

2008: B1

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Directors of Education

**FROM:** Nancy Naylor  
Assistant Deputy Minister

**DATE:** January 10, 2008

**SUBJECT:** **Primary Class Size:**  
**(1) 2007-08 PCS results**  
**(2) 2008-09 PCS planning**

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The release of the updated Class-Size Tracker shows that Ontario's school boards have done excellent work in achieving the Primary Class Size (PCS) targets for 2007-08. I am writing, first, to highlight the 2007-08 results and, second, to provide your board with information that will assist you with preliminary planning for PCS implementation in the 2008-09 school year.

**(1) 2007-08 PCS RESULTS**

Province-wide, the Ministry is pleased to report that, in 2007-08, 88.4 per cent of all primary classes have 20 or fewer students and 99.7 per cent of primary classes have 23 or fewer students. At the same time, average class size in grades 4 to 8 has gone down – from 25.7 in 2003-04 to 25.0 in 2007-08.

These are outstanding results in the first year of full implementation. It is also especially good news that large primary classes (25 or more students) have virtually disappeared. In 2003-04, 25 per cent of primary classes had 25 or more students. In 2007, only 0.1 per cent of primary classes were this large.

A small number of school boards fell below the level of success that was attained both at the province-wide level and by the majority of boards. The Ministry is committed to working in partnership with each of these boards to assist with the development of their PCS plans for 2008-09 and ensure there is continued progress towards the PCS targets.

**(2) 2008-09 PCS PLANNING**

The experience of the first year of full PCS implementation has underlined the importance of an effective planning process at the school board level. Working with a number of boards that met or exceeded the PCS targets, the Ministry has identified a number of effective planning practices. While the Ministry plans to share more detailed

information in a document to be released in the near future, these effective practices include:

- Tracking enrolment carefully for all grades, with frequent reporting between principals and the board to review projections and early pre-registration, especially of Junior Kindergarten/Kindergarten students.
- Ongoing monitoring and adjustment of plans well in advance of the upcoming school year and of reorganization in the first month of the school year.
- Designating a senior administrative official to lead planning, reporting and management of implementation, including management of the budget.

In 2008-09, school boards should organize their elementary classes so that, on a board-wide basis:

- At least 90 per cent of primary classes have 20 or fewer students;
- 100 per cent of primary classes have 23 or fewer students;
- 100 per cent of combined grades 3/4 classes have 23 or fewer students; and
- Average class size in grades 4-8 does not increase beyond 2003-04 levels or 25:1:
  - Boards that historically have been above 25 (that is, had an average 4-8 class size greater than 25 in 2003-04) are encouraged to achieve an average of 25 or to match the lowest average class size achieved since 2003-04.

Boards may be subject to cash flow penalties if any of the PCS targets are not met. Once a school board is compliant with the PCS targets, it may use any surplus from the PCS Reduction Amount to address other needs in the elementary panel. Further details about accountability measures for this funding will be provided when the Ministry releases the 2008-09 GSN.

In advance of the release of the 2008-09 Grants for Student Needs (GSN), boards are advised that the government will commit to maintaining the per pupil amount, adjusted for increases in salary and preparation time benchmarks under the current labour framework.

As in previous years, boards will be expected to develop PCS plans for 2008-09 and submit them to the Ministry before the end of June 2008. However, boards will not be asked to submit preliminary or trial PCS plans in advance of June 2008, except in some individual cases where a board may be having difficulty in reaching the PCS targets.

Transitional Program Equivalency (TPE) was provided on a limited basis in 2007-08 to allow boards to exempt specific primary classes from the PCS standards. As the PCS initiative is reaching maturity, TPE will be considered only for programs such as French Immersion or other specialty programs that require congregating students. Classes exempted under TPE will have a cap of 23 students.

The Ministry has completed its process of allocating capital funding to school boards to address their PCS related capital needs. Boards are reminded that they must enter their PCS Capital project costs into the SFIS system to receive approved funding. Boards that are anticipating funds should ensure that this data entry has been done.

In 2008-09, each board will again choose its own September count date for reporting the final class organization within its elementary schools. This policy provides flexibility to avoid any reorganization of classes or schools as a result of the PCS initiative after

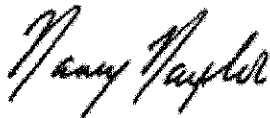
the September count date. It is also expected that boards will undertake any necessary September reorganization in the best interest of students, with minimal disruption to classroom activities.

To help minimize the extent of September reorganizations, boards may also wish to consider that most 2007-08 PCS plans were designed to achieve the minimum target of 90 per cent of primary classes with 20 or fewer students. This meant that these plans effectively "used up" the 10 per cent of primary classes that could have up to 23 students. The original intent of this flexibility was to accommodate the variances boards would see between the projected enrolment in their plans and actual enrolment in their schools in September. Boards may wish to use most of the 10 per cent flexibility to address any variance between projected and actual enrolment at the start of the school year.

If you require further information about the PCS initiative, please contact:

Funding and policy	Mehul Mehta	(416) 325-2035 mehul.mehta@ontario.ca
PCS plans, accountability and reporting requirements	Mathew Thomas	(416) 325-2049 mathew.thomas@ontario.ca
PCS Capital	Grant Osborn	(416) 325-6268 grant.osborn@ontario.ca

Hard work by committed staff at the board and school level was a key to successful implementation of the primary class size initiative in 2007-08. Province-wide, more than 530,000 primary students are now benefiting from classes with 20 or fewer students. I look forward to working with your school board and other education partners throughout the coming year to ensure that we build on this success and give our youngest students the ongoing advantage of small class sizes.



Nancy Naylor  
Assistant Deputy Minister

Copy: Superintendents of Business and Finance