

WHY WE NEED to LOWER CLASS SIZE in NYC SCHOOLS



What are we proposing?

Class Size Matters is urging that the Mayor and NYC Council designate \$100 million to be allocated towards hiring teachers to lower class size, starting first in the early grades and in struggling schools.

That amount could pay for the salaries of about 1,000 new teachers, which could reduce class size in as many as 4,000 classrooms – as adding a new teacher at a grade level lowers class size for all the other students in that same grade in the school. These funds would represent less than .03 percent of the more than \$34 billion that the DOE is spending this year.

Why is class size important?

Research shows smaller classes lead to better results for all kids – especially those who need help the most. Class size reduction has been shown to lead to higher test scores, better grades, more engaged students, fewer disciplinary referrals, and less teacher turnover.

Children assigned to smaller classes are more likely to graduate from high school on time, attend college and get a STEM degree. They are also more likely to own their own home and have a 401K twenty years later.

Smaller classes will also likely lead to substantial cost savings by lowering special education referrals, boosting four year graduation rates, reducing the need for expensive and often less effective intervention services. Economists have estimated that reducing class size yields benefits about twice the costs, especially for low-income students and children of color, who make up most students in NYC public schools. As a result, class size reduction has been identified as one of only a handful of reforms shown to narrow the achievement/opportunity gap between disadvantaged and more advantaged students.

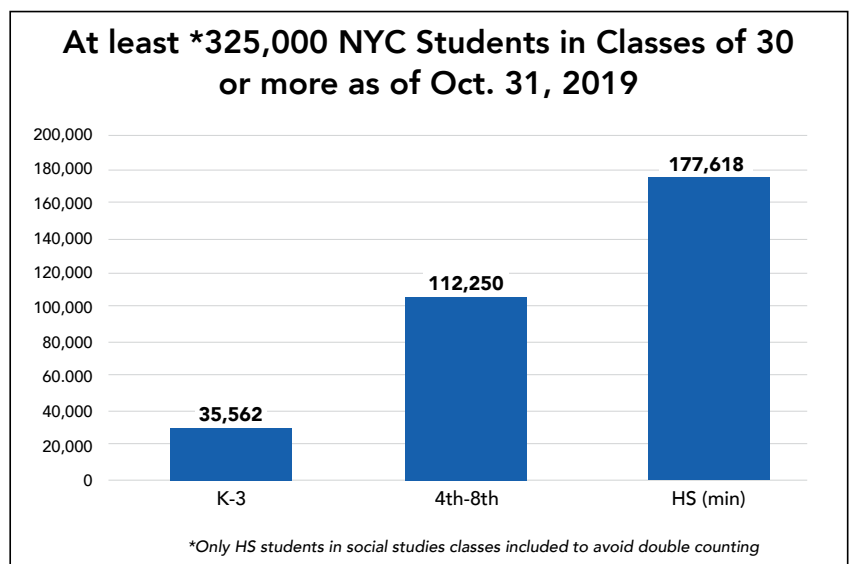
What has happened to class size and what are the results?

Class sizes have increased sharply in NYC since 2008 and are 15-30% larger on average than in the rest of the state. *More than 325,000 NYC students are crammed into classes of 30 or more this year.* The number of children in grades 1st-3rd in classes of 30 or more has risen by nearly 3,000% since 2007.

While the Mayor has focused his efforts on expanding Pre-K and now 3K, a 2014 letter signed by over 70 professors of education and psychology sent to the previous Chancellor emphasized that any gains from Pre-K would likely be undermined without an effort to reduce class size in grades K-3.

As Dale Farran, an eminent Pre-K researcher has written, *“Too much has been promised from one year of preschool intervention without the attention needed to the quality of experiences children have and what happens to them in K-12.”*

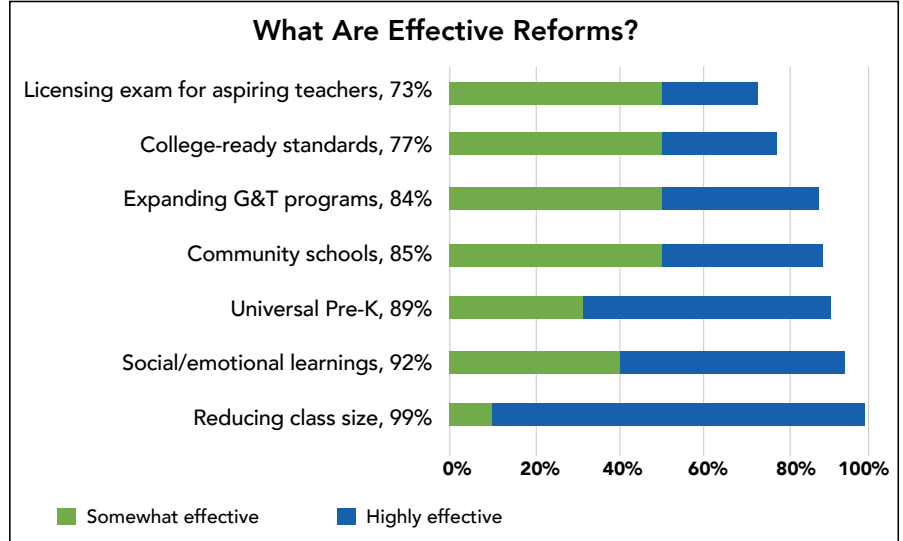
Since Mayor de Blasio took office, achievement levels have been flat or declining, as measured on the national exams called the NAEPs, the most reliable assessments. And the gap in test scores between students of different economic and racial groups has widened.



How do NYC parents and teachers feel about class size?

Every year the DOE's surveys have been administered, smaller classes have been the highest or second highest priority of parents when asked what changes they would like to see in their children's schools.

According to a UFT teacher survey, 99% NYC teachers responded that class size reduction would be an effective reform to improve NYC schools, far outstripping any other proposal. About 90% of them said that this would be a highly effective reform.



What about space?

In about half the school districts, there is space to lower class size now. In some overcrowded districts, Pre-K classes could be moved into CBOs, many of which are under-enrolled. Kindergarten classes could be also re-located to many of the half-empty DOE-operated Pre-K centers, where there is more space to reduce class size.

Overall, there does need to be an expedited and expanded capital plan. And as shown in the Pre-K initiative, where there is political leadership, space can be found. The same can happen if the city implements a coordinated and prioritized plan to lower class size.

Resources:

- More information about research on class size <https://www.classsizematters.org/research-and-links/>
- Fact sheets here: <https://www.classsizematters.org/fact-sheets-on-the-benefits-of-class-size/>
- NYC class size data and trends at: <https://www.classsizematters.org/class-size-presentations-of-citywide-and-district-trends-since-2006/>

Any questions?

Please email: info@classsizematters.org or call 917-435-932