

June 2019

## Five Facts to Know About Class Size Research

It has been a factor in recent teacher strikes sweeping the nation, including in Oakland, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Uniformly popular among teachers and parents alike, class size reduction initiatives are the perpetual people pleaser of the political world, repeatedly appearing in forums such as State of the Union speeches and campaign platforms. But what does research tell us about the connection between smaller class sizes and key outcomes such as student achievement or high school graduation?

In recent years, skeptics ranging from the popular author Malcolm Gladwell and Hoover Institution scholar Eric Hanushek have cited research to cast doubt on the efficacy and value of class size reduction reforms, launching a cottage industry of news articles boasting such headlines as *Small Classes: Popular, But Still Unproven* and *Despite Popularity with Parents and Teachers, Review of Research Finds Small Benefits to Small Classes*.

Of course, the implementation of any common reform will show varying outcomes in different instances. Responsible scholars and policymakers, therefore, insist on looking at the entire body of research. In one of the National Education Policy Center's most often-cited policy briefs, *Does Class Size Matter?*, Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach, a professor at Northwestern University, reviews the research comprehensively and reaches a clear set of conclusions. The five facts below are based on the analysis she presents in her brief.

1. Smaller classes in early grades are associated with better test scores: The largest and most rigorous class size study ever conducted (Tennessee's Student Teacher Achievement Ratio, or STAR, experiment) found, in no uncertain terms, that students in smaller classes of 13 to 17 students in grades K-3 outperformed their peers in larger classes of 22 to 25 students: STAR found that all students benefited, on average, from the 13- to 17-student classes. However, African American students and students from low-income families benefited even more. Most quasi-experimental studies reach similar conclusions. It's worth noting that the vast majority of

high-quality class size research focuses—as the STAR study did—on the early grades, so more research is needed in this area. An exception is a study that found that smaller eighth-grade class sizes are associated with higher rates of student achievement and engagement, especially in urban schools.

2. Smaller classes in early grades are associated with better long-term outcomes: These outcomes include lower rates of juvenile crime, higher rates of high school and college completion, and increased odds of saving money, marrying, and owning a home.

3. Class size reduction helps, even if classes remain large: Some researchers have concluded that class size reduction only helps if class size drops below a magic number like 15. However, the preponderance of evidence suggests that reductions can improve student achievement even when class size remains as high as 40.

4. Class size reductions make an even bigger difference for experienced teachers: Although all teachers benefit, on average, from class size reductions, experienced teachers are better able to take advantage of the smaller class sizes. With smaller classes, teachers can spend more time on instruction and less time on classroom management. They can more closely monitor student learning. They have more time to use alternative approaches to re-teach concepts to students who do not get them the first time. And they have higher-quality personal interactions with their students.

5. Class sizes, student-teacher ratios have risen in recent years: After falling steadily for 40 years, student-teacher ratios spiked upwards around the time of the Great Recession (2008-2010), according to the most recent federal data available when Schanzenbach's brief was published. More recent data suggests that the ratios remained flat or continued to rise through 2015 (when they were 16:1), but are projected to start declining once more this year. It's important to note that pupil-teacher ratios are not the same as class size because some teachers do not have their own full-time classes (e.g., elementary school music teachers) or, as in the case of special education teachers, are placed in very small classes for students with disabilities. However, it is easier to calculate student-teacher ratios and this data is available, on a consistent basis, over longer periods of history. Average class size for primary school students in self-contained classes was 21.6 in 2011-12, according to the most recent available federal data. That's up from 20.3 in 2007-08.

*This article provided by The National Education Policy Center (NEPC), housed at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education, which produces and disseminates high-quality, peer-reviewed research to inform education policy discussions. <http://nepc.colorado.edu>*



# Tip of the Month

If you are using the online Bluebook (pdf file), you can search it easily on a PC computer using CTRL-F to bring up a search box. Enter the text you wish to locate within the Bluebook, and it will find and highlight it for you. You can then scroll through the finds with two small arrows located on the left of the search box. The online Bluebook is updated approximately monthly and is located at [www.ces.org/bluebook.pdf](http://www.ces.org/bluebook.pdf).

