



**class size matters**

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Testimony of Leonie Haimson, Executive Director of Class Size Matters  
Before the NYC Council Education Committee on the FY 2013 expense budget

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Thank you, Chair Jackson, for allowing me to speak today. In 2001, when Mayor Bloomberg first ran for election, he promised to reduce class size. Here is an excerpt from his 2001 campaign brochure:

*Better Teachers, Smaller Class Sizes and More Accountable Schools: Studies confirm that one of the greatest detriments to learning is an overcrowded classroom. ... For students, a loud, packed classroom means a greater chance of falling behind. For teachers, class overcrowding means a tougher time teaching and giving students the attention they need. Here are a few new ideas to improve schools and standards, and to reduce class sizes: Hire more certified teachers to reduce class sizes — especially in the K-3rd grades.*

As late as in Feb. 2008 amendment to the capital plan, the DOE still was claiming that they would achieve the following goals:

- *Institute class size reduction for Grades K–3 at every elementary school throughout the City.*

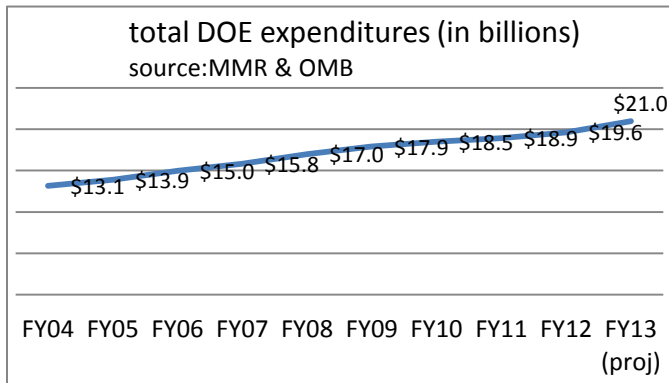
This clearly hasn't happened. Numerous audits from the NY State and NYC Comptroller have shown the administration's misuse of literally billions of state dollars, meant to reduce class size.<sup>1</sup>

Though the overall education budget has been increasing and is expected to rise again next year, bolstered by an increase in state aid, none of the increases are due to go to general

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<sup>1</sup> NYS Comptroller, "NYC DOE Administration of the Early Grade Class size reduction program," March 16, 2006; <http://osc.state.ny.us/audits/allaudits/093006/05n3.pdf>; NYC Comptroller, "Audit report on the Department of Education's Administration of the Early Grade Class Size Reduction Program," Sept. 9, 2009, [http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/bureaus/audit/PDF\\_FILES/FM09\\_113A.pdf](http://www.comptroller.nyc.gov/bureaus/audit/PDF_FILES/FM09_113A.pdf)

education teachers to maintain or reduce class size. Instead, the DOE plans to cut general education instruction once again.

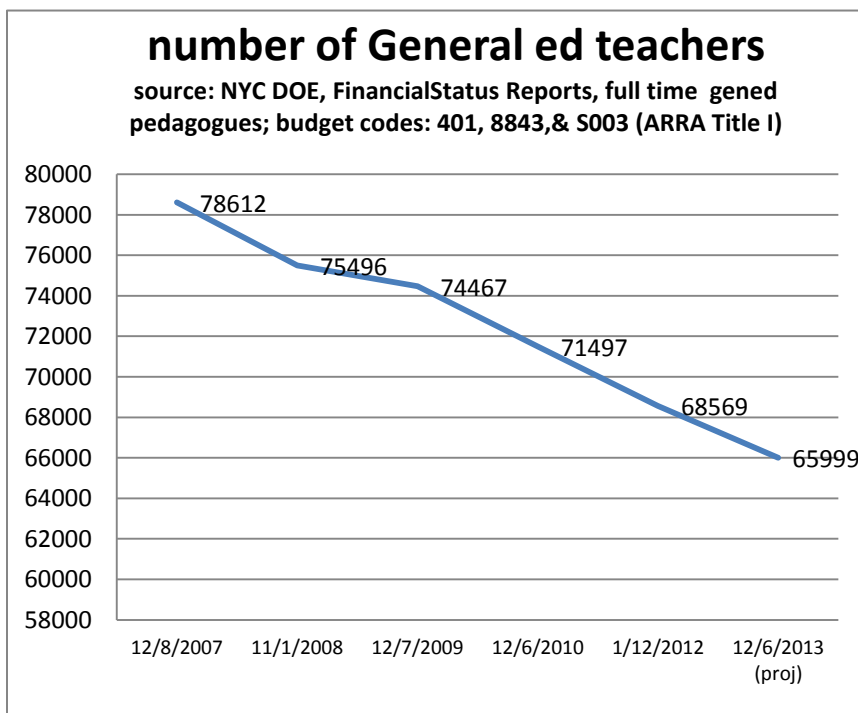


The DOE intention to impose a \$185 million cut to general education next fiscal year will cause the number of general education teachers to fall even lower.

