

Hello,

This is my 15th year teaching in the Beaverton public schools. Despite years of staffing reductions and forced transfers, I have had the good fortune to remain at the same school for my entire career. During these years I have seen a steady change in the students we serve. While many are quick to blame parents or screens, I can't help but put blame on the steady creep of class size and the lack of instructional consistency stemming from staffing instability.

When I started teaching 4th grade in 2004, my 1st-grade "buddy class" had 19 students. Though my numbers have always hovered around 28-30, our primary used to have much more manageable sizes of 18-22. By the time students got to me, almost all were at or above grade level in all areas, foundational concepts were set, and the students were eager to learn. Now...I'm lucky if half my class fits this description. Class size in K-2 regularly creeps above 30, and our students are not building the necessary critical foundation, both academically and emotionally.

While behaviors have always come with the territory, what I'm currently hearing from primary has me questioning how tenable future years will be if things don't change. Room clears, restraints, and runners are the new 3 R's. When I talk about being a teacher, people (like the checker at the grocery store yesterday) will often mention that they or a family member is thinking about going back to school. Sadly, I often feel I have to discourage this course. New teachers can expect to inherit struggling students, receive minimal support, and then be laid off at the end of the year. How can one recommend this as a career? But this trend can be reversed.

By securing stable funding and investing in our public schools, we can right this ship. More counselors. More social-emotional support. More instructional assistants. More teachers. More \$ for engaging curriculum (Should I mention that we had to cancel our social studies adoption this year due to funding!). I really hope our state legislature can prioritize our next generation.

Thank you,
Brad Stewart
5th Grade Teacher