CLASS SIZE
REPORT

2025

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Introduction

As part of the Nova Classical Academy 2023–2028 Strategic Plan, the Board of Directors identified Academic and Student Support as one of the key focus areas for the school's long-term development. In alignment with this focus, Goal 3 of the plan emphasizes the importance of fostering "an environment that values structures and classical culture in the classroom as well as joy and connections between members of Nova Classical's learning community in and outside the classroom". Within this goal, measurable Objective 3.5 tasks school leadership with conducting a formal review of class sizes. This class size report represents Nova Classical Academy's fulfillment of that strategic objective and contributes to the school's broader commitment to supporting an optimal learning environment that reflects its classical mission and values.

The goal of the report is to examine class sizes at Nova Classical Academy in the following ways:

1. review available research related to class size, including peer-reviewed sources that explore the relationship between class size and student outcomes;
2. review available research specifically related to class size within the classical education model, or alternatively identify if such a body of research does not exist;
3. compile and analyze class size data from Nova Classical Academy, disaggregated by school and department;
4. compile data on class sizes at traditional public schools within the Twin Cities metropolitan area for comparative context;
5. compile data on class sizes at comparable K–12 institutions that follow a classical instructional model, including Eagle Ridge Academy and St. Croix Preparatory Academy.

This mixed-methods analysis will allow Nova Classical to better understand how its current class sizes compare to local and mission-aligned peers. In keeping with the school's commitment to thoughtful and mission-aligned planning, the findings from this report are intended to inform both short- and long-term considerations related to resource allocation, staffing, facilities planning, and student support.

Through a comprehensive review of literature and comparative data analysis, this report will aim to provide clarity about Nova Classical's current class sizes so it can be determined if those class sizes support the academic rigor, structured environment, and meaningful relationships that are core to its classical vision.

Organization of the Report

This report is organized to provide a logical and comprehensive overview of the findings from Nova Classical Academy's class size report. Each section builds upon the preceding one to ensure that the analysis is both accessible and rooted in relevant research, comparative data, and clearly defined parameters.

The report will begin with literature review divided into two sections. The first section is a summary of key research findings related to class size within the broader educational sector. This section will focus primarily on peer-reviewed academic sources and widely recognized studies that examine the relationship between class size and various student outcomes, including academic achievement, behavioral indicators, and teacher-student engagement. The aim of the literature review's first section is to provide a foundational understanding of how class size has been studied and interpreted across the educational landscape.

The second part of the literature review will turn to an exploration of research related to class size within the context of the classical education model. This portion of the review will identify any available scholarship or data that specifically addresses class size within schools employing classical instructional practices. In the event that such research is limited or nonexistent, that gap will be acknowledged, and implications for Nova Classical's future work in this area will be noted.

The second half of the class size report presents the findings of Nova Classical's internal and comparative data analysis. This portion will begin by defining key terms and parameters used throughout the data collection process, ensuring clarity and consistency in interpretation. These definitions were essential to developing a common understanding of what was being measured both within Nova Classical and in comparison to peer schools.

The report will then describe the sources of data used to complete the comparative analysis. This includes internal enrollment and scheduling data from Nova Classical Academy, as well as publicly available data from traditional public schools across the Twin Cities metro area and other K–12 classical schools, such as Eagle Ridge Academy and St. Croix Preparatory Academy.

Finally, the report will present the results of the data analysis, followed by a discussion of key findings. This discussion will connect the literature to Nova Classical's local context, highlight notable trends, and identify areas for further consideration by school leadership and the Board. Together, these components aim to support evidence-based dialogue and decision-making related to class size in the years ahead.

Literature Review: Research on Class Size

Since the 1980s, there has been a body of research compiled related to the topic of class size. Perhaps the most foundational and credible research on the topic was a late 1980s study which found that elementary students in Tennessee increased their achievement by the equivalent of about three months of additional schooling over a four year period if they were in a class with seven fewer students than the control group.

On the other hand, researchers from the University of Chicago studied the effects of class size utilizing whole-class instruction versus ability grouping in the classroom environment. The study found that class size alone did not have a statistically significant effect on growth in achievement. In ability-grouped classes, group size rather than overall class size was more significantly related to achievement. According to this study, "instructional quality is highest when teachers engage students cognitively for long periods of time with high-quality curriculum materials".

Generally, research has found evidence that there is increased learning in smaller classes sizes. With that being said, researchers have differed on how much class size impacts student learning. **The vast amount of research in the area makes it possible to support a wide variety of positions on class size.** Because of this, it is helpful to look at meta-analysis research which is a type of study that merges the findings of independent studies into a single result. Meta-analysis is a research method that statistically combines the results from two or more separate studies in order to improve greater understanding of a topic that has conflicting claims.

One of the foundational meta-analyses of the topic was conducted by the Hoover Institution in the late 1990s. Reviewing 277 independent studies, it was found that small class sizes resulted in increased student achievement in 15% of the studies. Small class sizes decreased student achievement in 13% of the studies and the rest of the studies were unable to find a link between the two variables.

One of the most recent pieces of meta-analysis research is *Small Class Sizes for Improving Student Achievement in Primary and Secondary Schools* (2018) which looked at the findings of 127 independent students completed through 2017. The meta-analysis found:

> There is some evidence to suggest that there is an effect of reducing class size on reading achievement, although the effect is very small. There is no significant effect on mathematics achievement, though the average is negative meaning a possible adverse impact on some students cannot be ruled out.
>
> The overall reading effect corresponds to a 53% chance that a randomly selected score of a student from the treated population of small classes is greater than the score of a randomly selected student from the comparison population of larger classes. This is a very small effect.
>
> Class size reduction is costly. The available evidence points to no or only very small effect sizes of small classes in comparison to larger classes. Moreover, we cannot rule out the possibility that small classes may be counterproductive for some students. It is therefore crucial to know more about the relationship between class size and achievement in order to determine where money is best allocated.