Indeed, every year since 2007, the number of general education teachers has declined; and the budget cuts to schools next year are projected to cause the

elimination of 2570 pedagogues compared to the number this current school year.

According to our analysis below, this would be on top of a decline of more than 10,000 such teachers since 2007.

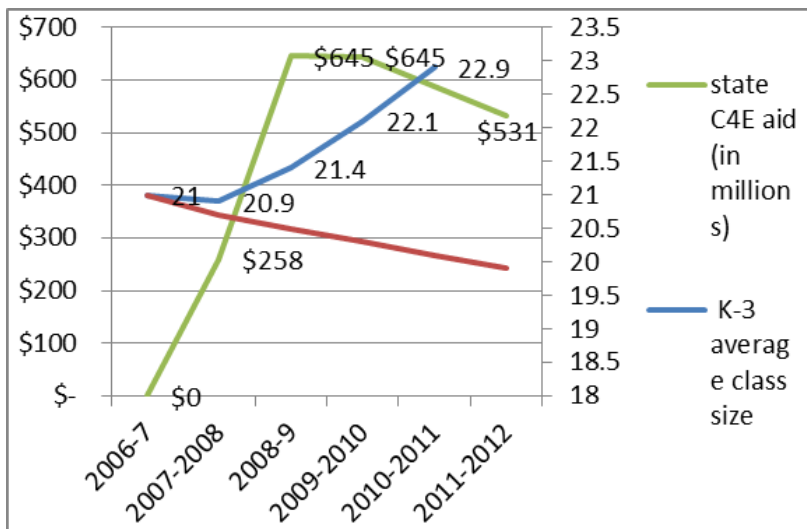
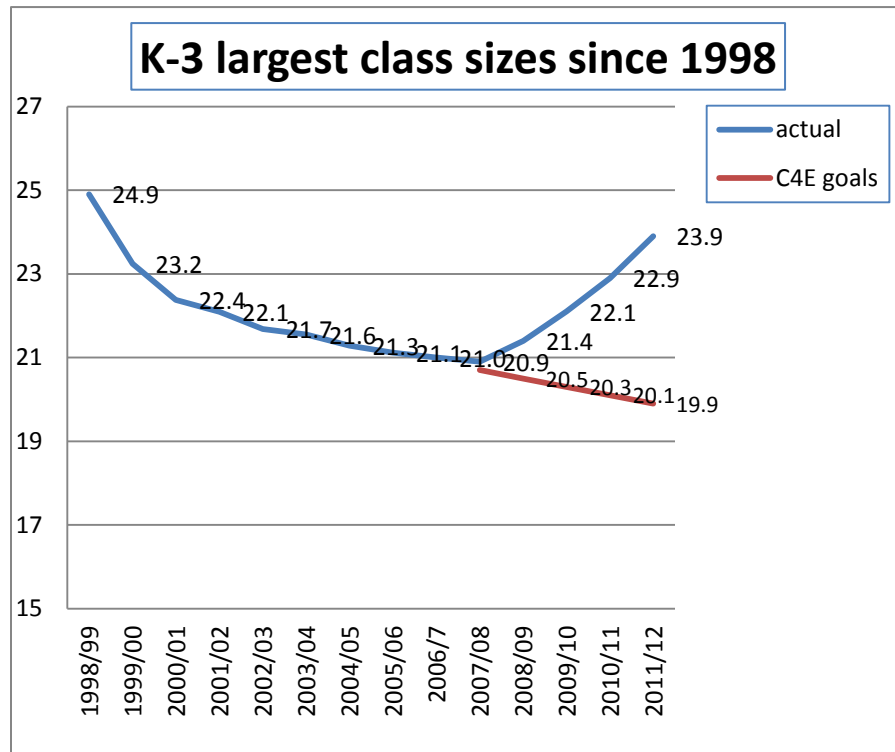


Meanwhile the full time non-pedagogical staff has increased, from 2530 in FY 11 to 3916 this fiscal year; an increase of 35 percent. Spending on testing, contracts, consultants, and charter schools have all risen sharply.

