

February 14, 18  
Louisa Boren STEM K-8 PTA  
5950 Delridge Way  
Seattle, WA 98106

School Board Directors and Seattle Public Schools Administrators;

It has come to the attention of the PTA and greater community at Louisa Boren STEM K-8 that our enrollment projections for the coming 2018/19 school year ***will not be made on the same basis*** to those of our non-Title 1 neighborhood elementary schools.

We understand that in the past higher class sizes at option schools were intended to neutralize the affect of attrition at higher grades and avoid diminishing class sizes and the coinciding impact on budget. But this is not the reality at our school or most K-8s in the district.

In contrast STEM K-8 has unique and diverse staffing needs that are ill served by this enrollment theory. As non-high poverty schools across neighborhoods are funded to lower class sizes in K-2, it is a terrible inequity that option schools such as ours would not be afforded the same enrollment advantages.

A recent study published by the National Education Policy Center notes, "class size is an important determinant of student outcomes, and one that can be directly determined by policy. All else being equal, increasing class sizes will harm student outcomes."

All things are not equal and increasing class sizes will hurt students in a population where equity and access to opportunities is already severely hampered. Our diverse option school would be best served by the lower class sizes that are being enrolled at our neighbor schools.

Class size issues compound existing equitable workload and student learning issues for staff at option schools. Option schools and K-8's frequently enroll higher percentages of students with special needs that families believe can better be addressed in a specialized, smaller environment.

This problem is magnified at STEM where we house multiple special education programs, a preschool and high impact programs like Access. Our school needs to address extensive differentiation and staff collaboration requirements to address needs associated with Special Education, 504's, social emotional needs, and high performing students.

In addition to 500 plus students enrolled in our school we house multiple classrooms of 3-5 year olds in preschool. We are a PreK-8 as these classrooms and staff are completely integrated into our school's curriculum and culture. These numbers must be taken into consideration. Our preschool programs require the same time, investment and support services that the rest of our students and staff need from office staff and administrators. This is a big piece of the workload as well as the total population of our school and we aren't getting credit for it.

In this context class size additions have significant impacts on overloaded staff. STEM K-8 school staff have further workload challenges because of the need to meet standard district curriculum as well as the specialized curriculum addressing the school vision and mission that draws

families to our school, E.g. Project Based Learning and STEM curriculum.

STEM K-8 was recently deemed an OSPI Lighthouse school, only the second in Seattle Public Schools since the designation began. A school of our distinction and unique curriculum deserves the same lower class sizes mandated by the state and worthy of our students and staff without an impact on our staffing or budget.

The PTA at STEM K-8 will not use our budget, donated by the families of our community to compensate for the lack of funding that would offer our school the basic supports and lower class sizes that all schools are worthy of.

There are possible solutions that we support to address these concerns for a range of Option School needs:

- Enroll students at Option schools at district-wide ratios, but increase enrollment or open additional classes where requested.
- Have further discussion with affected schools to determine options that make sense, including engagement with families and stakeholders.
- Provide the same support as other teachers in similar non-high poverty schools in our region and district receive by lowering our class size enrollment with no impact.
- Adjust enrollment targets so that schools are not required to meet the 500 plus student quota in order to maintain all support staff, in particular the critical need for an AP.
- Instead of schools having to apply for an enrollment waiver, Option schools should be enrolled at the mandated levels with the option to request a waiver for higher-class sizes, not the other way around.

Please re-think this enrollment policy that puts our students and staff at a distinct disadvantage.

Sincerely,

The Louisa Boren STEM K-8 PTA

CC: Michael Tolley, Associate Superintendent for Teaching and Learning,  
Stephen Nielson, Deputy Superintendent,  
JoLynn Berge, Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance  
Flip Herndon, Associate Superintendent for Capital, Facilities, Enrollment Planning.  
School Board Directors