



REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

## K-3 Class Size

2016

**Authorizing legislation:** ESSB 6052 Section 502(1)(g)  
(<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=6052&year=2015>)

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## Executive Summary

As part of the state’s interest in the class sizes of early grades, the Legislature in 2015 required school districts to report K-3 class size by grade, by month, to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

Class size is determined by the ratio of students to homeroom teachers within a grade level. Excluded from the number are:

- specialist teachers, such as physical education or music teachers, who typically only spend their day instructing multiple groups of students that transition between homeroom instruction; and
- specialist instruction and students enrolled exclusively in Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) classes and in self-contained special education programs.

For the 2015-16 school year, 294 school districts and 2 tribal compact schools reported class size data. Lamont School District and Suquamish Tribal Compact School had no K-3 enrollment. Charter schools did not report this data due to the Supreme Court’s 2015 *League of Women Voters v. State*, which resulted in the transition of these schools to ALE programs under the Mary Walker School District.

The data provided shows that the statewide average class across kindergarten through third grade was 21.18 for high poverty schools (in which more than 50 percent of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch) and 21.70 with non-high poverty schools. Further breakdowns by each grade are shown below:

Grade Level	Statewide Average Class Size for High Poverty Schools	Statewide Average Class Size for Non-High Poverty Schools
Kindergarten	20.05	20.73
First	20.33	21.51
Second	21.69	22.06
Third	22.54	22.63
Average Across K-3	21.18	21.70

**Please note:** The complete data table, which shows all 45,684 data elements reported to OSPI, is too large to be provided within the legislative report format. The data can be found at [www.k12.wa.us/LegisGov/2016documents/K-3ClassSize.xlsx](http://www.k12.wa.us/LegisGov/2016documents/K-3ClassSize.xlsx).

## Introduction

K-3 class size reporting guidance was issued to school districts November 2015 to ensure data was being reported consistently across the state. This guidance addressed the following issues related to when and how to count both students and teachers on a monthly basis as required by state law.

### When did reporting entities count students and staff during the month?

The K-3 Class Size Reporting is based on the number of students enrolled and homeroom teacher regularly scheduled to provide instruction during the week of the monthly count day. The count day, for the purposes of collecting enrollment for state funding, is defined as the fourth instructional day of September and the first instructional day for the remaining months of a standard school year (October through June).

### How did reporting entities count students?

In the K-3 Class Size Reporting application, districts and tribal compact schools report, each month, the enrolled student headcount in classrooms with kindergarten through grade 3 by school. The following enrollment should not be included in the K-3 Class Size Reporting application:

- Self-contained special education classrooms with staff that are not coded to a duty root 31 and who are reported as program 21.
- Kindergarten through grade 3 Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) programs. Students enrolled exclusively in ALE programs and ALE teachers should not be reported. ALE students enrolled in both seat-time classroom instruction, as well as, ALE instruction should be reported as a headcount in their seat-time classroom school.
- Summer school programs.

Grades 1 through 3 headcount numbers are a whole number (no decimal places). Students enrolled in half-day kindergarten programs and reported as K2 in the state's Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS) should be reported as a 0.50 headcount. Students enrolled in a full-day kindergarten program and reported as K1 in CEDARS should be reported as a whole number, regardless of the funding source of the full-day kindergarten program.

For students who attend two or more schools, the student's headcount should be reported at the school where the student is enrolled the majority of the day. The student's headcount should not be included in the other school(s). For students attending each school an equal amount of time at each school, the district and tribal compact school would decide which school to claim the student's headcount.

## How did reporting entities count their homeroom teachers?

In the K-3 Class Size Reporting application, districts and tribal compact schools report their homeroom teachers by school who are regularly scheduled to provide instruction on the monthly count day. The reported number is rounded to the nearest 3rd decimal place.

Homeroom teacher is defined as those coded to duty root 31 – “Elementary Homeroom Teacher” in the S-275 – School Personnel Report. Teachers that are specialists as defined by duty root 34 – “Elementary Specialist Teacher” do not meet this definition.

Teacher data is reported through this application on a full-time equivalent (FTE) basis. A teacher FTE is as defined in the S-275 reporting instructions as the contracted number of hours per day associated with a full-time certificated employee in this position. FTE includes hours associated with the local certificated base contract, and excludes time for meals, time associated with classified assignments or duties, and hours associated with supplemental contracts for additional time, responsibility, or incentive.

Teachers with split classes (teaching multiple grades in one class) would have their teacher FTE split based on the number of students in each grade. For example, a teacher with a classroom of 10 first graders and 15 second graders would be reported as a 0.400 FTE (10 ÷ 25) first grade teacher and a 0.600 FTE second grade teacher (15 ÷ 25).

## OSPI Data Validation and Analysis Process

OSPI worked with school districts and tribal compact schools entities throughout the school year with respect to answering questions regarding the data reporting guidance.

In addition, OSPI used data as calculated for the K-3 compliance class size for state funding as a comparison benchmark for data accuracy. Twice during the school year, OSPI took an extract from the K-3 class size reporting tool and compared the data collected to K-3 class size compliance results. Since the K-3 class size data defined teachers as only homeroom teachers, and the K-3 compliance calculations allowed all K-3 teachers to be included, OSPI expected lower K-3 compliance class sizes as a benchmark as part of the data validation process.

During OSPI’s final data review process, it was determined that 45,684 individual class sizes (for each school, each grade and each month) were reported. To produce the most accurate average possible, OSPI removed class sizes that did not pass our data validation process. Of the 45,684 class sizes reported, 220 (0.48 percent) of the total were excluded from the calculations of the statewide average.

The data provided to legislative staff in accordance with the requirements in the omnibus appropriations acts is inclusive of all data reported during the school year.

## Results

The data provided shows that the statewide average class by grade level at high poverty schools during the 2015-16 school year as follows: Kindergarten 20.05; First 20.33; Second 21.69; and Third 22.54. The overall average class size across the entire K-3 grade span at high poverty schools for the 2015-16 school year is 21.18. The data provided shows that the statewide average class is by grade level at non-high poverty schools during the 2015-16 school year is as follows: Kindergarten 20.73; First 21.51; Second 22.06; and Third 22.63. The overall average class size across the entire K-3 grade span at non-high poverty schools for the 2015-16 school year is 21.70.

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## Conclusion and Next Steps

The K-3 class size data collection tool remains open for the 2016-17 school year, for districts, tribal compact schools, and charter schools to continue to report this data as required by state law. Since OSPI is collecting student headcount enrollment at the school level in the P223 enrollment reporting system, the data validations for the 2016-17 school year will include comparing the student headcount reported on the P223 with the data reported in the K-3 class size data collection tool.

If this class size reporting requirement remains in the 2017-19 biennial appropriations act, OSPI may pursue the option of automating this data collection by utilization of the S-275 staff data collection and the school based P223 enrollment data collection.

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