

Jennifer Kennedy-Holmes
26 Hemlock Hollow Road
Woodbridge, CT 06525
jkennedyholmes@gmail.com
203-809-4805
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Board of Education
Beecher Road School
40 Beecher Road - South
Woodbridge, CT 06525

Dear Members of the Board of Education,

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to express my concern regarding the current class sizes and the physical size of classrooms within our first grade. As a parent of a 1st grade student at Beecher Road School, I believe that addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring the quality of education and overall well-being of our students and educators.

After attending Open House, I was disheartened at the amount of desks that were jammed into our learners' small classroom space. I am an educator and currently in my school district, we have 13-14 students in our first grade classrooms. Beecher has 22-23 students in each room. That's a huge difference. My son's classroom is the size of a large office. He has expressed discomfort at sitting on the rug because their knees are overlapped. He was recently injured because a student was sitting on his hand due to lack of space. Students are required to keep their chairs pushed all the way in and they are sitting in rows like you would expect to see in a middle school. This is not the optimal learning environment for our young learners.

If we were to open an additional classroom and move just 3-4 students from each room, all class sizes would be under 20 - a much more reasonable class size. Currently, our young learners cannot work together in small groups or gather to work collaboratively with math manipulatives on the floor. There isn't room for students to take breaks or stand and stretch or read in an alternate setting. Teachers are unable to fit next to students to assist them with proper writing grip or help them solve a word problem.

Young students benefit most from sitting in groups where collaboration and academic discourse is encouraged. They learn most when working in pairs at vertical services or sitting on a carpet with partners and whiteboards or completing project-based learning in small groups. This current environment is not supporting best practices for teaching first grade students. Students are unable to focus and are not able to attend to tasks effectively. This will ultimately lead to lower achievement levels and lower levels of student engagement.

Larger class sizes can have several negative impacts on the learning environment, including:

1. **Reduced Individual Attention:** With more students in each class, it becomes increasingly difficult for teachers to provide personalized attention and support to each student. This can affect student engagement and their ability to grasp complex concepts.
2. **Classroom Management Challenges:** Managing a larger group of students requires more effort and can lead to increased behavioral issues, further detracting from instructional time.
3. **Increased Teacher Workload:** Teachers with larger classes often face higher levels of stress and workload, which can lead to burnout and affect their overall effectiveness in the classroom.

In addition to the issue of class sizes, the physical size of classrooms also plays a significant role in creating an effective learning environment. First grade classrooms are overcrowded, which can lead to:

1. **Reduced Space for Movement:** A cramped classroom limits students' ability to move around and makes it difficult for teachers to arrange flexible seating or learning centers.
2. **Comfort and Focus:** Adequate space is essential for creating a comfortable learning environment. Overcrowded conditions can lead to discomfort and distraction, which can impede students' ability to focus and learn effectively.
3. **Safety Concerns:** Overcrowded classrooms may pose safety risks during emergencies and limit the ability to execute effective evacuation procedures.

I urge the Board to consider the following actions to address these concerns:

1. **Review and Adjust Class Size Limits:** Reevaluate current class size policies and consider implementing stricter limits to ensure that teachers can manage their classes effectively and provide the necessary support to students.
2. **Invest in Classroom Expansion:** Explore options for expanding or redesigning classrooms to accommodate growing student numbers and create a more conducive learning environment.
3. **Monitor and Evaluate:** Implement a system for regularly assessing class sizes and classroom conditions to ensure that adjustments are made as needed and that the learning environment remains optimal.

One of your goals as a Board is “to promote and foster high expectations for student growth, active learning and academic excellence for all learners”. This surely is not meeting this goal. Lower class size and increased space for learning is imperative to our children’s success.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I am confident that with thoughtful consideration and proactive measures, we can enhance the educational experience for all students. I look forward to your response and to working together to address these challenges.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Kennedy-Holmes