



The Small High School Going to Scale Tool

Urban districts nationwide are redesigning their high schools, with an emphasis on reducing their size, to reduce drop-out rates and improve performance. Efforts to create small high schools arise out of research that shows that small schools may be especially effective for urban students and a desire to start fresh with new high school designs. Few would argue that simply making schools smaller would lead to dramatic student improvement. Instead, reformers envision that those designing smaller schools will also attend to

Going to Scale can help answer...

How much will it cost to operate small schools in my district?

What components of small school design typically drive additional costs?

What policies in my district can add to or decrease small school costs?

What ramp-up costs will I incur?

improving instruction and with “smallness” be more able to create a supportive community of adult and student learners. At Education Resource Strategies (ERS), we work with schools and district leaders to help them make more strategic use of resources to improve student performance. We have found that many school districts embark upon the creation of small high schools without a clear sense of how much they will spend to do so or how to ensure that small schools can organize in ways that will promote high performance.

To support districts in thinking about these questions, and planning for the implementation of small schools, ERS, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has created the Small High School Going to Scale Tool. The Going to Scale model provides decision makers with a tool to quantify the resource impacts as they apply their

district’s allocation policies to potential small school designs. With a clear understanding of the reasons for increased spending, district leaders can then revise allocation policies and provide support, including examples of cost-effective organizational designs, to ensure that extra spending is not the mathematical by-product of having less economy of scale but instead strategically contributes to improved instruction.

The Going to Scale Model demonstrates the sources of increasing spending and provides a variety of options for decision-makers to model different resource allocations, implementation scenarios and staffing configurations. In addition, the Model may be used to explore options for using “Weighted Student Funding” to minimize spending differences among schools. Since Weighted Student Funding may be impacted by staffing levels that are required by contract, funding stipulations and district practice, the GTS tool allows users to model the per pupil cost of a variety of staffing models to determine the minimum requirements in their context and the spending impact of different sized schools.

Going to Scale Components

Per Pupil Spending Estimator

- Applies district standard staffing ratios and funding allocations to new small schools and compares per pupil cost and structure to a traditionally-size school

School Budget Scenario Modeling

- Customized budget building tool that compares new budget to the budget that would have been generated through a district’s standard policies

Ramp-up Cost Estimator

- Estimates the amount and type of extra ramp-up costs based on user-driven implementation and support options

Seat Capacity Projector

- Estimates the impact of new schools on overall district seat capacity by year

To successfully implement small schools, district decision makers must quickly move beyond using their traditional policies and practices to allocate resources to small schools to strategies that ensure sufficient and equitable resources across schools and also promote the strategic organization of school level resources to improve instruction and student support. The Going to Scale Model can help district leaders think about these important questions. For more information, contact ERS at info@educationresourcestrategies.org or learn more online at www.educationresourcestrategies.org.