## Procurement News

### NEW/RECENT CONTRACT AWARDS:

**RFP 2019-024** – Indoor/Outdoor Athletic, Auditorium, Fine Arts Seating & Related

Recommendation for Award

- School Equipment
- AK Sales
- Norcon
- Lone Mountain

**RFP 2019-026** – Lockers, Curtains, Wall Padding & Related

Recommendation for Award

- School Equipment
- AK Sales & Consulting
- Norcon

**RFP 2019-027** - Playground, Recreational & Water Park Equipment

Recommendation for Award:

- Lone Mountain
- School Equipment
- Hansen & Prezzano
- AK Sales & Consulting
- Exerplay
- Norcon of NM

**RFP 2019-028** - Running Track & Court Surfaces

Recommendation for Award:

- Robert Cohen Co.
- AK Sales & Consulting
- Lone Mountain

**RFP 2019-029** - Synthetic Turf

Recommendation for Award:

- Robert Cohen Co.
- AK Sales & Consulting
- Cassidy Landscaping
- Lone Mountain
- Westwind Landscape
- Accent Landscape Contractors

### UPCOMING PUBLICLY COMPETED SOLICITATIONS:

The following is a list of the Requests for Proposals advertised & available to the public in May 2019 for review and to submit proposals:

- ⇒ **RFP 2019-036**– “School Business Office Management” (new category) - Closes on 5/30/2019
- ⇒ **RFP 2019-037**– “Professional Development and Training for CES Members and Participating Entities Staff”- Closes on 5/30/19
- ⇒ **RFP 2020-01**– “Grounds Maintenance Equipment” – Est. release: 6/17/19
- ⇒ PSFA & CES have partnered to assist NM schools with the upcoming *Statewide Security System-Based Project*. The attached spreadsheet lists the categories identified by PSFA with their respective CES vendors & contracts, & related information, for schools to use: [Spreadsheet Link](#)

## Calendar & Events

### NM SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION LAW CONFERENCE •

Albuquerque, NM **June 14-15th** [INFO: Here](#)  
 Conference features presentations on the latest legal issues facing public education & includes numerous breakout sessions to assist new & veteran school board members, administrators & educators.

### NM COUNTIES 83RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE • Clovis, NM

**June 17-20th** [INFO: Here](#)

### NATIONAL BEST FRIENDS DAY • June 8

### FATHERS' DAY • June 16

### SUMMER SOLSTICE & • June 21

### NATIONAL TAKE YOUR DOG TO WORK DAY •

### June 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
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16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

If you know of useful events or would like yours in our next Newsletter please email: [Angelina@ces.org](mailto:Angelina@ces.org)

## The Value of a Detailed Scope of Work

Is saving money on your next construction project a high priority for your district? If the answer is yes, make certain to provide the bidding contractor with a concise and detailed scope of work or architectural drawings and specifications. By doing so your project will no longer be a “guessing game” for the contractor. Not doing so can lead to a high price and arguments during the project. One other cost saving approach is to have the bidding contractor respond with a list of assumptions and exclusions. By agreeing to these before the purchase order is issued you can help to eliminate misunderstandings during the project.

When working with a bidding contractor the more information you can provide to them relative to the scope of work the better. Providing them access to the site during the bidding phase also helps to save money and helps to hold down on the number of change orders that might crop up during the length of the project. The more access the bidding contractor has the more accurate their price will accurately reflect the scope of work.

A vague scope of work puts the bidding contractor in an awkward position and the contractor typically responds with a high price because they are uncertain of the project requirements. When a contractor is uncertain or having to guess the requirements they have to protect themselves financially. They usually protect themselves by offering a high price. For example, if your scope of work only tells the bidding contractor to remove and replace the carpet in the classroom the contractor only knows that the carpet needs to be replaced. They do not however know what to replace it with? Does the carpet need to be patterned or non-patterned, does it need to be directly glued to the floor or does it require tack strip and padding? Carpet is typically priced based on the face weight of the carpet and whether it is patterned or non-patterned. Patterned carpet is typically more expensive than non-patterned carpet but the bidding contractor may very well use patterned carpet in their proposal because the scope of work is too vague and they want to cover any and all costs. This will cause their price to go up and may make the project unaffordable. This issue could be avoided by providing the contractor with a detailed scope of work.

Wood doors are another example of an item that can be costly if not properly detailed in the scope of work. Wood doors come in a variety of species ranging from Birch, Lauan, Oak or Walnut. As you would suspect there is a big price difference from Lauan to Birch. Which one you specify or require can be the difference between awarding the project this year or waiting for new funding next year. A Lauan solid core wood door can cost between \$175 to \$185 per door depending on where the contractor purchases it while a solid core Birch door can run you between \$205 and \$210. The difference of \$30 per door may not sound like much but what if your scope of work requires the contractor replace 20 of them? If the contractor is left to guess which one is required they will typically default to the one with the highest price so they are covered no matter which one you ultimately choose.

Communication is key when working on any construction project and good communication will save your district money. If you start with a good detailed scope of work or architectural drawings, you are on your way to a smooth project that is affordable.



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