



Class size: A conversation Where are we now and where do we need to go?

Leonie Haimson, Class Size Matters

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Class size bill passed June 2022 by NYS legislature

- Legislature passed bill in June 2022; bill signed by Gov. Hochul in Sept 2022, who gave DOE an extra planning year to comply
- Requires NYC to provide a 5-yr class size reduction plan to cap all class sizes at 20 students in grades K-3, 23 in grades 4th-8th, and 25 in HS classes; Phys ed and performing art group classes limited to 40 students per class instead of 50.
- An additional 20% of all classes must achieve these caps each year, schools with highest levels of poverty to be prioritized for smaller classes first, with 100% of classes meeting caps by Sept. 2028. .
- Law requires multi-year detailed plan showing where space would be created and teachers hired to lower class size for each school but this NEVER HAPPENED.
- Some exemptions allowed in the law but only with agreement of UFT and CSA.

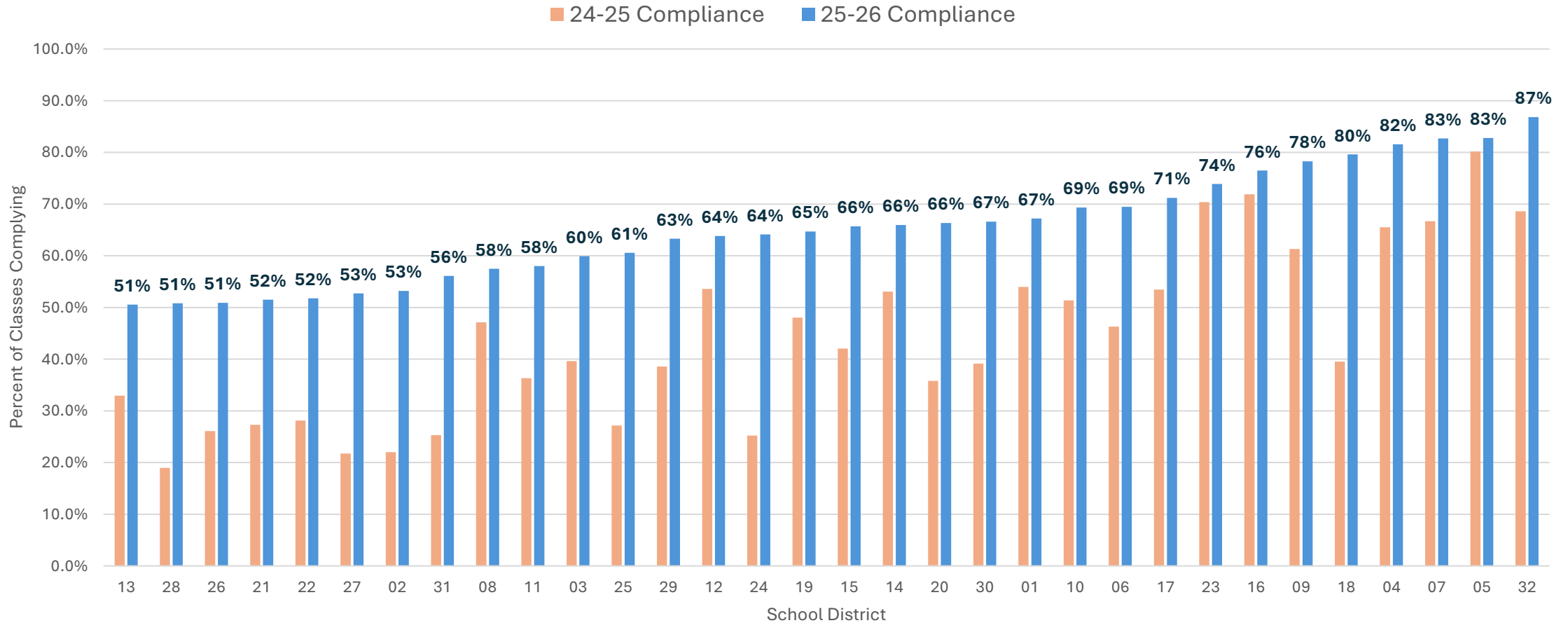
What has happened since?

- Though law requires multi-year class size plan, DOE has STILL not developed or implemented such a plan
- DOE was already at more than 40% compliance when law was passed, due to enrollment decline – but then class sizes increased in 2023 due to Eric Adams budget cuts.
- This year DOE met 64% benchmark this year, *but only by exempting 10,535 classes in 123 schools from their calculations.*
- More than 700 schools received funding for class size reduction this year but could only apply if they had the space at their current enrollment.

