

A black and white photograph of a classroom. In the foreground, several students are seen from behind, with their arms raised high, indicating they want to answer a question or participate. The background shows a chalkboard filled with mathematical equations and diagrams, including fractions and arrows. The overall scene is bright and active.

Class Size Task Force

Avon Grove School District

February 26, 2009

Task Force Members

Donald D'Apolito - Community Member

Jennifer DiFelice - Penn London Elementary Teacher

Ed Farina - Parent

Brian Gaerity - Parent

Dennis Gerber - Member of the Board of School Directors

Todd Harvey - Avon Grove Intermediate School Principal

Mike Holveck - Parent

Pat McKeon - Instructional Technology Specialist, PLE & AGIS

Sean Murray - Avon Grove Intermediate School Teacher

John Salisbury - Community Member

Edwin Wright - Community Member

Margaret V. Sharp, Ed. D. - Task Force Co-chair, Assistant Superintendent
of Curriculum & Instruction

Bonnie Wolff - Task Force Co-chair, Member of the Board of School Directors

Meeting Schedule

- September 23, 2008
- September 29, 2008
- October 14, 2008
- October 27, 2008
- November 18, 2008
- December 2, 2008
- December 15, 2008
- January 13, 2009
- January 26, 2009
- February 3, 2009
- February 9, 2009
- February 17, 2009
- February 26, 2009

**Total of
507 Hours**

Goal: To review the Avon Grove School District Class Size Policy No. 126, adopted April 15, 1997

| Grade | Class Size |
|---------------------|--|
| Kindergarten | 24 |
| Grade 1 | 25 |
| Grade 2 | 27 |
| Grade 3 | 29 |
| Grade 4 | 29 |
| Grade 5 | 29 |
| Grades 6-8 | Two person team (58) Three person team (87) Four person team (116) |
| Grade 9-12 | Determined by the administration in consideration of content, student instructional levels, work stations and other factors |

Timeline of Activities

Sept/Oct/Nov

1. Reviewed current policy
2. Reviewed research on class size
3. Reviewed district demographics and academic achievement

December

1. Toured schools
2. Developed class size survey
3. Studied information about facilities & finances

Jan/Feb

1. Conducted class size survey
2. Developed findings & options
3. Developed recommendations

Educational Research & Literature: Findings

Class Size



Pupil Teacher Ratio

Educational Research & Literature: **Findings**

Student **T**eacher **A**chievement **R**atio Study (STAR)

- Conducted in Tennessee from 1985-1990
- Considered the *hallmark* research study
- Focused specifically on grades K-3
- Results based on class size of 13-17 students per class
- Students scored approximately 8 percentage points higher than students in regular classes (22-25) on the Stanford Achievement Test

Educational Research & Literature: Findings

Research on Class Size

- **Greatest benefits (academic & non-academic) of smaller class sizes for students in grades K-3**
- **Benefits have long term impact on overall success in school**
- **Class size reduction is not the “silver bullet”**
- **Variables such as teacher quality and professional development are believed to improve achievement**
- **Some researchers/economists doubt the STAR achievements were significant enough to justify the cost**
- **Class size reduction is dependent upon budget and facilities**
- **Limited availability of research on class size for grades 4-12**

District Facilities: Findings

- Schools are currently at capacity
- Alternate utilization of current space would impact delivery and/or location of instructional programs such as art, music, etc.
- Repair to and replacement of mechanical systems at FSEMS beginning the summer of 2009 will not provide additional classroom space
- Adequate land in two different locations for future building projects
- Enough land at PLE to add an additional wing
 - \$3-4 million for 8 classrooms
 - \$6-8 million for 16 classrooms

