

CLASSES,

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last year because my advanced kids don't feel valued. That's terrible because it shrinks my program overall."

Myers teaches in the Ken Collins Theatre but his intro to theatre class was even too big for the stage.

"One of the concepts of theatre is you sit in a circle because everyone is equal in a circle but when your classes get so big, even when you have a huge stage like ours, you can't fit them on it," Myers said. "Instead, kids got into friend groups. Sometimes having classes that large defeats the purpose of having the class in a sense because part of theatre is getting out and learning about new people and learning empathy and you can't do that if you're stuck in your own friend group."

Myers said fundamentals of acting is about 10 students too big. In the class, kids do a three-minute performance for their final exam, which will take five class periods to get through every student.

"Verbal feedback has gone by the wayside," Myers said. "All the feedback I give to kids anymore is all typed and that even decreases it (the class). As an acting teacher, it's all about verbal feedback, because if you type it, they may not read it, they may interpret it differently."

Myers definitely isn't the only elective teacher dealing with giant class sizes.

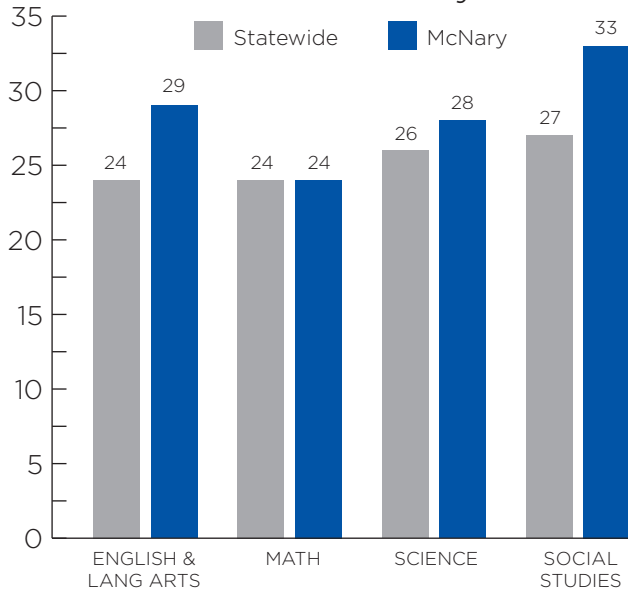
Art classes also have more than 40 students and Mike Connor, who teaches three weight training courses, has at least 50 kids split between 12 power racks in all of his classes.

While Connor wishes he could spend more time with each individual student, he's making it work.

"Kids log their lifts. They're on an interval timer so I know where kids should be and what they should be doing," Connor said. "It meshes real well. There's a lot of movement. They have to really get after it and it can get a little chaotic at times but

Median Class Sizes

2015-16 school year



there is an intended purpose in what they're doing. I'm pretty comfortable with that. I believe we give our kids a good opportunity down here."

Culinary arts teacher Wendy Bennett has up to 42 students in her food essentials class.

Seven kids spread over six kitchens, each with a burner stove, oven, grill and griddle, are given rotating jobs—kitchen manager, supply manager, two assistant cooks, a dishwasher and a sanitarian.

The students learn basic sanitation, measuring, how to read a recipe and how to work together as a team. The curriculum primarily focuses on baking and cooking breakfast.

"I think the space with 42 students can be really cramped but with the proper training, the students know how to communicate and talk to each other," Bennett said. "We make it work and I think the students in general are very happy with how it works."

Bennett taught six classes her first semester of the 2015-16 school year and then seven during the second semester. The classes were so popular that McNary wanted to have eight periods this year and were able to hire a part-time teacher, Irina Bakun, to lead two sessions.

"It's exciting to have a program that the students want to be involved in and

also have the support of the administration that want to grow programs that the students are interested in," Bennett said.

But now culinary arts, which also includes four upper level classes, can't grow without an additional classroom.

Myers and Connor said their departments could also benefit from another teacher.

When Connor was at South Salem, weight training became so popular that the school started doubling the classes with two instructors in the weight room leading 75-80 kids.

"It would be nice to have another teacher," Myers said. "I've been asking for that for a couple years. I wish there was an easy solution. Even if (Principal) Erik (Jespersen) could add more teachers, where are they going to teach? There's only a certain amount of space that we've got."

McNary is also limited to a certain amount of full-time equivalent (FTE), or available hours for employees.