What about next year?

- Principals have once again been asked as they were last year to apply for class size funds but only if they have the space to reduce class size.
- In the NYC prelim budget, \$543 million is allocated for FY 2027 to hire about 6,000 more teachers, and a total of \$943 million thereafter.
- Yet [IBO's latest report](#) estimates the cost for staffing at the far lower level of about \$700M over the next two years
- Both the IBO estimate & (we assume) that of the city assume NO change in enrollment in any school. But if enrollment doesn't change hard to see where these teachers will be placed because 495 schools are too overcrowded to reach the mandate at their current enrollment.
- If enrollment policies were aligned with the class size goals in the law, the cost for both staffing and space would be much reduced by many billions, and that funding could be allocated towards other critical educational priorities.

Grades K-3 Class Size Compliance in 2025-2026 (by School District)



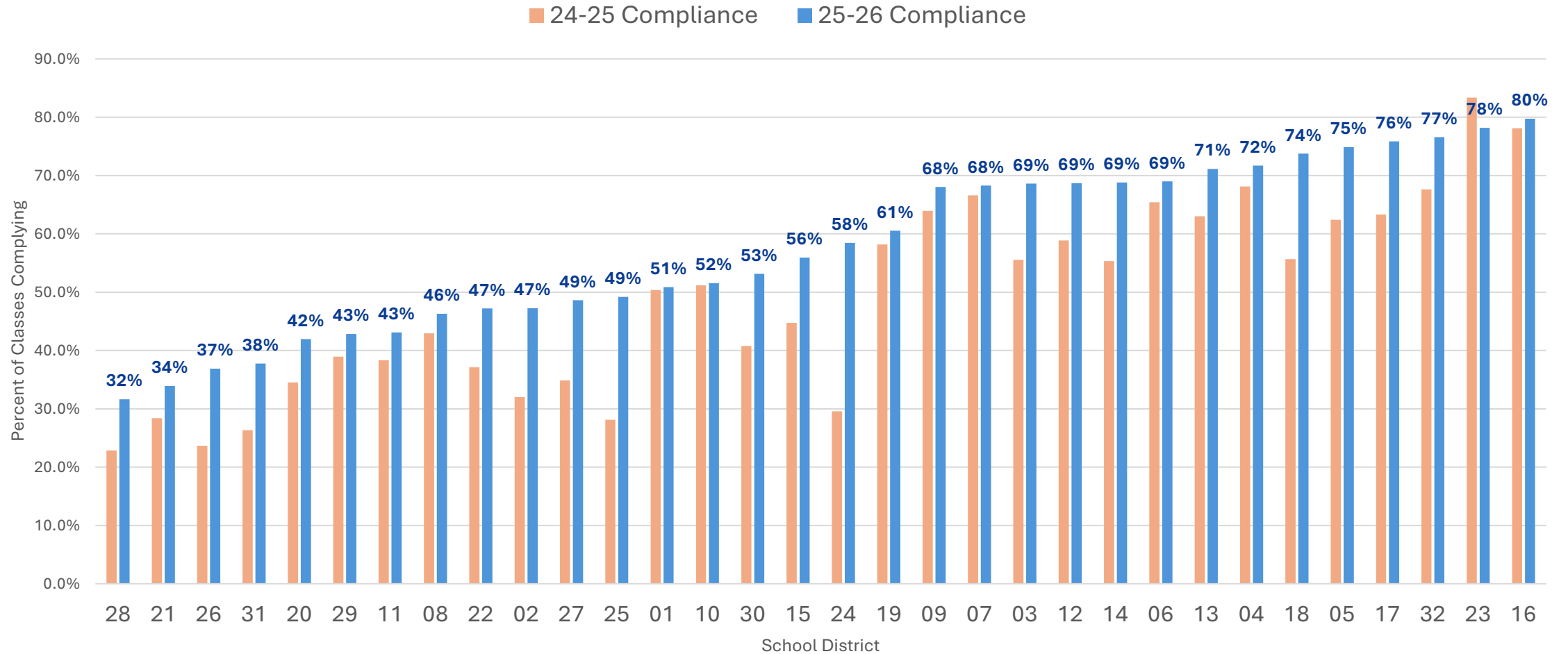
Data Sources: (2025-2026 Compliance): DOE Class Size Report, School Data [10/31/2025].

