READING PASSAGE 3

*You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 27-40**, which are based on Reading Passage 3 below.*

Does Class Size Matter?

A   Of all the ideas for improving education, few are as simple or attractive as reducing the number of pupils per teacher. Unlike competing proposals for reform, class-size reductions rarely elicit huge outcries or involve structural change. The testing of educators, by contrast, generally arouses the anger of unions. Similarly, establishing special 'charter' schools involves privileging some schools over others, with the credits provided usually coming out of the budgets of struggling local schools. With its uncomplicated appeal, class-size reduction in the U.S. has lately gone from being a subject of primary academic interest to a policy juggernaut with over twenty states aiming at decreasing class sizes.

B   Do small classes improve school achievement? To answer this, investigators have attempted to analyse existing data, such as records at the U.S. Department of Education. These reveal that there were steep drops in pupil-teacher ratios between 1969 and 1997, but no significant gains in academic performance.

But do these findings mean that class size makes no difference? Not necessarily. For instance, schools strive for more than just high test scores; they also usually try to keep their drop-out rates low. And, indeed, the drop-out rate for older students fell considerably over that period. Because drop-outs generally come from the low end of the achievement distribution, a reduction in the drop-out rate could be expected to pull down average test scores.

Another reason for discounting those data is the difficulty of ensuring a level playing field. In a perfect world, U.S. students would all come from well-off families, with two highly educated English-speaking parents who are involved in their children's schooling. Teachers would all be creative and have complete mastery of the subject matter. The reality is very different.

C Over the past 35 years, some studies of existing data have produced evidence that smaller classes benefit students, but most of these studies were poorly designed. The exception was the Tennessee study called Project STAR (Student Teacher Achievement Ratio). Frederick Mosteller of Harvard University has called it 'one of the greatest experiments in education in United States history'.

Students entering kindergarten were randomly assigned to one of three kinds of classes: a small class of 13 to 17 students, a regular-size class of 22 to 26 or a regular-size class with both a teacher and a full-time teacher's aide.
The students remained in whatever category they had been assigned to throughout the third grade, after which they joined a regular classroom in the fourth. To ensure that teaching quality did not differ, teachers were randomly assigned to small and regular-size classrooms. Few teachers received any special training for working with small classes, and there were no new curricular materials.

D At the end of STAR, researchers analysed the data. Jeremy Finn of New York University and Charles Achilles of Eastern Michigan University found evidence for 'an array of benefits of small classes'. They calculated that students in smaller classes were outperforming their counterparts in regular-sized classes by the first grade and that this advantage persisted even after students returned to larger classes. They also found that the effect was stronger for black and Hispanic minority groups – a significant finding for policy-makers.

Eric Hanushek of Stanford, however, criticises some of STAR's key conclusions. He argues that STAR does not prove that gains persist long after students return to regular classes. It was debatable how much later improvement stemmed from other factors, such as a supportive home. Nor does he accept that the benefits accumulate, with participants widening the gap with their peers in larger classes year by year.

Hanushek and others have also shown that during the study too many children moved from regular to small classes, probably because school personnel caved in to parent demands. And Hanushek also asserts that STAR failed to ensure good randomisation of teacher and student assignments. However, these points do not undermine STAR's basic findings.

E   The largest public class size reduction programme so far, California's, stands more as a warning than as worthy of emulation. That state is trying to reduce classes in kindergarten through grade three despite a shortage of teachers that is most acute in low-income areas.

This is exacerbating the disparity in resources available to rich and poor schools in California, because more affluent areas can attract the best teachers. Indeed, some of the extra teachers needed are being recruited from the poorer schools. Researchers found a statistically significant achievement advantage in reading, writing and mathematics for students in classes that had been reduced to 20. What is more, the effect did not vary for students of different backgrounds.

F   Wisconsin's Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) was a five-year pilot study to do some of the groundwork for a major project. Class sizes were reduced in only 14 schools, but it was noteworthy for targeting schools at which 30% of the students were below poverty level, compared with California's across-the-board approach. SAGE lowered the average pupil-teacher ratio in kindergarten through third grade to 12–15:1 from 21–25:1. Analysts have studied the results of first-grade students in these schools and similar first-grade students elsewhere and found the results accord with those from STAR.

STAR and SAGE have made it hard to argue against reducing class sizes. But the California initiative shows that reductions made with too little forethought can yield minuscule gains. Administrators need solid information before they can make sensible policy decisions.

*Reading Passage 3 has six sections, **A–F**.*

Which paragraph contains the following information?

