

May 19, 2014

Dear Chancellor Fariña:

We have learned that at a [recent Town hall meeting](#) in Brooklyn, you responded to the concern expressed by a parent by saying that 30 students per class in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and up were “not outrageous.” While we understand that these class sizes are increasingly common in city classrooms, we believe this is unacceptable and must change.

Smaller classes are the [number one priority of parents](#) in DOE surveys every year. Yet every year since the survey has been given, class sizes have increased and in the early grades are now the largest in 15 years. In the rest of the state outside NYC class sizes [average 20 to 22 students in all grades](#), and yet our students with a far higher average need level are expected to achieve the same standards, with class sizes as much as 50 percent larger in many schools.

In the Campaign for Fiscal Equity case, the state’s highest court concluded that based on research, NYC students had been denied their constitutional right for a sound basic education in large part as a result of excessive class sizes. In July 2003, when you were Superintendent of District 15, you [served on a panel of educators called the Professional Judgment Panel](#) commissioned by CFE. This panel called for [class sizes](#) of no more than 14-17 students per class in elementary schools, 23 students per class in middle schools, and 18-29 students in high schools, depending on the poverty level of the school.

In [responding to a survey](#), NYC principals said classes should be no larger than 20 in grades K-3, no larger than 23 in grades 4-5, and no larger than 24 in all other grades in order to provide a quality education.

In 2007, a new state law called the Contracts for Excellence (C4E) was passed in response to the CFE decision, requiring NYC to reduce class size in all grades, and the city submitted a class size reduction plan that was approved by the state. The city’s C4E [plan called for the city to lower class sizes](#) to an average of no more than 20 students per class in grades K-3, 23 students per class in grades 4-8 and 25 in core high school classes over five years. Yet rather than adhere to this plan, the previous administration allowed class sizes to reach levels the [NY Supreme Court found to be unconstitutional](#), and our students are suffering as a result.

Mayor de Blasio campaigned on a promise that he would [commit to achieving specific class size reduction goals](#) by the end of first term and if necessary, raise revenue to fund this. He also pledged that he would [comply with the plan](#) the city submitted in 2007, calling for class size reduction in all grades. We hope that you will follow-up with these promises.

According to [the state’s schedule](#), districts are mandated to publicize their proposed 2014-15 C4E plan and receive public comments starting June 16. Before that date, they are supposed to consult with parents/guardians, teachers, and administrators.

In order to fulfill the mayor's promises and the needs of our children, we urge you to put forward aggressive yet reasonable annual targets for class size reduction, dedicate a significant share of the [\\$644 million in the city's C4E funds](#) specifically towards achieving those goals and provide sufficient oversight to see that schools use these funds appropriately. None of these actions occurred in the previous administration.

In addition, we urge you to immediately re-install the early grade class size funds that the DOE eliminated in 2010, and restore class size limits of 28 in grades 1-3 that were eliminated in 2011.

Finally, ***the new proposed five year capital plan must be significantly expanded***, because as presently constituted it includes insufficient seats to alleviate current school overcrowding, no less reduce class size and/or address projected enrollment growth.

We hope that you will heed the decision of the state's highest court, listen to parents, educators, and what research shows, and follow through with the mayor's promises to NYC voters by reducing class size. Our children deserve their right to a quality education and this should start now.

Sincerely,

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