

March 5, 2018

# Benefits of Small Classroom Settings



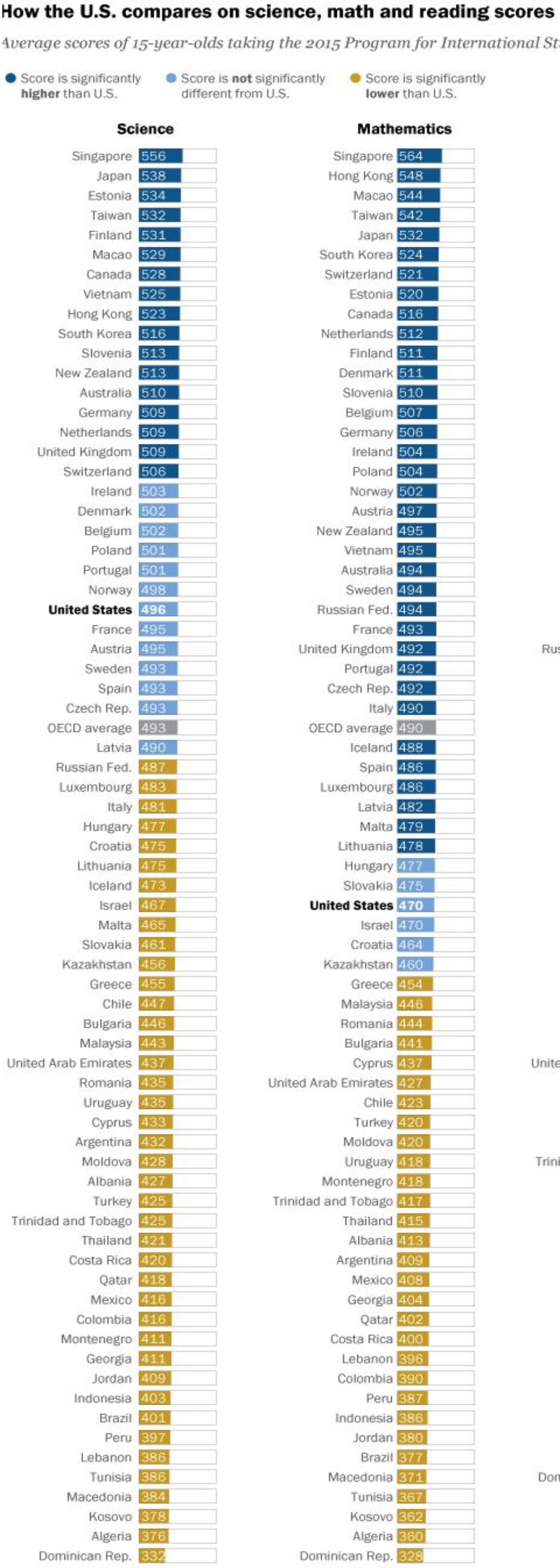
**“I realized if I can change a classroom, you can change a community, and if you change enough communities you can change the world.” - Erin Gruwell (Educator, Motivational Speaker)**

**By, Jane Hanley**

# Time to Make a Change

If you look at research done in 2015 by PISA, which measures math, science, and literacy scores of 15 year olds worldwide, the United State’s results are not too assuring. Out of 71 countries,the United States ranked 24th in Science and 38th in Math. Beyond that, the STEM system that the United States has tried to implement and enforce has even more disappointing results. Of all the students enrolled in these programs, about 16% actually rank above average and about 46% rank below average (Desilver, 2017). The figure on the right shows the ranking of the United States worldwide in math and science.

Looking at these statistics really makes you think about the education system that is currently being implemented in the United States. People can enroll in as many IB and AP programs as they want throughout their education careers. Teachers and school officials can implement all the STEM programs as they want. All of these efforts mean nothing if the students are not actually learning the advanced information they are being taught. So what is the problem? The United States obviously has the technology advancements and the funding necessary to implement these advanced programs. Why are we not getting these results? Why are students not testing as well as students worldwide?



# The Facts About Small Class Sizes

How can the United States improve their education system? Studies show that immense improvements can be made in education when class sizes are decreased. This, ultimately, creates a more familiar and comfortable environment. It gives the teachers more control and gives students less of a opportunity to doze off and mess around in the back of the classroom.

Smaller class sizes is not a new or foreign concept to the United States. From the year 1885 to 1989, a program was implemented in Tennessee that included over 1,200 teachers and 12,000 students. The study included 79 schools, including rural, suburban, and inner-city schools. Each school had a grade that was broken up into 3 classes, one of about 13 students and two classes of about 22 students.

From the information gathered from this experiment they concluded that from students who were in small classes showed greater results than just an improvement in grades. Students were able to retain more information and genuinely do better on testing. The results also showed how great of an influence this study had on minority low poverty groups (as shown in figure 1 and 2). Students of minority groups were more likely to attend college and ultimately earn a degree (Mosteller).

**“When the results were disaggregated by race, black students showed greater gains from being assigned to a small class, suggesting that reducing class size might be an effective strategy to reduce the black-white achievement gap.” - Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach**

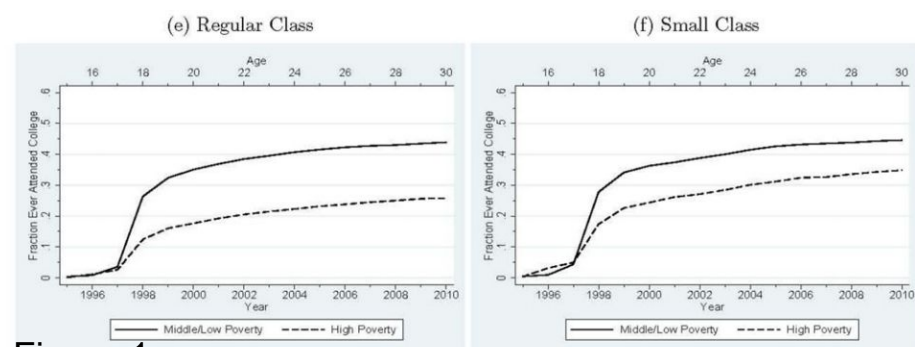


Figure 1.

