



# Checklist for Kindergarten - 2nd Grade

	PISGAH	SCHOOL 1	SCHOOL 2	SCHOOL 3	CONSIDERATIONS
Kindergarten Class Size	<b>16 max</b> with full time assistants				Some area schools have kindergarten class sizes of 27 or even larger. Are teachers able to provide individualized instruction for students? <i>More on back.</i> *
1st & 2nd Grade Class Sizes	<b>17 max</b> with a shared full time assistant				Some area schools have first and second grade classes of 27 or even larger. Are teachers able to provide individualized instruction for students? <i>More on back.</i> *
Christian Foundation					Do the faculty and programs reinforce the Christian values/foundation that you have established in your own home? Is Christmas Celebrated? Are devotions/chapel part of program?
Music Comprehensive Program Specialized Teacher					Is the music program in jeopardy due to budget cuts? Are music instructors trained & experienced or does the classroom teacher simply present general music instruction? * <i>More on back</i> **
Art Comprehensive Program Specialized Teacher					Is the art program in jeopardy due to budget cuts? Are the art instructors trained & experienced or does the classroom teacher simply present general music instruction? <i>More on back</i> **
Science Lab Separate and Equipped					Is there a separate, dedicated science lab where students can explore and experiment on a regular basis?
Technology Interactive Boards Technology Lab					Are there interactive SmartBoards in each classroom? Do students regularly visit a dedicated technology lab for hands-on instruction?
World Language Specialized Teacher					Is there a specialized Spanish teacher who creatively incorporates activities & songs to engage students in lessons?
Cultural Arts Performances					Does the school offer cultural programs and regular arts performance opportunities? Do children have a chance to shine?
Physical Education					Does the school offer a comprehensive physical education taught by trained and experienced physical education instructors? <i>More on back</i> ***
Community					Is there a sense of community at the school? Do teachers, staff, and other families know you and your child?

## **\*Impact of Class Size: Results of the Project STAR Report**

The Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio (**STAR**) was a four-year longitudinal class-size study funded by the Tennessee General Assembly and conducted by the State Department of Education. More than 7,000 students in 79 schools were randomly assigned into one of three interventions: small class (13 to 17 students per teacher), regular class (22 to 25 students per teacher), and regular-with-aide class (22 to 25 students with a full-time teacher's aide). Classroom teachers were also randomly assigned to the classes they would teach. The interventions were initiated as the students entered school in kindergarten and continued through third grade.

The analysis of academic achievement consistently and significantly ( $p \leq .01$ ) demonstrated the advantage of small classes over regular size classes and regular sized classes with a teaching assistant. As Jeremy Finn and C.M. Achilles stated in the *American Educational Research Journal* (Fall 1990), "**This research leaves no doubt that small classes have an advantage over larger classes in reading and math in early primary grades.**" Project STAR Researchers reported that students placed in small class sizes in grades K-3 have better high school graduation rates, higher grade point averages, and are more inclined to pursue higher education.

- Small classes lead to higher graduation rates: Preliminary data from participating STAR school districts in Tennessee show that students in small classes were more likely to graduate on schedule; they were less likely to drop out of high school; and they were more likely to graduate in the top 25% of their classes, according to Dr. Jayne Boyd-Zaharias, a STAR researcher since 1986. In addition, Boyd-Zaharias found that small class students graduated with higher grade point averages (GPAs) than regular class size students.
- Students in small classes achieve at higher levels: Three other researchers - Dr. Jeremy D. Finn, professor of education at SUNY Buffalo, Susan B. Gerber of SUNY Buffalo, and Charles M. Achilles, Ed.D., of Eastern Michigan University, together with Boyd-Zaharias - released new findings showing that STAR students who attended small classes in grades K-3 were between 6 and 13 months ahead of their regular-class peers in math, reading, and science in each of grades 4, 6, and 8. "Our analyses show that at least three years in a small class are necessary in order for the benefits to be sustained through later grades," wrote the researchers. "Further, the benefits of having been in a small class in the primary years generally increase from grade to grade."
- Students in small classes are more likely to pursue college.

## **\*\*Importance of Arts Education**

Recent John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Report: "Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning," offers clear evidence of how arts can improve academic performance, energize teachers, and transform learning environments. Developed by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation in conjunction with several prominent foundations, the report details research projects that included students, educators, artists and others in New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area. Results include: (MacArthur Foundation, 2000)

- 1) Students with high levels of arts participation outperform "arts-poor" students on virtually every measure
- 2) Learning through the arts has significant effects on learning in other domains
- 3) Arts experiences enhance critical thinking abilities and outcomes
- 4) The arts enable educators to reach students in effective ways.

## **\*\*\*Value of Physical Education**

Studies suggest a connection between physical activity and increased levels of alertness, mental function, and learning. Research indicates that schools that offer intense physical activity programs see positive effects on academic achievement, including increased concentration; improved mathematics, reading and writing test scores; and reduced disruptive behavior. From "*Bridging student health risks and academic achievement through comprehensive school health programs*", *Journal of School Health* 1997; 67(6): 220-227, and "*Appropriate functions of health education in schools: improving health and cognitive performance*", Krairweer, N., Arasteli, J., Cataldo, ., eds., *Child Health Behavior: A Behavioral Pediatrics Perspective*, John Wiley, New York, NY, 1986.

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