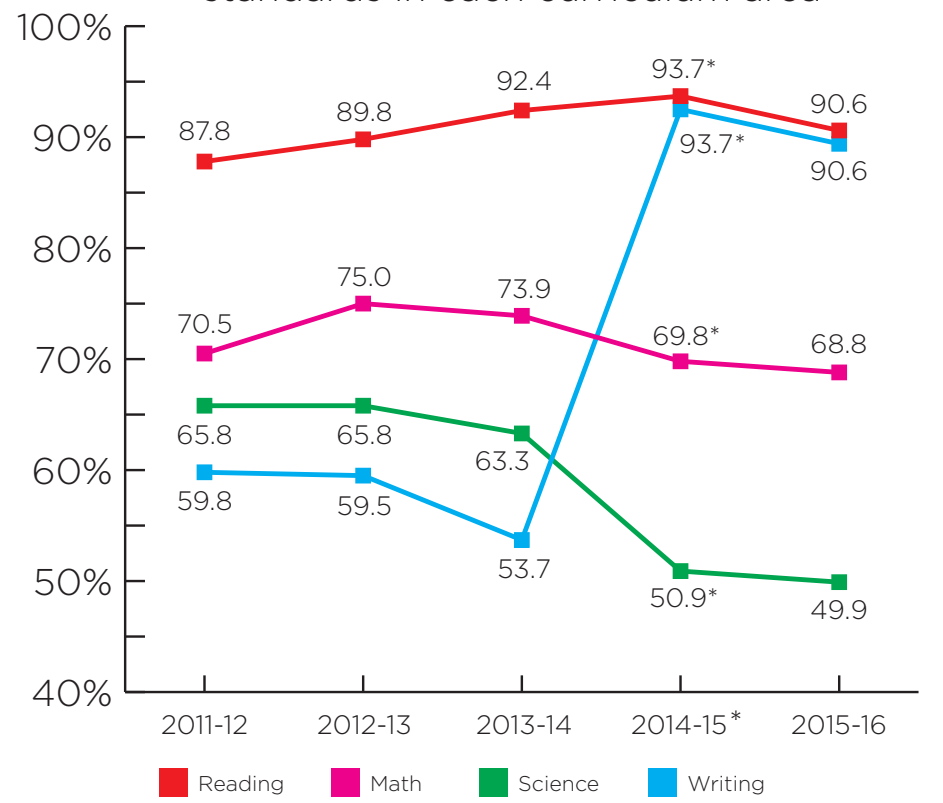
Jespersen was supposed to meet with the school district on Friday, Feb. 24 to receive his FTE for next school year but that meeting has twice been rescheduled.

When looking at FTE, Jespersen said he hires for talent, not position.

"Just because an Algebra I teacher retires, I don't automatically say I am only

5-Year Celtic Academic Performance

Percentage of students meeting or exceeding standards in each curriculum area



*Denotes the onset set of a new type of testing. Reading and writing became a combined category known as English Language Arts. Data sourced from school report cards provided by the Oregon Department of Education.

looking for an Algebra I teacher," he said. "I am looking for an Algebra I teacher but if I have an amazing art teacher, this teacher is out of this world, I would consider hiring the art teacher and then have one or two more kids in a math class and then the next year I might hire one or two math teachers."

"Obviously there's a balance there. You don't want to have three math teachers and 47 social studies teachers. I also don't want to be stuck saying I can only look at this small group of applicants that I'm not super excited about when I have this amazing candidate that I'm really excited about."

Jespersen added he thinks about hiring 365 days a year.

"I'm not kidding you," he said. "I'm not hiring every day of the year but I'm constantly looking at the needs of our school and we're dreaming and scheming and thinking how can we make McNary better."

While McNary's average

class size is 29 students and large classes have primarily been an electives problem, one of Katie Wickham's chemistry classes had 42 students last semester in a room with only 32 desks. For safety reasons, she stopped doing labs and instead had students do work online.

"It (online simulations) doesn't prepare kids for college," Wickham said. "There's something about hands on learning in science that is fundamental but if a kid catches on fire, you imagine if there's 40 other kids, they have to get through all the backpacks and desks and it's an absolute nightmare."

McNary was able to reduce the size of Wickham's classes this semester by combining two of Frank Hanson's smaller honors chemistry classes.

The reason the classes got so big is because McNary only has two licensed chemistry teachers. To alleviate the problem, McNary is offering more upper level science classes next year.

Assistant principal Rhonda Rhodes is in charge of the master schedule at McNary, a job that got more difficult two years ago when the Salem-Keizer School District went from a seven period day to eight.

The change put all the high schools on a common schedule so that students could spend time and gain the benefits of the Career and Technical Education center on Portland Road in Salem.

But it also added an extra elective to all 2,100 students schedule without adding any elective teachers.

Tenth, 11th and 12th graders register for the next year's classes two weeks before spring break. After spring break, upcoming freshmen take their turn. Their assignment is to pick 16 classes, eight for each semester, as well

as four alternates. Some core classes, like English, math and science are pre-determined.

Rhodes then takes those requests and the school's FTE and builds sections accordingly. Electives like weight training and culinary arts will have eight sections while some classes may only have one.

Automotive classes will max out at six because there's only one teacher, Michael Melting, and one shop.

"For the core classes it's simpler, I look at how many students are going to be taking biology," Rhodes said. "I then divide that by what I think is a reasonable class size number. In the core classes that works pretty well and I can do that pretty easily. We try to keep freshmen classes a little bit smaller because there's more management and they're more easily distracted. Those younger students need and want more individual attention from their teachers."

After every kid has 16 viable classes, a computer simulation places each student in their desired classes and Rhodes gets a list of kids that don't match. Then the hand scheduling begins.

"We do the best we can because I literally do care about every single kid's schedule," Rhodes said. "I know with a big school you might think that's not true but I really do. When we run the simulation it shows us the conflicts and we try to move courses around to get the fewest number of conflicts possible because we want our theater kid to take it and we want them in AP U.S. history or whatever the courses are. It's a pretty involved process. It's intense. It's a lot of work but it's important work because the more kids you get in the right places the better their education."

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