In *Class Size: What Research Says and What It Means for State Policy* (2011), the Brookings Institute reviewed studies and determined that while differing methodologies can make it hard to compare studies, the impact of smaller class sizes "seem[s] to be largest when introduced in the earliest grades, and for students from less advantaged family backgrounds."

Literature Review: Research on Class Size in Classical Education

Contrary to existing educational research on class size, there is a notable dearth of peer-reviewed research articles on classical education. Perhaps the most exhaustive research project to date is from 2022, a mixed-method approach where the researcher explored 68 self-described K-12 classical schools in the United States in order to define "What is Classical Education, Anyway?". The aforementioned research question arose from a "cavernous gap in scholarly literature" and "available source material, which is mostly popular rather than empirical and presents a wide range of opinion" (Richardi, 2022). The available source material also tends to lean towards educating the parents of the students attending classical Christian educational institutions, or parents who homeschool.

The results of the study was that the major themes of sampled schools were character formation, articulate expression, a focus on truth, beauty, and goodness, and often employment of the trivium as a cognitive development model. Activities such as memorization, discussion, and debate were emphasized. The study also noted differences in emphasis on educational principles depending on school affiliations. The data did not support the classification of Paideia schools as classical institutions.

Through the exploration of existing peer-reviewed articles about classical education, there are no studies whose research questions explore the relationship between class size and the efficacy of classical education. The closest existing study that touches upon the relationship is a case study for a thesis project that focuses on music education at a classical school in Colorado. According to the case study, "small class sizes are not an indicator of achievement, however. Having highly qualified teachers, superior equipment, and a relevant curriculum are better indicators for student achievement" (Jackson, 2020). The researcher did concede that "smaller class sizes provide more opportunities for individualized instruction at the critical beginning level of music learning", in agreement with the Brookings Institute conclusion from the Class Size section above of this report.

The available research on classical education suggests that meta-analysis of self-reported classical schools principles and practice is needed in order to empirically define what makes and defines a classical education. This "cavernous gap" in the literature is an exciting opportunity for educational researchers.

Sources of Data

To ensure consistency, credibility, and comparability in findings, the methodology for this class size at Nova Classical Academy closely follows the framework used in the 2024–2025 BrightWorks Class Size Study. BrightWorks (formerly Metro ECSU) is a nonprofit educational cooperative established in 1976 by the Minnesota Legislature to provide cost-effective, high-quality education services and programs to public schools, private schools, and nonprofits across the Twin Cities metropolitan area. As a member-driven organization governed by a Representative Assembly and Executive Board, BrightWorks is widely respected for producing reliable data and conducting educational studies across districts and school types. Each year, BrightWorks completes an annual class size study of its member schools, which serves as a key resource for benchmarking and staffing discussions across the metro region.

The methodology used by BrightWorks, and adopted for this study, relied on the electronic collection of class size data from participating schools. All superintendents in the seven-county metro area were invited to authorize their districts' participation and assign a staff member to serve as the point of contact. That staff member received specific guidance through a memo titled "Memo to District Contacts: Directions for the Annual Class Size Study," along with three Excel templates tailored for data entry at the elementary, junior secondary, and senior secondary levels. These spreadsheets were then populated with aggregated building-level data and submitted for processing and analysis.

In alignment with this process, Nova Classical adopted a parallel method for its own internal data collection. Student information system (SIS) data was used to reflect class sizes as of a single date during the first semester of the 2024–2025 school year. This approach was consistent across Nova Classical and the other classical charter schools included in the report to ensure clean comparative data.

The findings from the BrightWorks study serve as the source of class size data for traditional public school districts. Data from 32 districts are included in the analysis, representing a broad cross-section of the Twin Cities metro area. These districts are outlined below:

District #	Name	District #	Name
#11	Anoka-Hennepin	#717	Jordan
#716	Belle Plaine	#194	Lakeville
#271	Bloomington	#832	Mahtomedi
#286	Brooklyn Center	#276	Minnetonka
#12	Centennial	#721	New Prague
#108	Central	#138	North Branch
#13	Columbia Heights	#622	North St. Paul
#112	Eastern Carver County	#719	Prior Lake-Savage
#272	Eden Prairie	#280	Richfield
#831	Forest Lake	#281	Robbinsdale
#14	Fridley	#720	Shakopee
#200	Hastings	#833	South Washington County
#270	Hopkins	#282	St. Anthony–New Brighton
#199	Inver Grove Heights	#283	St. Louis Park
#110	Waconia	#277	Westonka
#111	Watertown–Mayer	#624	White Bear Lake

In addition to comparing Nova Classical's data with that of traditional public schools, this report also includes information from other Minnesota K-12 classical charter schools. Data was collected directly through a formal request made by the Executive Director of Nova Classical Academy to the Executive Directors of Eagle Ridge Academy and St. Croix Preparatory Academy. These schools voluntarily shared their class size data, which was collected using definitions and processes modeled on those provided by BrightWorks to preserve methodological consistency.

By aligning the data collection process with BrightWorks and applying it consistently across Nova Classical and peer institutions, this report offers a clear and structured view of class size within both traditional public and classical charter public school settings.