(2024-2025 Compliance): Table C, Class Size Compliance by School (10/31/2024)

Note: Self-Contained classes and K-5 Bridge classes removed

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Grades 4-8 Class Size Compliance in 2025-2026 (by School District)



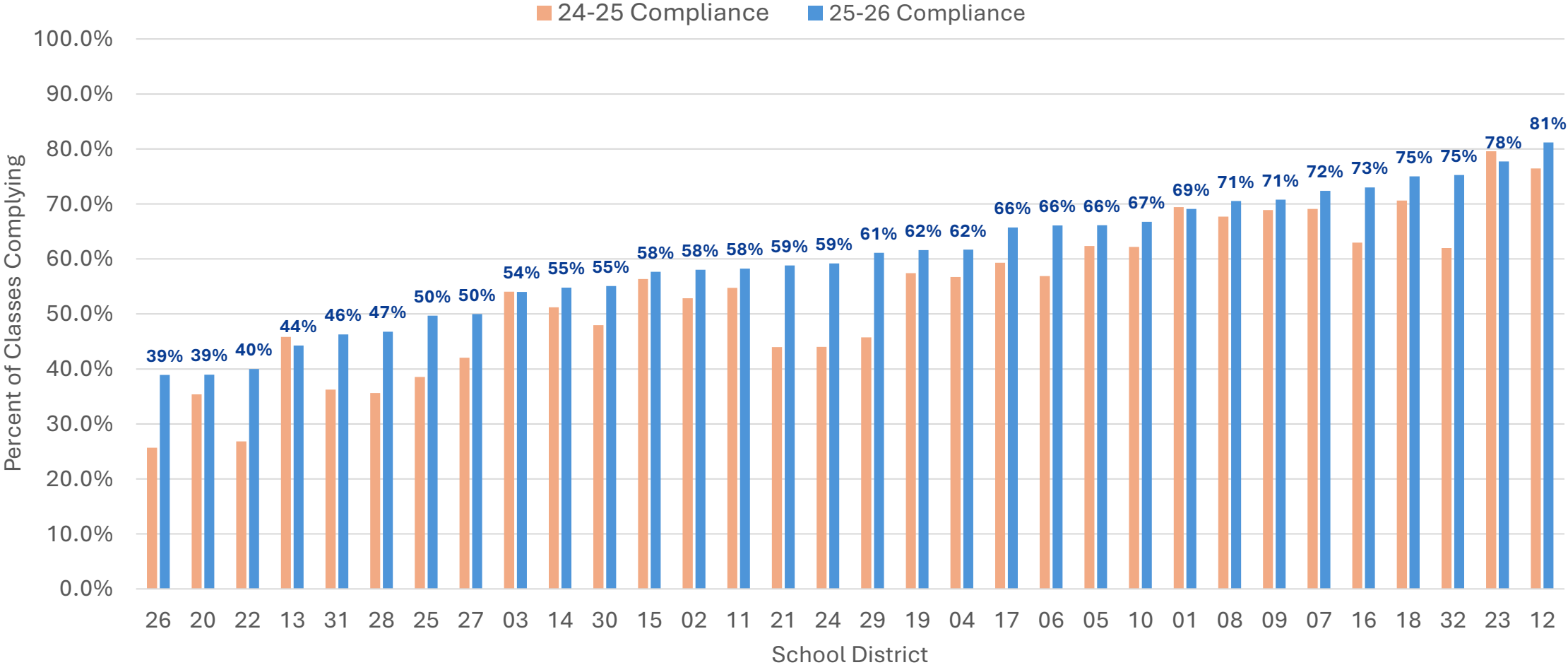
Data Sources: (2025-2026 Compliance): DOE Class Size Report, School Data [10/31/2025].

(2024-2025 Compliance): Table C, Class Size Compliance by School (10/31/2024)

Note: Self-Contained classes and K-5 Bridge classes removed

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Grades HS Class Size Compliance in 2025-2026 (by School District)



Data Sources: (2025-2026 Compliance): DOE Class Size Report, School Data [10/31/2025].

