

Dear Legislators,

I have been a Darien, CT resident for over 10 years and I oppose Bills, 738, 874 and 457.

A big reason for moving to this town and spending a great deal of money to live here is for the schools, particularly the small class sizes, the community and the high quality of teachers we attract. With Forced Consolidation, it gives me no reason to stay in Darien. Also, Darien has some of the best diagnostic and gifted teachers in the area. With forced consolidation, my concern is that the high quality and caliber of teachers will be compromised. Many of these teachers drive over an hour to teach at our schools. They will no longer have a reason to do that with forced consolidation.

There is substantial research to support small class sizes and the benefits.

Smaller classes, higher achievement and narrowing the opportunity gap

- **Baker, B. D., Farrie, D. and Sciarra, D. G. (2016), [Mind the Gap: 20 Years of Progress and Retrenchment in School Funding and Achievement Gaps. ETS Research Report Series, 2016: 1–37.](#)** *“...ample research has indicated that children in smaller classes achieve better outcomes, both academic and otherwise, and that class size reduction can be an effective strategy for closing racially or socioeconomically based achievement gaps.*
- **Mathis, William J. (2016). [Research-Based Options for Education Policymaking: The Effectiveness of Class Size Reduction. National Education Policy Center, University of Colorado.](#)** *With past research and policy considerations in mind, the brief concludes “class size is an important determinant of student outcomes, and one that can be directly determined by policy.” This is especially crucial for populations which are most effected by large class sizes, such as low-income and minority students. The research brief outlines the benefits of smaller classes in terms of student achievement, graduation rates and non-cognitive skills. Mathis recommends class sizes between 15-18 (with room for variation based in subject), and argues that while class size reduction can be costly, it could prove to be the most cost-effective policy in the long run.*
- **Schanzenbach, D. W. (2014). [Does Class Size Matter? National Education Policy Center Policy Brief.](#)** *“This policy brief summarizes the academic literature on the impact of class size and finds that class size is an important determinant of a variety of student outcomes, ranging from test scores to broader life outcomes. Smaller classes are particularly effective at raising achievement levels of low-income and minority children. Policymakers should carefully weigh the efficacy of class-size policy against other potential uses of funds. While lower class size has a demonstrable cost, it may prove the more cost-effective policy overall.”*

- Fredriksson, P., Öckert, B. & Oosterbeek, H. (2011). [Long-Term Effects of Class Size](#). [IZA Discussion Paper # 5879](#). *“Analysis of administrative data from Sweden shows Smaller classes in the last three years of primary school (age 10 to 13) are not only beneficial for cognitive test scores at age 13 but also for non-cognitive scores at that age, for cognitive test scores at ages 16 and 18, and for completed education and wages at age 27 to 42. The estimated effect on wages shows the economic benefits outweigh the costs.”*
- Dee, T. & West, M. (2011). [The Non-Cognitive Returns to Class Size](#). [Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis](#), 33:23. *Results show that smaller classes in 8th grade lead to improvements in non-cognitive skills like student engagement, persistence and self-esteem that have been strongly linked to success in schools and later in life. The authors estimate that in urban schools, the economic benefits from investing in smaller classes would be nearly twice the cost.*

Placing children in random class sizes: Lessons from Project STAR

Much of what we know about class sizes comes from an experiment called Project STAR (also known as the Tennessee Study). From 1985 to 1989 11,600 Tennessee students from kindergarten to third grade were randomly assigned to three class-size categories. The three class sizes were 13–17 students, 22–25 students and over 25 students.

The results were strong. An average student assigned to the smallest classes had a reading score nearly 8 percent higher than students in the medium-sized classes. The smaller-class students, on average, achieved 9 percent higher math scores. (See the paper here.)

Students in smaller classes who completed high school were more likely to take college-entrance exams than students assigned to medium or large classes. The effects are even stronger for minority and less affluent students.

Education economists Alan Krueger and Diane Schanzenbach calculate that, based on Project STAR’s results, reducing class sizes from 22 to 15 students has a 5.5 percent return in annual benefits. This takes into account students’ increased lifetime earnings.

Thank you for your your time and consideration in this very important matter.

Laura Pesce-Gray
Darien, CT Resident