



1. How do Florida schools compare in size to schools in other states?

According to the most recent data published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), Florida's public schools have the highest average enrollment in the nation.

School Size: Number of Students

*National average data from American School and University Report May 2000.

	National Average	Florida	Over National Average
Elementary	610	798	188
Middle School	800	1,381	581
High School	804	2,121	1,317

Florida high schools' population ranged from less than 100 to over 5,000 students per school.

2. What are the benefits of small schools?

According to recent research, small schools provide the following benefits:

- reduced discipline problems and crime;
- reduced truancy and gang participation;
- reduced dropout rates;
- improved teacher and student attitudes;
- improved student self-perception;
- student academic achievement equal to or superior to that of students at larger schools; and
- increased parental involvement.

The 1998 Institute for Education and Social Policy in "The Effects of Size of Student Body on School Costs and Performance in New York City Schools" reported the following:

- "The Literature on the relationship between the size of a school's student body and school outputs is unambiguous - smaller schools show better outputs than schools of other sizes."
- "We find that size of the student body is an important factor in relation to costs and outputs and that small academic and articulated alternative high schools cost among the least per graduate of all New York City high schools. Though these smaller schools have somewhat higher costs per student, their much higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates produce among the lowest cost per graduate in the entire New York City system."

Small Schools/Schools-within-a-School

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The research literature indicates that small schools are <u>better places for disadvantaged youth</u>, particularly poor students of color in urban districts. The small additional budgeted amounts per student this study finds invested in small schools seem well worth the improved outputs, particularly the low costs per graduate, that these small schools demonstrate."
<p>3. What is Florida's policy on school size?</p>	<p>The 2000 Legislature passed legislation which requires that beginning July 1, 2003, all new schools constructed must either be constructed or be operated to meet small school standards (Ch. 2000-235, L.O.F.). These small school standards are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elementary schools - a student population of not more than 500 students; • middle schools - a student population of not more than 700 students; • high schools - a student population of not more than 900 students; • schools serving kindergarten through grade 8 - a student population of not more than 700 students; and • schools serving kindergarten through grade 12 - a student population of not more than 900 students. <p>Small schools are to comply with all laws, rules, and court orders relating to racial balance.</p> <p>These standards do not apply to plans for new educational facilities already under architectural contract on July 1, 2003.</p>
<p>4. Should small schools cost more money to build or operate than large schools?</p>	<p>The 1992 Public Education Association in "Small School's Operating Costs: Reversing the Assumptions About Economies of Scale" reported the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The premise that small schools are more expensive to operate has always been false. Research in an educational setting has specifically disproved the economy-of-scale argument at all but a very limited range of school sizes. And <u>no</u> research evidence supports a claim that the large school size in New York City (e.g., 1500-4000 or more) achieves operational-cost scale efficiencies significant to justify their existence or to offset size-related, educationally damaging inefficiencies." • "On the contrary, studies show dis-economies of scale in large schools. Difficult to manage efficiently and safely, large schools require a disproportionate increase in management; an extra 'layer' of managers - subject supervisors, assistant principals, deans, additional

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	<p>secretaries - separate principals and teachers."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "In small schools the whole school environment changes, yielding advantages and economies derived from increased collaboration among staff, reduced supervisory needs, and increased efficiencies. The complexity of administrative tasks is reduced, whether in planning a schedule, the curriculum, evaluation, or coping with student problems. Face-to-face interaction substitutes for generating and responding to memos."
<p>5. What is meant by "school-within-a-school?"</p>	<p>"Schools-within-a school" means an operational program that uses flexible scheduling, team planning, and curricular and instructional innovation to organize groups of students with groups of teachers as smaller units, so as to functionally operate as a smaller school.</p>
<p>6. What is Florida's policy on schools-within-a-school for <u>current</u> schools?</p>	<p>In order to reduce the anonymity of students in large schools, school boards must adopt policies effective for the 2002-2003 school year, and thereafter, to encourage any school that does not meet the definition of a small school, to operate as a school-within-a-school.</p>
<p>7. What are the applicable statutes and rules?</p>	<p>Section 235.2157, F.S. -- Small School Requirement Section 230.23(20), F.S. -- School-within-a-school description</p>
<p>8. Where can I get additional information?</p>	<p>Florida Department of Education Educational Facilities (850) 488-4405 www.firn.edu/doe</p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives Council for Lifelong Learning (850) 414-6694</p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives Committee on Education Innovation (850) 488-7451</p>