Definitions of Terms

1. Average (Mean) Class Size
   Average (Mean) Class Size represents the class size, which equals the arithmetic average of class sizes reported. The average is the total of reported class sizes divided by the number of classes reported. Averages are reported to the nearest one tenth.

2. Class Size
   Class Size refers to the number of students in a group or class organized for the purpose of instruction.

3. Class Size Range
   Class Size Range represents the minimum and maximum class sizes reported for a given grade or subject area.

4. Class Types

Class Types counted for this report differ for each school type. Class types for each are as follows:

Elementary	Junior Secondary	Senior Secondary
Kindergarten	Art	Art
Grade 1	Health	Health
Grade 2	English Language Arts	English Language Arts
Grade 3	Math	Math
Grade 4	Music	Music
Grade 5	Physical Education	Physical Education
Special Education	Science	Science
	Social Studies	Social Studies
	Special Education	Special Education
	World Languages	World Languages

5. Elementary

This grouping *may* include the following grades: K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Combination grades/ungraded and special education classes may also be included. Depending on individual district grade organization, "elementary" *may* not include grades 5 or 6.

6. General Education

General education typically refers to the standard educational environment and curriculum designed for students who do not receive special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

7. Grade Group

Grade Groups include the school types—elementary, junior secondary, and senior secondary, but also part of and combinations of those school type groups. For example, some of the data is reported for a combination of junior and senior secondary as one grade group.

8. Junior Secondary

Junior Secondary includes students in middle schools, junior high schools, or the first part of an eight-year secondary program (i.e., grades 5-12).

9. Participating Districts

Participating Districts include school districts in the Twin Cities metro area that submitted data for the current year of the study. These districts may or may not be members of BrightWorks.

10. <u>School Type</u>

School Types for this study are Elementary, Junior Secondary, and Senior Secondary.

11. <u>Senior Secondary</u>

Senior Secondary includes students in senior high school or in the second part of an eight-year secondary program (i.e., grades 5-12).

Data & Tables

Figure 1. Average Elementary Class Sizes by Grade

	Kindergarten	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	4th Grade	5th Grade	Special Education
Nova Classical Academy	20.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	27.0	3.5
Brightworks	20.0	21.1	22.9	24.1	25.1	26.2	7.9
Eagle Ridge Academy	23	23	23	23	23	23	2.6
St. Croix Preparatory Academy*	30	30	30	30	30	N/A	Not Reported

*Note: St. Croix Preparatory Academy's Elementary school serves grades K-4.
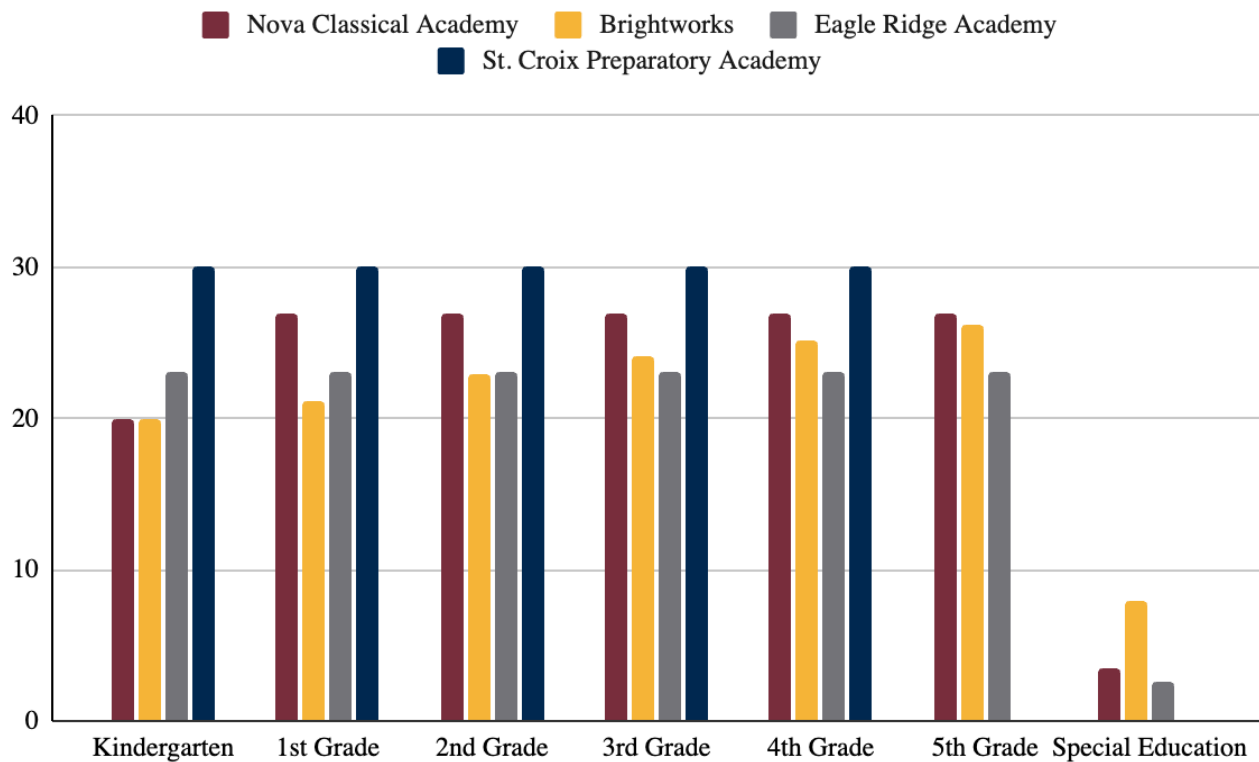
Figure 2. Average Middle School Class Size by Department and School

