



EPSL | **EDUCATION POLICY STUDIES LABORATORY**
Education Policy Research Unit

Class Size, Pre-kindergarten, and Educational Adequacy:

Costs and Funding Options for Florida

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Executive Summary

Since 1998, Florida voters have passed three amendments that pressure state officials to increase education spending. The 1998 amendment introduced constitutional language establishing the importance of education to the state and its citizens, requiring “adequate provision...for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality system of free public schools.” Two amendments followed in 2002, requiring free, high-quality pre-kindergarten and mandating the reduction of class sizes.

The analysis in this brief suggests that the recurring costs of the class size and pre-K amendments will be \$3 billion per year after full implementation. For pre-K, the actual costs estimated here are close to the estimates being used by the Legislature; for class size, the actual costs estimated here are lower.

Florida now has the lowest overall tax rates in the country. This analysis suggests that full funding of the two amendments would raise Florida’s ranking only slightly, from 50th to 49th. Therefore, Florida would remain a low tax state.

One of the biggest genuine uncertainties remains the constitutional requirements for educational adequacy required by the 1998 amendment. Estimating these costs is quite difficult compared with pre-K and class size reductions, which are much more explicit about the requirements.

It is therefore recommended that the Legislature:

1. Fund an independent, external review of CSR costs and benefits to provide a steady source of objective information as the amendments are implemented.
2. Perform a cost study for educational adequacy to provide preliminary estimates of potential additional funding requirements.
3. Create a bipartisan tax and expenditure commission in advance of the constitutionally mandated commission of 2007 to make sure that the amendments can be implemented by means of a stable funding source.

The foregoing is a summary of a policy brief in the report *Reform Florida* (Education Policy Research Unit, April 2004). The complete policy brief is available on the Education Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSL) website at:

<http://www.asu.edu/educ/epsl/EPRU/documents/EPSL-0401-108-EPRU.doc>

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