

# **Class Size Counts Questionnaire for FCPS At-Large School Board Candidates June 2017**

## **Response by Sandra Allen**

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- 1. What are the most and least important provisions in FCPS Regulation 1302.1? What provisions, if any, would you like to see changed, how and why?**

Providing answers to matters of Regulation requires extensive background knowledge of how the regulations came about and obtain feedback from teachers positive/negative aspects to make an inform decisions. I can give you my opinion on my personal observation/experience with helping in classrooms. If elected, I will get educated in Regulation. I am researching this matter right now. But to reply to your questionnaire, I feel you must have my answer as a Candidate with my personal views.

- 2. If FCPS staff revised Regulation 1302.1 to increase the caps for classes, what would you do?**

I volunteered at all levels of learning in my children's schools. I find the need to keep class sizes small. Manageable for teachers to properly assess, evaluate and provide adequate feedback to students at early stages of learning. Students are difference and learn differently at each stage. Adequate support must be present to help with learning and understanding. We must seek student success. If we don't invest to provide strong foundation students will fall behind in their learning as they proceed with their education. Thereby causing a ripple effect in their ability to learn. Why would we not see the uniqueness of all students since all our DNAs are different?

At early development students need hands-on experience and without adequate supervision student move on without completely learning the subject matter or attaining skills required. In my opinion, if decision was made to increase class size, there must also be an increase in teachers. My recommendation would be to hire young paid interns in fields of education. These would give interns experience and also bring positive benefits for students and teachers. As always must look at all opportunities.

- 3. If elected, would you vote to amend the FCPS Legislative Program to explicitly support state bills that:**

- Reduce state law caps on 4<sup>th</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade classes from 35 students to 29 students?**

As parents, we want our children to thrive and succeed. Decision makers should have equal goals. Decision in this area will affect student's future later in their education. When we invest at early learning/development students are provided with right tools to learn at higher school grades. Strong foundation is a must. Decisions made should be for the success of all students.

I support reduce class sizes, but this answer gets into the debate of school choice and parents right to decide. All students have rights and if decisions made takes away their opportunity, choices must be provided.

My question to you would be, would low income families have equal rights to decide student's future? I have no issues with families of wealth, but as you probably know low income and minorities students are disproportionately place in alternative schools, Juvenile Detention Center or drop out. It is my strong believe that if increasing class size detracts from student success, then parent must be giving a choice. How do we provide equal education? We must give parents the opportunity to see their child succeed. This means sending them to a different school. Educators and Leaders must see the importance of given a student all possible opportunities to succeed in life. We cannot afford to think of a child as just a number. They are individuals that need advocacy and support. Victims of poor decision making. Changes can happen, when right decision makers place focus on students. We need more leaders that care and have the right motives.

“Low income and minority families must be allowed to seek equal excellence for their students”

- **Required school districts to post on their publicly-available web sites the number of classes at each elementary school that had 25 or more students?**

Schools should be transparent with parents. Creating trust with the community and if posting data is important enough for parents, then information should be easily accessible. Any changes must be presented and informed openly to community at large. Minority and low income families have the right to be informed, as well. This is not happening at this time.

4. **What procedures, if any, would you vote to require FCPS staff to implement to ensure that the provisions in Regulation 1302.1 are enforced? Why do think those procedures would ensure enforcement.**

As academic institutions, schools should set the right example of ethics and morals for the student body. I say this because regulations are set for all schools to follow then that is what they must do. If they fail and create mistrust, then this will be what the student body will learn. Parents must continually work with FCPS to ensure Regulations are followed. PTA is a great way to assure these Regulations are implemented. Minority and low income parents must be notified. This is not happening right now.

5. **Would you vote for a new School Board policy to cap elementary, middle school and/or high school academic class sizes? If so, what caps (e.g.,28 students) would you support for academic classes in elementary, middle and high school and why?**

As mentioned it is essential to have small classes at early stages (Pre-schools to middle Schools).

HS is different students are getting ready for college. As you know colleges are much bigger and classes are enormous, so caps can help. Also students can definitely benefit from experience of bigger classroom environment. Transition from one learning institution to a much bigger and higher capacity can help them cope with changes.

If education system sets strong foundations at early stages of student's education, class size might not be a big issue in HS. Teachers input on this matter is very important. Parent are not present to see how changes affect students. Most of our observations are done via statistics or student grades.

6. **Would you vote for a School Board Policy to cap science classes with labs (e.g., biology, chemistry and physics) at 24 students consistent with safety recommendations by the American Chemistry Association and other national groups? Why or Why not?**

I did get an input from a teacher about this matter. Depending of the student body and diverse levels of learning having a cap can help, but also having another teacher can create wonders for some students. Teachers input to this area is essential any changes must be done with the coordination and input from them directly.

7. **The state requires FCPS to report average class sizes at each school. Would you require FCPS staff to also post publicly on the FCPS website the number of and course titles of classes with 25 or more students at each school? Why or why not?**

Again, if parents see this information as necessary for decision making and assessing their own student's success, I concur with posting information about class size. It is my goal to empower parents and provide them with the right information to advocate for their own student's success. Goal should always be, what needs to be changed to help improve students learning. Not to suspend, send students to alternative schools rather see them graduate.

8. **Should principals be allowed to create larger academic class sizes by trading classroom teacher positions for other positions or resources? Do your views change depending on whether it is an elementary middle or high school principal, or based on any other factor? If so, how and why?**

Class size in Pre-K to Elementary must be kept at a manageable level. If regulation stipulates a cap in class size, then Principals must abide by regulation. As mentioned

before, there needs to be a solution that seek student success. If this means parents need to make school choices, then this must be allowed.

9. **Should FCPS pull excess teachers and other staff out of schools where actual student enrollment (including FRM and ESOL counts) does not justify the number of positions allocated to that school base on the application of the needs-based staffing formula to enrollment projections? Describe any circumstances where you would not support pulling the excess staff and why?**

I believe we must allow decision makers to manage staffing as they see necessary. Micro managing any organization does not benefit and limits the decision-making ability. These decisions must be made with feedback and coordination with FCPS staff. Input must always be use because of positive and negative aspects of staffing. I would need to know more internal details regarding this issue.

10. **Should FCPS countywide staffing reserve positions ever be allocated to elementary schools with average class sizes (excluding Level 2 special education students) under 23 students? Under 20 students? When and why?**

I would need to know more about internal processes to provide my position. But as mentioned Pre-K to Elementary benefit from teacher's guidance and small class size are to the benefit of student.

11. **On May 25, 2017, a majority of School Board members voted against motions that would make other budget cuts to minimize across the board class size increases. If elect and those same amendments were on the agenda next May, which would you vote for, which would you vote against, and why?**

Budget cuts to education do greater harm to student's learning. I believe that we must do more with the current budget we have. Decisions on increases/decreases of budget must be carefully made. I don't support budget decreases in education, but also must be conservative with what has been appropriated. See if there are areas that students can benefit greater and those that take away value of student success, such the case of career Police Officers, which lead to the school to jail pipeline for low and minority students (please read my post on why I believe this detracts from student success).