*Write the correct letter, **A–F**, in boxes 27–31 on your answer sheet.*

***NB** You may use any letter more than once.*

27 detailed criticism of the methodology of a project

28 a comparison of the data from class-size reduction projects

29 the level of public interest in the issues of class-size reduction

30 details of action taken to protect the validity of a project

31 reasons why class composition changed during a project

Questions 32–40

Classify the following statements as referring to

    A   *Project STAR*
    B   *The California Project*
    C   *SAGE*

*Write the correct letter, **A**, **B** or **C**, in boxes 32-40 on your answer sheet.*

32 The student composition of each class was left to chance.

33 A long-term improvement in performance was claimed.

34 Similar results were obtained for all social groups.

35 The project was a preliminary to a more comprehensive study.

36 Several different class types were involved in the project.

37 A special group of schools was selected to take part.

38 Classroom assistants were used as part of the project.

39 The project was responsible for aggravating existing problems.

40 Certain groups of pupils within the sample were identified as having benefited.

Questions 27–31（段落信息匹配）

题号	答案	题干翻译	精确定位句（段落/原句）	详细解释
27	D	对某个项目研究方法的详细批评	第 D 段："*Eric Hanushek of Stanford, however, criticises some of STAR's key conclusions… He argues that STAR does not prove that gains persist… Nor does he accept that the benefits accumulate…*"；以及 "*Hanushek… asserts that STAR failed to ensure good randomisation of teacher and student assignments.*"	D 段集中罗列 Hanushek 对 STAR 方法与结论的系统质疑：长期效应、累积效应、随机化充分性等，属于"方法论的详细批评"。
28	F	对多个班额缩减项目数据的比较	第 F 段："*…analysts… found the results accord with those from STAR.*"	F 段把 SAGE 的一年级结果与 STAR 对比（"相符/一致"），属于跨项目数据比较。
29	A	公众对"缩小班额"议题的关注度	第 A 段："*…class-size reduction in the U.S. has lately gone from being a subject of primary academic interest to a **policy juggernaut** with over twenty states aiming at decreasing class sizes.*"	从"学术议题"到"政策巨轮"，且"20 多个州"推进，体现社会/政策层面的高关注与热度。
30	C	为保证项目有效性而采取的具体措施	第 C 段："*Students … were **randomly assigned** to one of three kinds of classes… To ensure that teaching quality did not differ, teachers were **randomly assigned** … Few teachers received any special training… and there were **no new curricular materials**.*"	随机分配学生与教师、控制教师培训与教材变动，都是典型的内生变量控制/效度保护措施。
31	D	项目进行中班级构成变化的原因	第 D 段："*too many children moved from regular to small classes, **probably because school personnel caved in to parent demands**.*"	明确给出"因家长要求，校方妥协"，导致学生从常规班转入小班，解释了构成变化的原因。

Questions 32–40（A/B/C 项目归类）

A = Project STAR　B = The California Project　C = SAGE

题号	答案	题干翻译	精确定位句（段落/原句）	详细解释
32	A	每个班的学生构成听凭随机	第 C 段（STAR）："*Students … were **randomly assigned** to one of three kinds of classes.*"	"随机分配"="left to chance"。对应 STAR。
33	A	宣称有长期成绩提升	第 D 段（STAR 结果）："*…outperforming … by the first grade and that this advantage **persisted even after** students returned to larger classes.*"	"persisted even after"= 返回大班后仍保持优势，属长期改进之主张/发现。
34	B	各社会群体结果相似	第 E 段（California）："*…a statistically significant achievement advantage… **the effect did not vary for students of different backgrounds**.*"	明说不同背景学生效果无差异，即"相似结果"。
35	C	该项目是更大研究的前期/预备	第 F 段（SAGE）："*SAGE was a **five-year pilot study** to do some of the **groundwork for a major project**.*"	"pilot study" "groundwork"= 预备/前期性质。
36	A	涉及多种班级类型	第 C 段（STAR）：三类班：小班；常规班；常规班＋全职助教。	明确 "several different class types"。
37	C	选取了特定群体学校参与	第 F 段（SAGE）："*…**targeting schools** at which **30%** of the students were **below poverty level** …*"	SAGE 有定向筛选（贫困比例≥30%），属"特殊群体"。
38	A	项目中使用了课堂助教	第 C 段（STAR）："*…a regular-size class with both a teacher and a **full-time teacher's aide**.*"	助教（teacher's aide）是 STAR 的实验类型之一。
39	B	项目导致既有问题加剧	第 E 段（California）："*This is **exacerbating the disparity** … more affluent areas can attract the best teachers… some of the extra teachers … **recruited from the poorer schools**.*"	"exacerbating the disparity"= 加剧资源不平等，属负面外部性。
40	A	样本中的特定群体被识别为获益者	第 D 段（STAR）："*…the effect was **stronger for black and Hispanic minority groups** …*"	指明少数族裔收益更大="特定群体被识别为获益"。