District Financials: Findings

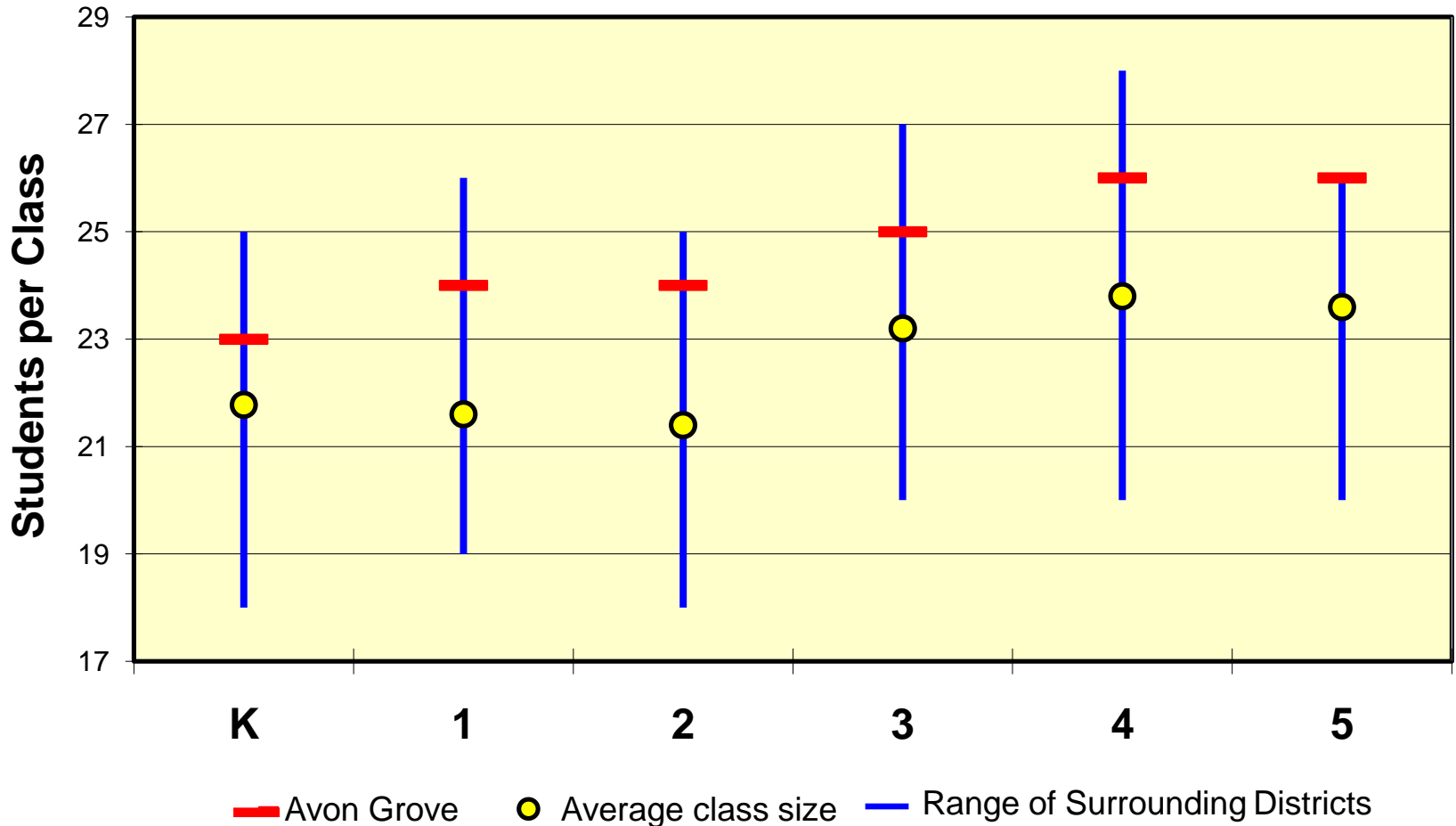
- Budget for the 2008-2009 school year is \$69 million
- Approximately \$24 million in reserve; \$8 million in capital reserve
- Projecting a shortfall of \$2.2 million for the '09-'10 SY
- Board approved ceiling of 5.4% on tax increase for the '09-'10 SY
- One teacher costs approximately \$58,000 plus annual increase
- One modular classroom costs approximately \$18,000 for one year

Local Class Size: Findings

- **An effort to reduce class size in the '08-'09 SY year**
 - **one grant funded class size reduction unit**
 - **two teachers from the District budget**
- **Average class size in AGSD is the second highest of the 10 districts surveyed**

