

**ECCC PTA Parent & Teacher Survey Results Show Concern
About Larger Class Sizes
One of Several Important Issues Regarding Education
March 2015**

The East Cobb County Council of PTAs (ECCC PTA) has released the results of ECCC PTA parent and teacher surveys about class sizes (student/teacher ratio), which were conducted at the end of the 2014 school year. The two separate, informal surveys reveal that responding parents and teachers expressed concern about larger class sizes in East Cobb and the corresponding impact on the learning experience. The purpose of the surveys was to understand how parents and teachers felt about class sizes. The survey results are relevant input at this time, when Governor Deal has established an Education Reform Commission to comprehensively review Georgia's education system and the QBE funding formula, as well as an Education Advisory Committee to provide feedback on education policy issues.

Participants in the separate parent and teachers surveys included 290 teachers from 40% of East Cobb public schools and 1,726 East Cobb parents. The surveys were anonymous. The surveys are in no way a comment on the caliber of our Cobb County School teachers and administrators. Cobb County has remarkable, talented, exceptional teachers and administrators who strive every day to provide a high-quality education to our students. Additionally, the ECCC PTA is composed of parents and volunteers, who are not professional statisticians or scientists and who did their best to make the survey questions fair and unbiased. The surveys were an informal, nonscientific means of gathering input from parents and teachers about a subject of importance to them -- class sizes.

Some background: In Cobb County today there are more students per teacher than in 2008. This is a result of the unprecedented economic challenges that the Cobb County School District (School District) has confronted in the past six years. As a result of these challenges, the School District was forced to cut 1300 instructional, professional and support positions between 2008 and 2013 -- even as student enrollment increased. Fortunately, this trend has turned around, and the School District was able to add 300 teachers for the 2014-15 school year. See: School District 2014-15 FY Official Budget, pages 42, 46.

Overall, the survey results reveal that responding parents and teachers are concerned that larger class sizes negatively influence the learning environment. According to 82% of responding parents, larger class sizes were an issue at their school. At the same time, 87% of teachers responding said that they have seen an increase of classroom sizes since they began teaching in Cobb County, and 76% of teachers responding said that the current class sizes make it more difficult to cover material effectively. Teachers and parents cited large class sizes as reasons for diminished one-on-one time with students and less opportunity to either assist students who are in need of extra help or to challenge students who are ready to advance academically. Parents also reported that larger class sizes result in student distraction from course work, and both parents and teachers reported additional behavior issues. Of the parents responding, 96% said that they were concerned that larger class sizes will have a negative impact on their child's education in the long term. To view the survey results, see the Legislation & Advocacy page of ECCCpta.org.

As parents, we realize that the School District team and the Cobb County Board of Education consider providing a high-quality education as the highest priority, and that our state elected officials share this objective. We all want our students to succeed. We also recognize that this issue cannot be solved overnight. The reduction of 1300 positions occurred over 6 years. We share the survey results as a “snapshot” of parent and teacher feedback on larger class sizes and to provide input on a condition of education delivery in East Cobb that has a meaningful impact on students and teachers.

There are likewise other education issues which our elected officials are trying to resolve – such as increasing teacher salaries, so that Cobb County can retain and recruit the best teachers for our students. Teacher retention and recruitment are unquestionably important to Cobb students and parents. We want the best teachers, and we want them treated well. Other matters that would support our teachers and promote academic achievement include teacher professional development, teacher training on education curriculum and putting effective data tools in place to measure and target how best to improve student academic performance. These are just a few of the education issues under consideration.

It is our sincerest hope that parents, teachers, administrators, community members, elected officials and business leaders will work together to assess education challenges in Cobb County and in Georgia – and that we can together identify the best solutions. A high-quality education is critical for our children, so that they may compete successfully in an exponentially competitive international economy, and so that our communities, businesses and State will thrive.

In closing, we are deeply grateful to the parents and teachers who filled out the surveys. We appreciate your valuable time and input.