

Superintendent's Report

April 14, 2016

Per Board Policy, I am providing information regarding **high school class size**. We have nine high school classes in 2016-2017 that have less than 5 students. The content areas are: English, Art (2), World Language, Science (2), Music and Industrial Arts (2). Except for English and Chemistry, the courses are electives, i.e. not specifically required for graduation.

The Brookings Institute did a **meta-analysis of class size research**. Excerpts are below. The entire article can be found at <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2011/05/11-class-size-whitehurst-chingos>. Not surprisingly, there are positive benefit findings, mixed benefit findings and no benefit findings for small class size.

There are a small number of variables in American K-12 education that are both thought to influence student learning.... Class size is one. Others include human resource policies, funding levels, curriculum, days/hours of instruction, and testing and accountability. Advocates for legislation on any of these topics are likely to appeal to research evidence as support for their position. That is appropriate and desirable as long as: a) the evidence is of high quality, b) it is relevant to the... action under consideration, c) conflicting evidence isn't ignored, and d) alternative courses of... action are similarly evaluated and compared.

*It appears that very large class-size reductions, on the order of 7-10 fewer students per class, **can** have meaningful long-term effects on student achievement and **perhaps** on non-cognitive outcomes. The academic effects **seem** to be largest when introduced in the earliest grades and for students from less advantaged family backgrounds. They may also be largest in classrooms of teachers who are less well prepared and effective in the classroom. (Emphasis added)*

Over the past three years, I have strongly supported initiatives that ensure our teachers are prepared and effective. I have seen growth in this area through the **Student Learning Objective (SLO) work** that they have completed this year. (SLO work, part of the supervision and evaluation model we are adopting, is data driven action research.)

I read 58 SLO documents, and the overwhelming majority were outstanding. Below are comments from the teacher reflections:

- *Moving forward I think that I would continue to implement all of the strategies that I used as well as continually seeking ways to enhance vocabulary study...*
- *Overall, I feel as though my students are much more engaged in our math lessons this year than in previous years...All students are paying attention, asking questions and contributing.*
- *Based on the data we have and the strategies we have implemented, all...students are on their way to meeting...SLO goals.*
- *Upon reflection of data specific to my classroom, I see a clear increase in the number of students performing in the average range and a clear decrease of students performing in the low range.*

The time I spent reading the teacher documents was the most positive time for me over the last three years. I most appreciated those that were somewhat critical of the goal of engaging all students. Most often cited was poor attendance as the biggest barrier to student success, particularly at the high school level.

Respectfully submitted,
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