K - 5 Class Size Comparison

Avon Grove -vs- Surrounding Districts
2008 - 2009

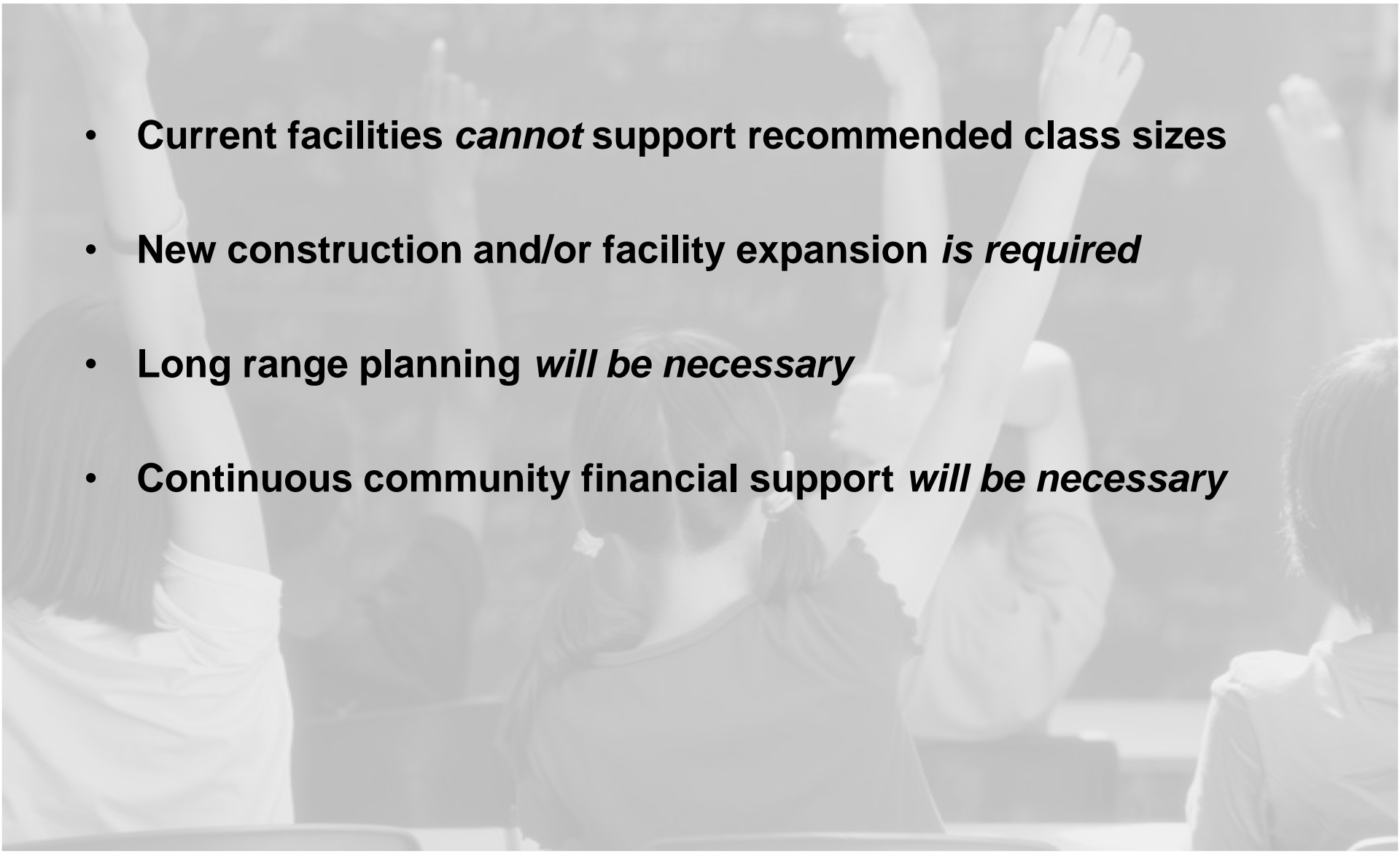


Class Size Policy No. 126

Recommendations

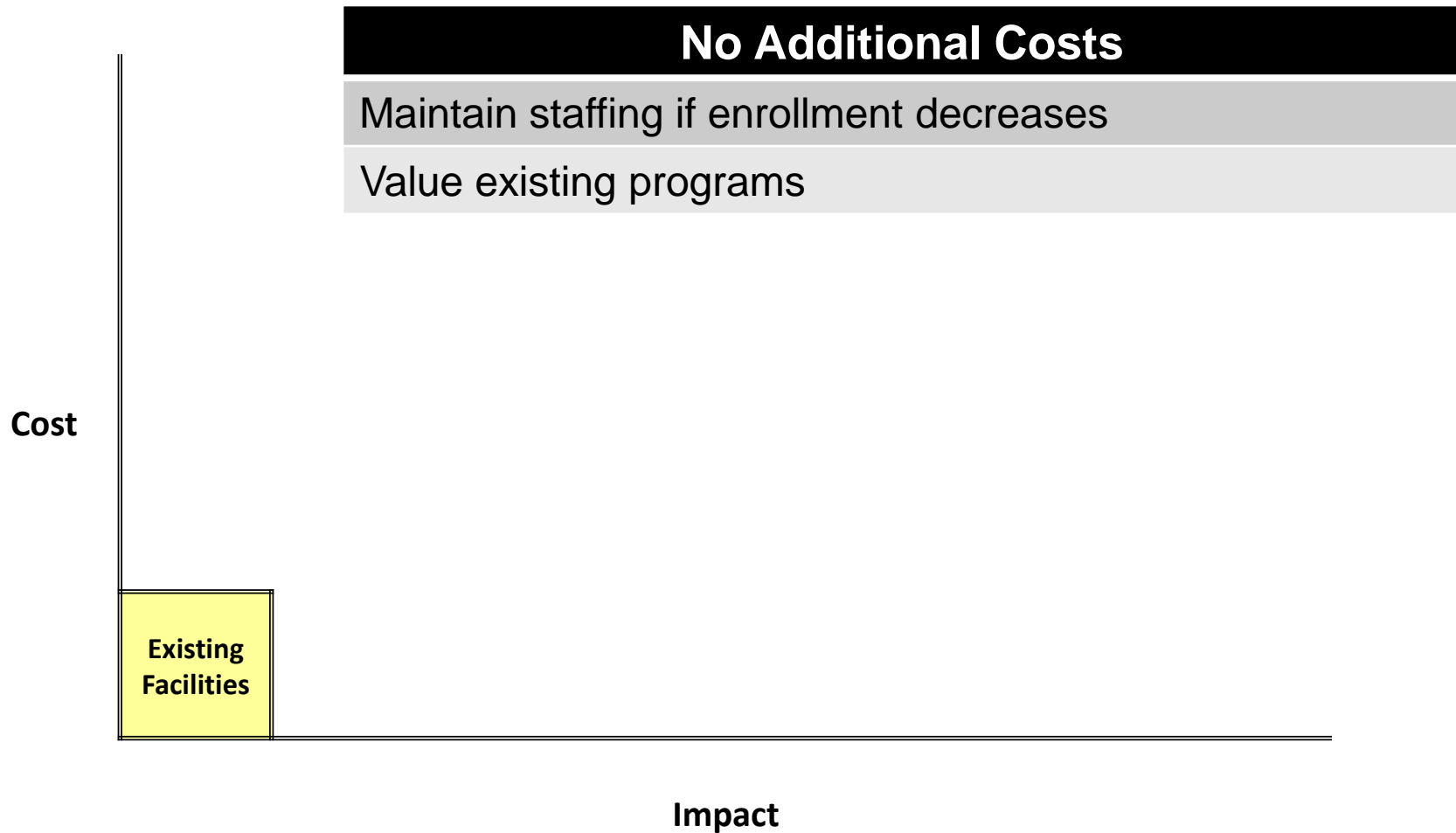
| Grade | Research | Class Size Range | Class Size Target |
|---------------|--|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| K - 2 | Range: 13-17 Data Source: STAR | 17 - 20 | 17 |
| 3 - 5 | Average Class Size: 24 Data Source: Class Size Survey | 22 - 25 | 22 |
| 6 - 12 | Requires Further Research | | |

Implementation Issues

- **Current facilities *cannot* support recommended class sizes**
 - **New construction and/or facility expansion *is required***
 - **Long range planning *will be necessary***
 - **Continuous community financial support *will be necessary***
- 
- A grayscale background image of a classroom. Several students are visible, with their hands raised in the air, suggesting an active learning environment or a Q&A session. The image is slightly faded and serves as a backdrop for the text.

