

By Ms. Wolf of Cambridge, petition of Alice K. Wolf and others for legislation to enhance opportunity for achievement and results for certain students in kindergarten through the third grade. Education.

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

PETITION OF:

- |                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Alice K. Wolf          | Steven M. Walsh      |
| Edward G. Connolly     | Barbara A. L'Italien |
| Michael A. Costello    | Stephen R. Canessa   |
| Benjamin Swan          | Shirley Gomes        |
| Peter V. Kocot         | James B. Leary       |
| Deborah D. Blumer      | Michael F. Kane      |
| Christine E. Canavan   | John W. Scibak       |
| Timothy J. Toomey, Jr. | Brian Knuuttila      |
| Carl M. Sciortino, Jr. | Peter J. Koutoujian  |
| Denis E. Guyer         | Patricia D. Jehlen   |
| Theodore C. Speliotis  | Robert P. Spellane   |
| Tom Sannicandro        | Mark J. Carron       |
| Patricia A. Haddad     | A. Stephen Tobin     |
| David Paul Linsky      | John P. Fresolo      |
| Michael F. Rush        | Walter F. Timilty    |
| Michael E. Festa       | Douglas W. Petersen  |
| Elizabeth A. Malia     |                      |

In the Year Two Thousand and Five.

AN ACT TO ENHANCE STUDENT OPPORTUNITY FOR ACHIEVEMENT AND RESULTS (SOAR).

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:*

1 Chapter 71 of the Acts of 1998 is hereby amended by adding  
2 section 90, as follows:

3 Chapter 71 Section 90. Student Opportunity for Achievement  
4 and Results (SOAR).

5 (a) It is the intent of the General Court that students in the  
6 early school years, especially in schools with a considerable  
7 number of low-income children, be in classes small enough to  
8 enhance their opportunity for achievement in the early grades.

9 (b) To that end, the General Court hereby establishes a pro-  
10 gram, Student Opportunity for Achievement and Results (SOAR).  
11 Through this incentive program, the department shall assist eli-  
12 gible school systems to establish low class sizes in kindergarten  
13 through grades three in schools that are eligible; to engage in pro-  
14 fessional development and other activities to enhance learning in  
15 the classroom, to work toward other enhancements of the chil-  
16 dren's school life that will support increased achievement; and to  
17 follow and evaluate student achievement through appropriate  
18 methods and research techniques.

19 Initially SOAR will be a five-year program, subject to appropri-  
20 ation.

21 (c) The department shall develop procedures to give eligible  
22 school departments in the Commonwealth the opportunity to  
23 apply for participation in SOAR. It shall develop contracts with  
24 schools within school districts that are eligible, as defined below,  
25 to carry out the program.

26 These contracts shall commit the school to enhance the oppor-  
27 tunity for student achievement and specifically to:

28 (1) Establish a class size of 15 pupils per regular classroom  
29 teacher in grades kindergarten to three over a four year period in  
30 schools in the district that apply. The number of schools initially  
31 eligible in the district is dependent on the total number of pupils  
32 in the district as defined below.

33 (2) Engage in teacher and staff development that enables  
34 teachers to maximize the benefits of smaller class size by  
35 enhancing the curriculum, improving the quality of teaching,  
36 increasing parent and family participation in their children's  
37 learning, and promoting other aspects of classroom life that sup-  
38 port the learning environment for children.

39 (3) Enhance the school day by participating in the universal  
40 free breakfast program and making all efforts to apply for grants  
41 and develop after-school programs for the participating school,

42 including collaboration with community groups and programs.  
43 The department shall collaborate with the district and the partici-  
44 pating school to support such opportunities.

45 (d) Eligible school districts and schools. School districts in  
46 which the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced  
47 lunch (the measure of low-income under 20 USC 2723) is 20% or  
48 more are eligible to apply for participation in SOAR. Each such  
49 district may apply for participation by 1 or more schools,  
50 depending on the number of pupils in the district. Initially, each  
51 district with up to 5,000 pupils may apply for one school; those  
52 with 5,000-10,000 pupils may apply for two schools, and so forth.  
53 Schools declared under-performing, as defined by M.G.L. c. 69, s.  
54 1J, shall be given a priority to participate in SOAR.

55 Schools within the district, assuming there is more than one,  
56 will be eligible to participate in SOAR in the order in which they  
57 serve low-income pupils, as defined above assuming that space is  
58 available and the school is willing to contract to participate in  
59 SOAR. Thus, a school with the highest percent of low-income  
60 pupils will be eligible first and so forth. The school department  
61 shall give a priority to a school declared under-performing by the  
62 department. The school department will put all due diligence to  
63 assisting schools to be able to participate.

64 All schools that participate in SOAR must have all day kinder-  
65 garten. The department will assure that the schools have access to  
66 department programs that assist in developing or maintaining all-  
67 day kindergarten.

68 (e) Class size. Class size is the number of pupils assigned to a  
69 regular classroom teacher at the beginning of the school year and  
70 maintained throughout the year. Within SOAR, classrooms shall  
71 maintain a class size of 15 pupils to 1 teacher. However, eligible  
72 schools may propose classes of 30 pupils to 2 classroom teachers  
73 where space would be otherwise unavailable and the best judg-  
74 ment of the school and school district is that the classrooms estab-  
75 lished thus would be appropriate learning environments. The  
76 department will work with the districts to assure that the environ-  
77 ments are appropriate.

