



class size matters
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Frequently asked questions about class size 2011: What can a NYC parent do?

What the situation with class size in NYC public schools?

As most every parent knows, a small class is necessary for a quality education, and class size reduction is also the top priority of parents each year in DOE's surveys.

The Institute of Education Sciences, the research arm of the US Department of Education, confirms that class size reduction is one of only four, evidence-based reforms that have been proven to increase student achievement through rigorous experiments -- the "gold standard" of research.¹ The state's highest court in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case said NYC children were deprived of their constitutional right to an adequate education in large part because their class size.

Unfortunately, NYC public schools continue to have the largest class sizes in the state, and in a recent survey, 86 percent of the city's principals said that they were unable to provide a quality education because of excessive class sizes.²

Isn't the city supposed to be reducing class size?

Yes! In exchange for nearly a billion dollars in state "Contract for Excellence" funds, NYC promised to reduce average class sizes in all grades, starting in the fall of 2007, with annual reduction targets. The following class size averages were supposed to be achieved by the fall of 2012:

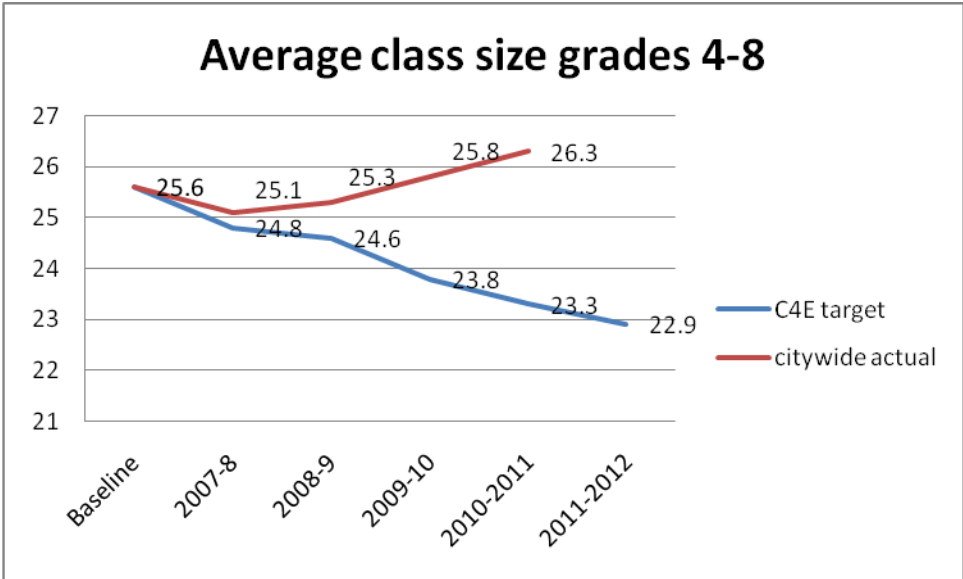
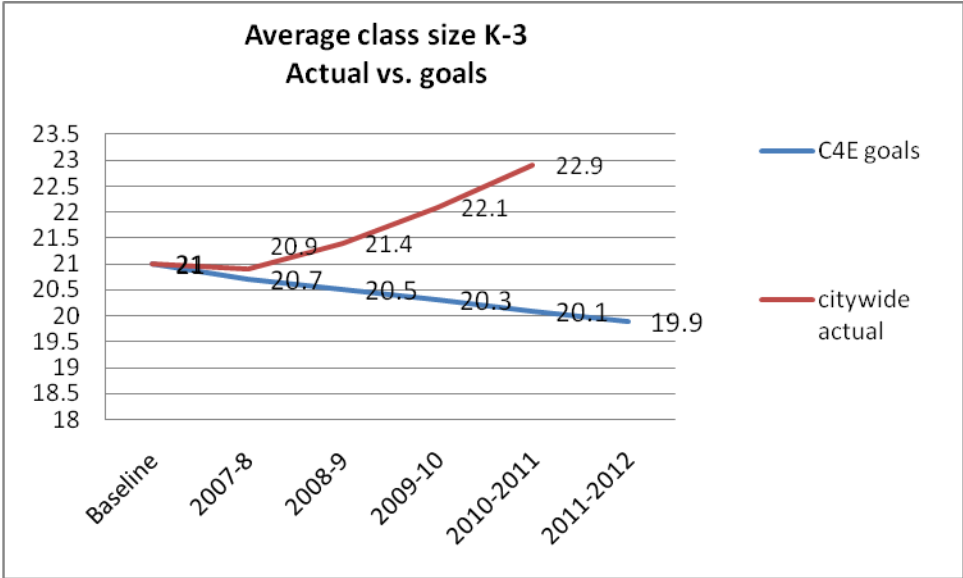
Grades	Class Size goals by 2012
K-3rd	19.9
4th-8th	22.9
9-12 (core classes)	24.5

