

**STORAGE NAME:** h2233.ei

**DATE:** April 17, 1999

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION INNOVATION  
ANALYSIS**

**BILL #:** HB 2233

**RELATING TO:** School Size

**SPONSOR(S):** Representative Andrews

**COMPANION BILL(S):** SB 2008 (C)

**ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:**

- (1) EDUCATION INNOVATION
  - (2) EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS
  - (3)
  - (4)
  - (5)
- 

**I. SUMMARY:**

HB 2233 requires that beginning July 1, 2000, all plans for new educational facilities to be constructed within a school district and reflected in the 5-year school district facilities work plan must be plans for small schools. This provision is in order to promote increased learning and more effective use of school facilities. The bill requires that small schools must comply with all laws, rules, and court orders relating to racial balance. The requirements of HB 2233 do not apply to plans for new educational facilities already under an architectural contract on July 1, 2000.

As used in this bill, "small school" means:

- An elementary school with a student population of not more than 500 students.
- A middle school with a student population of not more than 900 students.
- A high school with a student population of not more than 1,200 students.
- A school serving kindergarten through grade eight with a student population of not more than 700 students.
- A school serving kindergarten through grade 12 with a student population of not more than 900 students.

The bill provides that a school on a single campus which operates on a school within a school concept is considered a small school if each subunit physically located on the single campus meets the definition of small schools as defined above.

The fiscal impact is indeterminate at this time.

## II. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:

### A. PRESENT SITUATION:

According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Florida has the highest number of students per school in pre-K through grade 12 of any state in the nation. With an average school size of 769, Florida's primary and middle schools are 63 percent larger than the national average of 471 and are 21 percent higher than the state with the second largest schools (Georgia).

During the 1960s, a study by James Bryant Contant prompted a national effort to create large, "comprehensive" high schools of 750 to 2,000 students that could offer a more expansive and specialized curriculum. Despite subsequent studies that questioned the effect of large schools on student achievement, the next 30 years brought a substantial increase in the average K-12 school size and a reduction in the number of schools.

Additionally, large schools were considered more efficient than smaller schools. Many educators and economists believed large schools could provide the same program services at a lower cost. Results from recent studies, however, contradict the large school efficiency argument.

A 1992 Public Education Association study reported that large schools (i.e., 1,500 - 4,000 students) do not achieve cost efficiencies significant enough to justify their existence or to offset negative educational effects. Large schools require more administration and support positions to manage their operations and more teachers for specialized departments and courses. Higher rates of violence and vandalism also add to large school costs.

### **Small Schools Research**

Deborah Meier, former Principal of Central Park East High School in Harlem, offers these reasons why small schools are essential:

- In small schools, teachers can get to know students and their work, how they think and how best to teach them. Students also have access to more adults for academic advice and as mentors.
- Small schools provide the possibility of school wide accountability. Parents and the public have easier and more direct access to teachers and principals. Teachers and principals can get to know the parents.

In addition to Meier's findings, a synopsis of 30 years of research on school size found that smaller schools:

- Improve students' test scores and grades, especially for low-income minority students.
- Increase student attendance rates and reduce dropout rates. Research shows that dropout rates in schools of more than 2,000 students are twice as high as those of schools with 600 or fewer students.
- Improve student attitudes toward and interest in school.
- Foster better relationships between students and teachers.

According to a report issued by the Education Commission of the States, the ideal sizes for schools to achieve both instructional benefits and cost-efficiency are the following ranges:

- High Schools -- 600-1,700
- Middle Schools -- 400-800
- Elementary Schools -- 300-600

### **Economy of Scale**

The economy of scale argument, which examines the cost efficiency for "producing" a given level of achievement in students, leads to conclusions favoring school consolidation and larger size. The

logic is that savings could be applied toward strengthening and expanding the school's academic offerings in response to individual differences among students in interest and ability. This should result in either a general increase in resource strength, greater program specialization, or both. Program specialization is seen as an advantage within this specific research.

Although this argument assumes that greater size results in an economically more efficient operation, savings projected by proponents of school consolidation have not materialized. Large schools usually expand their support and administrative staffs to handle the greater bureaucratic demands. In rural areas, higher costs for distributing materials and transporting students offset any savings (Lee, 1996).

### **Characteristics**

In addition to size for small schools to be successful and effective educators and researchers recommend the following:

- Embrace a strong academic structure, rigorous academic standards and high expectations for all students.
- Create schools-within-schools that are independent schools, not subdivisions or just one specialized school within a larger school.
- Broaden the range of courses and activities by collaborating with schools within and outside of their building and with other community resources (i.e. museums, recreation centers, etc.).
- Provide equal opportunity for all students to participate in different schools.
- Provide helpful information and guidance to all students about their school options.

### **Other Considerations**

The aforementioned target numbers can be undesirable or difficult to achieve in some circumstances such as isolated rural schools. Another concern with small schools is that they cannot offer the course variety and extracurricular activities offered by large schools.

### **Primary Learning Centers**

Primary Learning Centers are schools consisting of any combination of kindergarten through eighth grade that meet the needs of the children in the immediate residential area. The population of Primary Learning Centers should not exceed a total population of 500, however, the benefits of a 250 population should be considered as well. Primary Learning Centers provide all the educational benefits without the costly overhead associated with fully staffed cafeteria, media centers and administrative offices.

### **5-year District Facilities Work Program**

Section 235.187, F.S., requires each school district to annually prepare a 5-year district facilities' work program. The program must provide for public hearings and input. The program must reflect the estimated revenues (local, state, or other), needs, a schedule of all capital outlay projects, and major repair and renovation projects and project costs of the district. Districts must identify the number of relocatable student stations scheduled for replacement during the 5-year survey period and the total dollar amount needed for that replacement. Those relocatables identified and scheduled for replacement in a school board adopted financially feasible 5-year work program are counted at *zero* capacity. All remaining relocatable classrooms are counted at *actual* student capacity.