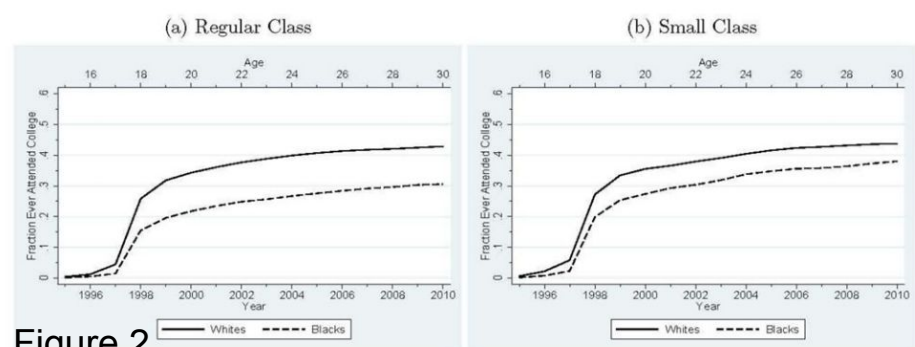


Figure 2.

**“2.7%, it is 5.4% for African American students and 7.3% for students in the poorest third of US schools” - (Dynarsky, Hyman, & Schanzenbach, 2013; Krueger, 2003)**



# What is Stopping Us?

Although research shows how influential and beneficial reducing class sizes can be, there is still obstacles we face when trying to implement it across the United States.

First off, there is a problem with funding. Although the goal would be to implement smaller class sizes throughout schools throughout the United States. It is obvious that funding for all schools is not the same throughout the county and we would not want any school to not reap the benefits of small classes after seeing how influential it can be on minority students. Education budgeting is currently being focused on increasing STEM programs. "The White House issued a memorandum ...directing the Education Department to spend \$200 million a year on grants that promote science, technology, engineering and math education" (Strauss). After reading the statistics on how the implemented STEM programs are not as progressive and beneficial as people had hoped they would be, I believe there is a better way for that \$200 million could be spent. That money could be used towards staffing schools so that they can implement small classes in their schools.

Another problem that is faced when trying to implement smaller class sizes is older teachers not having a progressive mindset. Although implementing a common curriculum or STEM programs might have worked in the past. These programs mean nothing if the

students are not receiving the one on one attention they need in order to learn and retain this information. So, I believe that the United States should focus its money and attention on increasing students retention rates and test scores before it starts increasing its money spent on higher education programs.



# Advisor Program

According to a policy brief done by New Visions Public Schools about schools in New York City who have implemented these advisory programs,

- “Advisory offers emotional support for students during adolescence...offer advocacy and support in difficult social and academic situations.”
- “Advocates of advisory programs see a direct link between a student’s emotional and social experience and academic achievement.”
- “Advisory promotes self-esteem.”
- “It provides peer recognition in an accepting environment, offsetting peer pressure and negative responses from peers in other areas.”
- “Students in advisory programs are less likely to drop out and have a lower incidence of substance abuse.”

Based on these observations I believe that implementing these programs are a step in the right direction if implementing small class sizes is out of the question.

The goal is to have qualified college students or willing teachers to advise these students. The most important aspect of this program is the students have a real connection with their advisor. That way, with the connection they have, the advisor will be able to know what is best for the student to improve them both socially and academically.

“Do you believe it is important or beneficial for students of all ages to be able to have access to mentors?  
Why or why not?”

“In today’s world of very busy parents, it does indeed ‘take a Village’ to raise a child, unfortunately. Most children do not have a stay-at-home parent who is there for them at all times as in days of old. Children need positive adult role models that are a constant in their lives, even as a supplement or a complement to a parental role. Having access to mentors would provide that much-needed role model to give direction, guidance, and support.”

- English Teacher since 1990

When I asked, “Have schools you have taught at ever had a mentor program of any type?”

Her response was, “I have not.”

For a teacher who has years of experience in many different schools and knows first hand the benefits small group interaction and advising can on a student, it is sad to see that she had never seen any professional advising programs  
\_\_\_\_\_ in action.



# Conclusion

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My hope in the future through further research we will be able to steer the American Education System in the right direction. I hope that we will further be able to prove how progressive thinking and actions towards implementing smaller class sizes will help future generations obtain more diplomas, better jobs, and more stable lifestyles.

Along with these goals, I hope that the United States will also be able to increase its national scores in science and math. I do truly believe that if we take these necessary steps towards more advising programs and more one on one time with the students, it will be possible.

I believe that equality is so important, especially in today's education systems. Through the research I have done and observations I have made, creating smaller class sizes and more advising programs is a relatively small and obtainable goal.

Most importantly, I hope after sitting down to read the facts and familiarize yourself with the current American Education System, you too believe that these are the proper and most necessary steps towards obtaining a better future in our education system.

Our  
**Small**  
class sizes  
ensure your  
**individual  
attention!**



**OUR CLASS SIZES  
ARE SMALL, SO  
MINDS HAVE ROOM  
TO EXPAND.**

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