

Provide additional FTEs to all of our “intensive touch” elementary schools in order to ensure that all K-2 classrooms can begin the year 16 students in each classroom. The funding source is undetermined at this time due to lack of information in regard to Employee Premium Compensation limits for district staff members, as well as resolution in regard to TIF 25.

Rationale:

It is difficult to determine the number of FTEs due to the lack of information provided to the Board in regard to school by school staffing which would be found in the employee workbooks. This information was requested several months ago, but I am not aware of it being disseminated to the Board. Although the Administration feels it is better to create larger class sizes so there isn't a need for reductions of classrooms based on beginning of the year enrollment, based on longitudinal district data there is a greater likelihood (2 additions-1 reduction) that additional classrooms would need to be added due to enrollment. Adding additional creates a greater disruption for students and staff due to the additional time and resources that are required to recruit and interview new hires at a very busy time of year.

Based on extensive research, class size has the most significant impact on student achievement in the early childhood years. Smaller class sizes have shown to have a greater impact on academic achievement than aligned curriculum, as well as instructional coaching. Smaller class sizes also ensure that students and teachers have the time to develop strong, positive and reciprocal relationships which lay the foundation in developing a child's resiliency. Resiliency has been shown to counter-act the effects of Childhood Trauma that is a direct result from children experiencing toxic stress at home, school and community. Students that experience chronic toxic stress are more likely to develop learning disabilities, maladaptive behaviors, as well as an increased risk of substance abuse issues and mental health challenges.

Although Governor Walker has provided district a “tool” called AGR to increase class sizes for our most vulnerable students, I believe that it has a detrimental effect on student learning for our youngest learners. With large numbers of black students, students receiving Free and Reduced Lunch, English Language Learners and students with disabilities not reaching adequate reading and math outcomes, leading to huge disparities, it is critical to invest our resources in high leverage strategies that can close these gaps.

Lower class sizes has also been a priority identified within our budget feedback from schools and the community.