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The Importance of a Low Student to Teacher Ratio

by Jennifer Brozak, studioD



A low student-to-teacher ratio can allow your child to receive more individualized attention from her teacher.

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reports that the advantages of lower student-to-teacher ratios may be even greater for less-advantaged students; those students have been shown to make the highest achievement gains by the end of the school year.

Lasting Effects

Small class sizes during a child's first years of school can have lasting effects. According to the Center for Public Education, the benefits that students experience from small class sizes during their early years of education will follow them -- even if their class sizes increase as they inch toward graduation. In fact, a study published in the "Economic Journal" found that students who attended smaller classes during their first few years of school were more likely to take college entrance exams than students who were enrolled with a larger student-to-teacher ratio.

Individualized Attention

Of course, the primary reason behind these benefits seems to be that teachers who have fewer students are able to provide each student with more individual attention. Fewer students means that teachers have more manageable workloads and more time to work one-on-one with students; they can engage them more, try out different activities and lessons that might not be feasible in a larger class size, and, because they have fewer students to monitor, they tend to spend less time on classroom management issues, such as discipline.

Student Accountability

As public schools across the country continue to feel the effects of state budget cuts, the importance of student-to-teacher ratio and class size has bubbled to the surface. Despite conflicting positions on the issue, many education policy advocates, including the Center for Public Education, overwhelmingly indicate that a low student-to-teacher ratio can increase student achievement, enhance a child's test scores and provide lasting academic benefits.

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When It Matters Most

The positive effects of reduced student-to-teacher ratio are the most apparent in early education, specifically in kindergarten through third grade. The Center for Public Education states that classes of no more than 15 to 18 students seem to provide students with the best benefits in terms of achievement in reading and math.

Closing the Achievement Gap

Small classes during the early years of education also help to close the "achievement gap" between minority and nonminority students, and also between affluent and lower-income students. The Brookings Institution

A lower student-to-teacher can also encourage greater participation in class. In a class of 30-plus students, it is easier for a shy or unprepared student to "hide." Conversely, in a class of 15 students, students may feel more accountable or more comfortable participating in class discussions -- and this greater degree of accountability can certainly lead to better grades and higher achievement.

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About the Author

As a mother, wife and recovering English teacher, Jennifer Brozak is passionate about all things parenting and education. A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh and St. Vincent College, Jennifer writes features for the IN Community magazine network and shares her daily escapades on her blog, One Committed Mama.

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