While overall enrollment has increased, there has been a steady disinvestment in the classroom, and the result has been a sharp growth in class size.

Despite the mayor's promise, and the city's obligation as part of its Contract for Excellence plan, class sizes have risen sharply in all grades since 2008. This year, the 5<sup>th</sup> year of NYC's

mandated class size reduction plan, class sizes are far above the Contracts for Excellence Plan goals –and in the early grades, are the largest in thirteen years.<sup>2</sup>



Though the city claims that their failure to comply with these class size goals resulted from the state's failure to follow through with increased funding, the truth is that even when the state increased its aid sharply through the C4E program, the city cut back on school budgets, leading to class size increases at the same time.

<sup>2</sup> Source, all 2011 class size data: DOE updated Class Size Report, available at: <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/data/classsize/classsize.htm>

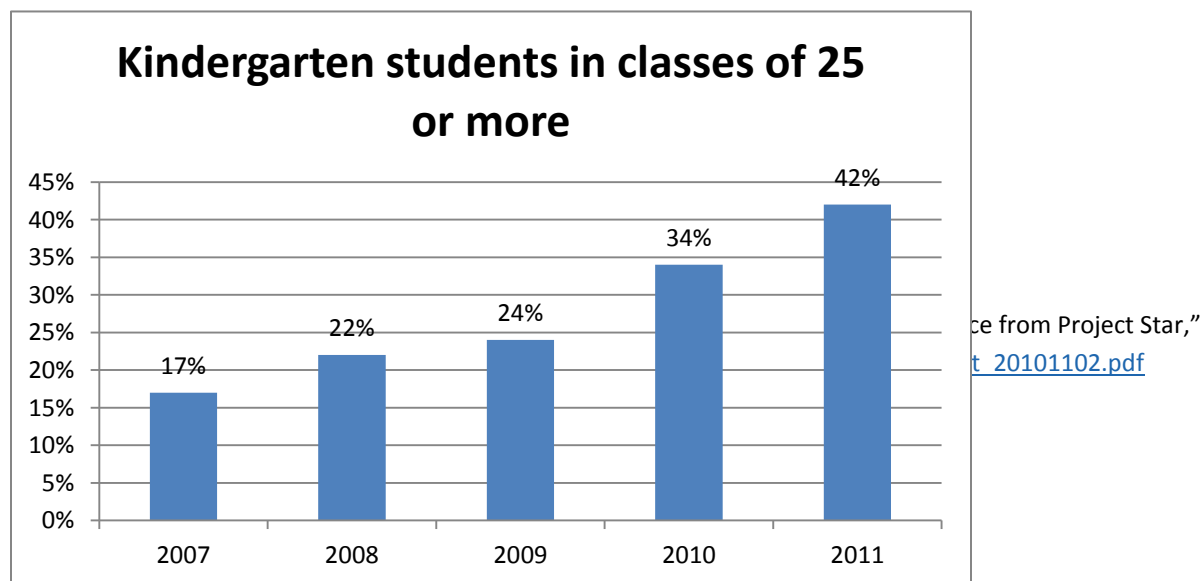
The increase in class size in the early grades has also been driven by other factors as well as budget cuts; including rising enrollment, increased overcrowding in many elementary schools, and at least two specific policy changes that DOE made in the last two years:

1. In 2010, the DOE eliminated the Early Grade Class Size reduction program, that provided extra funds to principals if they kept class sizes near twenty in grades K-3. Though this program was never properly enforced by DOE, it did give incentives to principals to do their best to keep class sizes small in the early grades. When the state program was subsumed by the Legislature into the larger Contract for Excellence program in 2007, the DOE promised to keep the funding as is, as part of their legally-mandated overall C4E plan. And yet in 2010, without any notification to the public or the state, they eliminated this funding, illegally I would argue.
2. In 2011, the DOE stopped honoring their “side agreement” with the UFT to limit class sizes to 28 or less in grades 1-3, and this has had the effect of increasing class sizes in these grades to even higher levels – above 30 in many cases , to the contractual cap of 32 – and even further above the C4E goals of 20 or less, which are also the goals that the mayor promised to achieve in 2001, when he first ran for office, and again in 2005, in his State of the City address.