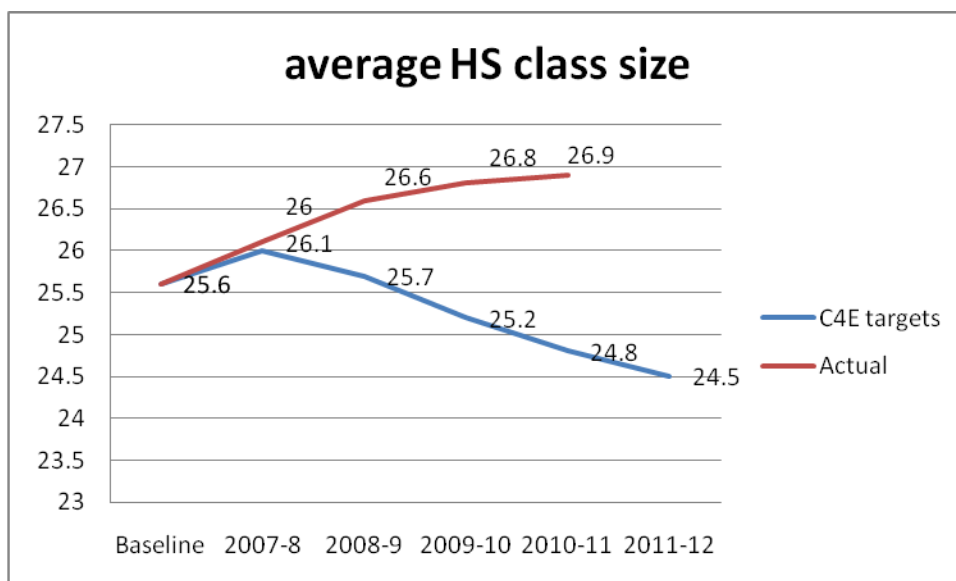
¹ U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, "Identifying and Implementing Educational Practices Supported by Rigorous Evidence: a User Friendly Guide," December 2003 at: <http://www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/rigoroussevid/rigoroussevid.pdf> The other three reforms are one-on-one tutoring by qualified tutors for at-risk readers in grades 1-3rd ; life-skills training for junior high students, and instruction for early readers in phonics.

² Prof. Emily Horowitz and Leonie Haimson, "How Crowded Are Our Schools? New Results from a Survey of NYC Public School Principals"; October 3, 2008; http://www.classsizematters.org/principal_survey_report_10.08_final.pdf

What happened instead?

Despite the state law called the Contracts for Excellence (C4E) mandating that the city reduce class size, and despite receiving nearly a billion dollars in additional state funds that could be used for this purpose, class sizes in city schools have increased by the largest amount in eleven years the last two years. (For more charts, check out <http://nycpublicschoolparents.blogspot.com/2010/01/our-lawsuit-against-city-on-class-size.html>)





In January 2010, Class Size Matters, the UFT and other groups sued the DOE, to make the city live up to its promise.

In its brief, the city argued the courts had no jurisdiction over its failure to reduce class size, and although Judge Barone of the Bronx Supreme Court disagreed and said the case should go forward, the city is currently appealing his decision.

What can parents do? Here are some suggestions.

Call or write the Mayor, the DOE, your City Council members and your legislators.

Urge them to make the DOE to use the federal funds for education jobs this year, as the legislation intended, to restore the loss of two thousand teaching positions. Also demand that DOE put the 1700 teachers on ATR in the classroom. For their contact info, go to <http://classsizematters.org/howyoucanhelp.html> .

