

**SAMPLE CLASS SIZE LETTER TO BOARD OF EDUCATION
– FROM PARENTS @ FEINSTEIN ES**

April 19, 2009

Dear Members of the San Francisco Board of Education:

In your 5-year Strategic Plan, “Beyond the Talk: Taking Action to Educate Every Child Now,” a statement caught my eye: “To increase the achievement of ALL groups of students and dramatically accelerate the achievement of targeted groups of students (African-American, English Learner, Latino, Pacific Islander, Samoan, and Special Education students) we are focused on three areas: Access and Equity, Achievement, and Accountability.”

Based on these stated goals, I am very concerned about the recommendation to increase the kindergarten class size from 20 to 22 students beginning in the 2009-2010 school year and urge you to reconsider your positions.

Access and Equity: Make social justice a reality. How does an increase in class size from 20 to 22 kindergarten students help make social justice a reality? Studies have shown that larger class sizes do not help students flourish. Why constrain these young students embarking on their academic careers? Increasing the class size is in direct conflict with the district’s access and equity goal.

Achievement: Engage high achieving and joyful learners. How can teachers provide engaging and joyful experiences when there are additional challenges in the classroom? Teachers struggle on a daily basis to provide high quality interactions with individual students. But, there comes a point when an incremental increase in the student-teacher ratio combined with a routine behavioral or performance challenge causes a dramatic decrease in educational effectiveness, individualized attention, supervision and safety. Increasing the class size is in direct conflict with the district’s achievement goal.

(As a parenthetical note, if you change the academic school year to begin earlier in August, that would further diminish your student achievement goal when a child, barely over 4 ½ years of age, enters a kindergarten classroom with the challenges discussed above. Consider the negative impacts that lack of maturity will have on the child, his or her teacher and fellow classmates.)

Accountability: Keep our promises to students and families. You have not kept your promise to me, or to the thousands of other entering kindergarten families who assumed a class size of 20 students for the 2009-2010 school year. No doubt, these are extremely challenging economic times; but when faced with a budget shortfall, cuts should occur as far from the classroom as possible. Increasing the class size is in direct conflict with the district’s accountability goal.

I support your efforts to increase the achievement of all student groups and I am concerned about the persistent achievement gap that exists between traditionally underrepresented ethnic groups, English language learners and their peers. That said, I ask that you remember your strategic plan goals and consider all other cost-saving measures before increasing the kindergarten class size by 10%. This policy recommendation is going in the wrong direction. Please, go “Beyond the Talk.”

Sincerely,