

# Bulletin

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## Amended Bulletin No. 33

To: Principals and Case Managers

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Subject: Guidelines for Special Education Class Size

The Illinois School Code was amended to change the Illinois State Board of Education's special education rules regarding class size (23 Illinois Administrative Code 226.730). The focus remains on the number of students with disabilities, which means those students on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), per classroom per class period – not the number of students assigned to any particular teacher on his/her caseload.

The recent amendment excludes from the definition of “students with disabilities”, solely for the purposes of class size, any student who receives ONLY speech services outside of the general education classroom, provided that the instruction the student receives in the general education classroom does not require modification.

NOTE: A modification, which is different from an accommodation, is defined as a change in what a student is expected to learn and how the student will demonstrate achievement when participating in the general education curriculum, such as changing the instructional level, the content and/or the performance criteria.

### A. GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

No general education classroom should have more than 30% students with disabilities, excluding speech only students. Additionally, the general education curriculum must be taught, and the class cannot be deemed a “remedial” class.

## B. SEPARATE SPECIAL EDUCATION CLASSROOMS

In determining the number of students with disabilities in a separate special education classroom, the amount of required special education services (ARS) is the determinant factor not the student's least restrictive environment (LRE). The ARS appears in the first line under the top chart in Section 12 of the e-IEP, and refers to the total number of instructional minutes the student receives.

- Students receiving special education for less than 20% of the school day - The separate special education classroom can have no more than fifteen (15) students with disabilities per class period. Two additional students, for a total of seventeen (17) students per class period, can be added if a paraprofessional is present at all times that the class enrollment exceeds fifteen (15) students.
- Students receiving special education services for 21% to 60% of the school day- The separate special education classroom can have no more than ten (10) students with disabilities per class period. Five additional students, for a total of fifteen (15) students per class period, can be added if a paraprofessional is present at all times that the class enrollment exceeds ten (10).
- Students receiving special education services for more than 60% of the school day - The separate special education classroom can have no more than eight (8) students with disabilities per class period. Five additional students, for a total of thirteen (13) students per class period, can be added if a paraprofessional is present at all times that the class enrollment exceeds eight (8).
- Students ages three through five - The separate special education classroom for students ages three through five can have no more than five (5) students with disabilities per class period. Five (5) additional students, for a total of ten (10) students per class period, can be added if a paraprofessional is present at all times that the class enrollment exceeds five (10).

The age, nature and severity of the students' disabilities and their needs for individualized instruction should be considered when grouping students with disabilities in the separate special education classrooms. Students with disabilities should be grouped in relation to their common educational needs and the types of services they require to meet those needs. If such grouping is not possible, administration should ensure that the special education services can be individualized to meet the various students' needs and the assigned teacher is qualified to plan and provide appropriate instruction for each student in the classroom.

If students with various ARS are grouped in the same class period, the number of students with disabilities in the classroom is controlled by the student with the highest ARS. For example, if a school wanted to schedule eleven students with disabilities who receive 250 minutes per week of special education and one student who receives 1200 minutes per week of special education into the same separate special education classroom for the same class period, the classroom can have no more than eight students. Because the classroom is scheduled to have twelve students, a paraprofessional must be in the room the entire time the class exceeds eight students or four of the students must be scheduled for another class period.

The age range for a separate special education classroom did not change with the new regulation. For elementary schools, the age range may not exceed four years. For high schools, the age range may not exceed six years.

Finally, when scheduling your students with disabilities, the special education teacher's other duties, such as participation in Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and the paperwork associated with the IEP process, must be taken into consideration. The special education teacher must have time within his/her work day to fulfill all these additional requirements.

### Special Education Class Size At-A-Glance

Classroom	Number of Students with Disabilities	Number of Special Education Teachers	Number of Paraprofessionals
General Education	No more than 30% per class period, excluding speech only		
Separate Special Education Classroom - ARS 20% or less	15	1	0
	16 or 17	1	1
Separate Special Education Classroom - ARS 21% to 60%	10	1	0
	11 to 15	1	1
Separate Special Education Classroom - ARS 61% and over	8	1	0
	9 to 13	1	1
Separate Special Education Classroom - 3 through 5 year olds	5	1	0
	6 to 10	1	1

CC: Chief Network Officers  
Specialized Services Administrators and Clinical Managers