

CLASS SIZE STUDY GROUP
2010 REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION TO BOARD OF EDUCATION
GENESEO COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT 228

Executive Summary

District 228 brought together a representative group of parents, teachers, administrators, and board members to facilitate discussion surrounding ways that large class sizes could be addressed. The group identified several different options and configurations that may be implemented. The group recognized that for a long-term solution, reconfiguring to attendance centers (PK-1, 2-3, 4-5) would result in the most stable system to adjust for fluctuating class sizes, but that there were several other factors that must be in place before such a reconfiguration could occur. The group reached consensus that in the short-term, providing additional certified staff to reduce class-size, at least in core subject areas, could provide some relief at grade levels where class enrollment reaches the 27 and higher numbers.

Introduction

In 2005, a group of faculty from all elementary schools convened a study group to determine whether or not a reconfiguration to grade-level attendance centers would be appropriate for the District. They spent several months reviewing both local data and what little research is available, and while there was some support from said group to reconfigure, it was the superintendent's recommendation at that time to NOT reconfigure.

Over the past 18 months, somewhat concurrent with the closing of Atkinson Elementary School and also some reduction in upper elementary grade sections, the District has experienced growing class sizes in certain grade levels. Conversations at meetings with faculty and PTA representatives led to a renewed interest in addressing class size.

From the initial discussion in late 2009, the study evolved to more than just addressing class size, but also moved into conversations regarding "best practices" of collaboration and instruction, resource sharing, financial benefits, etc. in examining how we could best structure the elementary schools.

The dates of all the meetings discussing this issue are as follows:

- October 21, 2009—discussed at PTA Officers Meeting
- January 26, 2010—first "Class Size Discussion" meeting with parents, teachers, administrators, Board members
- February 22, 2010
- March 8, 2010
- April 7, 2010

- May 11, 2010
- August 10, 2010
- September 7, 2010
- September 22, 2010
- October 20, 2010

At that initial January 26, 2010 meeting two primary tasks were accomplished:

- a. What type of class sizes seemed to be the “ideal” sizes for the group , and
- b. A large set of questions was generated to propel the group forward during the course of the study.

It was emphasized at that meeting and subsequent meetings that the superintendent would bring forward the final recommendation of the group.

The exact composition of the group fluctuated as busy schedules accommodated, but over the course of the meetings the following group were present during at least some of the meetings:

Board Members- 4 different board members, often all 4 at a meeting

Administrators- 3 elementary administrators, plus superintendent who served as facilitator

Educators-8 different educators representing all three schools and the special education cooperative

Parents- 10 different parents representing all three schools

Issues Reviewed

Exhibit 1 shows the initial set of questions that was proposed by the study group and **Exhibit 2** shows a chart with the “ideal” class size enrollment and demonstrates how “close” or “far away” from ideal the District was at that point in time.

Physical limitations of each school were also examined at the first three meetings, as they were conducted at each elementary school. Square footage of rooms was examined; rooms with restrooms, PE areas, cafeterias, etc. were all covered in some detail.

After reviewing the current enrollments, and keeping in mind the physical limitations and opportunities presented by each school, the group then entertained six (6) different options:

1. Keep all as current (status quo)
2. Add sections so that Millikin and Southwest house 3 sections of each grade and Northside houses 2 sections of each grade.
3. Build an addition to Northside (All purpose room, plus a few classrooms) but do not reconfigure.

4. Build an addition to Northside, and reconfigure to Grade Centers
5. Build an addition to Northside, and have two schools house 4 sections each of K-3, and one building house 8 sections each of grades 4-5
6. Build an addition to Geneseo Middle School for 5th graders, create 8 sections of K-4 at each of the three elementary schools.

The group then pursued much more detailed analysis of each of the options over the next few months, and into the Fall of the 2010-11 school year.

By September, the group had chosen to focus on keeping 1.) status quo, 2.) adding sections to Southwest to achieve 8 sections of all grades across the three schools, grade centers and the 3.) "Hybrid" with two K-3 schools, and one 4-5 building.

Exhibit 3 depicts the thinking and analysis of the group as they worked through criteria to come to a conclusion on the two primary reconfiguration ideas. The questions and factors that were answered correlated closely with many of the questions from January, 2010.