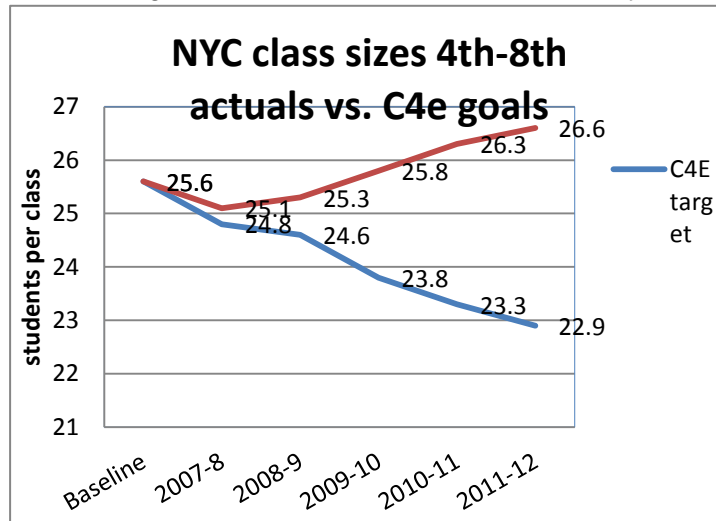
These purposeful increases in class size fly in the face of research, which show that the smaller the class, the better the outcome for students, particularly for poor and minority children. The effects in Kindergarten are particularly strong. Children randomly placed in smaller Kindergarten classes more than twenty years earlier. They were significantly more likely to have graduated from college, to own their own homes and to have a 401K3 plan than their peers:

*"Students in small classes also exhibit statistically significant improvements on a summary index of the other outcomes we examine (home ownership, 401(k) savings, mobility rates, percent college graduate in ZIP code, and marital status)."<sup>13</sup>*

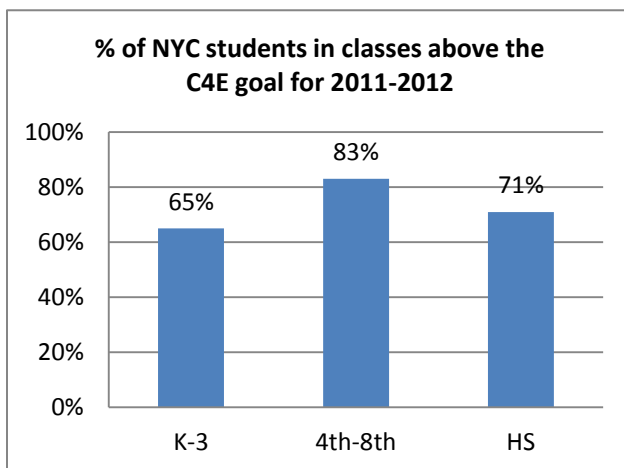
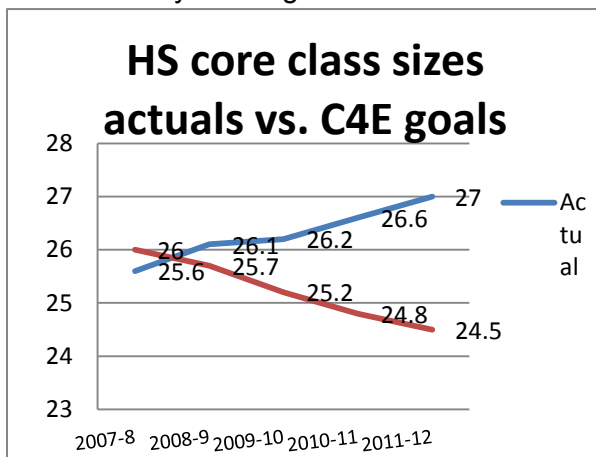
And yet this year, for the first time since the city has been reporting on class size, nearly half of our Kindergarten children are in classes of 25 or more, a trend that is likely to worsen if these budget cuts are adopted.



In grades 4-8 and in high school, average class sizes have also risen steadily, and are now far



above the city's C4E goals:



In fact, this year, which was supposed to be the final year of the city's five year C4E plan, 182,023 K-3 students are in class sizes above the C4E goal of 20 or less; 268,504 students are in classes above the C4E goal of 23 students, and approximately 223,000 high school students are in classes above 25 students.

All in all, this administration has been a dismal failure in affording our children with their right to an adequate education, which according to the state's highest court in the CFE case, will require significantly smaller classes.

Today, the state legislature agreed to eliminate \$125 Million of the Governor's proposal for a \$250 million competitive grant, and to re-allocate the rest of those funds as part of the formula aid system. This should provide NYC schools additional funding over that including in the preliminary budget.

We urge the NYC Council to take a stand for our children, and ensure that the \$185 million in cuts to general education instruction next year are restored, and that class sizes do not rise even further next year.