	Art	Health	English Language Arts	Math	Music	Physical Education	Science	Social Studies	World Languages	Special Education
Nova Classical Academy	27.8	N/A	27.2	20.0	26.6	28.2	27.3	26.7	20.5	4.4
Brightworks	28.4	N/A	26.0	26.1	30.8	29.9	28.9	28.3	27.4	6.2
Eagle Ridge Academy	20.2	N/A	20.2	20.3	21.1	17.4	20.4	20.4	20.1	3.4
St. Croix Preparatory Academy	29	N/A	26	22	30	31	31	31	20	4
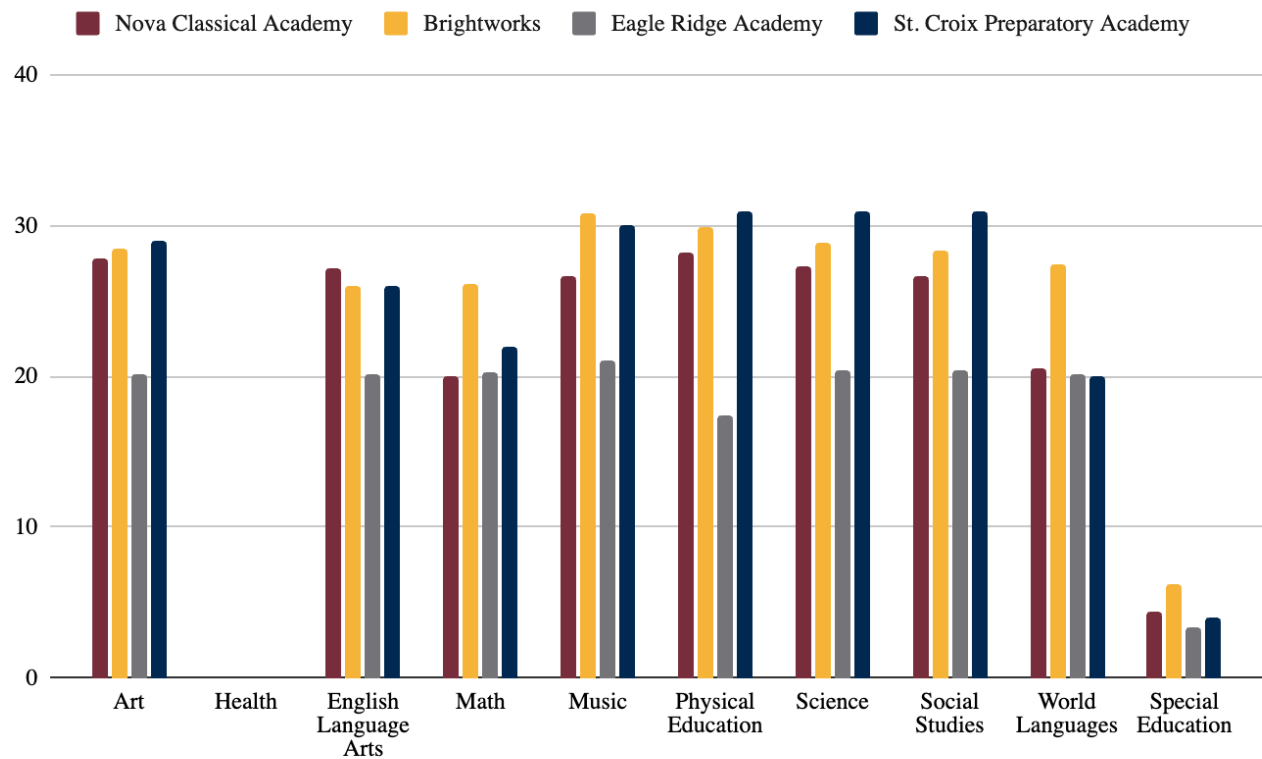
Note: None of the settings analyzed offer standalone health classes in middle school.

