

## Class size

Class size is (...) defined by the number of students who are educated in a single classroom. Although there is no research that suggests an optimum class size, there is research that identifies potential benefits for classes of fewer than 20 children in kindergarten through third grade.

In the 1980s and 1990s, several states (in USA) initiated Class Size Reduction (CSR) programs, which produced a variety of program evaluation data. (...) Overall, the information gained from these projects suggests that class size of fewer than 20 (i.e., 13 to 17) students is associated with modest achievement advantages as measured by standardized achievement tests when compared with students educated in classrooms with more than 20 students. These advantages were most pronounced for low-income and minority children. The effect appeared to be accumulative; the achievement advantage was greater for students who spent more years with small class sizes when compared to students who spent fewer years in such classrooms. There may also be long-term effects of small classes related to higher educational aspirations, higher class rank, fewer classroom disruptions, fewer students retained, and a reduced dropout rate in high school.

The results of the California CSR project suggest that class size alone does not account for the successes of these classes.

(...) When compared to teachers who have larger classes, teachers of small classes spend more time in direct instruction and less time on classroom management. In addition, teachers tend to use more hands-on instruction, give more feedback, and interact more with individual students. In response, students in small classes appear to be more academically engaged and participate at higher levels. These elements also improve learning in a variety of instructional settings. In addition to these instructional variables, reduced class size may facilitate the development of a learning community within the classroom. Small class size may also increase student perceptions of responsibility for learning.

**Reference:** Fugate, M. (2005). Class size. In. Lee, S. W. (Ed.). Encyclopedia of School Psychology (pp. 87-88). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.