



SB 580: Making class size and caseload mandatory subjects of collective bargaining

Oregon continually ranks among the very worst states in the nation for large class sizes. Student to staff ratios for specialists like school counselors and psychologists, school nurses, speech language pathologists, and special education are often more than double the national recommendations.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the inability to negotiate class size and caseloads has led specialists to struggle meeting growing student needs and in several districts teachers have been unable to force districts to negotiate safe cohort sizes to meet safety and health guidelines from OHA, OSHA, and ODE.

Education stakeholders and experts agree that large class size and caseload reduces the quality of a child's learning, reduces the amount of individualized attention students receive, and contributes to many of the classroom management, mental health and behavioral challenges our schools currently face.

In Oregon, when teachers and other educators sit down with school districts to negotiate their contracts, they discuss a variety of terms of compensation and working conditions.

However, in Oregon, there is no guarantee that class size and case load are discussed at the bargaining table.

Put students front and center in school contract talks

The answer is simple and straightforward. SB 580 adds class size and caseload to the statutes delineating mandatory subjects of collective bargaining, so appropriate caseload and safe class and cohort size may be a part of every contract negotiation.

Making class size and caseload a mandatory subject of collective bargaining is not a magic bullet and will not automatically solve Oregon's school funding problems. What it will do is guarantee that educators and school district officials consider ways to manage class size in the district budget at the same time they are setting benefits, compensation, and school year. There is no requirement for any specific outcome and no state benchmarks. Simply a requirement that they have the conversation.

Class size and caseload is one of the most important factors in the success of our students. Shouldn't it be at the top of the list for contract talks?

Oregon educators say yes. It is time to make class size a mandatory subject of collective bargaining in Oregon. Yes on SB 580



Class Size and Caseload as a Mandatory Subject of Collective Bargaining

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What does it mean to make something a mandatory subject of collective bargaining?

A: There are three categories of bargaining in public contracts- mandatory, permissive, and prohibited. Prohibited terms are not allowed to be discussed in contract negotiations at all; permissive terms of a contract *may* be discussed, if both negotiating parties agree; mandatory terms *must* be discussed.

In Oregon, class size is permissive, meaning that even if educators ask to make class size a topic of discussion, a district simply has to say no and the entire conversation is off the table. By making class size a mandatory subject of collective bargaining, it will be a required topic for discussion in every district in the state.

Q: Will making class size and caseload a mandatory subject of collective bargaining require schools or school districts meet specific benchmarks or set classes at a certain state-mandated size?

A: No. There is no predetermined outcome. This change would only require that school districts and educators *discuss* class size and caseload when laying out other terms of their contracts.

Q: Will making class size/caseload a mandatory subject of collective bargaining require districts to spend more money?

A: No. Districts will still have the same amount of money to spend. What this does is require that negotiations involve conversations about how to balance class size among other priorities in the contract, and will allow trade-offs in other aspects of the contract.

Q: Do any other states make class size a mandatory subject of bargaining?

A: Yes. At least six other states have statutory requirements that educators and districts discuss class size at the bargaining table.

Q: Will this affect teacher compensation?

A: Maybe. Educators and school districts could jointly decide to trade increases in compensation for smaller class sizes and caseloads.

Q: Is this complicated to change in the law?

A: No, it is very simple. The statute would add the phrase “ ‘Employment relations’ includes class size and caseload” and delete the words “class size” from the terms currently exempted from employment relations negotiations.



Class Size and Caseload as a Mandatory Subject of Collective Bargaining “Wills and Won’ts”

Confused about what impact making class size a mandatory subject of collective bargaining will have on aspects of public education? This chart shows what making class size a mandatory subject of bargaining will do and won’t do!

Outcomes of class size and caseload as mandatory subject	Will	Won’t
Require school districts sit down during collective bargaining with teachers and other educators to discuss appropriate class size and caseload	X	
Require districts and educators arrive at any pre-set outcome or reach specific class size or caseload benchmarks		X
Affect local control and local decision-making at the district level		X
Change funding levels or formulas		X
Require small rural districts to set or maintain specific class sizes		X
Change protocols or procedures for employee strikes		X
Make students and class size a top priority during contract negotiations	X	