Figure 3. Average High School Class Size Information by Department and School

	Art	Health	English Language Arts	Math	Music	Physical Education	Science	Social Studies	World Languages	Special Education
Nova Classical Academy	19.0	20.0	22.4	23.3	22.2	30.0	23.0	23.3	13.9	4.4
Brightworks	28.2	29.1	27.1	27.8	32.8	30.1	28.1	29.1	7.0	6.2
Eagle Ridge Academy	17.5	N/A	16.9	15.4	17.5	12.5	17.8	17.4	16.2	3.3
St. Croix Preparatory Academy	14.0	N/A	18.0	19.0	18.0	13.0	18.0	18.0	16.0	7.0
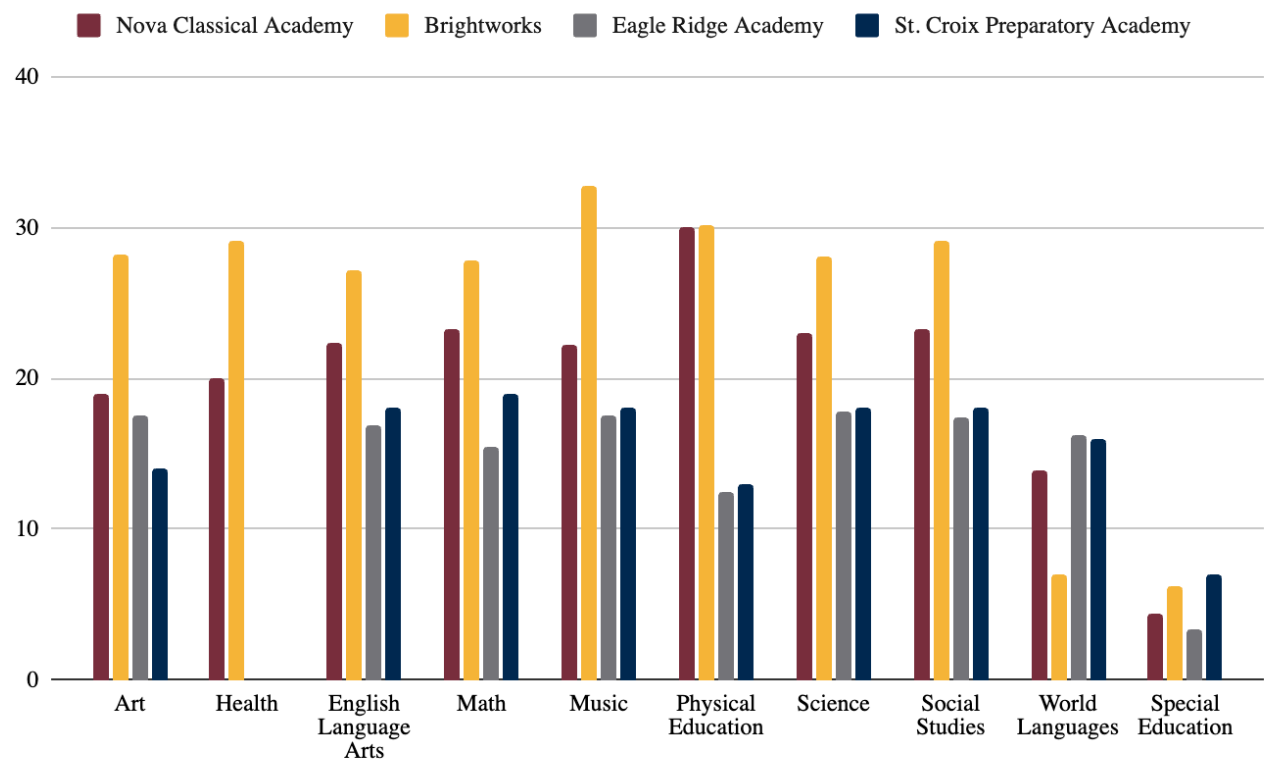
Note: Neither Eagle Ridge Academy nor St. Croix Preparatory Academy reported offering standalone health classes in their high school during the first semester.

## Figure 4. Middle School Section Range Information by Department and School

	Art	Health	English Language Arts	Math	Music	Physical Education	Science	Social Studies	World Languages	Special Education
Nova Classical Academy										
Smallest Class Size	26	N/A	19	6	25	26	23	17	7	1
Largest Class Size	29	N/A	31	31	28	30	31	32	28	8
Total Number of Sections	9	N/A	9	8	9	9	9	12	10	23
Number of Sections Over 30	0	N/A	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	0
Eagle Ridge Academy										
Smallest Class Size	11	N/A	15	10	7	7	10	16	12	1
Largest Class Size	26	N/A	27	28	35	26	26	28	27	6
Total Number of Sections	18	N/A	18	17	17	21	18	18	16	5
Number of Sections Over 30	0	N/A	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
St. Croix Preparatory Academy										
Smallest Class Size	25	N/A	16	11	11	30	29	29	14	1
Largest Class Size	33	N/A	32	33	40	33	33	33	26	16
Total Number of Sections	12	N/A	14	16	12	12	12	12	4	26
Number of Sections Over 30	3	N/A	5	1	3	8	8	8	0	0

Figure 5. High School Section Range Information by Department and School

	Art	Health	English Language Arts	Math	Music	Physical Education	Science	Social Studies	World Languages	Special Education
Nova Classical Academy										
Smallest Class Size	16	18	11	7	15	29	8	14	4	1
Largest Class Size	22	22	34	32	27	31	32	31	27	8
Total Number of Sections	5	2	21	15	5	2	11	13	15	23
Number of Sections Over 30	0	0	4	4	0	1	3	1	0	0
Eagle Ridge Academy										
Smallest Class Size	9	N/A	9	1	9	7	7	13	7	1
Largest Class Size	25	N/A	23	22	26	20	25	23	23	7
Total Number of Sections	13	N/A	22	22	2	6	16	28	17	11
Number of Sections Over 30	0	N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Croix Preparatory Academy										
Smallest Class Size	4	N/A	6	8	1	1	9	6	3	5
Largest Class Size	26	N/A	29	25	43	27	27	27	30	12
Total Number of Sections	12	N/A	21	23	10	12	18	20	16	5
Number of Sections Over 30	0	N/A	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0

