

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to education; creating the  
3           "Florida Maximum Class Size Study Act";  
4           requiring school districts to reduce the  
5           teacher-to-student ratio in certain schools;  
6           requiring the Department of Education to  
7           conduct a study of the efficacy of class size  
8           reductions; providing legislative goals;  
9           amending s. 233.0612, F.S.; encouraging school  
10          boards to install character-development  
11          programs in elementary schools; providing an  
12          effective date.

13  
14   Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

15  
16                   Section 1. (1) This section may be cited as the  
17 "Florida Maximum Class Size Study Act."

18                   (2) During school year 1998-1999, each school district  
19 using funds provided in the 1998-1999 General Appropriations  
20 Act for the purpose of class size reduction shall, in at least  
21 one elementary school, reduce the teacher-to-student ratio to  
22 one full-time equivalent teacher to 20 students in  
23 kindergarten through grade three. In any district where there  
24 is a critically low-performing elementary school as identified  
25 by the Commissioner of Education, such school shall be  
26 selected for inclusion in the program under this subsection in  
27 preference to any other school in the district, and the ratio  
28 to be achieved in such schools shall be one full-time  
29 equivalent teacher to 15 students. In the case of a district  
30 with more than one elementary school identified by the

31

1 commissioner as critically low-performing, the selection of a  
2 school shall be performed by the district school board by lot.

3 (3) At the conclusion of the 1998-1999 school year,  
4 the Department of Education shall conduct a complete study of  
5 the efficacy of the reductions in class size provided for in  
6 subsection (2). The study shall involve all participating  
7 schools and shall be focused on obtaining verifiable data  
8 regarding the benefits of class size reduction in terms of  
9 student achievement and performance. Results of the study  
10 shall be presented to the Governor, the President of the  
11 Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the  
12 minority leader of each house not later than January 1, 2000.

13 (4) Beginning with school year 1998-1999, it shall be  
14 the goal of the Legislature and each school district that each  
15 elementary school in the school district beginning with  
16 kindergarten through grade three class sizes not exceed 20  
17 students, with a ratio of one full-time equivalent teacher per  
18 20 students; except that only in the case of critically  
19 low-performing schools as identified by the Commissioner of  
20 Education, the goal in kindergarten through grade three shall  
21 be a ratio of one full-time equivalent teacher per 15  
22 students. For purposes of any funding in the General  
23 Appropriations Act to meet these goals, the district shall  
24 give priority to identified critically low-performing schools  
25 in the district. Second priority for the use of any funds  
26 designated for meeting these goals shall be for kindergarten  
27 through grade one. Third priority for the use of any funds  
28 designated for meeting these goals shall be for grades two and  
29 three.

30 Section 2. Subsection (1) of section 233.0612, Florida  
31 Statutes, is amended to read:

1           233.0612 Authorized instruction.--Each school district  
2 may provide students with programs and instruction at the  
3 appropriate grade levels in areas including, but not limited  
4 to, the following:

5           (1) Character development and law education. Each  
6 school board shall be encouraged to install in the elementary  
7 schools of the district a program in character development  
8 which is the same as or similar to the Character Counts or  
9 Character First! Education Series. The programs must be  
10 secular in nature and stress such character qualities as  
11 attentiveness, patience, and initiative.

12           Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 1998.