



Class Size Matters
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Why NYC School Leadership Teams should use available funding to reduce class size

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What additional funding is being provided schools this year? NYC schools are due to receive about \$530 million in additional state foundation aid from the state, which will increase to about \$1.3 billion over next three years, in order to fulfill of the goals of the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit. In that case, the state's highest court concluded that class sizes were too large to provide NYC students with their constitutional right to a sound basic education. And yet class sizes in our public schools are larger than when the court issued that decision.

A portion of these funds is being allocated to schools via the Contracts for Excellence program, which DOE is asking schools to allot to any of six priority areas, including (i) class size reduction, (ii) programs that increase student time on task (iii) teacher and principal quality initiatives, (iv) middle school and high school re-structuring, (v) expansion or replication of effective model programs for students with limited English proficiency, and (vi) full-day kindergarten or prekindergarten.

In addition, the rest of every school's Fair Student Funding, as well as its Title I and Title IIA funds can be spent on hiring additional classroom teachers to lower class size. The DOE has also agreed to cover the salary of additional teachers hired through the Absent Teacher Reserve Fund. Finally, the DOE is spending \$18 million in 72 schools to allow them to hire additional teachers to lower class size or to push into existing classes.

Here is the [list of 72 schools](#) which will receive these funds. If your school is among them, please let us know at info@classsizematters.org. In general, merely changing the teacher/student ratio does not have the same proven benefits as class size reduction. Finally, CM Treyger and Speaker Johnson have [introduced a bill](#) to phase in smaller classes for the sake of social distancing starting in the fall of 2022.

Why are smaller classes important, now more than ever?

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

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 should be required.

What does research show?

Smaller classes lead to better outcomes for all kids – especially those who need help the most, and thus class size reduction is one of only a handful of reforms proven to narrow the achievement/opportunity gap between racial and economic groups. Smaller classes have also 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, attend college and get a STEM degree.

How do NYC parents and teachers feel about class size?

Every year the DOE's school surveys have been administered, smaller classes have been the top 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 all schools, there is space to lower class size now. In the long run, there needs to be an expedited and expanded capital plan to alleviate overcrowding so that all students can have the benefits of smaller classes.

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/>

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