projected enrollment for the upcoming year to budget for an additional 4th grade teacher.

6. Leflore County School District

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
Leflore County Elementary	F	2 nd	2	28/30

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

Leflore County School District provided the following response:

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. Leflore County Elementary started the year off with deficiencies in the areas of certified teachers. We had teachers who were in the process of getting their licenses, and other teachers who were in the process of completing classwork assignments and were awaiting their licenses. These deficiencies were resolved as the year moved on. The student to certified teacher ratio was a difficult task for us to fulfill. In areas where we noticed a class overload of about three students, we placed full time substitutes in those classrooms. We are implementing plans and procedures to make sure that these class overloads are taken care of for the 2018-2019 school year.

2. Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload. Due to the social and economic status of Greenwood, Mississippi it is very difficult to attract and keep full time certified teachers in testing subject areas. We are making every effort to attract certified teachers in all schools for the 2018-2019 school year.

3. Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year. The District has had numerous teacher licensure training and recruitment fairs to attract quality certified teachers which can be found on the District's website.

7. Scott County School District

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
Sebastopol Attendance Center	C	1 st	1	28
		4 th	2	28/28

Scott County School District is requesting a waiver for one (1) 1st grade class and two (2) 4th grade classes at Sebastopol Attendance Center.

Scott County School District provided the following response:

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 facility currently used by elementary school will not allow for an additional classroom. A portable classroom would have to be purchased and currently our budget will not allow for the expenditure.

2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* The District is asking for a one-year waiver to allow time to budget for a portable classroom.

3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* The District will be going through some changes next year based on Neshoba and Newton County not allowing transfer students. Sebastopol has the potential to lose forty (40) students based upon those numbers. If this occurs classroom space and overloads would be fixed.

8. Smith County School District

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
Mize Attendance Center	C	4 th	2	28/28

Smith County School District is requesting a waiver for two (2) 4th grade classes at Mize Attendance Center.

Smith County School District provided the following response:

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.* Smith County School District has an increase in population that was not expected. The District does not have the space to add another classroom.

2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* The District have had an increase in population that was not expected. The District does not have room for an additional classroom at this time.

3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* The District will be renovating a building to add another classroom.

9. South Tippah School District

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
Blue Mountain Elementary	C	4 th	2	31/31

South Tippah School District is requesting a waiver for two (2) 4th grade classes at Blue Mountain Elementary.

South Tippah School District provided the following response:

Other Factors Related to the Overloads:

The District was 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 requested a waiver for this school last year and the waiver 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.* There are two (2) specific hurdles that make alleviating the overload a significant issue: the budget cuts that the District has faced, as well as, not having additional space.
2. *Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload.* Blue Mountain School is a very small K-12 school where the enrollment can be hard to predict. In the third and fourth grade, the students rotate between the two teachers reported as having overloads, so the two teachers are not teaching an overload all day.
3. *Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year.* The District is mindful of trying to make improvements on our class loads across the District. The District will be happy to make necessary changes as the budget improves.

10. West Bolivar Consolidated School District

School	School Accreditation Level	Grade Level	Total number of Sections with overload	Number of Students in Each Section
McEvans Elementary	D	2 nd	1	31
		3 rd	1	28

West Bolivar Consolidated School District is requesting a waiver for one (1) 2nd grade class and one (1) 3rd grade class at McEvans Elementary.

West Bolivar Consolidated School District provided the following response:

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 lack the certified staff to add additional classrooms. The District has attempted to hire certified staff, but the District have not been able to. If the District add an additional class, the class would have been with a long-term substitute due to the lack of certified applicants.

2. Describe the emergency, hardship, or other special situation that justifies this overload. At the beginning of the school year, the District needed forty (40) teachers. Due to this large of vacancies in the area, the District were not able to find enough certified teachers to instruct students. Therefore, the District forced to hire a full-time assistant with the one certified teacher that were on staff.

3. Describe plans to resolve this overload for the next school year. The District has been actively recruiting new teachers through emails and contact with local universities and Teach for America. The District will be having a Teacher Recruitment in the District to attract new teachers. Additionally, the District offer a teacher retention bonus of certified teachers when they sign to the District.