(2024-2025 Compliance): Table C, Class Size Compliance by School (10/31/2024)

Note: Self-Contained classes and K-5 Bridge classes removed

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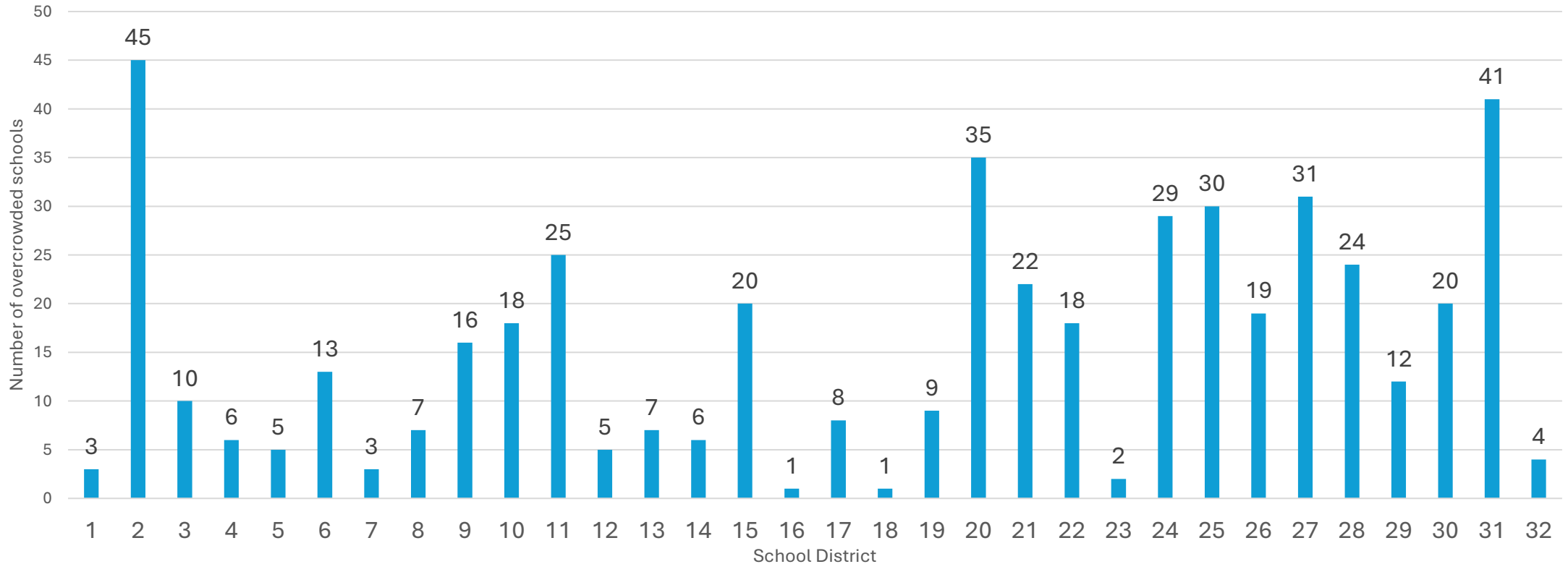
What about next year?

- Principals have once again been asked as last year to apply for class size funds but only if they have the space to reduce class size.
- In the NYC prelim budget, \$543 million is allocated for FY 2027 to hire about 6,000 more teachers, rising to \$943 million the next year for full compliance
- Yet [IBO's latest report](#) estimates the cost for staffing at the lower level of about \$700M over the next two years
- Both the IBO estimate & (we assume) the city assume NO change in enrollment in any school. But if enrollment doesn't change, hard to see where these teachers will be placed because 495 schools are too overcrowded to reach the mandate at their current enrollment.
- If enrollment policies were aligned with the class size goals in the law, the cost for both staffing and space would be much reduced by many billions, and that funding could be allocated towards other critical educational priorities.

