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Dear Families,

I hope this will bring some perspective to the class size discussion item on Tuesday's (June 13) agenda. Below is a slightly condensed note which was sent to staff this morning. Please don't hesitate to ask if you have questions.

Toni Jones  
Superintendent

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*There has been a swell of misinformation concerning elementary class size in our community over the weekend. Please know that there is no proposal to raise class sizes to 30 in elementary. There is no proposal to increase classes across all of our schools K-5. In regards to the middle school and high school, course load numbers are driven by your Bargaining Agreement.*

*There have been questions about moving elementary teachers from one building to another. It is important to note that this is not a new practice due to tight budgets. In the budget every year we must identify where enrollment is decreasing, and where it is increasing. In elementary, a change from 2<sup>nd</sup> grade (classes of 23) to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (classes of 25) can necessitate moving staff to adjust. We are always hopeful that this will be minimal, but keep in mind our elementary enrollment is declining next year because we have a large 5<sup>th</sup> grade moving up to middle school.*

*In 2016-2017 we have 220 elementary sections. Due to enrollment decreases in K-5 for 2017-2018, we are down 13 sections and will only have 207 sections. But, the good news is that we still managed to find a position for every elementary classroom teacher employed with FPS this year due to retirements and other openings. While not ideal, we were thrilled to have available positions for staff and not be forced to go through a Reduction in Force.*

*We must budget by "actual" children sitting in seats while simultaneously looking at the projections. We will monitor enrollment all summer (as usual), determine where enrollments are increasing and then assess for additional sections. Last year McKinley needed two additional Kindergarten classes because of unanticipated increases in enrollment. You will not have 27-30 students in your classroom. Much of the confusion is coming from a reduction in sections at one particular building in which the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade currently has 3 sections and is slated for 2 sections next year. This is due to October and May enrollment numbers, which indicated less than 25 students in each of those 2<sup>nd</sup> grade sections. We will continue to monitor sections for enrollments and withdrawals up until mid-August and then determine where we need to adjust.*

*The BoE Class Size agenda item being discussed on Tuesday will focus on last minute additions which are not budgeted. For example, a school has three sections of 25, 25, 25, and then 1 student shows up in the last week of August. Does the BoE want to consider 25, 25, 26 before adding a teacher? Please be mindful that this is a BoE dialogue because we are facing large budget challenges. A shift in this process has an impact of adding between \$300,000 to \$500,000+. This would impact a few of the planned 207 sections K-5 and would not change our class size average. The guidelines we currently use also say that a para could be added in the classroom. The BoE needs an opportunity to discuss the guidelines as they are written.*

*If you have any questions, it's important that you reach out for factual information. It is likely that in the coming months (and possibly years), the BoE is going to be faced with some challenging decisions if Hartford can't rectify the state challenges. We are all in this together, and respect, civility, and love for children is something that we all cherish. We all came into this profession to make a difference, and I have no doubt that we can have challenging discussions and community input in a thoughtful and united way.*

*Have a wonderful Monday as we wind down to summer!*

*Dr. Toni Jones  
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