Figure 6. Middle School Total Averages by School

	All General Education Classes	All Classes*
Nova Classical Academy	25.5	20.5
Brightworks	28.1	24.0
Eagle Ridge Academy	20.08	19.51
St. Croix Preparatory Academy	27.9	22.7
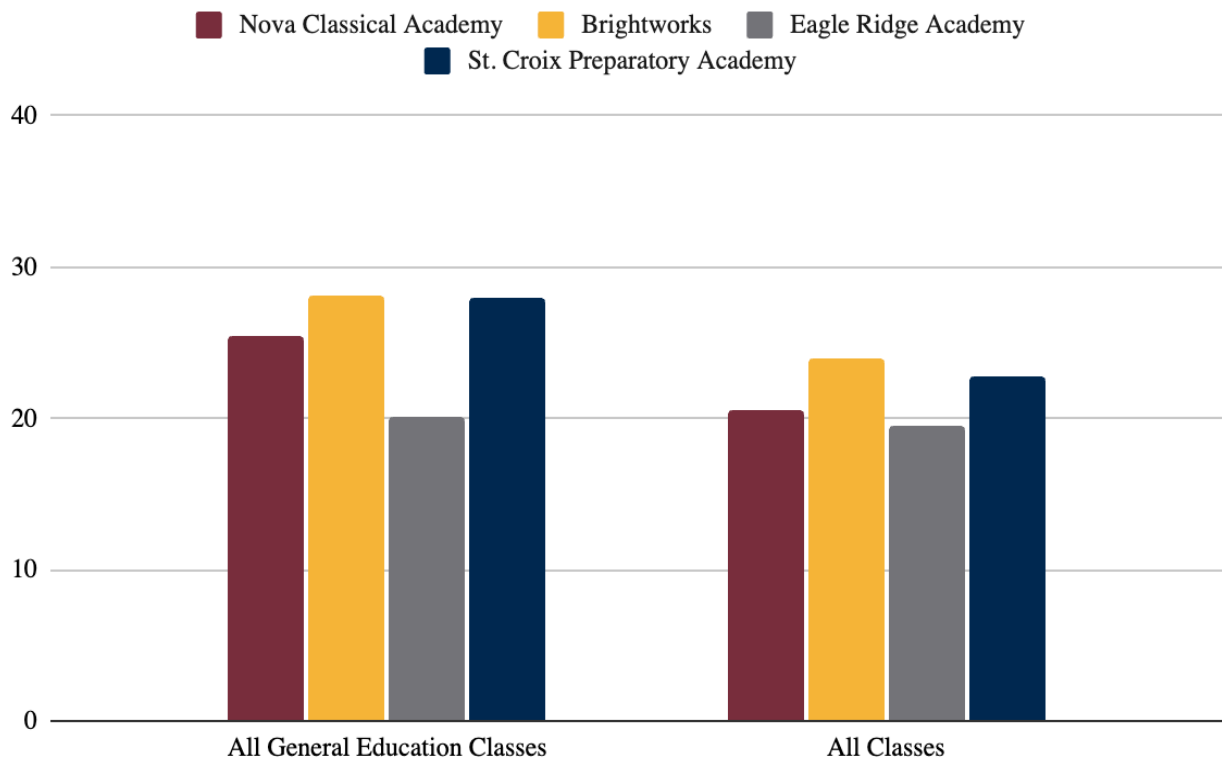
Note: "All Classes" includes the average size of all general education classes, general education intervention classes, and special education classes.

Figure 7. High School Total Averages by School

	All General Education Classes	All Classes
Nova Classical Academy	21.3	17.8
Brightworks	27.9	25.0
Eagle Ridge Academy	16.5	15.5
St. Croix Preparatory Academy	17.1	16.7
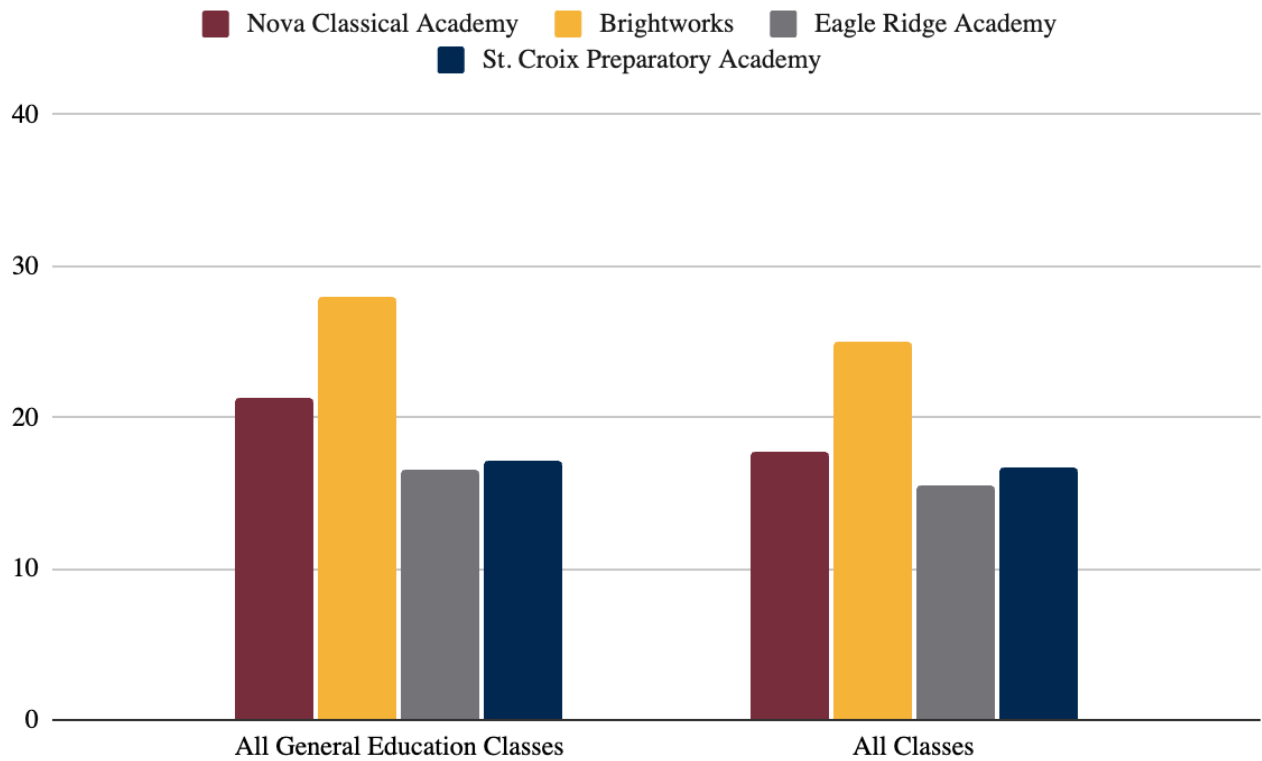
Note: "All Classes" includes the average size of all general education classes, general education intervention classes, and special education classes.