The study group then attempted to focus down on the primary criteria for making any type of change. In other words, was the most important criteria in decision-making "the ability to reduce the number of students in an elementary classroom" or was "the ability for parents to be affiliated with a PTA for several years" more important? **Exhibit 4** depicts the level of importance across the 9 factors involved with decision-making.

It was evident from that exercise that the three primary objectives for any decision was to achieve the following:

Any decision made should:

- a. Possess the ability to reduce the number of students in an elementary classroom
- b. Possess the ability to balance equitably the number of students in an elementary classroom
- c. Possess the ability to eliminate leveling of students from one building to another.

The final exercise for the group was to rank order their ultimate decision for alleviating the class size issue. Four choices were individually paired against each other and produced a long-term recommendation and then a short-term solution.

Exhibit 5 shows the results of the initial pairing group of all four choices: Hire 3 more teachers for Southwest, Reconfigure to Grade Centers, Reconfigure to two K-3 schools and one 4-5 school, and to Employ new staff to work with Core Classes in grade levels that were over some administratively adopted "large" class size.

The first level of results produced the long-term results leading towards a reconfiguration to Grade Centers. After this pairing, the group agreed to rank the

"Hire 3 More Teachers" vs "Employ new staff to work with Core Classes". That ordering then led to a short-term opportunity to employ staff where possible to reduce the class size of Core Classes (Reading and Math, in particular).

Conclusions

This study group accomplished many objectives, not the least of which was to provide a powerful catalyst for the Board of Education to connect with the faculty and community in planning for important decisions.

Despite the elementary schools experiencing some "pockets" of larger than desired class sizes, it should be noted and appreciated the efforts made by faculty and staff to ensure that student achievement has not been negatively impacted by this phenomenon, at least as is measured by state achievement tests. There was much discussion, however, about impact of lost intangibles and individual attention that is more readily available with smaller class sizes.

The study group's challenge to the Board of Education will be to identify means within an ever tightening budget to employ the necessary number of teachers to help reduce class size, at least within the Core Instructional times (specifically Reading and Math). This must be completed within the additional constraints of space in certain elementary buildings. Millikin Elementary School currently has the most challenges for available space, but one must keep in mind that construction should be ongoing during the summer of 2011 to create a small, special education addition at Northside School. This would allow for one full classroom available at both Millikin and Northside in the near future.

The administration will be working in the Spring of 2011 to build a recommendation for the Board's review to justify fiscally responsible staffing that will attempt to adjust class sizes in the core area to no more than 26 students where possible. The study group understood, though perhaps not unanimously, that the Board cannot make policy nor guarantees at the present time to mandate specific class sizes, but rather must make public a philosophy that encourages and desires smaller classes where practical and feasible.

The administration would like to avoid "leveling" of students in the upper elementary grades, and would prefer to employ the reduction of class sizes in the Core Areas for the short-term. As previously mentioned, many within the study group were also opposed to the concept of "leveling".

For the long-term solution of balancing and reducing class sizes through Grade Centers, the following factors must be met before the Board of Education may consider setting an implementation date:

- a. Overall elementary enrollment within each grade level, K-2 (not including St. Malachy's) exceeds 216 students. This number of students divided into 8 classroom sections results in 27 students on average. Examining current (Monday, November 29, 2010 enrollment figures) class sizes, one can quickly

see where a remedy would need to be implemented to reduce classes for the Core Content areas.

| Grade Enrollment | Grade | Teacher | Northside | | Millikin | | | Southwest | | |
|------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------|----|----------|----|----|-----------|----|----|
| | ECE | Martens | 10 | | | | | | | |
| 191 | Kindergarten | Pearson, Larrison | 23 | 25 | | | | | | |
| | Kindergarten | Menendez, O'Malley, Rivera | | | 26 | 25 | 25 | | | |
| | Kindergarten | Chaney, Gustafson, Rittenhouse | | | | | | 24 | 24 | 19 |
| 178 | First | Clary, Vermont | 23 | 23 | | | | | | |
| | First | Gierhart, Snodgrass, Stroud | | | 23 | 23 | 23 | | | |
| | First | D'Hondt, Reakes, Strafford | | | | | | 21 | 21 | 21 |
| 210 | Second | Piekos/Harvey, Nelson | 26 | 25 | | | | | | |
| | Second | Ford, Johnson/Sancken, Miller | | | 26 | 25 | 25 | | | |
| | Second | Everett, Minnaert, Rickman | | | | | | 28 | 27 | 28 |
| 174 | Third | Miller, Johnson | 24 | 23 | | | | | | |
| | Third | Boone, Buennig, Farber | | | 25 | 25 | 24 | | | |
| | Third | Myers, Nelson | | | | | | 27 | 26 | |
| 182 | Fourth | Heller, Henderson | 28 | 29 | | | | | | |
| | Fourth | Stern, Robbins, Gentry | | | 24 | 25 | 26 | | | |
| | Fourth | Craig, Hansen | | | | | | 25 | 25 | |
| 172 | Fifth | Monier, Schulz | 29 | 29 | | | | | | |
| | Fifth | Humphries, Pierce, Sandoval | | | 28 | 28 | 29 | | | |
| | Fifth | Faulkner, McCombs | | | | | | 30 | 28 | |