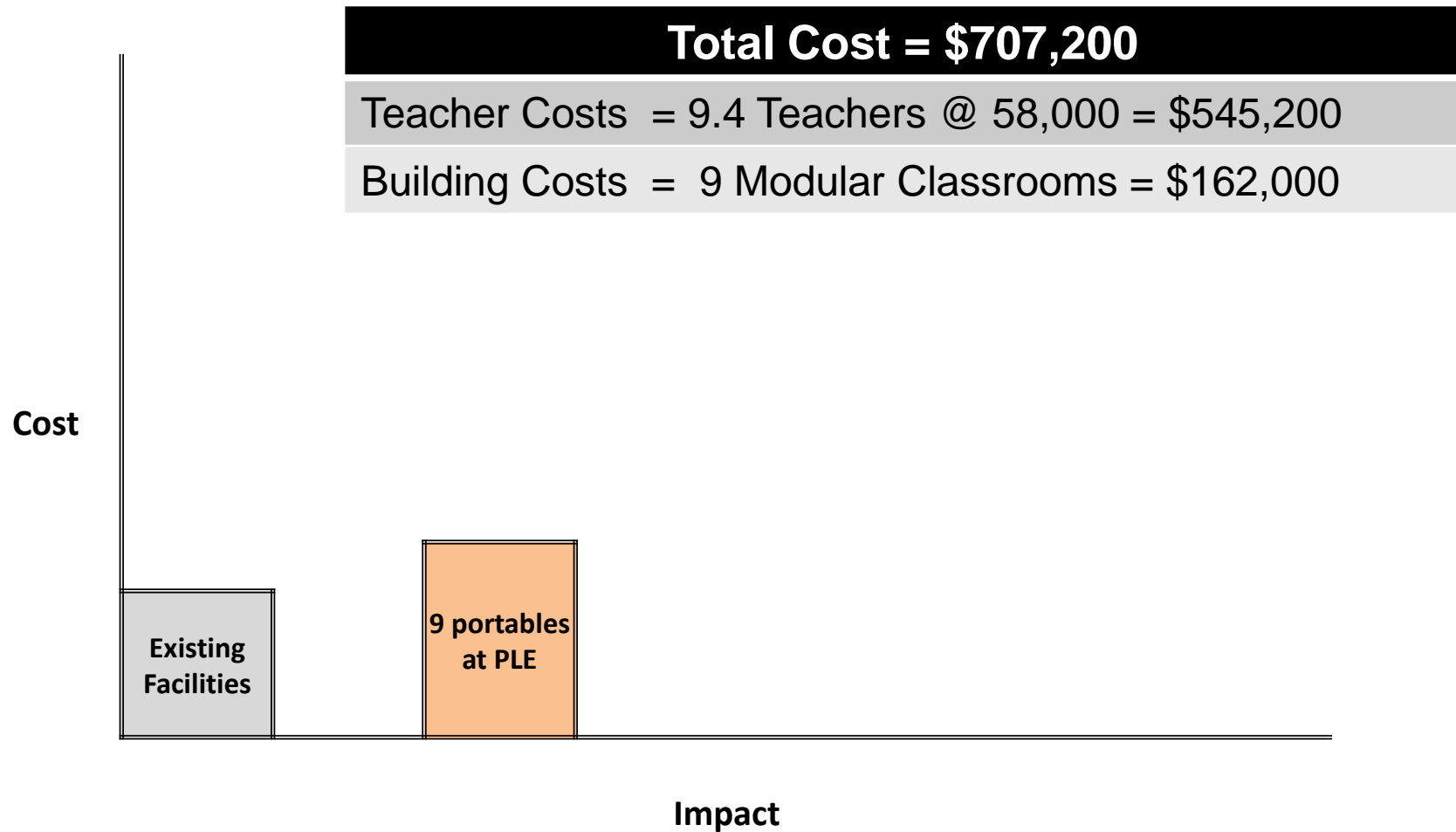
Implementation Options

Maintain Staffing



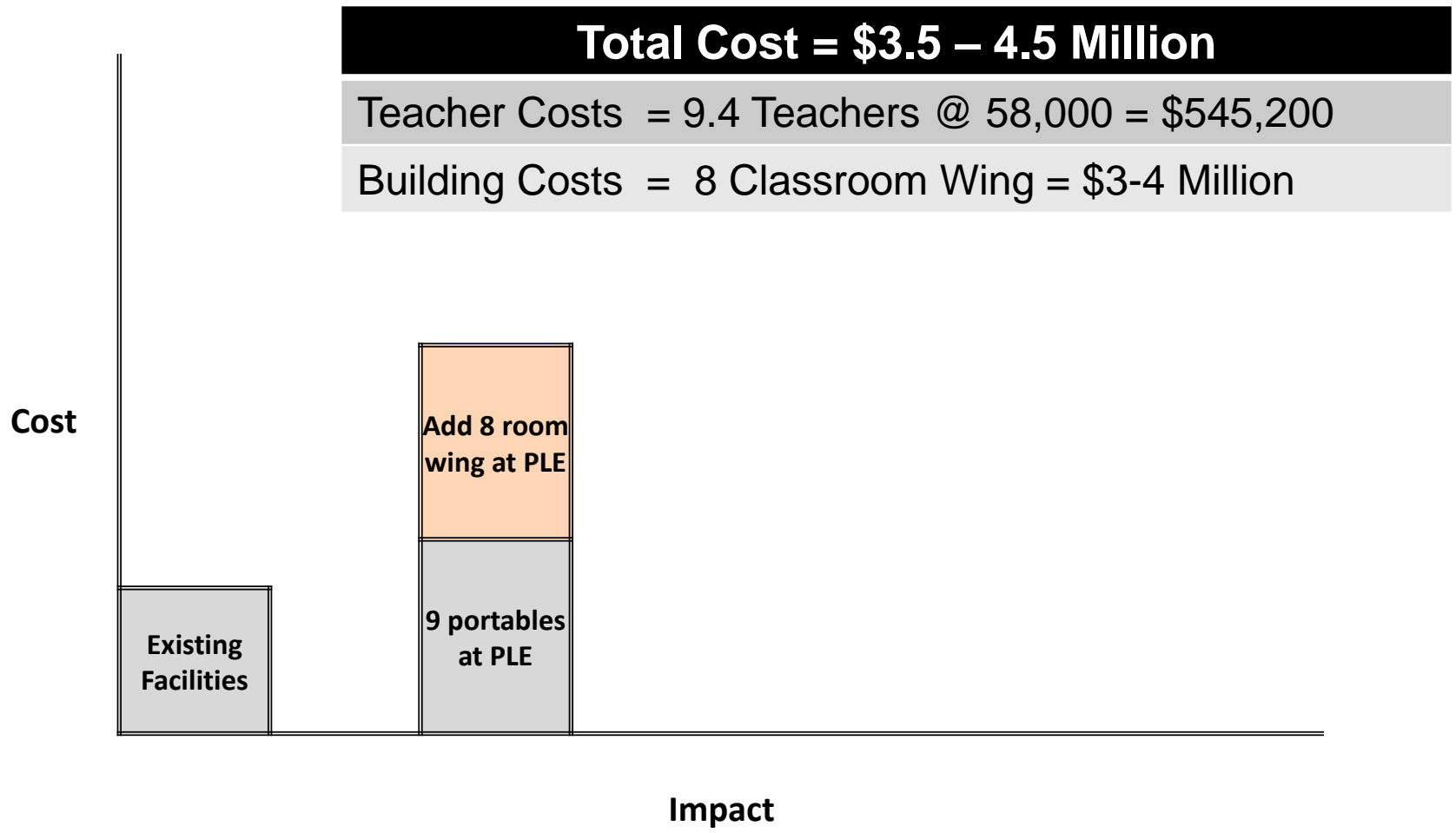
Implementation Options

Reduce to Class Size of 20, K - 2



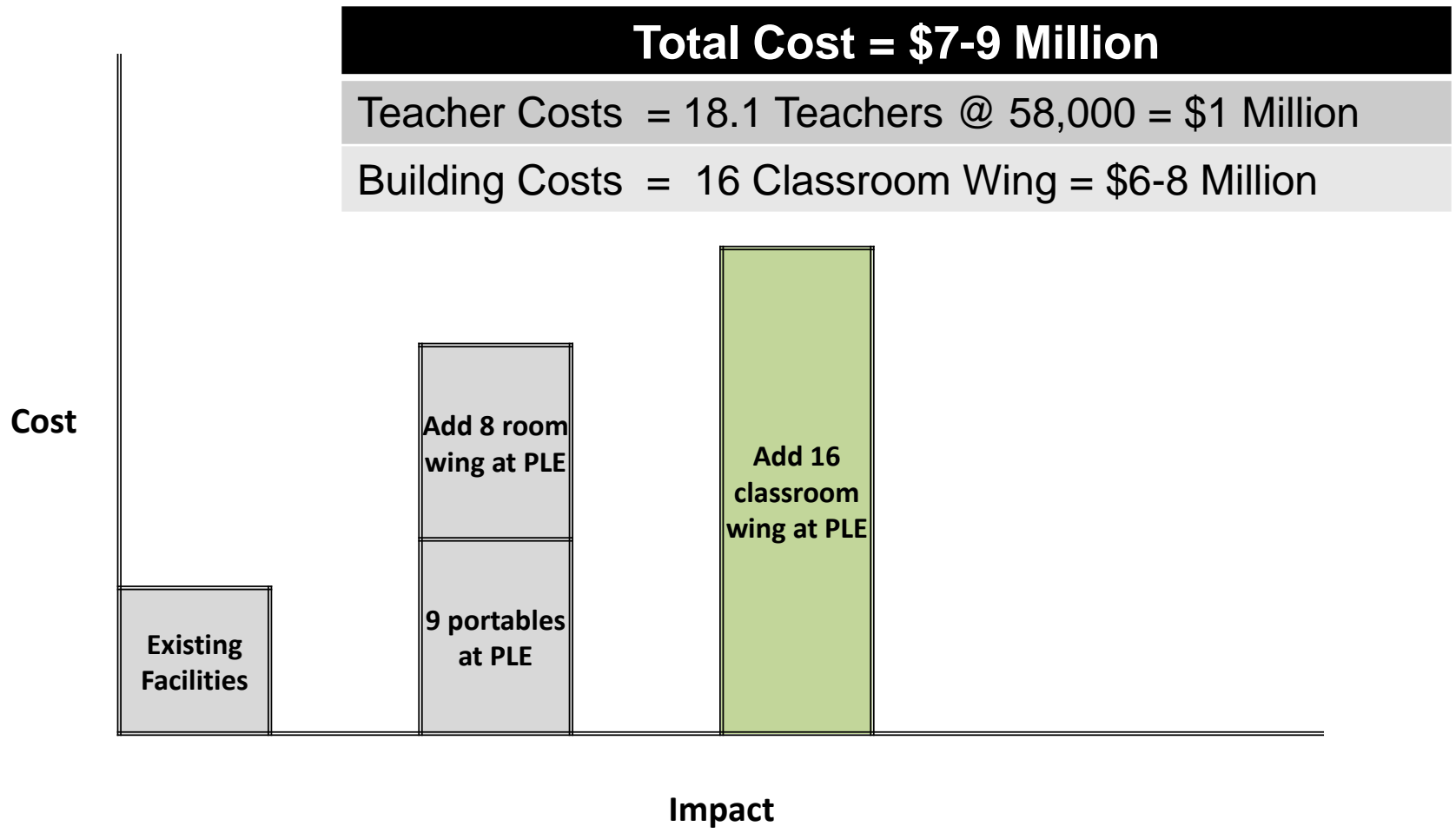