Figure 8. Student Population Demographics by School

	Special Education	English Learners	Students Receiving Free/Reduced Price Lunch
Nova Classical Academy	9.8%	5.7%	22.1%
Eagle Ridge Academy	7.4%	8.7%	33.6%
St. Croix Preparatory Academy	15.0%	1.6%	10.7%

Limitations

While this report offers valuable comparative insights, several limitations should be acknowledged:

- **No analysis of academic performance data:** The report relies on the literature review to draw connections between class size and learning outcomes. It does not include analysis of academic performance data, which could provide insight into school-level outcomes.

- **Lack of teacher workload data in BrightWorks:** BrightWorks data does not include information about teacher workloads, such as the number of sections taught per instructor. As a result, analysis of total student-teacher interaction is limited to Nova Classical and the other participating classical schools, and does not allow for full comparison with traditional public school districts.

- **Data reporting inconsistencies:** Although this report adopts definitions and methods aligned with the BrightWorks framework, slight differences in how schools report or interpret data may affect the precision of cross-school comparisons.

- **Single-point-in-time data:** All data reflect a single point in time during the first semester of the 2024–2025 school year and may not capture fluctuations in enrollment, course scheduling, or staffing assignments that occur across semesters.

- **PSEO enrollment not articulated:** The report does not disaggregate data on students participating in Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO). As students taking PSEO courses may spend part of their day off campus in college-level classes, their absence from the high school course schedule may impact reported class sizes in ways not articulated by this analysis.

- **Cross-grade enrollment impact:** The report does not account for students who are enrolled in courses outside of their school level (for example, middle school students enrolled in high school courses). These scenarios may affect averages and teacher load calculations within specific school levels.

- **Exclusion of qualitative insights:** The analysis is based exclusively on quantitative class size data and does not incorporate qualitative data.

- **Limited classical education research:** While this report includes a review of available research, there is limited scholarly literature specifically addressing class size in classical education models, which restricts the ability to apply context-specific findings to Nova Classical's program with full confidence.

- **Definition of classical education:** The Nova Classical Board has adopted a definition of classical education. This report does not take any steps to determine if what is considered classical education by the research reviewed and comparable schools align with the Nova Classical Academy definition.

- **Analysis of research-based practices:** This report highlights differences in operational models between Nova Classical and comparable classical schools, such as staffing structures, presence of a second adult in the classroom, and number of teacher preps, but does not evaluate whether these practices are supported by empirical research.

Findings

Elementary Class Sizes: Nova Classical in Context
Nova Classical Academy's elementary class sizes are among the highest of the schools included in this report. With average class sizes of 27 students in grades 1 through 5, Nova Classical exceeds the metro-wide averages reported by BrightWorks and the averages at Eagle Ridge Academy, which consistently report 23 students per class. Only St. Croix Prep reports larger elementary class sizes, with 30 students per section in grades K–4. Nova Classical's Kindergarten average is 20.0, matching both BrightWorks and Eagle Ridge. In Special Education, Nova Classical's average class size is 3.5 students, lower than the BrightWorks average of 7.9, though slightly higher than Eagle Ridge's 2.55.

Middle School Class Sizes: Between Classical Peers, with Subject-Level Variation
Nova Classical's middle school general education class size average of 25.5 places it between Eagle Ridge Academy (20.08) and St. Croix Prep (27.9). Math is notably smaller at 20.0, closely aligning with Eagle Ridge.

Although Nova Classical's averages are lower than those at St. Croix Prep, multiple subjects at Nova include sections with more than 30 students, particularly in Math and Social Studies. Eagle Ridge reports no middle school classes exceeding 30 students, while St. Croix Prep reports several. Nova Classical's average across all middle school classes, including general education and Special Education, is 20.5.

High School Class Sizes: Moderate Overall, with Targeted Large Sections
Nova Classical's average high school general education class size is 21.3, lower than BrightWorks' 27.9, but above both Eagle Ridge (16.5) and St. Croix Prep (17.1). Subject averages vary across disciplines, with Math, English, Science, and Social Studies in the low-to-mid 20s. Courses such as World Languages (13.9), Art (19.0), and Health (20.0) are among the smallest.

A small number of class sections in English, Math, Science, and Social Studies exceed 30 students. These are notable compared to Eagle Ridge and St. Croix Prep, which report no high school class sections above 30 students.

Comparative Patterns: Classical Charter Peers vs. Traditional Public Districts
Across middle and high school levels, Nova Classical's class sizes are higher than those of classical charter peers, though generally lower than traditional public school averages reported by BrightWorks. This places Nova Classical between its mission-aligned peer schools and the larger metro districts in terms of classroom size.