- b. The District sustains a balance within the Working Cash Fund of more than \$4,500,000, and can project that even after construction of an addition to Northside, a balance of all four operating funds would be greater than 180 days of cash on hand.
- c. Consideration for a Fine Arts Center addition must be outlined and financial plans in place, to the extent that those plans would not interfere with (b) above.

The recommendation concludes with a request that the Board of Education continues to search for ways that representative constituents be involved in the future when such important decisions must be made, and that consideration be given to development of a policy in Section 2 of Board Policies outlining a process or protocol for decision-making.

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| Grade Enrollment | Grade | Teacher | Northside | | Millikin | | | Southwest | | |
|------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|-----------|----|----------|----|----|-----------|----|----|
| | ECE | Martens | 10 | | | | | | | |
| 191 | Kindergarten | Pearson, Larrison | 23 | 25 | | | | | | |
| | Kindergarten | Menendez, O'Malley, Rivera | | | 26 | 25 | 25 | | | |
| | Kindergarten | Chaney, Gustafson, Rittenhouse | | | | | | 24 | 24 | 19 |
| 178 | First | Clary, Vermost | 23 | 23 | | | | | | |
| | First | Gierhart, Snodgrass, Stroud | | | 23 | 23 | 23 | | | |
| | First | D'Hondt, Reakes, Strafford | | | | | | 21 | 21 | 21 |
| 210 | Second | Piekos/Harvey, Nelson | 26 | 25 | | | | | | |
| | Second | Ford, Johnson/Sancken, Miller | | | 26 | 25 | 25 | | | |
| | Second | Everett, Minnaert, Rickman | | | | | | 28 | 27 | 28 |
| 174 | Third | Miller, Johnson | 24 | 23 | | | | | | |
| | Third | Boone, Buennig, Farber | | | 25 | 25 | 24 | | | |
| | Third | Myers, Nelson | | | | | | 27 | 26 | |
| 182 | Fourth | Heller, Henderson | 28 | 29 | | | | | | |
| | Fourth | Stern, Robbins, Gentry | | | 24 | 25 | 26 | | | |
| | Fourth | Craig, Hansen | | | | | | 25 | 25 | |
| 172 | Fifth | Monier, Schulz | 29 | 29 | | | | | | |
| | Fifth | Humphries, Pierce, Sandoval | | | 28 | 28 | 29 | | | |
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The recommendation concludes with a request that the Board of Education continues to search for ways that representative constituents be involved in the future when such important decisions must be made, and that consideration be given to development of a policy in Section 2 of Board Policies outlining a process or protocol for decision-making.

Elementary Class Size Discussion

Questions from January 26, 2010, meeting at Northside Library

1. Are there opportunities to work with technology with the larger classes?
2. Can class size affect achievement as curricular expectations increase? (i.e. Reading groups in Kindergarten while trying to meet basic daily needs)
3. What are the struggles associated with teaching large sections from teachers' point-of-view?
4. How is leveling off decided? Do Parents volunteer to move?
5. What is the make-up of the elementary schools if grade centers are chosen?
6. What are the studies on student achievement and grade centers?
7. Is there space available to add sections to grade levels that are already "full"—26 students in 8 sections?
8. Can there be a 9th section to reduce class size?
9. What can we do with the TWO empty rooms at Southwest next year? (one in Pod C and one in Pod D)
10. What is the nationwide class size average compared to our same size?
11. Test scores vs. class size within our district
12. How is the decision made on where a child is placed in mid-year entrance?
13. Research what effect class size has on student achievement.
14. Advantages/Disadvantages of grade attendance centers
15. Is there any way to consider class size with value assigned to students with IEP/BBT?
16. Could elementary or Middle School Spanish be a possibility as a result of grade centers? Savings could allow new programs at other schools.

