

## Class Size Study Group February 13, 2007

### TAKE AWAY POINTS

The group reviewed the following research studies on class size. Key points from each study were summarized.

“Cost of Reducing Class Size” - ERIC Clearinghouse Policy Report, 2000

“Alternatives to Class Size Reduction” - Larry O. Picus, ERIC Clearinghouse Policy Report, 2000

- Facilities, administrative costs, teacher training, etc. need to be considered when reducing class sizes
- Reduction in class size is only one means to an end. It's an expensive solution.
- Need knowledgeable well trained teachers with reduction in class size or gains don't occur
- Page 10 - questions to ask about lost opportunities cost
- There are effective alternatives: Increase dollars for teacher training, increase dollars per pupil; restructuring school day (increasing test scores)
- Think outside the box to achieve our Ends
- Variation in achievement based on:
  - 43% of the achievement gains are attributed to the teacher being well-qualified
  - 49% of the achievement gains are attributed to home/family factors
  - 9% of the achievement gains are attributed to class size

“Designing a Policy” - ERIC Clearinghouse Policy Report, 2000

- Is the only reason for reduction in class size to increase achievement?

“Addressing Professional Development Needs” ERIC Clearinghouse Policy Report, 2000

- Need good professional development program. May be as important reduction in class size.
- Put aside dollars for professional development; community meetings; eliminating unnecessary programs.

“Tennessee's Class Size Study: Findings, Implications, Misconception” Jeremy Flint, Charles M. Achilles, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Summer, 1999

- Found lasting impacts
  - Improved teaching conditions
  - Improved student performance, before and after
  - Improved student engagement
  - Improved student learning behaviors
  - Fewer classroom disruptions and discipline problems
  - Fewer student retentions
- Statistics significant, across the board

- There is a threshold for impact
  - 15 students (Why? Are teachers/students just happier?)
- Positive effects for suburban students as well as urban
- When aide is another adult in classroom – no significant difference
- Not much said about teacher training other than teachers and students were randomly assigned

“Teacher Quality and Student Achievement Research Review” The Center for Public Education, National School Boards Association, November 2005

- Looked at class size and teacher development through the lens of student achievement

Findings:

- Teacher quality created greater difference than class size
- Class size effective but not as effective as teacher quality

Qualities:

- Content knowledge
- Teaching experiences (5+ years)
- Teaching credentials
- Overall academic ability
- Some states forced to hire unqualified teachers in efforts to reduce class size
- How to recruit “quality” teachers:
  - Those from rigorous college and university programs
  - Examining transcripts
  - Helping new teachers to be successful
  - Collaborate with higher Ed to recruit top candidates to go into teaching and to address shortages i.e., Running Start, distance learning
- Pay attention to teacher assignments, how to staff schools, professional development
- Have support for teachers
  - High expectations (for teachers and students)
  - Collegiality
  - Positive environment
- Tipping Point: The point at which schools no longer had the ability to improve student achievement because 20% or more teachers were unqualified for their teaching positions
- Student learning not dependent on ethnicity or school. Strongest for poor/minority, but everyone benefits from good teacher
- Effects accumulate over time
- A “highly effective” teacher was defined as a teacher whose students had the most gain from one year to the next in reading and math
- Skilled teachers produced better results