

Tomah Area School District Report for SAGE Study Committee

Brief Picture of the District

- The Tomah Area School District encompasses approximately 495 square miles.
- There are seven elementary schools which feed into one middle school and one high school. Four of the elementary schools are located in outlying communities- Oakdale and Camp Douglas to the south, Warrens to the north, and Wyeville to the east. The school district also has an early learning center for our 4K program, the Timberpups. An alternative education center, the Robert Kupper Learning Center, houses our high school alternative education programs and has a classroom set up as a hospital room for our Certified Nursing Program.
- The Tomah Area School District is currently experiencing declining enrollment. We have gone from a high enrollment of about 3163 students in January of 2010 to an enrollment of 2977 as reported on the 2013-14 District Report Card. Also, per the 2013- 14 District Report Card, our student population is comprised as 87.4% White (3.5% American Indian, 1.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 3.8% Black, 3.8% Hispanic), 15.5% of students have a disability, 46.6% are economically disadvantaged, and .6% have limited English proficiency.
- Our schools range of economically disadvantaged students is from a high of 65.1% at Lemonweir Elementary School to a low of 38.2% at Tomah High School.

Why the District Chose Not to Participate in SAGE

- Based on a review of Board minutes and a conversation with Mr. Bob Fasbender, former superintendent of the Tomah Area School District (2005-2010) and former Business Manager for the District (1986- 2005) when the SAGE Program was initiated, there were a number of reasons why the district opted not to participate in SAGE:
 - 1) The Tomah Area School District did not have classroom space available to implement the SAGE Program. The only elementary school in which additional classroom space existed was Camp Douglas.
 - 2) There was a concern expressed in regard to equity. Not all of the elementary schools would have been eligible for the SAGE Program and there was concern about how to justify to our parents and staff that some schools would have class sizes around fifteen (15), while other schools would have class sizes in excess of twenty (20).
 - 3) Concerns were also raised about continued funding of the SAGE Program. There was a lack of confidence that the state would continue funding the program. The School Board would then be faced with two choices- neither of them positive: a) No longer implementing the SAGE Program and increasing class sizes after parents in those schools had grown accustomed to the smaller class size or b) asking our local community to pay increased taxes to support smaller classes in only some of our elementary schools. The Tomah Area School District is one of the lowest spending districts in the state. Our 2013-14 mill rate was 44th lowest in the state. As a result,

increasing taxes to replace SAGE funding would not have been looked upon favorably.

- 4) It was decided around this same time to place some limits on class size. While these limits are not articulated in any Board policy, our district registrar does her best to move students to different buildings (provided transportation allows) in order to maintain some equity in class numbers. Generally, we are committed to the following: 4K- under 18 students (a teacher and an aide are in each class), Grades K-2- 20 students per class, Grade 3- 23 students per class, Grades 4+5- 25 students per class. If enrollment does exceed these numbers, additional aide time is provided to teachers (if such time is needed).

Why the District Continues to Elect Not to Participate

We have had numerous discussions about class size over the years. We continue to come back to the research which shows that the number one influence on a child's achievement level is the classroom teacher, not the number of students in the class. See the chart based on the research by John Hattie. The Tomah Area School District is investing their resources and money into the efforts of classroom teachers which have a demonstrated impact on student achievement.

Other Comments

One of the biggest drawbacks to the SAGE Program is the need for additional classroom space. While the option does exist to have two teachers in a classroom with no more than thirty (30) students, this still becomes a facility issue as many elementary classrooms do not easily accommodate thirty children comfortably. It seems that the Fair Funding for Our Future proposal being promoted by the Department of Public Instruction would more effectively address issues of poverty in every school district. As you know, the proposal:

- Guarantees a minimum amount of state aid for every student;
- Incorporates a poverty factor into the formula, accounting for families' ability to pay—not just property value;

Teachers toolbox

Effect Size
Bloom's taxonomy
Constructivism

More

Decisions/Decisions
Which? Questioning Strategy
Formative Teaching Methods
Teaching without Talking
Methods of Analysis
Teacher Intelligence
Black and Wilson
Learning loops
Proformax
Expectancy-value
Dewey's theory of motivation
Dewey's questionnaires
Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Professor John Hattie's Table of Effect Sizes

Hattie says 'effect sizes' are the best way of answering the question 'what has the greatest influence on student learning?'. An effect-size of 1.0 is typically associated with:

- advancing learners' achievement by one year, or improving the rate of learning by 50%
- a correlation between some variable (e.g., amount of homework) and achievement of approximately .50
- A two grade leap in GCSE, e.g. from a C to an A grade

An effect size of 1.0 is clearly enormous! (It is defined as an increase of one standard deviation)

Below is Hattie's table of effect sizes.

| Influence | Effect Size | Source of Influence |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Feed back | 1.13 | Teacher |
| Student's prior cognitive ability | 1.04 | Student |
| Instructional quality | 1.00 | Teacher |
| Direct instruction | .82 | Teacher |
| Acceleration | .72 | Student |
| Remediation/feedback | .65 | Teacher |
| Student's disposition to learn | .61 | Student |
| Class environment | .56 | Teacher |
| Challenge of Goals | .52 | Teacher |
| Peer tutoring | .50 | Teacher |
| Mastery learning | .50 | Teacher |
| Homework | .43 | Teacher |
| Teacher Style | .42 | Teacher |
| Questioning | .41 | Teacher |
| Peer effects | .38 | Peers |
| Advance organizers | .37 | Teacher |
| Simulation & games | .34 | Teacher |
| Computer-assisted instruction | .31 | Teacher |
| Testing | .30 | Teacher |
| Instructional media | .30 | Teacher |
| Affective attributes of students | .24 | Student |
| Physical attributes of students | .21 | Student |
| Programmed instruction | .18 | Teacher |
| Audio-visual aids | .16 | Teacher |
| Individualisation | .14 | Teacher |
| Finances/money | .12 | School |
| Behavioural objectives | .12 | Teacher |
| Team teaching | .06 | Teacher |
| Physical attributes (e.g. class size) | -.05 | School |

- Establishes sustainability in state funding, while strengthening rural, declining enrollment, and negatively aided districts; and
- Redirects the school levy tax credit directly into school aids, increasing transparency and state support for classroom learning.

There is no question that assistance needs to be provided to schools in which there exists a high level of poverty. While the SAGE Program was designed to address this issue, it did not effectively do so if a school district, like the Tomah Area School District, did not have space for additional classrooms or a clear and united consensus from the community that lower class size was a priority. Fair Funding for Our Future would better help the Tomah Area School District respond to the challenges we face with our students in poverty based on what we believe will have a more significant impact on their achievement.