Exhibit

2

Class Size Discussion
January 26, 2010
Ideal Class Size Enrollment

| | K | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 18 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 |
| | 23 | 23 | 23 | 24 | 24 | 24 |
| | 18 | 18 | 18 | 20 | 22 | 22 |
| | 20 | 20 | 22 | 25 | 27 | 27 |
| | 20 | 20 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| | 18 | 18 | 18 | 22 | 22 | 22 |
| | 20 | 20 | 22 | 22 | 25 | 25 |
| | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| | 18 | 18 | 20 | 22 | 22 | 22 |
| | 16 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 28 | 28 |
| | 18 | 20 | 20 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| | 20 | 22 | 23 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| | 22 | 22 | 24 | 24 | 26 | 28 |
| | 18 | 20 | 22 | 22 | 24 | 24 |
| | 18 | 18 | 20 | 22 | 22 | 22 |
| | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 |
| | 20 | 20 | 23 | 23 | 25 | 25 |
| | 20 | 22 | 22 | 23 | 23 | 25 |
| | 18 | 18 | 23 | 23 | 25 | 25 |
| | 17 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 19 | 19 |
| | 16 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 18 |
| | 18 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 25 |
| | 18 | 20 | 20 | 24 | 24 | 24 |
| Ideal Average | 18.87 | 19.83 | 21.22 | 22.57 | 23.43 | 23.74 |
| D228 Average | 22.25 | 25.25 | 21.63 | 25.57 | 27.57 | 25.86 |
| Difference between "Ideal" and Current | 3.38 | 5.42 | 0.41 | 3.01 | 4.14 | 2.12 |
| Total Currently Enrolled | 178 | 202 | 173 | 179 | 193 | 181 |
| Current # of Teaching Sections | 8 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| New Average with 8 sections in all grades | 22.25 | 25.25 | 21.63 | 22.38 | 24.13 | 22.63 |

CLASS SIZE GROUP CRITERIA

GRADE CENTERS

| HOW DOES THIS IMPACT: | One Pre-K—1 | One Pre-K—1 | COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS |
|-----------------------|--|--|--|
| | One 2—3 | One 2—3 | |
| | One 4—5 | One 4—5 | |
| | | | |
| Class Size? | Balanced, equity, but maybe not smaller. Could divide up troubled groups of students. Staff would need to be hired to make a difference Easier to Add or Decrease a section | Would require costs for additional teachers to reduce class size. | Would there be a Board policy for deciding appropriate class sizes or would that be a contractual issue? |
| Bus/Dismissal Times? | | More students potentially could ride a bus (shuttle between schools) Supervision of bus riders Potential for additional costs Potential for adjustments to parents for busing and staggering times. | Could SAFE become a greater option? Could we continue the same start and end times? |
| Leveling? | Any leveling (Up or Down) occurs in same building. Should be eliminated, except possibly for IEP students | Some questions arise for special education, self-contained classrooms. Leveling into age appropriate classrooms. | |

CLASS SIZE GROUP CRITERIA

GRADE CENTERS

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Resource Allocation? | Accessible more readily for grade level staff. Materials within building may be more grade level/age appropriate. Could introduce programs in higher grades (computers, foreign language, band) | Pk-1 = more stuff and cramps storage Book rooms may need to be changed. More difficult to agree on what is needed with more teachers. May not be as much individuality between teachers. | |
| Materials? | Should be less transport between schools. | May still need to stagger use. | Would current book rooms be adequate in size to hold all of a grade level's materials? |
| Personnel? | Easier to "level" teachers Strengths of teachers could be better utilized to serve students. Increased ability to adjust quickly to changing class sizes. | Leveling teachers may also be a con | |
| Collaboration? | Easier because of proximity within grade level, but may not be productive if too large, cliques develop. More voices, more ideas, more resources for mentoring. | May increase more efforts early for materials, other curricular supplies, scheduling use of items. | How does growing technological advancements create opportunities for teachers to collaborate now if they want? |
| Transition from building to building? | Students move together, despite there being more transitions. | More concerns for faculty. Research says for every transition year there is a year setback, then you gain it back. | Will sense of unity be stronger for students? |

