

Class Size

Education

The most studied question in education, and one of the most disappointing.

Class size reduction lowers the number of pupils per teacher. The effect on attainment is real but small, and expensive per unit of gain.

TENNESSEE STAR
small, real gains

COST PER GAIN
high

- Effects appear mainly below about 20 pupils.
- Largest effects are in the earliest years.
- Small reductions produce very small effects.
- Teachers often do not change methods when classes shrink.
- Reduction requires hiring, which can lower average quality.
- The same money on teacher development often buys more.

LOOK FOR IT

Cutting a class from 30 to 27 changes very little. Cutting it from 30 to 15 changes something, at roughly double the staffing cost.

Educational reference. The finding is robust and consistently unpopular: the effect is genuine, but the cost-effectiveness is poor.