Implementation Options

Reduce to Class Size of 20, K - 2



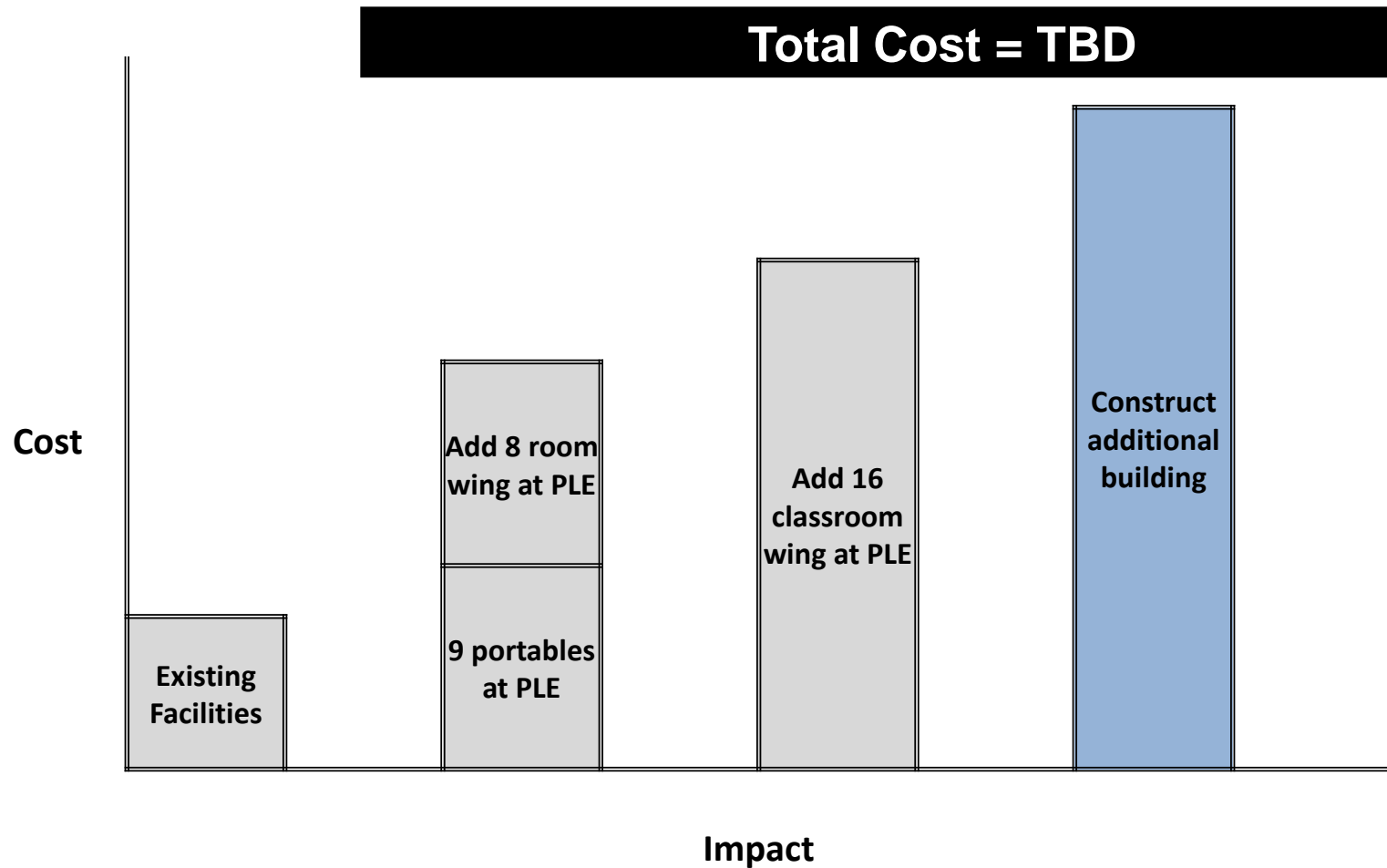
Implementation Options

Reduce to Class Size of 17, K - 2



Implementation Options

Class Size Recommendations, K - 5



Final Thoughts...

- **Complex and contentious issue with no easy solution**
- **Class size is as important as teacher quality, curriculum, and staff development, to improving academic achievement**
- **Financial issues are challenging even in the best of economic times**
- **Long range and continuous planning is necessary to address class size**
- **Class size reduction requires community commitment**