

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Class Cap Guidelines

2019-2020 School Year

Definitions

- “Soft cap” is defined as the stated cap (i.e. P-2 = 20, Gr 3-6 = 25, Gr 7-9 = 28 and Gr 10-12 = 30).
- “Hard cap” is defined as the stated cap + 2 students.

Effective date

- Note that these caps shall apply on September 30th of each school year. It is understood that there may be enrolment fluctuations throughout the year after this time.

Class Size Guidelines

1. Classes for grades Primary to Two are capped at 20 students (soft cap), up to 22 students (hard cap). Creating combined classes or multi-age groupings are appropriate to meet this cap.
2. Classes for grades Three to Six are capped at 25 students (soft cap), up to 27 students (hard cap). Creating combined classes or multi-age groupings are appropriate to meet this cap.
3. Classes for grades Seven to Nine are capped at 28 students (soft cap), up to 30 students (hard cap). Creating combined classes may be appropriate to meet this cap.
4. Classes for grades Ten to Twelve are capped at 30 students (soft cap), up to 32 students (hard cap). Creating combined classes may be appropriate.
5. Combined classes have multiple grade levels in one room. The cap for a combined class shall be the cap for the lowest grade level.
6. Class caps are applicable to all classes, at the applicable level, in all education entities.
7. A class may exceed the hard cap in the following circumstances:
 - School Capacity—When, in order to meet the class size cap, the creation of an additional class or classes is necessary and the school does not have the space to accommodate the additional class(es), the class cap shall not apply.
 - Exceptional Circumstances—The class size cap can be exceeded in exceptional circumstances in order to accommodate issues of class configuration or class composition.

Procedures when exceeding hard cap

A principal may determine that it is best for their school to have a class(s) exceed the hard cap, related to school capacity (space) or exceptional circumstances. While school capacity (space) is relatively easy to define, it is recognized that “exceptional circumstances” is more difficult to define, and may vary from school to school.

1. Principal reviews school’s situation and their rationale with their immediate supervisor.
2. Principal reviews school’s situation and rationale with the affected teachers.
3. If there is agreement with the group of affected teachers, the principal will review the situation and rationale with the School Advisory Council (or recognized equivalent).
4. If there is not agreement with the group of affected teachers, the principal contacts their immediate supervisor to discuss ways in which classes do not exceed the hard cap.

Example 1:

An elementary school with student enrollment requiring 9 classrooms to meet class cap guidelines includes 3 combined classrooms. The Principal and teachers discuss alternative scenarios that would allow for fewer combined classes, however, two affected classrooms would need to exceed cap by 2 students in order to accommodate the reconfiguration.

The teachers are not in agreement as to the merits of the alternative. The Principal maintains the original configuration.

Example 2:

A small Junior High with student enrollment requiring 7 classrooms to meet class cap guidelines includes one combined Grade 7 and 8 classroom. The Principal and teachers review student profiles and curriculum and determine that exceeding cap guidelines in grade 7 using a different configuration of 7 classrooms would be preferred.

The Principal advises their supervisor and then meets with SAC, receiving endorsement of the proposed alternative. The Principal changes the class configurations and one classroom will be reported as exceeding cap for exceptional circumstances.

High School Course Changes

Course selections in high school happen in the spring. Significant course changes at a school may create pressure to maintain class caps.

1. Schools should promote Nova Scotia Virtual School (NSVS) courses as a viable and positive option in public school programming.
2. Principals may combine classes in order to meet class size guidelines.
3. In order to meet class cap guidelines, it is understood that some students may be directed to an alternate course with available space.

Communication & Reporting

1. Principals and central office staff will work collaboratively to communicate and problem-solve to meet these Class Cap Guidelines.
2. The principal is responsible to review class sizes with staff and SAC as of September 30th.
3. The principal shall report all classes over the hard cap to their immediate supervisor as of September 30th.
4. Regional Executive Directors of Education/Superintendent shall report class sizes to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
5. Following confirmation of all known exceptions to the class cap guidelines, classes exceeding cap for exceptional circumstances are posted during the first week of October.