There are at least 495 schools without sufficient space to comply with the caps

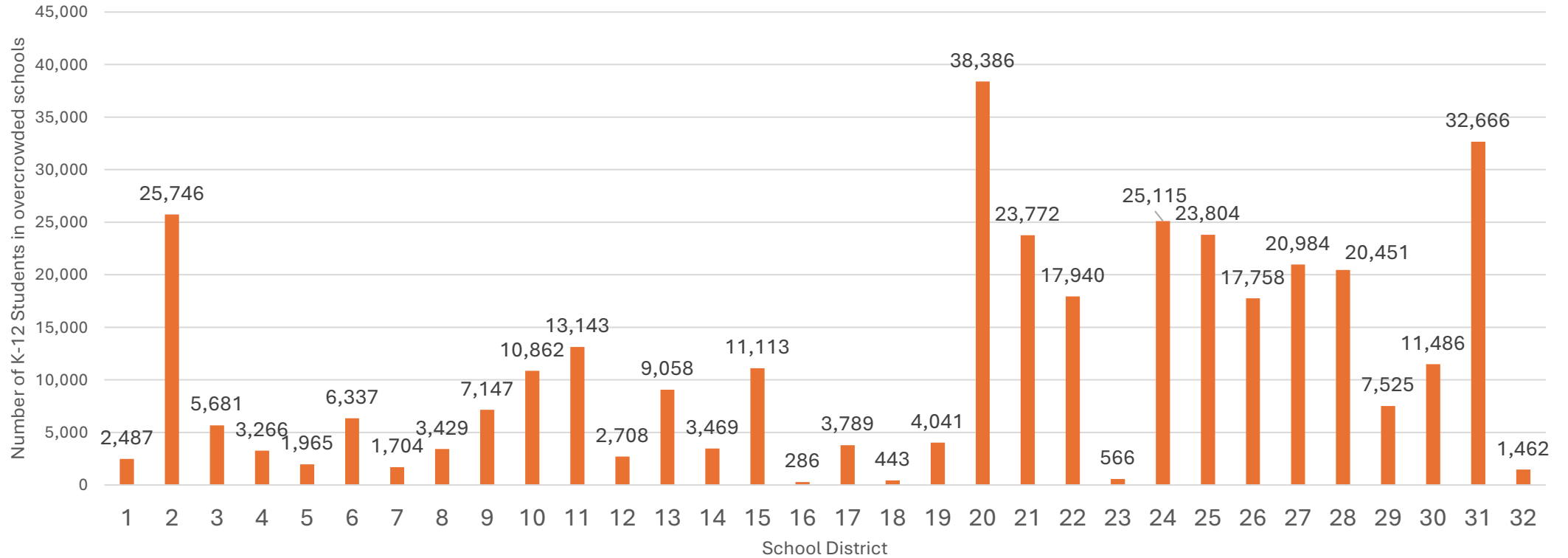
- DOE has identified 495 schools without sufficient space to lower class size to mandated levels at their current enrollment
- You can look up your own schools to see if they are on the list at <https://tinyurl.com/495schools>
- These schools enroll nearly half of all students and more than 250,000 students in poverty

495 schools have insufficient space to lower class size at current enrollment, according to DOE (by school district)



*Data Sources: DOE Class Size Space Analysis 2024-2025
NYC DOE School Locations Data (as of 12/16/24).*

46% of K-12 Students* (358,589) in schools with insufficient space to lower class size at current enrollment (by school district)



*Data Sources: [DOE Class Size Space Analysis 2024-2025](#)
[Table B: 2024-2025 Unaudited* Register Snapshot as of 10/31/2024](#)
[NYC DOE School Locations Data \(as of 12/16/24\)](#).
 * - Data excludes District 75 students.*

Which schools have smaller classes, and which do not?

- If schools are divided into quartiles according to their **weighted need**, meaning their percentage and number of high-risk students, twice as many Black students, more than 5 times the number of Hispanic students, and more than 5 times the number of students in poverty attend NYC schools in the highest weighted need quartile than those in the lowest weighted need quartile
- ***Yet fewer than half of the classes in the highest weighted need quartile met the smaller class size caps this fall, compared to 73.6% of the classes in the lowest weighted need quartile.***
- In fact, the higher the weighted need, the lower percentage of classes met the cap in every quartile.
- This same trend can be seen in other high-need categories as well, including multi-racial students, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners – all of whom are enrolled in larger numbers in the highest need quartile and yet their schools are the least likely to meet the class size caps, as seen in the chart in the next slide.

Weighted Need Quartiles (From SED)	Number of Schools	% of Classes Complying (2025-2026)	Enrollment (2024-2025)	% of All Enrollment Citywide	Black Students	Hispanic Students	Multi-Racial Students	Native American Students	Students with Disabilities	English Language Learner Students	Students in Poverty (Minimum)
1 - Lowest Need	379	73.6%	91,379	11.35%	23,414	32,016	3,868	734	20,951	9,618	57,509
2 - Moderate Need	382	69.1%	142,296	17.68%	38,271	59,508	3,508	1,723	31,566	19,462	104,075
3 - High Need	382	65.5%	183,869	22.85%	42,110	88,794	3,223	2,514	40,579	34,362	147,195
4 - Highest Need	383	49.3%	387,229	48.12%	47,185	166,439	5,460	5,042	71,012	80,618	307,222
Grand Total	1526	59.5%	804,773	100.00%	150,980	346,757	16,059	10,013	164,108	144,060	616,001

