

Talking points for NY Council hearing on class size

**Hearing on Thursday 2/29/24 at 1 PM; press conference at 12 noon in front of City Hall
Please come! Sign up to testify remotely or in person here:**

<https://council.nyc.gov/testify/>

The best testimony is to speak from your own experience as a parent about how your child would benefit from smaller classes; but here are some additional points you can make if you want.

Remember: you are limited to two to three minutes in your oral testimony; written testimony can be longer.

Why is Class Size important?

- Countless studies show that students with smaller classes do better in every way measured – higher test scores, better grades, fewer disciplinary problems, as well as increased likelihood of graduating high school, attending college, and getting a STEM degree.
- Smaller classes especially benefit students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Especially since the pandemic, many students need more emotional connection and support that only a smaller class can provide.
- According to a 2008 survey, NYC principals said that class sizes should be no more than 20 students in grades K-3, 22-23 students in 4th-5th grade, 24-25 students in 6th-8th grades and 25 students in high school for a quality education – very close to the new limits in the state class size law.
- Teachers overwhelmingly agree that reducing class sizes is the best way to improve public schools whenever they are offered that option in surveys.
- ***My child has suffered because of large classes in the following ways...***
- ***Or: My child has benefited or could benefit from small classes in the following ways...***

Legal Background & Numbers

- In 2022, the Legislature passed a new law requiring smaller classes in all grades, of no more than 20 students per class in grades K-3; 22 students per class in grades 4-8; 25 students per class in high school, to be phased in over five years.
- The Gov. signed the bill into law in Sept. 2022, but gave the DOE an extra year to comply so the reduction in class size was supposed to start this Sept. 2023 instead.
- Yet instead of lowering class size, class sizes have increased in most schools for the last two years, and are likely to further increase in future years, given DOE plans to make additional but cuts to the budget and to the capital plan that will make it impossible to comply in future years.
- The Class Size Working Group appointed by the Chancellor proposed many actionable, effective proposals that would enable schools to lower class size and to meet the benchmarks in the law but so far, the DOE has not adopted any of them.

Class Size Working Group's Recommendations

- DOE should accelerate the construction of new schools in overcrowded communities.
- Strengthen the teacher pipeline & incentivize teachers to work in the highest needs schools.
- Halt co-locating schools, if this will take space needed for existing schools in the building from lowering class size
- Adjust enrollment at nearby schools, with community input

- Reject tradeoffs such as the elimination of afterschool programs, art or music rooms, and other opportunities for students.
- More recommendations at tinyurl.com/CSRWreport

Budget cuts will lead to larger classes

- Most schools have had their budget cuts the last two years causing class sizes to increase
- ***My child's class sizes also increased, leading to...***
- This year, only 37% of core academic classes citywide met the class size caps versus 42% two year ago.
- Only 46 schools *fully complied* with the class size caps this year, versus 89 schools two years ago.
- Nearly 600 schools received another round of mid-year 'adjustment' cuts this year.
- \$547 Million was cut from the DOE this fiscal year, with additional cuts of \$500 million+ planned each year for the next four years FY25-28
- More funding not less will be required to hire the teachers necessary to lower class size

Big cuts to capital plan will deprive space needed for smaller classes

- Funding to expand, lease or build new schools has been cut by over \$2 billion since the class size law passed, and the number of new seats cut in half.
- The new five-year plan fails to identify 77% of the new seats to be created, either by district, subdistrict or grade level, violating the transparency required by two state laws

More teachers needed, not less

- The DOE estimates that they will need an additional 10-12,000 new teachers to comply with the class size law, while the IBO estimates 17,000 new teachers.
- However, the DOE has *shrunk* the teaching force by 4,000 from FY19 to this year and projects another loss of nearly 3,000 teachers

There is funding for smaller classes

- The DOE has received more than \$1.3B in additional state funding meant for smaller classes
- The IBO estimates that the city will have a \$3.3 Billion surplus next year.
- NYC already has a rainy-day fund of \$2 Billion
- There are many other revenue and savings options for the DOE:
 1. DOE should receive state transitional charter aid, which would provide an extra \$100M this year alone.
 2. The state should exempt NYC from helping pay charter school rent, saving more than \$100 million a year.
 3. The state should increase capital reimbursement for school construction from 25% to 50%. Could provide billions in additional capital expenses.