

Hello, My name is Sebastian Spitz, and I'm with Class Size Matters. I'd like to talk about the Renewal School program, which as we know has not lived up to expectations. Chancellor, you recently noted that the Renewal School program lacks a "theory of action." Chancellor, as you know, many theories in education turn out to be misguided, not supported by evidence, or otherwise wrong-headed. Yet when it comes to reducing class size, research has shown study after study that smaller class sizes result in higher achievement, both in the short term and long term, with positive effects lasting into adulthood. Thus, reducing class sizes should be part of any theory of action in the Renewal Schools. Unfortunately, it has not been.

Our research has found that 42% of Renewal Schools did not reduce class sizes from 2014 to 2017, despite the DOE's promise to do so, and more than 70% of these schools continue to have maximum class sizes of 30 or more. Of the Renewal schools the DOE wanted to close or merge after this year, all but one have maximum class size of 30 or more.

Among Renewal schools that did reduce class size, many saw great improvements, and we have found a statistically significant correlation between each Renewal school's average class size and its positive impact on achievement, after controlling for student background. Reducing class size works, and it should be the top priority of the renewal program.

I'd also like to bring up what's going on in PS 25 Eubie Blake, which the PEP voted to close in February. Students at PS 25 have high need levels: 31% have disabilities, and more than a fifth are homeless. Despite these challenges, PS 25 Eubie Blake has the fourth highest impact score among all elementary schools in New York City, and the second highest in Brooklyn. We hope that Chancellor Carranza visits the school and withdraws the proposal to close it.