

## **Fact Sheet on School Overcrowding and the Capital Plan**

### **The Problem:**

- According to an audit from the NYC Comptroller, at least one third of public schools are overcrowded, without the city having any clear plan to deal with the problem. A third of the city's elementary schools are at least 138% of capacity. Nearly half a million students already attend schools that are severely overcrowded and the situation is getting worse.
- The current school construction capital plan with about 38,000 seats will meet less than half the need, given DOE's own data and their enrollment projections. NYC is the fastest growing large city in the country, according to the recent Census, and yet the city has no realistic proposal to address the growing student population.
- There is widespread consensus that the DOE's formula for estimating school utilization levels underestimates the actual level of overcrowding and the space needed to provide a quality education. A working group appointed by the Chancellor made suggestions in December to improve the accuracy of this formula, but their recommendations still have not been released.
- The well-documented result is that hundreds of schools have lost their cluster rooms; thousands of students are assigned to lunch as early as 10 a.m., and/or have no access to the gym. Many special needs students are forced to receive their services in hallways and/or closets rather than in dedicated spaces, and class sizes in the early grades have reached a 15-year high.
- The Mayor's ambitious plan to build an additional 160,000 market-rate housing units, on top of 200,000 affordable units over the next 10 years will create the need for even more school seats.

### **Class Size Matters Recommendations:**

- The DOE should double the number of new seats in the capital plan, which would more nearly achieve the goal of alleviating current overcrowding and accommodating projected enrollment growth. According to the Independent Budget office, this would cost \$125 million per year, given that the state reimburses for half the cost.
- The DOE planned to pay \$127 million per year at a total cost of more than \$1.1B for nine years for a computer consulting company. That contract was later cancelled by the city after the media raised concerns about the fact that the company had been involved in a kickback scheme. Originally the contract was nearly twice that high, at a potential cost of more than \$2 billion. For less than what the DOE was prepared to pay for this contract on an annual basis, the number of seats in the capital plan could be doubled and we could begin to meet the real needs of NYC public school students.
- The DOE should also form an independent commission to improve the planning process and efficiency in siting new schools, which now lags far behind private and public development efforts.