

How Consolidation Increases Class Sizes and Why it Matters

- “While all students did better in small classes, the gains... for minorities were approximately twice the gains of whites, reducing the achievement gap.” Finn and Krueger (Project STAR)
- “The weight of evidence... clearly favors smaller schools. Students who traditionally struggle at school and students from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds are the major benefactors of smaller schools. Elementary schools with large proportions of such students should be limited in size to not more than about 300 students...” Leithwood and Jantzi

Consolidation will significantly increase class sizes unless corrective steps are taken.

Here is why. If four 19-student classes from 2 schools are put together in one school, they total 76 students. If the District splits these 76 students when class sizes rise above the 26-student threshold, which is district policy for K-3 in some of these schools, there will now be 3 sections instead of the 4 previous sections. *The new sections have 25, 25 and 26 students, where before they had 19 each.* This happens in all consolidation scenarios: pulling students into a larger pool allows class sizes to rise even if split at the District's current caps on class size.

• **Consolidation will increase the *average* class size in every scenario (see Tables 1 & 2)**

- Kennedy's average class size jumps by 3 if merged with New York and 5 if merged with Cordley
- Pinckney's average class size jumps by 5 if merged with Hillcrest

• **Consolidation will increase the sizes of the *largest* classes in every scenario (Tables 1 & 2)**

- Kennedy's largest class jumps from 24 to 28 if merged with Cordley
- Pinckney's largest class jumps from 22 to 31 if merged with Hillcrest (both have a cap of 31 in grades 4-5)

What happens if we close a school and distribute its students among several schools (rather than merging two schools)?

- **The students have to go somewhere.** Wherever they go they will increase class sizes.
- **Closing Wakarusa Valley resulted in higher class sizes in the receiving schools** (Broken Arrow, Schwegler, and Sunflower). **See Table 3:**
 - Broken Arrow's average class jumped by 3 and its largest class went from 22 to 29
 - Sunflower's average class increased by 1 and its largest class went from 25 to 29

Are these increases a problem? Yes.

- Lawrence’s low-income, minority, and bilingual students are concentrated in the 6 targeted schools. 57% of the children in these schools receive free or reduced-price lunch, and this rises to 79% in Kennedy
- The leading *Project Star* study recommended *class sizes of 17 or below for at-risk elementary students*
 - consolidated schools would be 4.5 to 7.6 students above this recommended level
 - some consolidated classes would be 14 students above this recommended level
- The resulting class sizes are even *above* class sizes in the District’s 3-section schools (Deerfield, Langston Hughes, Quail Run, Schwegler, and Sunflower), schools with much lower percentages of at-risk students (see **Table 4**), *even if District policies on caps in class sizes are followed*

Table 1. Class sizes on the east side, before and after consolidation*

	Average class size	Largest class	Smallest class	Median	Mode	Percent at-risk	School size
Before consolidation							
Cordley	22.6	26	18	23	26	42.5%	294
Kennedy	18.6	24	16	17	18	79.0%	224
New York	18.1	24	14	18	19	73.0%	185
Pinckney	19.3	22	16	19	20	57.6%	229
Average	19.9	24	16	20	18	63.0%	233
After consolidation							
Cordley/Kennedy	23.5	28	20	23	24	58.3%	518
Cordley/New York	21.8	27	19	20	21	54.3%	479
Kennedy/New York	21.5	26	19	21	20	76.3%	409
Average	22.8	27	19.8	22	21	63.0%	455

*All data are from the official USD497 enrollment report (Sept. 20, 2011).

Table 2. Class sizes in the central area, before and after consolidation*

	Average class size	Largest class	Smallest class	Median	Mode	Percent at-risk	School size
Before consolidation							
Pinckney	19.3	22	16	19	20	57.6%	229
Hillcrest	23.7	31	18	24	21	57.9%	356
Sunset Hill	21.7	25	16	21	25	43.4%	258
Average	21.7	28	17	21	20, 21, 25	53.0%	307
After consolidation							
Hillcrest/Sunset Hill	24.6	27	24	26	27	51.8%	614
Hillcrest/Pinckney	24.3	31	22	24	24	57.6%	585
Average	24.4	29	23	24	24	54.7%	600

Table 3. What if students are distributed among several schools? Class sizes before and after closing Wakarusa Valley**

	Average class size	Largest class	Smallest class	Median class size	Mode
Before closure					
Broken Arrow	19.1	22	15	18.5	18, 22
Schwegler	24.3	28	21	24	24
Sunflower	22.7	25	16	24	24
After closure					
Broken Arrow	22.4	29	15	22	16, 21, 22, 29
Schwegler	20.5	25	18	20	20
Sunflower	23.5	29	16	26	21, 26, 29

**This table Focuses on grades 1-5 because full-day kindergarten was added to Broken Arrow and Sunflower in 2011, which affects the averages. Focusing on grades 1-5 holds constant everything but the increase in students from Wakarusa Valley.

Table 4. Comparing class sizes in consolidated schools and other Lawrence schools*

	Average class size	Largest class	Smallest class	Median	Mode	Percent at-risk	School size
Central consolidation	24.4	31	22	24	24	54.7%	600
East-side consolidation	22.8	28	19	22	20	63%	455
3-section schools	22.5	29	15	22	20	28.3%	447
Example: Quail Run	21.9	26	18	21	21	15.3%	417
District as whole	21.5	31	14	21	20	41.9%	355

*All data are from the official USD497 enrollment report (Sept. 20, 2011).

Data for above tables

Official USD497 enrollment thresholds above which classes are divided into two

	K-3	4-5
Cordley	27	32
Kennedy	25	30
New York	26	31
Hillcrest	26	31
Pinckney	26	31
Sunset Hill	27	32

Current number of students and sections, by school and grade

(in parentheses: number of sections)

Grade	Cordley	Kennedy	NY	Hillcrest	Pinckney	SH
KG	44 (2)	51 (2)	36 (2)	59 (3)	39 (2)	38 (2)
1	50 (2)	32 (2)	29 (2)	71 (3)	42 (2)	33 (2)
2	48 (2)	45 (2)	32 (2)	58 (3)	39 (2)	43 (2)
3	57 (3)	34 (2)	25 (1)	49 (2)	41 (2)	48 (2)
4	52 (2)	21 (1)	24 (1)	57 (2)	38 (2)	50 (2)
5	43 (2)	40 (2)	37 (2)	62 (2)	32 (2)	46 (2)

Projected number of students & sections in consolidated schools

Projections are based on summing current enrollments (in parentheses: number of sections)

	Cordley/ Kennedy	Kennedy/ NY	Cordley/ NY	Hillcrest/ Sunset Hill	Hillcrest/ Pinckney	New York/ Pinckney
enrollment	518	409	479	614	587	414
% at-risk	58.3%	76.3%	54.3%	51.8%	57.6%	64.5%
Grade						
KG	95 (4-5)	87 (4)	80 (4)	97 (5)	98 (4-5)	75 (3-4)
1	82 (4)	61 (3)	79 (4)	104 (4-5)	113 (5)	71 (3)
2	93 (4)	77 (4)	80 (4)	101 (4)	97 (4-5)	71 (3)
3	91 (4)	59 (3)	82 (4)	97 (4)	88 (4)	64 (3)
4	73 (3)	45 (2)	76 (3)	107 (4)	94 (4)	61 (2-3)
5	83 (3)	77 (3)	80 (3)	108 (4)	93 (3-4)	69 (3)