CLASS SIZE GROUP CRITERIA

GRADE CENTERS

| | | | |
|----------------------|--|---|--|
| Construction Needs? | Would allow for space even if there wasn't a configuration. | Will need to build an addition to Northside . Will need more restrooms? | How big would an addition be and how much would it cost? When would work be done? |
| Internal Remodeling? | | Restrooms, Southwest School "walls", Coat Racks and shelves | |
| Special Education? | 4 year age span? Configuration could lead to different type of creativity. Most parents in this case are accepting of change. Could be more sharing of teachers. | Self-contained may face special challenges. | How could we incorporate more inclusion? Would there be more Learning Disabled teachers at upper grades? |
| PTA? | If it is only a few who carry the PTA load, then perhaps it puts more people together to do the work. | Not good. One PTA Board for all three schools? | PTA Organization may need to be restructured. Parents split between schools. |
| Parent Involvement? | Parents who want to be involved, will still be involved. Not being involved could become an excuse. Probably won't change much. | Could be lower, depends on teachers if parents want to be involved, to what level are they allowed? | |
| Holiday Programs? | Could be staggered to accommodate. Not seen as an issue here. | | Key comment was that could be made to be no less convenient than they are now. |
| Parent Conferences? | Online registration could facilitate parent's schedules. | | Could parents Skype in for conferences? |

CLASS SIZE GROUP CRITERIA

GRADE CENTERS

| | | | |
|---|--|--|---|
| Research regarding Student Achievement per Configuration? | No solid research on any configuration. | | Is there any new data in last five years? |
| Costs? | Possibility of some Federal money for special education classrooms. | May increase costs due to additional staff needed to reduce class size. Construction costs. | Comments made that this must save money to be a valid option. |
| Political Issues? | | Chance that siblings would not be in the same building. (maybe a pro though also). Building costs of an addition to Northside in a time when little state money flowing. Biggest to stop grade centers. | Must be sold as to how it will benefit the children. |
| Other? | Bus buddies, cafeteria issue with milk, eating will not be at the same time which cuts into collaboration, 5 th grade babysitters at Southwest, Bus stations (monitoring hundreds of students waiting to be bused to other buildings) | | |

| | Demographic | The ability to reduce the number of students in an elementary classroom. | The ability to be able to balance equitably the number of students in an elementary classroom. | The ability to eliminate leveling of students from one building to another. | The ability to inform a parent when they first register of what school their child will be attending. | The ability for teachers to be able to collaborate within a grade level. | The ability to minimize the number of transitions between schools for a student. | The ability to avoid costs for a physical addition to a school. | The ability for parents to be affiliated with a PTA for several years. | The ability to make parent conferences and involvement with holiday programs convenient for |
|-------------|-------------|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|--|---|
| RESPONSE 3 | A | 2 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 4 |
| RESPONSE 4 | A | 4 | 5 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 9 | 7 |
| RESPONSE 2 | B | 1 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 9 |
| RESPONSE 6 | B | 3 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 9 |
| RESPONSE 7 | B | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 7 |
| RESPONSE 14 | B | 4 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 9 |
| RESPONSE 17 | B | 4 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 8 |
| RESPONSE 18 | B | 2 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 8 |
| RESPONSE 19 | B | 4 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 8 |
| RESPONSE 1 | P | 1 | 4 | 3 | 9 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 8 |
| RESPONSE 10 | P | 1 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 8 |
| RESPONSE 16 | P | 2 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 9 | 4 | 8 |
| RESPONSE 5 | T | 1 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| RESPONSE 8 | T | 1 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 5 | 8 | 9 |
| RESPONSE 9 | T | 5 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 2 | 1 |
| RESPONSE 11 | T | 1 | 3 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 8 |
| RESPONSE 12 | T | 3 | 5 | 1 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 9 | 6 |
| RESPONSE 13 | T | 3 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 6 | 5 |
| RESPONSE 15 | T | 1 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 8 |

3 or less
5 or more

| Option | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | F | G | H | I | J | AVERAGE |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-------------|
| Hire 3 more teachers | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2.571428571 |
| Reconfigure to Grade Centers | 1 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1.928571429 |
| Reconfigure to two K-3, one 4-5 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2.714285714 |
| Employ new staff to work with Core classes | 4 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2.785714286 |