



Official Business

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

SENATOR THOMAS H. WAGONER

- Chair, Senate Resources Committee
- Vice-Chair, Senate State Affairs Committee
- Member, Community & Regional Affairs
- Member, Legislative Council
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Session: January – May

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Sponsor Statement Senate Bill 204

Many studies and discussions have taken place over the years on the effectiveness of learning in classrooms of various sizes. These studies show that smaller classrooms have a positive affect on a students learning, especially in the lower grades. Studies have also shown that students in smaller classes in grades Kindergarten through third grade tend to perform better in subsequent years as well.

Senate Bill 204 would require that grades one through three have a 20:1 pupil: teacher ratio. If reaching that goal is not possible, for whatever reason, there is the ability to have more students with a teacher's aid. For up to 24 students SB 204 requires a half time teacher's aid, and 25 students on up would require a full time aid. This would make for a better classroom environment for both the students and the teachers.

One of the main concerns raised each time the discussion of lowering classroom size comes up is the financial burden. Lowering classroom sizes around the state will cost money. Senate Bill 204 addresses that issue by implementing these provisions over a three-year period. This way the school districts will not suffer from a large increase in cost, but will get the benefits of smaller classrooms where it is most needed.