

Diane Ravitch's testimony in support of lowering class size

October 27, 2021

Chairman Treyger, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I am a historian of education. My first book was a history of the NYC public schools.

As a historian, I have studied reform in NYC and in cities across the nation.

Reform usually means shaking up the system. Centralize, decentralize, recentralize. Reorganize the bureaucracy, put the mayor in control, change the decision-making structure. Hire consultants, hire data analysts, hire coaches.

Or reform means outsource the schools to private entrepreneurs.

Or reform means more standardized testing. Interim assessments, test prep. Testing and more testing. More testing does not produce more learning or better grades.

These so-called reforms barely move the needle, if at all.

Class size reduction is a far more powerful reform than any of the above.

Grades improve, discipline improves. Teacher morale improves.

Children get the attention they need. Class size reduction is especially valuable for the children with the greatest needs.

With smaller classes, teachers have the time they need to do their jobs.

Chairman Treyger, you are right. Reform begins with the needs of children, not the limits of space.

Class size reduction is the most powerful reform you can enact.