

The just-released DOE class size plan fails on every account. Class size borough hearings begin this Wednesday May 22nd.

Make your voices heard!



- Bronx – Wednesday, May 22, 2024 (6:00pm)
- Manhattan – Thursday, May 23, 2024 (6:00pm)
- Staten Island – Tuesday, May 28, 2024 (6:00pm)
- Queens – Wednesday, May 29, 2024 (6:00pm)
- Brooklyn – Thursday, May 30, 2024 (6:00pm)

To register and receive the Zoom link, go to <https://learndoe.org/contractforexcellence/> available by 5 PM the day of the hearing.

Questions? Email us at info@classsizematters.org

Talking points for class size hearings

The state passed the class size law nearly two years ago, yet the DOE has still taken no steps to ensure compliance with the law. Instead, their policies have caused class sizes to increase due to repeated cuts of school budgets, while also slashing their spending on more space. Their [draft class size “plan”](#), posted May 7, makes insufficient investments in new teachers and space, and is bound to fail without significant improvements.

Lack of funding to hire enough teachers:

- DOE fails to invest sufficient funding to hire additional teachers to lower class size. The DOE says they will spend \$137 million in “targeted” schools for this purpose, though they do not report which schools will receive this funding and how many more classes will meet the legal class size limits as a result.
- We estimate that this amount would allow for the hiring of only about 1,350 additional teachers, out of the 10,000 to 12,000 teachers the DOE itself says will be needed to comply with the law over the next four years. The longer the DOE waits to hire additional teachers, the more difficult it will become to ensure their quality and certification.
- Yet DOE plans to cut the budgets of as many as 760 schools due to projected enrollment decline and to impose a hiring freeze and vacancy reductions systemwide that could easily undo any positive impact from that \$137 million. In fact, the city’s Financial plan projects a *decrease* of nearly 1,000 teachers next year, which would increase rather than decrease class size.
- At the same time, they fail to allocate any of the more than \$800 million of Contracts for Excellence funds specifically for the purpose of reducing class size, or the \$1.8 billion dollars the city has received in additional Foundation funding that they will have received since 2021-2022 school year. In addition, the Independent Budget Office projects a city surplus of more than \$5 billion.

What the DOE should do instead to hire more teachers:

- ✓ The DOE should provide funding to add at least 3,000 more teachers next year -- one fourth of the additional number needed over the next four years, at a cost of about \$300 million. They should also promise to refrain from cutting any school’s budget, and not to impose a hiring freeze or vacancy reductions.

Lack of spending to create enough space

- The DOE refuses to create sufficient space for smaller classes. Principals at 650 schools reported to DOE in their survey that they currently cannot comply with the class size limits due to inadequate classroom space. Yet the new proposed five-year capital plan cuts more than \$2 billion for new capacity compared to the current plan and would create only about 22,000 additional seats – one tenth of the number that the School Construction Authority itself claims will be necessary.
- A provision in the state budget passed in April requires the DOE to “increase planned spending on classroom construction by \$2.0 billion” in order to be able to achieve the class size limits. Yet Instead of building more schools, the Mayor is planning to spend at least \$6.8 billion for new jails –\$2.7 billion more than the \$4.1 billion currently dedicated for new school construction.
- The Queens jail will cost at least \$3.9 billion, which is far more than the plan has for new schools in Queens; the Bronx jail to cost at least \$2.9 billion. Yet there is not a single dollar specified in the capital plan for new schools to be built in the Bronx.
- The plan only Identifies new seats in six districts (2, 25, 27, 30, 31) plus one new high school in Brooklyn & one in Staten Island. 77% of the new seats remain unidentified as to borough, district, or grade level.
- Without an expanded and accelerated plan to build more schools, the DOE will never meet the timelines to achieve the class size limits in the law.

What the DOE should do instead to create more space:

- ✓ Immediately add at least \$2 billion to the five-year capital plan, specifying where the new seats will be built by district, sub-district, and grade level, and explain how these additional seats will allow all schools over four years to reach the class size limits in the law.

Other problems with the DOE’s plan

- DOE proposes that every superintendent increase the percentage of classes in their district schools at or below the class size caps by 3%. Yet forcing superintendents and principals to lower class size without providing any more funding or space could create problems in many schools. Instead, it is DOE’s responsibility to ensure that every school has the resources needed to lower class size without negative tradeoffs to the overall quality of education students receive.
- The DOE also cites as an option to achieve the class size limits by expanding online learning. Forcing more students into remote classes, given the dismal results of this strategy during the pandemic, seems especially unwise and would likely undercut any of the benefits to student learning and social connection provided by smaller classes.

What the DOE should do instead:

- ✓ The DOE must create and implement an actual multi-year plan, showing which schools will receive additional funding to hire additional teachers to lower class size each year, and detailing where additional space will be created to allow the approximately 650 schools that do not currently have sufficient space to achieve the class size limits within the within the mandated timeframe. If the DOE refuses to create this plan, the State Education Department should require them to do so.