St. Croix Prep reports several classes with more than 30 students in the middle school, showing that larger class sizes can be a part of classical models depending on program structure and design.

Conclusions & Discussion

The findings of this report illustrate that class size at Nova Classical Academy exists within a complex ecosystem of instructional design, staffing models, and programmatic tradeoffs. While class size is often viewed as a stand-alone metric, its true impact depends on how it intersects with factors such as teacher load, scheduling, available support staff, and school mission. This section draws together the comparative data, research context, and operational considerations outlined in the report to frame actionable insights for Nova Classical's leadership and Board. The goal is not simply to assess whether class sizes are "too large" or "too small," but rather to understand whether current structures support the classical vision of rigorous academics, structured learning environments, and meaningful relationships.

Class Size Within a Broader Ecosystem While class size is a meaningful metric, it does not exist in isolation. It is deeply intertwined with a school's overall staffing model, instructional model, master schedule, course offerings, special education programming, and academic interventions. Understanding Nova Classical Academy's class sizes requires examining these contextual factors to make informed decisions aligned with the school's mission and financial realities.

Elementary Staffing Structures and Tradeoffs Nova Classical's larger elementary class sizes, 27 students in grades 1–5, contrast with its peer schools, particularly Eagle Ridge Academy. However, class size alone does not reflect the full instructional environment. For example, St. Croix Prep assigns a full-time paraprofessional to each elementary classroom, providing a consistent second adult in every room. Nova Classical currently employs 11 general education assistants, but these staff members are not directly assigned to individual classrooms. Instead, they support a range of needs across all 19 elementary classrooms.

Nova Classical's decision to increase elementary class sizes more than a decade ago, while deemed fiscally necessary at the time, was made strategically to help offset the costs of operating an upper school, as well as the construction and ongoing operating costs associated with moving to our current facility. These decisions, while fiscally necessary, highlight the importance of periodically reassessing whether the current structure best supports the student experience and aligns with Nova Classical's long-term educational goals.

Upper School Teacher Load and Instructional Capacity Upper school staffing models also reveal important distinctions. At Nova Classical and St. Croix Prep, the base teaching load is five of seven periods per day, while at Eagle Ridge Academy, the base contract includes six of seven. This structural difference significantly impacts how many students a teacher interacts with across the school day. The chart below outlines the implications:

	Sum of All Upper School Section Rosters	Total Number of Upper School Sections	Average Upper School Class Size	Number of Sections Taught	Average Number of Students Contacted per Teacher
Nova Classical Academy	3808.2	164.0	23.2	5.0	116.1
Eagle Ridge Academy	4950.4	269.0	18.4	6.0	110.4
St. Croix Preparatory Academy	4879.8	226.0	21.6	5.0	108.0

If Nova Classical adopted a staffing model where upper school teachers taught six of seven periods instead of five, the number of total sections would increase by 20%. With the same student enrollment spread across more sections, the average class size would decrease from 23.2 to approximately 19.4 students per class. However, because each teacher would be teaching more classes, the average number of students a teacher interacts with across the day would remain virtually the same, holding steady at approximately 116.1 students per teacher, just distributed differently.

The tradeoff to obtain these smaller average class sizes is that each teacher's preparation time would be reduced by 50%, as they would go from having two planning periods per day to just one. This reduction in planning time could affect instructional quality, workload sustainability, and the capacity to engage meaningfully with students outside of scheduled class time.

Teacher Overages and Instructional Capacity In addition to base contract loads, teacher overages play a role in how schools extend instructional capacity. At St. Croix Prep, many upper school teachers are assigned an additional course, with the average full-time teacher operating at a 1.1 FTE, teaching 11 courses over the academic year instead of 10. These overages are compensated with a flat stipend of $3,589 per additional section.

Nova Classical uses overages more selectively. In FY25, four upper school teachers are assigned an additional class, and two others are compensated to oversee thesis projects during the house period. Nova Classical calculates overages as a 0.1 proration of each teacher's base salary, resulting in stipends ranging from $5,393 to $6,940 per additional section taught. This model provides more compensation flexibility but limits how broadly overages can be used as a staffing strategy.

If Nova were to adopt a flat-rate stipend of $3,589 per overage, aligned with St. Croix Prep's model, it could make a budget-neutral adjustment to increase staffing by 5 additional sections. Distributing Nova Classical's current enrollment over 169 sections instead of 164 would reduce the average class size from 23.2 to approximately 22.5 students per class. While a modest reduction, it illustrates how targeted, cost-neutral staffing strategies could improve student-to-teacher ratios without major structural changes.

Course Types and Elective Enrollment Impact At Nova Classical, elective courses that are student-selected, such as art and world languages, tend to have smaller class sizes. This naturally reduces the school's overall average, and further demonstrates that course type plays a role in interpreting the class size data meaningfully.

Special Education and Inclusive Practices Special education programming also plays a critical role in shaping class size outcomes. In many cases, students with higher needs are served outside of general education classrooms, reducing the accommodation burden on teachers and slightly lowering general education class counts. When including special education sections in the analysis, Nova Classical's overall class size averages shift closer to peer schools.

System-Level Student Load Comparison By combining middle and high school enrollment data, a broader picture emerges of the number of students served by general education teachers in each system. While individual class sizes matter, total student contact load also influences teacher effectiveness, planning time, and relationship-building capacity.