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Class Size in the States

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Wisconsin Legislative Council Study Committee on the Student
Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Programs

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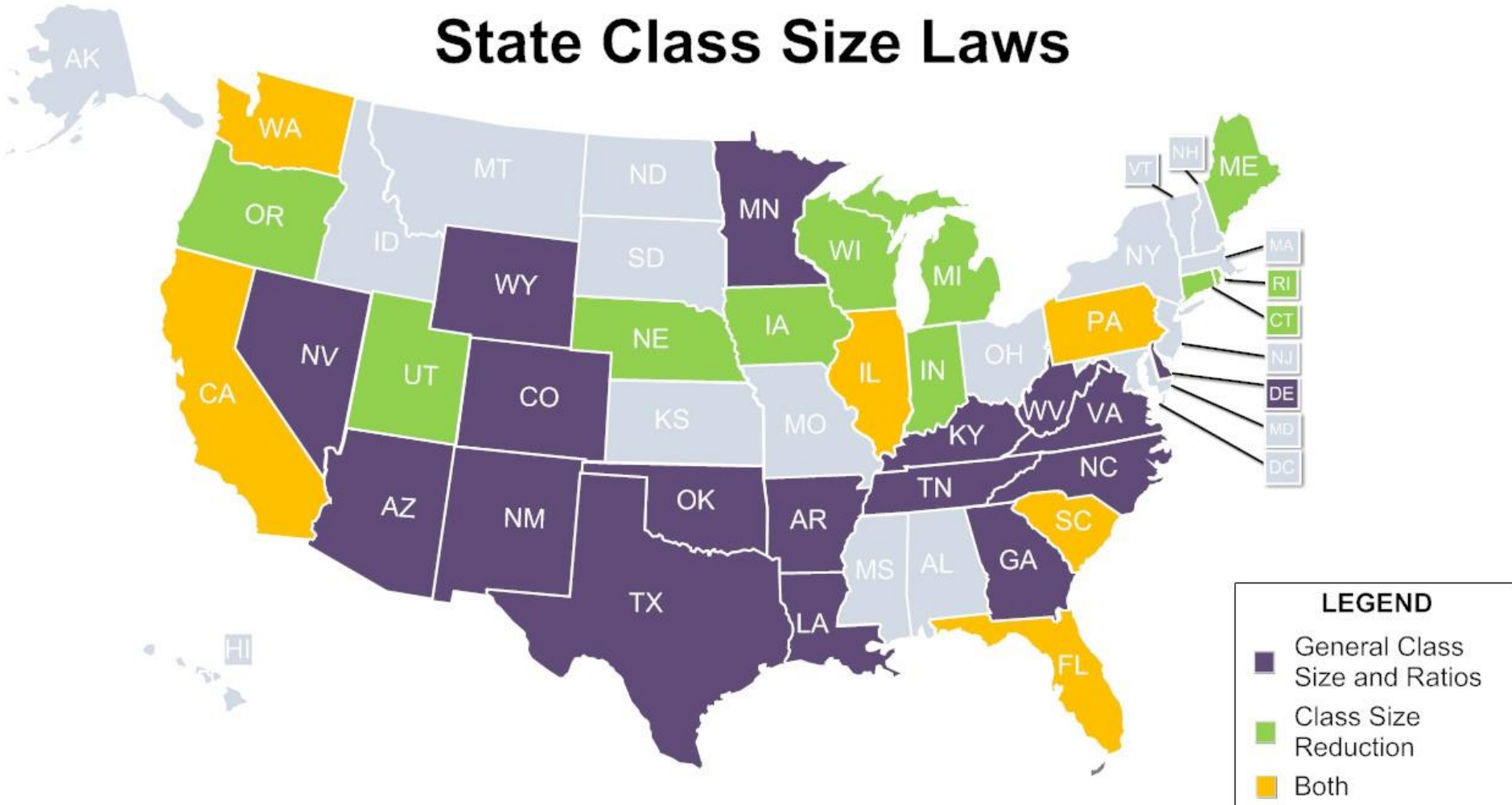


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State Class Size Laws





Common Trends in General Class Size Law

- Law focuses on "core subject classes" like math and English language arts
- Earlier grades tend to have smaller caps/teacher-to-student ratios
- States tend to be specific on the inclusion of paraprofessionals and teacher aides
- Range of how enforceable the caps and ratios are and whether waivers are available

