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Pleasantdale School District 107 | 7450 S. Wolf Road | Burr Ridge, IL 60527 | 708.784.2013 | Fax: 708.246.0161 | [www.d107.org](http://www.d107.org)

To: Pleasantdale Board of Education  
From: Dr. Dave Palzet  
Re: Class Size Guidelines  
Date: March 18, 2026

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As the Board considers whether to adjust the District's current class-size guideline policy (policy 7:65), the administration previously presented a report on the policy and its implementation. The report given at the February 18, 2026, Board meeting included a review of the current guideline, the process used to determine when sections are added, the academic data considered for a specific grade level, the financial impact of adding sections, and a comparison of the LADSE District's policies.

**Historical Background:** The current class-size policy was implemented in March of 2015. The policy established appropriate class sizes for grade bands (see below). These guidelines were discussed at several Board meetings leading up to the final approval. Based on communication with the former Board member who spearheaded this initiative, the current class-size guideline was developed through an analysis of board guidelines in neighboring districts. Based on this year's analysis, our class size guidelines are at the lower end compared with those of the LADSE districts.

**Reviewing the Policy:** Following that report, the Board requested an additional presentation to further discuss any potential adjustments to our current class size guidelines. Our current guidelines are as follows.

- Preschool: 15
- Kindergarten - First Grade: 20
- Second Grade - Third Grade: 24
- Fourth Grade - Fifth Grade: 25
- Sixth Grade - Eighth Grade: 26

Additionally, the policy requires the administration to consider the following.

- Student needs, including special education, 504 accommodations, behavioral/discipline,
- social-emotional issues, identified "at-risk" student considerations, English second language learners, and acceleration/enrichment needs
- Academic strengths and/or challenges for the group of students by grade level
- Subject areas
- Space availability and classroom sizes
- Budgetary constraints as determined by the Board in collaboration with the administration
- Effectiveness of available support services, including co-teaching and/or whole-class (not individual or small group aids as identified in IEPs) instructional aides
- Educational research and best practices
- Technology benefits
- Other needs or factors as identified by the administration

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**What the Research Says:** Reducing class size usually helps, but the average effect is modest, and it is not equally strong in every setting. The clearest benefits show up when reductions are substantial rather than cosmetic, especially in the early grades, and often more for students facing disadvantage. Small shifts like going from 30 to 28 students are much less likely to matter than going from the mid-20s down to the mid-teens. The Education Endowment Foundation summarizes the average impact as about +2 months of progress, while noting that most studies involve fairly large reductions and that small reductions are often not cost-effective. The Campbell systematic review of international evidence similarly found a small positive effect in reading and a small, statistically insignificant effect in math overall.

Many nonexperimental studies find mixed or null results because class size is hard to isolate from other factors: higher-need schools may get smaller classes, stronger teachers may be distributed unevenly, and class-size policies can change staffing quality. A recent large meta-analysis of 1,767 estimates from 62 studies argues that once publication bias and study design are accounted for, the overall effect is close to zero. That is not the last word, but it is a serious reminder that the broad research base is less uniform than advocates sometimes claim. Most careful reviewers now say something like this: class size can matter, but context and implementation matter just as much. The Brookings review concluded that only a small number of studies are credible enough to drive policy, and from those, the most defensible claim is that large reductions of roughly 7–10 students can produce meaningful long-term gains.

On who benefits most, the evidence leans toward younger students and often students from historically underserved groups, though this is not perfectly uniform across all studies. EEF says smaller classes appear more promising in the early primary years. The Campbell review also notes that rather than universal reductions everywhere, targeting higher-poverty settings may be more economically efficient.

On non-academic outcomes, the evidence is thinner but directionally favorable. Newer observational work has found higher behavioral engagement in smaller elementary classrooms. Those findings are plausible and important, but they are not as definitive as the early-grade academic evidence from randomized studies.

For special education, the striking conclusion is actually how little strong evidence exists. A 2023 Campbell review found surprisingly few studies that could support firm causal conclusions. Qualitative evidence suggested students, teachers, and principals generally preferred smaller classes because they allow more individualized attention, but the quantitative evidence base was too thin to support strong effect claims.

#### What the research supports

- Smaller classes can improve outcomes.
- The evidence is strongest in K–3.
- Effects are most likely when reductions are large, not marginal.
- Benefits can be blunted if reductions force schools to hire many underprepared teachers or spread strong teachers too thin.

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### What the research does not support

- The claim that any reduction in class size will meaningfully boost achievement.
- The claim that class-size reduction is always the most cost-effective reform.
- The idea that the evidence is uniformly strong across grades, subjects, and contexts.

### References:

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### Websites Consulted:

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