78 (f) Phase in of SOAR implementation. Schools will contract to  
79 participate in SOAR over the life of the program. The schools will  
80 move to lower class size, as follows:

81 In the school year, 2005/2006, kindergartens will lower class  
82 size; in 2006/2007, kindergartens — grade 1; 2007/2008, kinder-  
83 gartens-grade 2; 2008/2009, kindergartens — grade 3.

84 (g) Professional development. For some schools and teachers,  
85 such low class sizes will be a very new experience. Since the goal  
86 of this program is to maximize children's opportunity for learning,  
87 schools and teachers will be assisted to develop curricula,  
88 teaching techniques, classroom management practices, the use of  
89 technology, integration of parents and community resources into  
90 the classroom, and other new or innovative ways of enhancing  
91 student learning. For teachers just entering teaching, a mentoring  
92 program will be included in the professional development plan.  
93 The program for this professional development will be enumer-  
94 ated in the contract.

95 (h) Before and after school programs. Each school participating  
96 in SOAR will participate in the universal breakfast program. In  
97 addition, schools will commit to working toward after school  
98 opportunities that will enhance the learning capacity of children  
99 and will assist in making each child "school ready" for each  
100 school day. These programs may be within the school building or  
101 coordinated with other community agencies and should include  
102 opportunities for recreation, physical activities, and artistic  
103 endeavors.

104 (i) Evaluation and research. The department shall establish a  
105 program to monitor and evaluate the impact of project SOAR on  
106 students' early learning. The district and the school shall develop  
107 a plan to evaluate student progress and other aspects of the pro-  
108 gram. There shall be multiple assessments of school achievement.  
109 The district and the school shall commit to working with the  
110 department on such evaluations as are established.

111 The board shall establish such evaluation with an appropriate  
112 school of education. It shall conduct research to measure and  
113 compare student performance in schools that participate in the  
114 SOAR program with other schools of comparable demographics  
115 so as to give the General Court the ability to understand the condi-  
116 tions under which this project enhances learning for students. This  
117 evaluation shall also monitor the school systems' implementation  
118 of SOAR.

119 The evaluation, where appropriate, shall assess the factors that  
120 make the program effective in improving student learning and  
121 those that do not. For example, if there are schools that use the 30-  
122 2 class size model, the impact on learning shall be examined  
123 against the 15-1 classes. Where appropriate, the impact of after-  
124 school programs shall be measured. Other variables that impact  
125 the ability of children to learn may also be part of the study.

126 Schools participating in SOAR must participate in this evalua-  
127 tion but the Department must assure that evaluation techniques do  
128 not interfere with the learning environment for the classrooms and  
129 schools.

130 (j) Integration with other programs. The department shall make  
131 every effort to support integration of existing education programs  
132 that it funds and supervises within schools that participate in  
133 SOAR and collaboration between programs. Since SOAR is  
134 attempting to create an environment for maximal learning oppor-  
135 tunity, early literacy programs, professional development pro-  
136 grams, teacher mentor programs, and others can be an integral  
137 part of SOAR.

138 (k) Funding. SOAR shall be funded through state grants appro-  
139 priated for the purpose of improving student achievement through  
140 lower class size in the early grades, subject to yearly appropria-  
141 tion.

142 After a school district has been approved for participation in  
143 SOAR, and thereafter, the department shall calculate grants for the  
144 ensuing school year. The state funding may be used only for the  
145 purposes described herein and not to replace existing local  
146 funding.

147 (1) The department shall base its calculation for funding of the  
148 lowering of class size on the average teacher salary across the  
149 Commonwealth multiplied by  $\frac{2}{3}$  for each teacher's class reduced  
150 to 15. If the actual number of classes affected prove different  
151 from the estimates, corrections will be made to the school sys-  
152 tem's funding as soon as is practicable during the school year.

153 (2) The department shall develop a formula for assisting school  
154 systems to carryout the needed staff development. The formula  
155 shall include consideration of the need for workshop training time,  
156 teacher planning time, and professional assistance that might be  
157 required. This requirement may be met by utilizing funds in extant

158 state programs but may not take away from professional develop-  
159 ment funds for staff of higher grades or other schools.

160 (3) The department shall provide auxiliary funds, if necessary,  
161 to institute the universal free breakfast program to the extent that  
162 federal funds do not cover the cost, estimated to be at the point  
163 where 60% or fewer of the children are eligible for free and  
164 reduced lunch. Schools in the SOAR program will make every  
165 effort to encourage families eligible for the fee and reduced lunch  
166 program to register for the program.

167 (4) The department shall collaborate with school district in the  
168 program to give them maximum technical assistance and access to  
169 funding available for after-school programming.

170 (5) The department shall utilize appropriated lower class size  
171 funding to establish and operate the monitoring and research pro-  
172 gram to the extent necessary to assure that such monitoring is  
173 effective in providing information critical to the evacuation of this  
174 program by the General Court.

175 (I) There shall be an ongoing effort to evaluate the implementa-  
176 tion and impact of SOAR on its goals and to evaluate the effec-  
177 tiveness of the programs within the schools.

178 The department shall provide a yearly report on the ongoing  
179 monitoring and research to the Joint Committee on Education, the  
180 Arts, and Humanities, to the Speaker of the House, to the Presi-  
181 dent of the Senate, and to the Governor of the Commonwealth.

182 To the extent that any schools are not meeting the goals that  
183 they have established, the department will assist the schools to  
184 meet their goals.

185 The department may terminate a contract if a school department  
186 has violated its contractual obligations: such termination must be  
187 based on documented evidence of such violation(s).



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The third part of the report is devoted to a  
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