

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

## Response by Chris Grisafe Candidate for FCPS At-Large School Board

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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?

Among the most important provisions are:

- Establishing class size caps for elementary schools
- Criteria/guidelines that trigger resource actions when class size meets or exceed thresholds
- Notification to parents about decisions impacting class size

I would like to see greater transparency in class size throughout FCPS schools. I believe it would be value add for all schools to publish actual core class sizes for all grades, and make them online and easy to locate for parents.

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

I would vote against such an effort and work with CSC and other stakeholders to help advise/advocate against it.

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

- Reduced state law caps on 4th through 6th grade classes from 35 students to 29 students? Yes (HB1498)
- 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? YES! (HB2174)

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? Increase transparency of class size generally, and require principals to notify/report to the school board, through the School Board's independent auditor, when any given class size exceeds requirements under 1302.

Would require principals to report all class sizes?

Yes, transparency is a key element to accountability.

Why do you think those procedures would ensure enforcement? Requiring principals to report to the board through the independent auditor will help ensure the board is informed and positioned to hold administrators accountable, where appropriate, and better prioritize resource decisions.

5. Would you vote for a new School Board policy to cap elementary, middle school and/or high school academic class sizes? Yes, in general, I would vote to support this idea. However, in the spirit of due diligence, and particularly for the high-school level, I would seek to understand whether or not there are any instances where it is important for an administrator to have flexibility in class size.

If so, what caps (e.g., 28 students) would you support for academic classes in elementary, middle and high school and why? For upper grades, 30 students sounds like a reasonable cap. In the spirit of due diligence, and particularly for the high school level, I would seek to understand whether or not there are any instances where it is important for an administrator to have flexibility in class size.

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?

Yes, for the sake of safety and quality of instruction.

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 web site the number of and course titles of classes with 25 or more students at each school? Why or why not?

Yes, I would certainly support making class sizes public because I believe it would aid good governance and accountability. However, I believe it would be more useful to parents and administrators to post actual class sizes for all classes rather than the average number and only above a threshold.

8. Should principals be allowed to create larger academic class sizes by trading classroom teacher positions for other positions or resources?

Generally, no, not for elementary school. There are many ingredients to student success, but smaller class size is a factor which reaps many academic and social emotional benefits, particularly for elementary school level, and therefore should not be negotiated for other educational resources or positions.

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?

The priority should be controlling the class size, especially at early grades and at schools with high needs. There may be room for discussion at the high school level, depending on the school and the types of positions/resources needed.

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 based 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.

My sense is that teachers need to go where they are going to make an direct impact on students. If there is a school with a significant special population, there could be reasons to keep those excess teachers in that school. This could apply to certain Title 1 schools or schools with a high ESOL or Special Ed population. In such cases, there should be a process to fully evaluate the need for excess teachers and not just based on numbers alone; and this should be revisited periodically.

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?

Yes, I do think schools with high needs should get reserve positions, even if the average class size is under 23. In schools with high needs, it is not only the class size that matters but the student to teacher ratio that matters.

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 elected and those same amendments were on the agenda next May, which would you vote for, which would you vote against, and why?

In general, I would vote for budget cuts to support smaller class size. But small class size alone does not ensure a good education. The retention of highly qualified teachers, the school leadership and the amount of community involvement dictates the success of our students. All of these factors need to work together, not in isolation, to move forward.

With respect to meeting on the May 25 meeting, I would have generally support all of the Jeannette Hough's motions, because they reprioritize resources from administration to the classroom to specifically address class size.