



State of Delaware
Office of Auditor of Accounts
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State Auditor

Working Hard to Protect YOUR Tax Dollars

Inspection

School Year 2019-2020 Maximum Student/Teacher Ratio

April 22, 2020

The Office of Auditor of Accounts (OAOA) performed an inspection, in accordance with Title 14 of the Delaware Code, to ensure adherence to the maximum student/teacher ratio during School Year 2019-2020 by reviewing the Department of Education (DOE) Annual Class Size Report, school district or charter school Board meeting minutes, and classroom rosters.

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Abbreviations:

| | |
|------------------|----------------------------------|
| OAOA | Office of Auditor of Accounts |
| DOE | Department of Education |
| K-3 | Kindergarten through third grade |
| The Ratio | Maximum student/teacher ratio |

The mission of the Delaware Office of Auditor of Accounts

The Delaware Office of Auditor of Accounts serves Delawareans by ensuring accountability in the use of taxpayer dollars through independent assessments of financial operations, performance management and statutory compliance of state government.

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Report Details

Background

In accordance with 14 Del. C. §1705A, “The ratio of students to instructors in any class in kindergarten or grade 1-3 in a Delaware public school shall not exceed 22 students as of the last school day of October. In calculating such ratio, a classroom instructional aide shall count as equal to half a teacher. This ratio shall only apply to a class within which students are instructed in the core academic subjects of English/Language Arts, mathematics, science and social studies.¹ The local school board may vote to waive the maximum student-instructor ratio at a public meeting noticed for that purpose. Any local school board vote on such a waiver shall occur on or before December 1 of each year, and the notice for such shall be placed in the local newspaper for two (2) consecutive weeks before the meeting. This notice shall be posted on the door of any school affected for the same two (2) consecutive weeks before the meeting. The notice shall be posted on the door of any school affected for the same period, a copy shall be sent to the principal, teacher association building representative and Parent Teacher Organization/Parent Teacher Association parent leader of any affected school.² The State Auditor shall, in cooperation with the Department of Education, monitor compliance with this section in the audits of the boards of education of the schools district conducted.³”

Essentially, no kindergarten through third grade (K-3) classroom should exceed the one teacher per 22 students ratio. If a classroom exceeds the maximum student/teacher ratio (the ratio), there should be at least one additional teacher or paraprofessional present, or a waiver of this requirement must be approved by the School Board on or before December 1st.

What We Found

There are 15 school districts and 14 charter schools that service grades K-3. For the classrooms that exceeded the ratio and did not have adequate staff support, we obtained and reviewed Board meeting minutes to confirm the Board approved to waive this requirement on or before December 1st (see Table 1 below).

| Table 1: Board Approved Waiver Obtained | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|
| Districts/Charter Schools | Date of Board Meeting | Does the waiver cover specific School/Classrooms or entire District/Charter | Did the District/Charter School have an approved Waiver |
| Appoquinimink | 11/19/2019 | Specific | Yes |
| Charter of New Castle | 11/20/2019 | Specific | Yes |
| Christina | 11/12/2019 | Entire | Yes |

¹ 14 Del. C. §1705(A)(a)

² 14 Del. C. §1705(A)(c)

³ 14 Del. C. §1705(A)(d)

| | | | |
|------------------|------------|----------|------|
| Colonial | 11/12/2019 | Entire | Yes |
| Indian River | 11/25/2019 | Entire | Yes |
| Kuumba | 2/13/2020* | Entire | Yes* |
| Lake Forest | 11/14/2019 | Entire | Yes |
| Laurel | 11/20/2019 | Entire | Yes |
| Milford | 11/18/2019 | Specific | Yes |
| Newark Charter | 8/20/2019 | Entire | Yes |
| Odyssey Charter | 11/20/2019 | Entire | Yes |
| Providence Creek | 11/21/2019 | Entire | Yes |
| Seaford | 11/18/2019 | Entire | Yes |
| Smyrna | 11/20/2019 | Specific | Yes |
| Woodbridge | 11/21/2019 | Entire | Yes |

OAOA found that fifteen districts/charter schools exceeded the ratio and were required to obtain a Board approved waiver. Four of the districts/charter schools (see Table 1 above) obtained a Board approved waiver; however, the waiver did not include all schools within the district. OAOA selected classrooms that were not included in the waiver for additional review (see table 2 below). Additionally, Kuumba Charter School did not obtain the required Board approval on or before December 1st. When OAOA reached out to the Head of School for a response, she indicated that the topic of the waiver was scheduled to occur at the November 2019 Board meeting; however, discussions with the public disrupted the agenda. The waiver was then rescheduled for discussion at the February 2020 Board meeting. OAOA received and reviewed the minutes for the February 2020 Board meeting and ensured the waiver was approved by the Board.

Additionally, we performed a review of the districts/charter schools that had classrooms that exceeded the ratio but indicated having adequate staff. If a district/charter school did not obtain a Board approved waiver to exceed the ratio, OAOA selected a classroom(s) within that district/charter school and requested the classroom roster, teacher name, and name of any additional teacher(s) or paraprofessional(s) to ensure adequate staff support was present (see Table 2 below).

| Table 2: Maximum Student/Teacher Ratio Testing | | | |
|--|---------------------|---|--|
| Districts/Charter Schools | # of K-3 Classrooms | # of K-3 Classrooms Exceeding 22 Students | Did the selected Classroom(s) have appropriate support |
| Alonso | 22 | 4 | Yes |
| Appoquinimink | 160 | 58 | Yes |
| Aspira Academy | 16 | 16 | Yes |
| Brandywine | 163 | 30 | Yes |
| Caesar Rodney | 135 | 43 | Yes |
| Campus Community School | 8 | 3 | Yes |
| Cape Henlopen | 101 | 33 | Yes |
| Capital | 120 | 14 | Yes |
| Charter of New Castle | 16 | 5 | Yes |
| Kuumba Academy Charter School | 15 | 10 | Yes |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|-----|----|-----|
| Milford School District | 79 | 14 | Yes |
| MOT Charter School | 12 | 12 | Yes |
| Red Clay | 270 | 30 | Yes |
| Smyrna | 85 | 21 | Yes |
| Thomas Edison Charter School | 16 | 12 | Yes |

During our review, we determined fifteen districts/charter schools exceeded the ratio; however, further review found the classrooms had adequate staff support to meet the ratio.

Recommendations

OAOA noted only one exception during this engagement that related to a charter school's failure to obtain Board approval of the classroom size waiver by December 1st. We recommend that districts/charter schools, when necessary, ensure the Board approval of the classroom size waiver is completed on or before December 1st of each school year in accordance with the Delaware Code.