Issues with the capital plan

- SCA testified last year before the NYC Council that 70K additional seats needed to comply with the law
- But less than half of those seats --33,417 -- are funded in current 2025-2029 Capital Plan
- 57% of these seats are still unsited; 39% unspecified as to district/subdistrict/ or grade level;
- Only 12,426 seats are projected to be completed by Sept. 2028 -- deadline for full class size compliance – and most of these funded in the prior capital plan
- Lag resulted in part b/c Mayor Adams admin slashed more than \$2B from school construction after the class size law was passed, funds that were only partially restored in July 2024 because of a requirement in the state budget

Only 12,426 seats to be ready by Sept 2028 (deadline in the law) 8,205 carried over from previous capital plan. 4,221 in new plan



Data Sources: [FY 2025-2029 Five Year Capital Plan Proposed Amendment - February 2026](#), FY25-29 New Capacity Projects (C7-C12), FY20-24 Capacity Projects in Process (C15).

Note: three projects listed as having estimated completion dates of ‘September 2025’ have been removed from analysis. (2 projects in 78Q & 1 in District 8)

Other strategies Class Size Working Group proposed to produce more space for class size reduction

- Our [Dec. 2023 report](#) also called for balancing enrollment between nearby overcrowded and underutilized schools – that would likely save billions in staffing and school construction costs and years of time
- Re-starting School Siting Task force to more quickly identify suitable sites with more community involvement
- Building more schools as part of new housing developments – as schools can be “anchor tenants” to help with financing
- Reviving Educational Construction Fund, a Public benefit corporation that was created by the New York State Legislature in *1967* to finance mixed-use real estate projects which feature new school facilities but now is mostly moribund.
- None of these recommendations have been adopted so far by DOE

Aligning enrollment with class size goals

- Balancing enrollment between nearby schools some of which overcrowded and others underenrolled would likely not only save billions in staffing and school construction costs and years of time
- This would also likely lead to more diversity & help support underenrolled schools which now struggle with inadequate budgets
- Many elite schools like Bard HS & Special music school that receive hundreds of applications already cap enrollment to keep class sizes low;— no reason this shouldn't be done for less elite schools
- Many other schools cap enrollment in order to meet the UFT class size contractual limits

DOE arguments against aligning enrollment with class size don't hold water

- Though DOE argues that this would cause parents to leave the system, studies indicate the reverse
- When CA public schools lowered class size, [research shows](#) that this reform attracted thousands more families to the system
- Last year, DOE [surveyed parents](#) who took their kids out of the public schools, to ask them what contributed to their decision.
- 82% said class size was a factor, and 58% said it contributed “a lot” to their decision.

Class Size Working Group also recommended shifting some PreK and 3K classes from overcrowded ES to nearby CBOS

- Nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the 266 elementary schools on the DOE list of schools that are too overcrowded to meet the class size caps have 3K and PreK classes
- Yet there are nearly twice as many empty PreK and 3K seats (15,778) in CBOs and ECCs in the same districts as the number of PreK and 3K students in these schools
- By shifting some of these early education programs to nearby CBOs and ECCs, DOE could free up as many as 450 classrooms in overcrowded elementary schools, with school construction savings as much as \$1.7B.
- CBOs rate higher in school quality in one of the two evaluation systems used by DOE and equal in the other & are also able to offer extended day & year programs, essential for working parents.
- Last year principals who wanted to lower class size but didn't have the space were able to request this; this year they were told they could not even ask.

What can you do?

- If your school doesn't have smaller classes in compliance with the law, ask your principal and/or SLT why, and whether the school applied for these funds last year or for next year.
- If they haven't, ask why, and if it's a matter of inadequate space.
- If the school lacks space, ask your principal and your CEC/Superintendent what steps DOE is making to provide more space in the future, either via a specific building project or an adjustment in enrollment, or any other strategy.
- If the answer doesn't satisfy you, write to your City Councilmember and State legislators to complain, and copy me.

Other advocacy opportunities

- **Testify at City Council budget hearing on Monday March 23.** Public testimony will start at about 2 PM and can be done online. Sign up online at <https://council.nyc.gov/testify/>
- If you can testify and want to be on a panel with Class Size Matters, email us asap at info@classsizematters.org and we will try to arrange this. You can also submit written testimony.
- Speak about the specific situation at your school and mention if there is no apparent plan to provide smaller classes. You should also email your testimony to your Councilmember and Legislators.
- Or join us in meetings w/your electeds on this issue. **Take this survey to let us know which of these you'd be willing to do:** <https://tinyurl.com/classsize2026>