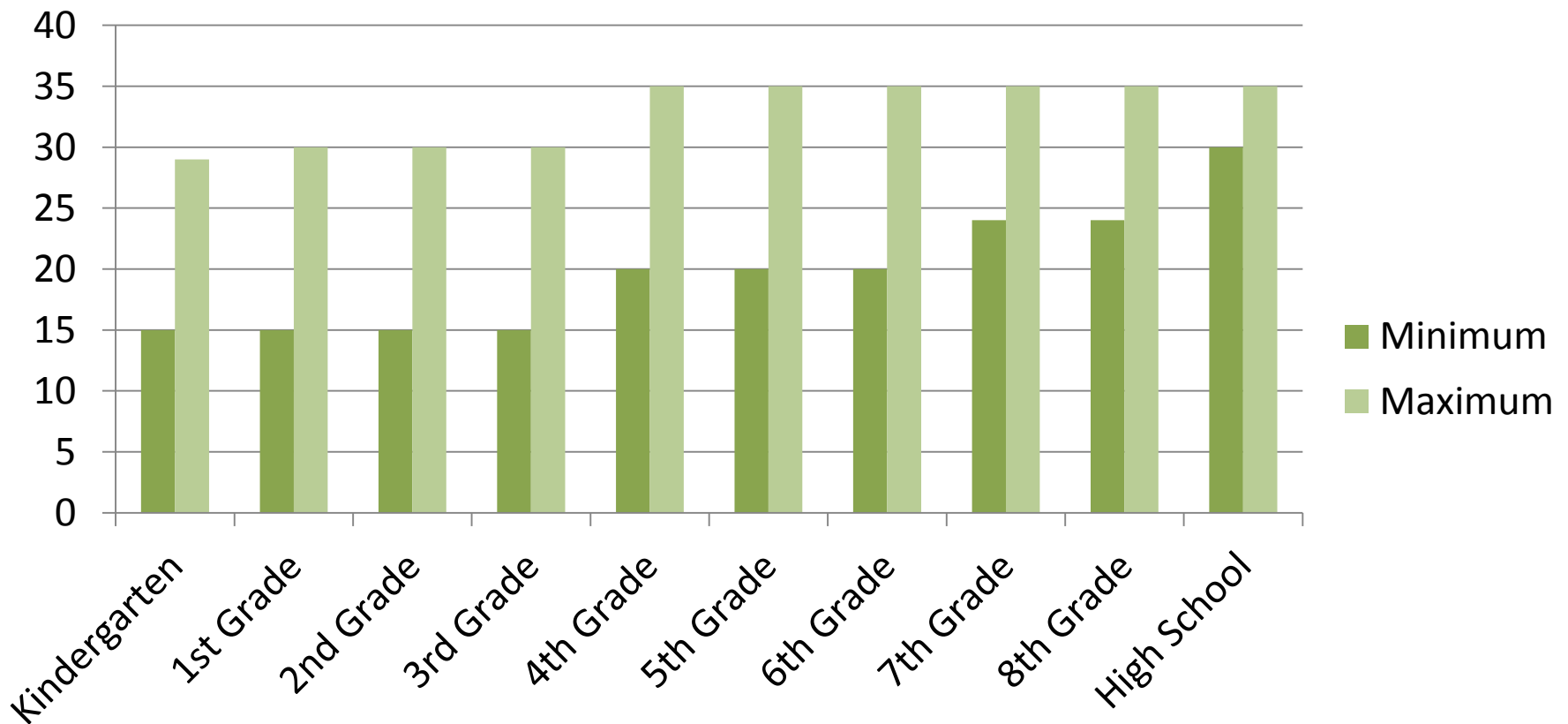


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Range in Class Size Requirements





Common Trends in Class Size Reduction (CSR) Law

- Mix of statewide requirements, voluntary programs, and grant opportunities
- Class sizes near 15 to 20
- Similar focus on smaller K-3 classes, but also other targeted groups like certain high school courses, technical education, and at-risk populations
- Specific reporting requirements and data analysis



Trends in Funding for CSR Policy

- CSR policies are funded in a variety of ways, including:
 - Inclusion in base funding or per pupil formula
 - Appropriations from the state general fund annually or program set asides
 - Federal funding including Title II of No Child Left Behind
 - Matching funds from local sources
 - Sometimes not specified in law



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- Funding is most commonly used for:
 - Hiring more teachers, aides, adjuncts and paraprofessionals
 - Providing training and professional development time for teachers, especially new teachers
 - Facilities and supplies
 - Dual enrollment opportunities, expanded learning, and early graduation in high school
 - Extended school days or year round schooling
 - Governance issues



Recent Research and Outcomes

- There are mixed opinions and research on class size reduction
- Research from Harvard saw positive deviations in student achievement in schools with CSR policies in Florida
- Research from Princeton found positive math improvement, especially for at risk youth and disadvantaged student populations in California
- The National Education Policy Center found in summarizing the academic literature on class size that smaller classes are effective at raising achievement for low-income and minority students



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- The National Center for Education Statistics reported that reducing class size in grades K-3 was found to be effective in randomized controlled trials
- However, students in smaller classes with new and inexperienced teachers saw losses
- One study of Florida found no gains on test scores for students in grades 3 through 8 during CSR policy
- Many reports show that CSR policy requires a large initial investment



Policy Considerations

- Costs: instructors, classroom space, operational overheads
- Significant reductions in class size have shown to be more effective than smaller reductions
- Targeting high need or at-risk populations first
- Continuous professional development for teachers and administrators



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- Evaluation of CSR policy and specific reporting requirements
- Packaging with other meaningful school improvement plans
- Parental and community involvement



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