

the condition of education 2008



INDICATOR 33

Student/Teacher Ratios in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

The indicator and corresponding tables are taken directly from *The Condition of Education 2008*. Therefore, the page numbers may not be sequential.

Additional information about the survey data and supplementary notes can be found in the full report. For a copy of *The Condition of Education 2008*, visit the NCES website (<http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2008031>) or contact ED PUBs at 1-877-4ED-PUBS.

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Learning Opportunities

Student/Teacher Ratios in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

Student/teacher ratios tend to be higher in public schools with larger enrollments than in public schools with smaller enrollments.

The ratio of students to teachers, which is sometimes used as a proxy measure for class size, declined between 1990 and 2005 from 17.6 to 16.1 students per teacher for all regular¹ schools (see supplemental table 33-1). This pattern changes, however, when public elementary, secondary, and combined schools are examined separately.

The student/teacher ratio for regular public elementary schools declined from 1990 through 2005 (from 18.2 to 15.8), with most of the decline occurring after 1996. Generally, elementary schools in each enrollment category showed similar patterns except in the largest schools (1,500 students or more), where the student/teacher ratio fluctuated between 19.6 and 21.2 over this period.

In contrast, student/teacher ratios for all regular public secondary schools increased between 1990 and 1996 (from 16.7 to 17.6) and then declined to 16.8 in 2005. Secondary schools in each enrollment category showed similar patterns.

In regular public combined schools (schools that include both elementary and secondary grades), student/teacher ratios were lower in 2005 (15.3) than in 1990 (15.8). This pattern varied by the school enrollment: the student/teacher ratio for the largest enrollment category was higher in 2005 than in 1990, the student/teacher ratios for the middle three enrollment categories were lower in 2005 than in 1990, and the student/teacher ratio for the smallest enrollment category was of similar magnitude in 2005 and 1990 (11.1 versus 11.0).

In every year from 1990 through 2005, the student/teacher ratio was positively associated with the enrollment for elementary, secondary, and combined regular public schools: the student/teacher ratio for any given enrollment category was always larger than that of any smaller enrollment category. For example, in 2005, regular secondary schools with 1,500 students or more enrolled 6.6 more students per teacher, on average, than regular secondary schools with enrollments under 300.

¹ Regular schools include all schools except special education schools, vocational schools, and alternative schools. Charter schools can be of any school type.

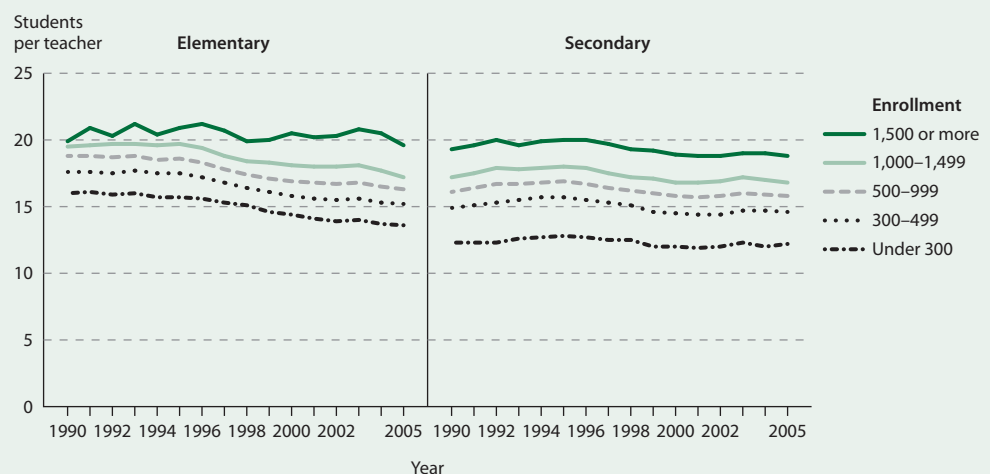
NOTE: Student/teacher ratios do not provide a direct measure of class size. The ratio is determined by dividing the total number of full-time-equivalent teachers into the total student enrollment. These teachers include classroom teachers; prekindergarten teachers in some elementary schools; art, music, and physical education teachers; and teachers who do not teach regular classes every period of the day. This analysis excludes schools that did not report both enrollment and teacher data.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 1990–91 through 2005–06.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:
Supplemental Note 3
Supplemental Table 33-1

STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO: Student/teacher ratios in regular public elementary and secondary schools, by school level and enrollment: Fall 1990–2005



Student/Teacher Ratios in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

Table 33-1. Student/teacher ratios in public schools, by type, level, and enrollment of school: Selected years, fall 1990–2005

Type, level, and enrollment of school	Year								
	1990	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	2005
All schools	17.4	17.7	17.7	17.6	16.9	16.4	16.2	16.2	16.0
Regular schools	17.6	17.8	17.8	17.7	17.0	16.5	16.3	16.3	16.1
Elementary schools	18.2	18.1	18.0	17.9	17.0	16.5	16.2	16.0	15.8
Under 300	16.0	15.9	15.7	15.6	15.1	14.4	13.9	13.7	13.6
300–499	17.6	17.5	17.5	17.2	16.4	15.8	15.5	15.3	15.2
500–999	18.8	18.7	18.5	18.3	17.4	16.9	16.7	16.5	16.3
1,000–1,499	19.5	19.7	19.6	19.4	18.4	18.1	18.0	17.7	17.2
1,500 or more	19.9	20.3	20.4	21.2	19.9	20.5	20.3	20.5	19.6
Secondary schools	16.7	17.4	17.6	17.6	17.1	16.7	16.8	16.9	16.8
Under 300	12.3	12.3	12.7	12.7	12.5	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.2
300–499	14.9	15.3	15.7	15.5	15.1	14.5	14.4	14.7	14.6
500–999	16.1	16.7	16.8	16.7	16.2	15.8	15.8	15.9	15.8
1,000–1,499	17.2	17.9	17.9	17.9	17.2	16.8	16.9	17.0	16.8
1,500 or more	19.3	20.0	19.9	20.0	19.3	18.9	18.8	19.0	18.8
Combined schools	15.8	15.8	16.1	15.7	14.6	14.9	15.2	15.2	15.3
Under 300	11.0	10.9	11.3	10.0	10.4	10.4	10.8	10.3	11.1
300–499	14.8	14.5	14.4	14.6	14.1	13.9	14.1	14.2	14.5
500–999	16.7	15.8	16.5	16.6	15.6	15.9	16.2	15.9	15.9
1,000–1,499	17.8	18.5	18.1	17.9	17.2	17.6	18.1	17.6	16.7
1,500 or more	19.0	19.8	20.0	19.6	18.9	20.0	20.7	19.4	20.7
Alternative	14.2	16.5	18.0	16.6	16.4	15.2	14.9	14.4	14.0
Special education	6.5	7.0	6.9	7.4	7.3	7.0	7.0	7.4	6.2
Vocational	13.0	13.0	12.9	12.9	13.1	12.7	9.9	11.5	12.0

NOTE: The student/teacher ratio is determined by dividing the total number of full-time-equivalent teachers into the total fall enrollment. Regular schools include all schools except special education schools, vocational schools, and alternative schools. Combined schools include both elementary and secondary grades. Charter schools can be of any school type. This analysis excludes schools that did not report both enrollment and teacher data. See *supplemental note 3* for more information about the Common Core of Data (CCD).

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey," 1990–91 through 2005–06.