



The TEACHER CENTER of Broome County
Teacher Study Group Grant Award
Winter/Spring 2008

FINAL REPORT
DOCUMENT PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

STUDY GROUP TOPIC: The Importance of Small Class Sizes

List of group members: Melissa Vandermark, Alissa Brand, Tracie Ostrander, and Ryan Siciliano

The final report must be word-processed and submitted both in print and through e-mail to kharasta@btbooces.org using this form, which is on the enclosed CD. Include information under each of the following headings.

Describe the initial goal of the group noting any adjustments that had to be made as time passed.

The initial purpose of our study group was to research and discuss the benefits of smaller class sizes for early childhood and primary grades. Our current pre-kindergarten has 18 students participating in a half-day session. We wanted to address the advantages of smaller class size, specifically in early childhood settings. We wanted to offer our findings to administration and other faculty members in order to encourage two half-day sessions of pre-kindergarten in the future.

Student needs that were addressed in our group included more one on one time for student and teacher within the classroom, manageable transitions from various activities, and a more ideal atmosphere for the growth of socio-emotional needs of the students. Our group findings were also to be used to sustain small class sizes within our district, as well as other surrounding districts.

Over the course of the group, a decision was made to not have a full-time, smaller class size in Pre-k next year. Although the results of our findings will be passed on to administration, the enthusiasm to present this to administration faded somewhat. Other than this information, all of our other goals were met within the group time.

Describe the ACTION PLAN that the group followed.

Tracie Ostrander, our Occupational Therapist looked at how early childhood settings dealt with OT issues and if class size had a direct impact upon this.

Ryan Siciliano, our first grade educator, created polls for our colleagues and collected and translated the information that given back on them.

Alissa Brand, our kindergarten teacher, looked at the research towards ideal class size, as well as current class size among current research.

Melissa Vandermark, facilitator and pre-kindergarten teacher researched the ideal early childhood setting class size as well as neighboring programs. She also looked into research that correlated class size with student achievement.

We each had five hours regarding this study group. We each had one hour of individual research time, and then an allotted 4 weeks of group meeting time before school begins to equal four hours.

Describe how the action plan was implemented.

We first met and set up our objectives as a team. We finalized and sent out copies of our poll regarding class size. We then tallied and discussed the findings that were returned. We also did a great deal of reading from the text, *Let's Put Kids First, Finally*. We discussed the findings within the text and related it to our goals. We next discussed neighboring school districts policies and programs, including any Occupational Therapy programs that were either provided through the school directly, or through the BOCES program. We also compared and contrasted results to informal school academic results (as well as school size).

Evaluate the impact of the study group effort on teacher/student performance.
How has this study group changed you as a teacher? Do you anticipate that any of your teaching practices will have changed?

This study group has changed us in first realizing the deep benefits of smaller class size in our district. It also has made us realize that the notion of smaller class size in specifically Pre-K is not only necessary, but recommended by a great deal of professional research. As far as teaching practices go, we believe that our style has been affected in that we take advantage of our small group individualized time even more so than before.

What evidence do you expect to see of student achievement improving as a result of your participating in this study group?

We fully expect our district to consider a full day, smaller Pre-K class in the future because of much of the research this group has supplied, as well as the information that was provided by our polls and opinions.

What evidence is there that the goals of the study group has/has not been met?

The evidence that the group goals have been met is that our administration, as well as our colleagues and peers, have become more informed because of our group study. Although the notion of a full day, smaller class size Pre-K has not been implemented, this is not necessarily a negative action. We believe that because of this study group and the

research implemented, that our suggestion will be taken more seriously with the important research being given to the proper places.

Comment on the value of the study group process? Did it work for you?

The process went well. We worked together professionally and adequately. It worked for all of us and we look forward to working with each other in the future. Our only downfall was the numerous snow days and delayed that tended to fall on our scheduled mornings. Rescheduling was sometimes time consuming, but we persevered with it.

How can we make this study group program better?

Perhaps giving more suggestions and open ended questions in dealing with the specific group topic may be beneficial.

A final report is due one week after the last meeting or by May 15, 2008, whichever date is first. The report must be typed and double-spaced using the provided form, which is on the enclosed CD. One copy must be submitted in print and the file must be submitted through e-mail to kharasta@btboces.org. Return to **THE TEACHER CENTER of Broome County @ WSKG, BOCES #22.**