



WHY NYC SCHOOLS SHOULD USE THE ADDITIONAL FEDERAL & STATE FUNDS TO LOWER CLASS SIZE STARTING NEXT YEAR



What are we proposing?

Class Size Matters and NYC Kids PAC urge the Mayor and NYC Council to designate \$1 billion of the additional federal and state aid our schools are due to receive over the next two to three years towards hiring additional teachers to lower class size, focused especially on the early grades and in communities that bore a disproportionate impact of the pandemic.

The federal government is allocating about \$7 billion over the next two years via the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) funds and the America Cares Rescue Act (ACRA) to help NYC schools reopen safely and with the support students will need to recover from the pandemic and more than a year of remote or blended learning.

In addition, our schools are also due to receive about \$520 million in additional state foundation aid to NYC schools, increasing to about \$1.3 billion over next three years, to fulfill of the goals of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit. In that case, the state's highest court concluded that NYC students were denied their constitutional right to a sound basic education, in part because their class sizes were too large.

That amount could pay for the salaries of about 10,000 new teachers, which could reduce class size in as many as 40,000 classrooms – as adding a new teacher lowers class size for all the other students in a school in the same grade or subject. In addition, we propose that the DOE hire 1,108 more school counselors and 1,456 more social workers, which would increase the number of those positions to one for every 250 students - the recommended guidelines for these professions. This would cost another estimated \$365 million, which would still leave over \$1 billion of the federal funds for other uses.

Why smaller classes are important, now more than ever

If NYC children ever needed smaller classes for more academic and social-emotional support, they will need them next year, to make up for the myriad losses they have suffered over the course of the last year due to the pandemic. Smaller classes would also help provide the social distancing that many health experts say is optimal.

Research shows smaller classes lead to better outcomes for all kids – especially those who need help the most. Class size reduction has been shown to result in 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.

In the long run, smaller classes also likely will 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 the majority of

public-school students in NYC. Class size reduction has been identified as one of only a handful of reforms shown to narrow the opportunity gap between disadvantaged and more advantaged students.

It is also important that class sizes be reduced so that teachers are better able to teach diverse students and those of different backgrounds in a more culturally responsive manner.

How does class size in NYC compare to the rest of the state?

Class sizes have increased in NYC since 2008 and are 15-30% larger on average than in the rest of the state, especially in the early grades. The number of children in grades 1st through 3rd in classes of 30 or more has risen by nearly 3,000% since 2007.

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.”*

How do NYC parents and teachers feel about class size?

Nearly every year the DOE’s school surveys have been administered, smaller classes have been the highest priority of K12 parents when asked what changes they would like to see in their children’s education.

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% said that this would be a “highly effective” reform.

What about space?

In about half of the districts, there is space to lower class size now. In some overcrowded districts, Pre-K classes currently sited in elementary schools could be relocated to CBO PreK providers, many of which are under-enrolled and have extra space. There are also an estimated 1800 empty seats in DOE-operated Pre-K centers, which could also accommodate more PreK classes.

In schools where there is still insufficient space, two teachers in a classroom could be provided. In the long run, there does need to be an expedited and expanded capital plan and funding for school construction and expansion needs to be included in the federal infrastructure program. Yet as shown in the Mayor’s Pre-K initiative, where there was a focused effort to create more space, space can be found. The same could be achieved with 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/>

Any questions? Please email: info@classsizematters.org or call 917-435-9329