

## Use of Title II Funds for Class Size Reduction

The Class Size Reduction program came into being during the last term of President Clinton. With the passage of *No Child Left Behind* the Class Size Reduction (CSR) program was eliminated and folded into what was the old ESEA Title II Dwight Eisenhower Math and Science program. The program kept the same purposes of both earlier programs and added new features that did not exist in either program. The new program is Title II, Part A, *Improving Teacher Quality State Grants*.

One of the features of the new program is that no funds can be spent unless the activity that is being funded has scientific evidence that it will work. While much has been written about class size reduction, there is little that fits the NCLB definition of "scientifically based research". Most of the early literature on CSR indicates that it does not have an impact on student achievement unless the size of the class is somewhere between 8 and 12 students, depending on the study cited. However, there are two new studies, the Tennessee STAR study and Wisconsin SAGE program, which do fit the NCLB definition of scientific research and make some definitive statements about CSR. Both programs are true programs, meaning that ALL targeted classrooms (K-3) are reduced in size in the schools that receive funds for the program, not just one class here and another class there. The Tennessee program reduced class size to 17 or below, the Wisconsin program reduced them to 15 or below. Both programs also did not rely on just reducing the class size in order to impact student achievement. Teachers were provided professional development in effective instructional strategies; students were provided extended day and other support programs. Both programs showed increased student achievement.

The two studies above and other less rigorous studies have provided guidance about how to spend funds for CSR. There are four major findings from the research:

1. The programs are more effective at the k - 3 grade levels. The research indicates that if a child has a lower class size for EACH grade K through three the child learns more and scores higher on assessments. In fact, the higher achievement continues past the third grade (one study says to the 8th grade) even when class size goes back to larger classes after the 3rd grade.
2. The programs are more effective if the CSR teachers are also provided with professional development in effective instructional strategies. In other words, simply lowering class size without regard to the effectiveness of the teacher has little or no impact on student achievement.
3. The programs are more effective if the class student / teacher ratio is reduced significantly. Because of the two studies above, the definition of significant is 17 or below. There is no support in the literature that says that reducing a class from 25 to 22 students has an impact on student achievement. While there is some literature that shows an impact at about 20 students, none of this research meets the NCLB standard for scientifically based research. This is why the CSR teacher in West Virginia must have 17 or fewer students in class.
4. CSR programs are more effective if they are actually "programs." There is NO support in the literature for picking one class in school A and another in school B and a third in school C in order to reduce the class size of the largest classes in those three schools. A CSR "program" is one that would reduce the class sizes in all classes K - 3 in the school with the largest average class size or in the school that has the lowest student achievement. **One way to target a CSR teacher to all grades K-3 in a school is to use the CSR teacher as an instructional interventionist in a three tier instruction program.** One thing to consider prior to implementing a CSR program in each grade k-3 is that most schools do not have enough classrooms to reduce all K - 3 classes to 17 or

fewer students, so this would limit the schools which could effectively house a CSR program. There are other considerations, not the least of which is cost. **Using CSR teachers as instructional interventionists avoids these limitations.**

In addition to the four pieces of research-based guidance mentioned above, there are other considerations that come from the Title II legislation itself:

1. All funds must be spent on activities that are based on scientific research.
2. Title II funds must be targeted at helping teachers become highly qualified.
3. Title II funds must be spent to help highly qualified teachers become more effective. (Professional Development.)
4. Title II funds must be spent to supplement what the state, local government, and other federal programs require; it cannot be used to supplant what they require. (Title II funds cannot be used to help a county meet the requirement of 25 students in a classroom. Once the class size of 25 has been met, Title II funds can be used to reduce the size further.)
5. Title II funds may only be spent to meet prioritized county needs that are identified from data.

There is an additional consideration when considering how much to spend on CSR versus professional development. Professional development is referred to as a high-yield strategy to improve student achievement, versus CSR, which is a low-yield strategy to improve student achievement. While both will yield greater student achievement, one yields greater results for the dollar spent. For example, one CSR teacher costs approximately \$50,000 for one year to have an impact on 17 students. The impact on those 17 students ends at the end of the year. That same \$50,000 will pay for a one-week summer reading or math academy for 16 teachers, which will impact 1320 students, with approximately \$5,000 left over to provide follow up sessions or professional development materials for the teachers. Additionally, because the professional development, if done well and implemented, will change what the teacher does in the classroom from that point forward, the impact does not end at the end of the year. The teachers who receive the professional development will be able to impact an additional group of 1320 students for each year that they continue to work.

While there is little research which compares the effectiveness of CSR with professional development there is one newer piece of research that equates professional development as 10 times more effective than CSR in terms of student learning and achievement. "The impact of moving up one standard deviation in teacher quality raises mathematics test scores by roughly ten times as much as the very expensive policy of reducing average class size by one standard deviation." pp 16 Hanushek & Rivkin (2002)

For the reasons above, beginning with 2004-2005, the county Title II plans for the school year were limited to spending 70% of Title II funding for CSR teachers. This percentage continued to be reduced over the next four years (64% in 2005-2006, 57% in 2006-2007, and 50% in 2007-2008) until no more than 50% of a county's Title II funds are spent on CSR teachers. Additionally, counties will be required to meet at least the first three points from the research above.

1. There should be no more than 17 students in a class taught by a teacher funded through CSR funding. (Actually the goal is 17 in each class for the grade for which the teacher is hired, but if that is not possible then the CSR paid teacher is limited to 17.)

2. The CSR teacher must be provided with professional development in research based effective instructional strategies. (This could be part of a larger professional development program.)
3. The CSR teacher must be hired for grades K - 3, unless research is cited and summarized in the application for funds that shows that it is effective at higher grades.

Additionally, counties will need to follow the NCLB Title II requirement to target their CSR teacher "programs" at SCHOOLS or ONE school that either has the largest average class size, is identified for improvement, or has the lowest percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers in addition to the three conclusions from research mentioned above unless there are circumstances which would limit the ability to target these funds (e.g. limited number of classrooms available, no schools identified for improvement, class size already below the average of 17 in an identified school, etc.)