Complain to your child’s teacher and/or the school UFT chapter leader if the union contract limits are violated. The [UFT class-size limits](#) are as follows:

- 18 in pre-kindergarten
- 25 in kindergarten
- 32 in 1-3 grades (for many years, the UFT had a “side” agreement to keep class sizes to 28 in these grades, which the DOE is no longer honoring)
- 32 in 4-6th grades
- 30 in Title I middle schools
- 33 in non-Title I middle schools
- 34 in academic classes in high school
- 50 in physical education and music classes in middle and high schools

The teacher or chapter leader at your school must “grieve” or complain to the DOE if class sizes exceed these levels, and the DOE can take weeks to address these violations. There are also allowances with "breakage," meaning if there aren't enough students to form a new class at least half as large as the limit for that grade, the principal can choose not to form a new class.

In any case, if your school has class sizes above these levels, you should contact your teacher and/or UFT chapter leader immediately and urge them to grieve. If you don't know who s/he is, ask your PTA president or parent coordinator. ***And let us know immediately at classsizematters@gmail.com***; I may be able to help.

Can fundraising efforts pay for classroom assistants? Enrichment teachers?

Official policy has long been that PTA funds cannot be used to hire classroom teachers to reduce class size, though these funds can be used to hire enrichment teachers and/or classroom assistants. Parents in some schools contribute funds for "assistant teachers" in grades K and up, to work alongside regular teachers. In some schools, their salaries come out of general PTA funds; in others, parents of children in specific grades are asked to contribute a set amount. Last year, the DOE and UFT agreed that parents can continue funding these positions. For more on this, see <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/31/education/31aides.html>

Here are other sources of funding that can be used to make classes smaller:

- **Title One Funds** (federal funds for schools with large numbers of poor students) can be used to reduce class size. By federal law, parents are supposed to have a voice in how these funds are spent. Here is a link to see how much Title One funding your school is receiving:

http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/d_chanc_oper/budget/dbor/allocationmemo/fy10_11/FY11_PDF/sam09.pdf

- **ARRA (federal stimulus funds)** can be used to hire teachers to reduce class size:

http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/d_chanc_oper/budget/dbor/allocationmemo/fy10_11/FY11_PDF/sam06.pdf

- **Federal Title IIA funds** are supposed to be used to reduce class size, or if there's no room, hire extra teachers to “push in”:

http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/d_chanc_oper/budget/dbor/allocationmemo/fy10_11/FY11_PDF/sam25.pdf

- **School Support Supplement Funds** (formerly the Early grade class size reduction funding, which the city has now cancelled) can be used to reduce class size:

http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/d_chanc_oper/budget/dbor/allocationmemo/fy10_11/FY11_PDF/sam26.pdf

- **Contract for Excellence (C4E) funds.** To settle the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit, state funds began coming to NYC in the fall of 2008; supposed to be used for specific purposes, one of which is required to be class size reduction. For more information on this program, see

<http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/funding/c4e/default.htm>

School by school allocations are at

http://schools.nyc.gov/offices/d_chanc_oper/budget/dbor/allocationmemo/fy10_11/FY11_PDF/sam05.pdf

Check out if your school is receiving C4E funds for class size reduction, under the C4E strategy of “New Classroom” (as opposed to a smaller teacher/student ratio), class sizes should be smaller – and certainly much smaller than the contractual limits.

Are there any other rules limiting class size, such as space requirements?

Yes. The NYC building code requires that each Kindergarten student is supposed to have at least 25 square feet of space per student. For 1st through 12th graders, and non-D75 special education classrooms, each student is supposed to receive at least 20 sq. feet. D 75 and self-enclosed special education classes are supposed to have even more space per student.

These represent the minimum square footage required per pupil according to the building code of the City. Let us know if your child’s class violates these space requirements!

Finally, join Class Size Matters!

Go to our website at www.classsizematters.org where you can make a tax-deductible donation, and subscribe to our list serv at classsizematters-subscribe@yahogroups.com

And please let us know what your child’s class size is this year.

Prepared by Leonie Haimson, Class Size Matters, classsizematters@gmail.com, April 2011.