

CLASS SIZE FRAMEWORK

The RSU 26 Board of Directors recognizes that there is a relationship between class size and student growth and achievement. This relation varies across grade levels, subjects, and the varying needs of individual students in classes. The RSU 26 Board of Directors also recognizes that class size has a financial impact. Thus the RSU 26 Board of Directors commits to working closely with the administration to achieve a healthy balance between educational and social outcomes for students and financial outcomes for taxpayers.

A. Guiding Principles on Class Size

Given the variation in student needs and the relatively small size of the district which leads to large variation between years, the RSU 26 Board of Directors chooses not to set specific class size targets. Year to year variation in class size is expected and desirable in the broader goals of facilitating student growth and achievement. In this spirit, the board provides the following general principles and goals for assessing class sizes. It is recognized that some of these principles are contradictory and that they do not provide a single target for any class. But the following guidelines will be considered and discussed when class sizes are assessed by board or administrators:

- a. RSU 26 student growth and achievement goals in Policy AD will be the primary educational goals,
- b. RSU 26 believes that optimal class sizes are typically smaller than state or national averages but that it is also possible for classes to be too small for optimal educational and social-emotional development as well,
- c. RSU 26 has a responsibility to use taxpayer dollars efficiently,
- d. In general, younger grades should be prioritized for smaller classes before older grades within K-8. High school class sizes will be assessed based on pedagogy needs and the goal to offer a diverse array of class subjects, including advanced and AP classes,
- e. Cohort equity is important (no one set of students should consistently have the largest or smallest classes),
- f. Enabling teachers to teach material on a repeated basis improves educational outcomes, and when changing a grade/assignment is necessary, it is recognized that changing to grades/subjects further from the current teaching assignment requires more effort on the part of the teacher,
- g. The board, teachers and community will trust the administration in assessing the specific and special needs of students in different grade levels which may cause class sizes to vary depending on assessed student needs (i.e. more students with high identified needs may require smaller class sizes),
- h. Research shows that teacher ability and quality is significantly more impactful on student achievement than class size (Hattie, 2009).

B. Transparent process

Because this policy emphasizes flexibility and multidimensional goals resulting in variable class sizes depending on student needs, it is important that there be a transparent and public process around the discussion of class sizes for both the parents and teachers. Therefore the board will, whenever possible, pursue the following best practices:

- a. The administration will present to the board current year class sizes (Pre-K-8) and any recommended needed changes each August, September, and October. OHS will report average classes per subject area in September and February
- b. The administration will present to the board projected class sizes for the following year (Pre-K-12) in late-March or early April and again in June which will inform budget and hiring discussions
- c. The administration will solicit teacher input on class size viability as needed prior to making presentations or recommendations to the board.
- d. The board will publicly discuss class sizes at these times, making inquiries so as to ensure that the principles of section A are being followed. Public comment can also be used to address class sizes.

The outcome of these conversations, if a need is identified, can be responded to with a wide variety of approaches beyond hiring new staff.

C. Flexibility

Because of the relatively small size of the district, each year will be different from previous years in terms of class sizes. A static configuration of teachers, grades and class assignments should not be assumed. The board commits to managing class sizes flexibly each year in collaboration with the administration according to sections A and B to balance the needs of students, staff and taxpayers. While we do not list specific paths to create this needed flexibility, we expect the administrators, in consultation with the staff, to explore a wide variety of approaches and to use creativity in the solutions presented to the board that is not to be limited to how classes were configured in previous years.

This policy provides a route to transparency of process to the board and administration as they set educational policy including but not limited to class size, teaching assignments, student assignments to teachers, and building schedules in the best interests of the district.

References used above

Hattie 2008 - *Visible Learning* by John Hattie published by Routledge Press, 2008

Adopted: 8/4/2020
Revised: 3/22/2022