

Community Board Five in Manhattan Resolution on class size

Approved in June 2021

Community Board Five urgent appeal for New York City to reduce class sizes starting in Fall 2021

At the regularly scheduled monthly Community Board Five meeting on Thursday, June 10, 2021, the following resolution passed with a vote of 35 in favor; 0 opposed; 1 abstaining:

WHEREAS, In 2003, in the landmark Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) case, the state's highest court concluded that New York City public school class sizes were too large to provide students with their constitutional right to a sound basic education; and

WHEREAS, Class sizes in public schools have increased since that decision was made, particularly in the early grades; and

WHEREAS, As of last school year, about one third, or over 300,000, New York City students were crammed into classes of 30 or more; and

WHEREAS, Reducing class size has been proven through research to be one of the best ways to improve student learning, lower teacher attrition rates, and narrow achievement and opportunity gaps between students of different racial, gender, and economic groups;

WHEREAS, Smaller classes have also been shown to lead to better grades and test scores, more robust student engagement, fewer disciplinary referrals, and higher graduation and college-going rates, especially for students who need help the most; and

WHEREAS, Reducing class size has remained the top priority of New York City public school parents with children in grades kindergarten through 12 when asked what change they would most like to see in their children's school since the Department of Education (DOE) began to administer parent surveys in 2007; and

WHEREAS, New York City public schools are finally due to receive more than \$530 million in additional state Foundation Aid next year, rising to \$1.3 billion annually over the next three years, as a direct result of the decision in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity (CFE) case; and

WHEREAS, New York City public schools are also due to receive approximately \$7 billion in federal funds to be spent over the next two to three years, to help them reopen safely and with additional supports so students can begin to recover from all the disruptions caused by the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Smaller classes would also make it easier to implement social distancing in our schools next year, as well as provide students with the additional academic support and feedback they will need, after more than a year of remote and blended learning; and

WHEREAS, The New York City Council has proposed in its preliminary budget to allocate \$250 million to hire more teachers to lower class sizes starting this Fall 2021, targeted first in struggling schools with especially vulnerable students, and also enough funding to ensure that every school has at least one school counselor and social worker; and

WHEREAS, Senator Robert Jackson, the original plaintiff in the CFE case, has introduced a bill in the New York State Senate, S.6296, that would update the Contracts for Excellence law initially passed in 2007 to settle the CFE lawsuit by renewing New York City's obligation to develop and submit a five-year plan to lower class size; and

WHEREAS, Assemblymember Jo Anne Simon has introduced the same bill in the Assembly, A07447; and therefore be it

RESOLVED, Community Board 5 ardently urges the New York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to sign S.6296 and A.7447, that require the New York City Department of Education to develop and implement a five-year citywide class size reduction plan starting in Fall 2021; and be it further

RESOLVED, Community Board 5 urgently requests Mayor DeBlasio and Schools Chancellor Porter to agree to the New York City Council budget proposal that at least \$250 million be used next year to lower class size, as the first step in this five-year plan, as well as sufficient funding so that every public school has at least one school counselor and one social worker.