### **SMART Schools Clearing House**

Section 235.217, F.S., requires the SMART Schools Clearinghouse to recommend to the Governor, the Legislature, and the State Board of Education frugal construction standards that ensure appropriate industry standards and optimal life cycles and that may include, but are not limited to,

standards for optimal size of core facility space, design-build, performance contracting, energy efficiency, and life-cycle systems costing.

**B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:**

HB 2233 states and the Legislature finds:

- Florida's schools are among the largest in the nation.
- Smaller schools provide benefits of reduced discipline problems and crime, reduced truancy and gang participation, reduced dropout rates, improved teacher and student attitudes, improved student self-perception, student academic achievement equal to or superior to that of students at larger schools, and increased parental involvement.
- Smaller schools can provide these benefits without increasing administrative and construction costs.

**Definition**

As used in this bill, "small school" means:

- An elementary school with a student population of not more than 500 students.
- A middle school with a student population of not more than 900 students.
- A high school with a student population of not more than 1,200 students.
- A school serving kindergarten through grade eight with a student population of not more than 700 students.
- A school serving kindergarten through grade 12 with a student population of not more than 900 students.

A school on a single campus which operates on a school within a school concept is considered a small school if each subunit physically located on the single campus meets these requirements.

**Requirements**

Beginning July 1, 2000, all plans for new educational facilities to be constructed within a school district and reflected in the 5-year school district facilities work plan must be plans for small schools in order to promote increased learning and more effective use of school facilities. Small schools must comply with all laws, rules, and court orders relating to racial balance.

**Exceptions**

The requirements of HB 2233 do not apply to plans for new educational facilities already under an architectural contract on July 1, 2000.

**C. APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES:**

1. Less Government:

a. Does the bill create, increase or reduce, either directly or indirectly:

(1) any authority to make rules or adjudicate disputes?

No.

(2) any new responsibilities, obligations or work for other governmental or private organizations or individuals?

No.

(3) any entitlement to a government service or benefit?

No.

b. If an agency or program is eliminated or reduced:

(1) what responsibilities, costs and powers are passed on to another program, agency, level of government, or private entity?

N/A

(2) what is the cost of such responsibility at the new level/agency?

N/A

(3) how is the new agency accountable to the people governed?

N/A

2. Lower Taxes:

a. Does the bill increase anyone's taxes?

No.

b. Does the bill require or authorize an increase in any fees?

No.

c. Does the bill reduce total taxes, both rates and revenues?

No.

d. Does the bill reduce total fees, both rates and revenues?

No.

e. Does the bill authorize any fee or tax increase by any local government?

No.

3. Personal Responsibility:

a. Does the bill reduce or eliminate an entitlement to government services or subsidy?

No.

b. Do the beneficiaries of the legislation directly pay any portion of the cost of implementation and operation?

No.

4. Individual Freedom:

a. Does the bill increase the allowable options of individuals or private organizations/associations to conduct their own affairs?

No.

b. Does the bill prohibit, or create new government interference with, any presently lawful activity?

No.

5. Family Empowerment:

a. If the bill purports to provide services to families or children:

(1) Who evaluates the family's needs?

N/A

(2) Who makes the decisions?

N/A

(3) Are private alternatives permitted?

N/A

(4) Are families required to participate in a program?

N/A

(5) Are families penalized for not participating in a program?

N/A

b. Does the bill directly affect the legal rights and obligations between family members?

N/A

c. If the bill creates or changes a program providing services to families or children, in which of the following does the bill vest control of the program, either through direct participation or appointment authority:

(1) parents and guardians?

N/A

(2) service providers?

N/A

(3) government employees/agencies?

N/A

D. STATUTE(S) AFFECTED:

Creates s. 235.2157, F.S.

E. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS:

**Section 1** Creates s. 235.2157, F.S., providing legislative findings; defining "small school"; requiring that school districts plan construction of only small schools after July 1, 2000; requiring small schools to comply with racial balance requirements; providing an exemption for plans under architectural contract on July 1, 2000.

**Section 2** Provides an effective date of July 1, 2000.

III. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE AGENCIES/STATE FUNDS:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

One researcher suggests if you have 500 students who live within a two mile radius of each other, and it costs \$350 per child to transport them more than two miles from their residence, you are spending \$175,000 per year on transportation. The cost of a school with a student capacity of 500 is \$2.5 million. You could take the \$175,000 for transportation and lease purchase a school for thirty years at 6 percent interest, and you would have \$2.5 million. However, the exact fiscal impact of HB 2233 is indeterminate at this time.

2. Recurring Effects:

N/A

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

N/A

4. Total Revenues and Expenditures:

N/A

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AS A WHOLE:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

Indeterminate at this time.

2. Recurring Effects:

N/A

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

N/A

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

1. Direct Private Sector Costs:

N/A

2. Direct Private Sector Benefits:

N/A

3. Effects on Competition, Private Enterprise and Employment Markets:

N/A

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

**STORAGE NAME:** h2233.ei

**DATE:** April 17, 1999

**PAGE 8**

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

The bill does not require counties or municipalities to expend funds.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

The bill does not reduce the authority of counties or municipalities to raise revenue.

C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

The bill does not reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties and municipalities.

V. COMMENTS:

N/A

VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

N/A

VII. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION INNOVATION:

Prepared by:

Staff Director:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pamela M. Allen

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ouida J. Ashworth