



School by Design™

A Sample Insight

Skilled Interpretation Audit Report

Lenses that Matter: Optimizing Teaching and Learning

SxD Skilled Interpretation Audit

SxD's Skilled Interpretation Audits provide partner districts with actionable insights into their use of assets—time, students, staff and courses—through lenses that matter: Optimizing Teaching and Learning, Efficiency, and Equity and Access.

Through the audit, SxD partner districts receive summary reports for each lens, customized coaching, access to the SxD platform, and technical support.

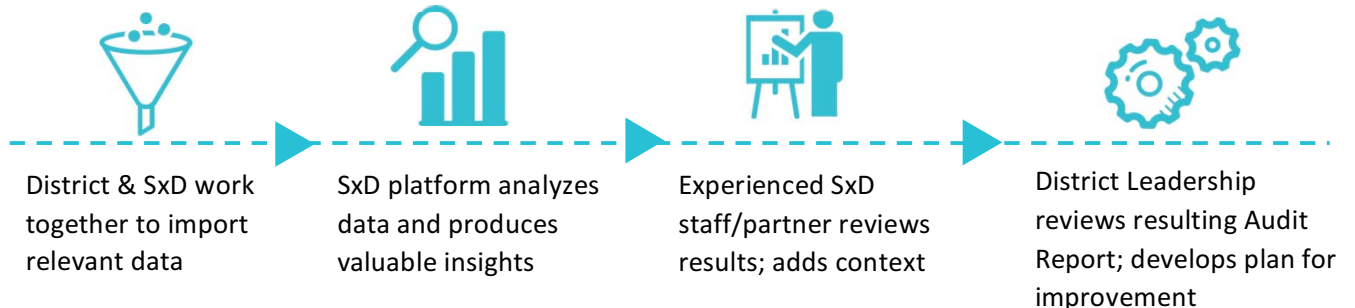
A Glimpse at SxD Insights

The SxD Audit Report on Optimizing Teaching and Learning provides insights into how resources are being used to support—or block—instruction.

Here's a glimpse of one SxD insight you might find in a report:

Students: How do district allocation decisions impact student class size?

How Skilled Interpretation Audit Works





STUDENTS

How do district allocation decisions impact student class size?

Overview

The research on the impact of class size on student learning is uneven and inconclusive. Even still, it remains a hot topic of discussion in faculty rooms, PTA convenings, and school board meetings. When overall class sizes are too high, beyond the tolerance of families and teachers, the overall district and school culture—the conditions for teaching and learning— can become contentious. It’s important for leaders to have a clear, accurate analysis of what drives class size and the options they have by school.

The first step is to take a hard look at what sets the foundation for class size: the district allocation of regular certified teachers to schools. Districts estimate enrollments and decide staffing levels for each school. Then schools make master schedule decisions that create the class sizes students will experience in their courses. While schools make many decisions that affect class size during this process, their overall class size boundaries are set by the district allocation. The initial allocation, then, is the best way to see the impact of the district formula.

The SxD District Allocation Evaluator helps you assess your allocation system—a combination of enrollment estimates and resource levels—and uncover the system’s impact on class size. It’s an important starting point for better understanding how districts, not just schools, influence class size in relation to instructional goals.

EXPLORE MORE

The Allocation Evaluator also lets districts see the FTE it would take to put all schools on the same footing.

SxD Analysis

SxD District 1 High Schools: Allocation Class Size Potential

The screenshot shows the SxD District Allocation Evaluator interface. At the top, there are tabs for Enrollment Allocation, SPED EL, FTE Allocation, Regular, and Base schedule. The 'FTE Allocation' tab is selected. A dropdown menu shows '3 of 4'. On the right, it says 'Last updated: 07/17/17 10:47 AM'. Below the tabs is a table with columns for School, Enrollment, FTE, Average Class size, and two sets of Class size metrics (FTE and Difference).

School	Enrollment	FTE	Average Class size	Class size: 26.21		Class size: 31.5	
				FTE	Difference	FTE	Difference
Cather High School (9-12)	1,197	53.4	29-30	60.9	-7.5	50.7	2.7
Faulkner High School (9-12)	1,564	71.3	29-30	79.6	-8.3	66.2	5.1
Fitzgerald High School (9-12)	1,110	51.4	28-29	56.5	-5.1	47.0	4.4
Hawthorne High School (9-12)	1,198	57.6	27-28	60.9	-3.3	50.7	6.9
Hemingway High School (9-12)	1,928	81.6	31-32	98.1	-16.5	81.6	-0.0
Hurston High School (9-12)	1,615	82.1	26-27	82.2	-0.0	68.4	13.8
Red Fern High School (9-12)	807	38.4	28-29	41.1	-2.7	34.2	4.2
Steinbeck High School (9-12)	2,048	92.7	29-30	104.2	-11.5	86.7	6.0

Figure 4: SxD District 1> District Audit> Allocation Evaluator (2014-15)



The majority of high schools in the **SxD District** have **3 of 4 (6 of 8) block schedules**. When all high schools are viewed through that same schedule using the numbers from staff allocation, potential class sizes range from a **26-27** (low) to **31-32** (high). ESL and special education staff are not included in the FTE count, so those differences have been excluded.

If you see differences across schools, some or all the difference might be accounted for by deliberate variations such as Title 1 or weighted student funding. In others, differences—at least in part—may be the result of uneven allocation systems. To understand these variations, leaders need to drill down and see if the differences are deliberate.

Optimizing Teaching and Learning

Uneven allocations can lead to wide variations in class sizes, regardless of the steps school leaders take to build high quality master schedules that even out the disparities. Exceptionally high class sizes can have direct impacts on students and on the overall culture of the school community, unless there are strategies to mitigate the effects. Additionally, when class sizes are high, opportunities for redeploying resources to create new learning opportunities for students or to find PD time for teachers varies widely school by school.

Next Steps

To better understand the influence of enrollment estimates and allocation levels on school class sizes, take a deeper look:

- **Work with finance.** Engage your finance or business office to better understand the nuanced differences of school allocations. Some differences may be strategic choices, such as ones caused by Title 1 or weighted student funding. Other differences may be less strategic, such as class size differences caused by allocation decisions based on past practice alone rather than formula. If you don't see differences across schools, and the class size averages align with your priorities, you can use this information going forward to inform your allocation process.
- **Dig deeper.** Take a further look at data related to class size.
 - Dive into the district- and school-level SxD Student Enrollment Reports to track the differences in student enrollments from the time of allocation to the time of audit. The reports will help you see trends by grade, student category and schools.
 - Use the SxD Class Size Reports to see actual class sizes and visit the SxD Interactive Master Schedule to explore class size in context of the actual master schedule.

