



## THE FLORIDA SENATE

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

**COMMITTEES:**  
Education Pre-K - 12, Chair  
Ethics and Elections, Vice Chair  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Education  
Fiscal Policy  
Government Oversight and Accountability  
Higher Education

**SENATOR JOHN LEGG**

17th District

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October 19, 2015

Commissioner Pam Stewart  
Florida Department of Education  
Office of the Commissioner  
Turlington Building, Suite 1514  
325 West Gaines Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Commissioner Stewart:

Consistent with our oversight responsibilities, now that the October 2015-2016 Full-Time Equivalent student survey has been completed, the Senate Committee on Education Pre-K – 12 will be reviewing the compliance of school districts with class size requirements, as codified in Article IX, Section 1, of the Florida Constitution.

Since passage of the class size provisions, the Florida Legislature has implemented the policy in the interest of students obtaining a high quality education. Considerations have been made in class size compliance calculations, for unique public school district programs that support innovation and parental choice.

State policy has established innovation and parental choice as the key components for the class size standard to be calculated as a school average. Policy allows flexibility in the areas of public schools of choice, charter schools, and innovation schools of technology. Some school districts, however, have expanded the intent of state policy by naming themselves a “district of choice” or a “district of innovation,” or labeled many of their schools as “public schools of choice.”

Our committee will be reviewing the existing public policy, examining how it is being implemented, and discussing whether retention, modification, or elimination of the flexibility should occur moving forward.

REPLY TO:

- 262 Crystal Grove Boulevard, Lutz, Florida 33548 (813) 909-9919
- 316 Senate Office Building, 404 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100 (850) 487-5017

Senate's Website: [www.flsenate.gov](http://www.flsenate.gov)

**ANDY GARDINER**  
President of the Senate

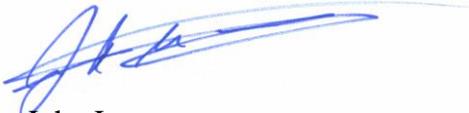
**GARRETT RICHTER**  
President Pro Tempore

With that in mind, I ask for the assistance of the Florida Department of Education (DOE) in providing the following information, no later than **November 13, 2015**:

- Which districts have labeled themselves as “districts of choice” or “districts of innovation” or have named more than one-third of their schools within their respective district “public schools of choice”?
- Of these districts, what documentation does DOE have that:
  - Illustrates specific school level innovation?
  - Substantiates meaningful parental choice?
- What other criteria is considered by these districts and by DOE for conformity to statutory letter and intent?
- Since the 2010-2011 school year:
  - How many students have been affected by having the compliance calculation at the school average rather than class level?
  - How many classroom teaching positions have been eliminated or not needed by having the compliance calculation at the school average rather than class level?
  - How much money has each of these districts saved by having the compliance calculation at the school average rather than class level?

Florida voted for quality education and smaller class sizes, and concerns have been raised by parents, students, and teachers. I understand the magnitude of this request, especially in conjunction with your current duties as the Commissioner of Education. The abbreviated timeline is due to the 2016 Legislative Session beginning in January. Your assistance with this request is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,



John Legg  
Committee on Education Pre-K – 12, Chair

cc: President Andy Gardiner  
Senator Don Gaetz, Chair, Education Appropriations Subcommittee  
Senator Bill Montford, Vice Chair, Education Appropriations Subcommittee  
Marva Johnson, Chair, State Board of Education  
John Padget, Vice Chair, State Board of Education  
Gary Chartrand, State Board of Education  
Rebecca Fishman Lipsey, State Board of Education  
Michael Olenick State Board of Education  
Andy Tuck, State Board of Education