Eagle Academy Public Charter School Title 1 Program Evaluation Summary

Eagle Academy PCS has had Title 1 funds since its opening in 2003. Eagle’s students who just completed the third grade received the “reduction in class size” treatment that was applied when they were in kindergarten. The hypothesis was and is that if Eagle reduces class size in kindergarten and/or first grade, this would have a significant impact upon student learning later in school.

The results of the intervention at the time of class size reduction demonstrated that this helped the students. However, the hypothesis was that this would continue and grow during subsequent grades. In the second grade, these students took the DC CAS. The majority of students were at Basic or Below Basic in the second grade. However, the DC CAS is a third grade test so that no conclusions could be drawn from the second grade testing. Using the ANET, which again is for third grade, the student’s scores as a group were on grade level for second grade to below grade level. Research supports this result in that the research shows little consistency over time for second grade students when given standardized tests.

The results for third grade were spectacular and proved the hypothesis. The students who received the treatment, reduced class size, scored an accountability score of 69.7 on the DC CAS in mathematics and an accountability score of 53.7 in reading/language arts for a combined accountability score on 64.4, the second highest third grade score in the District.

Eagle’s second grade class also took the DC CAS this year. These students performed slightly better than this year’s third grade class when they were in the second grade. Only 20% of this year’s second grade students scored at Below Basic and every one of those students was classified with an IEP. Approximately 47% of the students scored at Basic but were within 3 points or less of Proficient. The rest of the students scored at Proficient or above. This again demonstrates the effect of class size reduction over time. This longitudinal tracking demonstrates that students exposed to significant class size reduction, 20 students or less per teacher, demonstrate improved learning over the next three years.

In terms of the grade level that received the initial class size reduction the following assessments were completed at the beginning and the end of the grade level: DIBELS at the Wheeler Campus and EASY CBM at New Jersey Avenue campus. The results from these assessments demonstrate that students grew academically over time. Sixty seven percent (67%) of the students demonstrated growth between 7 and 10 months. Eagle also administered the Social Skills Improvement Rating scale to these same students on a before and after pattern to measure socio-emotional growth. Eighty-five percent (85%) of the students demonstrated a year’s growth in this category over the course of one school year. Socio-emotional growth is strongly positively correlated with academic growth at this age level. There was a significant positive growth for the students in the grade receiving the class size reduction.

Eagle also provided the following assessment on a more frequent basis, weekly or quarterly: LEXIA and IXL for reading and mathematics growth. Both of these instruments demonstrate a pattern of steady student improvement in classes receiving the reduced class size funds.

It is clear from the data available that reducing class size has a strong, positive impact on student learning over time (three to four years) that achieves the level of statistical significance by the third and the fourth year.

Other interventions may influence the data as well. The funds spent of parental involvement at the school and with the child at home may have impacted student learning. Certainly there is a body of research that demonstrates the impact of parental involvement on student learning but in Eagle’s case, this would have to be inferred as a relationship rather than be proven statistically as a major intervention.

There was also a high level of instructional performance by teachers at each grade level. This was not separated as a unique intervention and therefore must be inferred.

The one intervention that was measured was the class size reduction. Class size reduction clearly had a strong and statistically significant impact on student learning over time and this result fits the existing body of research that clearly demonstrates that reducing class size has a significant and lasting impact on student learning with other factors continuing at a reasonable level of support.