

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

Response by Michael H. Owens Candidate for FCPS At-Large School Board

703-973-0970

ms.owens@gmail.com

<https://www.facebook.com/OwensFCPS/>

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?

The most important provision in FCPS Regulation 1302.1 is section V, which deals with specific class size caps. These numbers are out of line with evidence-based research and should be lowered.

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

I would not support increasing cap sizes for classes.

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?**

I would support a legal cap at 29 students. Education is a legal right and overcrowded classrooms prevent students from exercising that right.

- **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?**

I strongly believe in transparency in our schools, including budgets, staffing, class sizes, and curriculum. Parents, especially, have a vested interest in knowing what resources are available to schools and how those resources are allotted.

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 you think those procedures would ensure enforcement?

I would require transparency and the posting of class sizes publicly to enable the community to monitor compliance. The members of the community not only have a right to know what is going on in our schools, but should have a voice and input into those decisions.

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?

I would support a 24 student classroom cap in academic classes at the elementary and middle school level and a 28 student cap at the high school level.

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 believe we should follow evidence-based recommendations, especially when it comes to student safety.

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?

I support posting all class sizes publicly. This is important information to help parents evaluate the performance of their schools and track trends over time.

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?

I would support experimental programs to improve educational outcomes using innovative resource management, for example high school classes based on college style lecture/seminar structures. But these programs should be evidence-based, planned, documented, and monitored during execution.

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.

Pulling excess staff should not be done routinely and should be discussed with administration and community leaders. The caps are maximums; many students and many schools may require lower teacher-student ratios for successful educational outcomes.

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?

Specific schools and specific student groups may need lower class sizes to maximize their learning potential. The population of our county is diverse and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to our classroom challenges.

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?

I understand that hard choices must be made to meet our instructional goals. In order to fund instructional positions to lower class sizes, I would vote in favor of reducing administrative and other non-instructional positions.