



Class size: 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

- Bill signed by Gov. in Sept 2022, who gave DOE an extra planning year to comply
- Law 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. .
- Some exemptions allowed in the law but only with agreement of UFT and CSA.

What has happened since?

- Though law requires detailed multi-year class size plan showing in which schools using which levers class sizes will be reduced, DOE has STILL never developed or implemented such a plan
- Schools were already at more than 40% compliance when law was passed, due to enrollment decline – but then class sizes increased in 2023 due to budget cuts; Adams also cut the capital plan by over \$2 billion.
- 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.

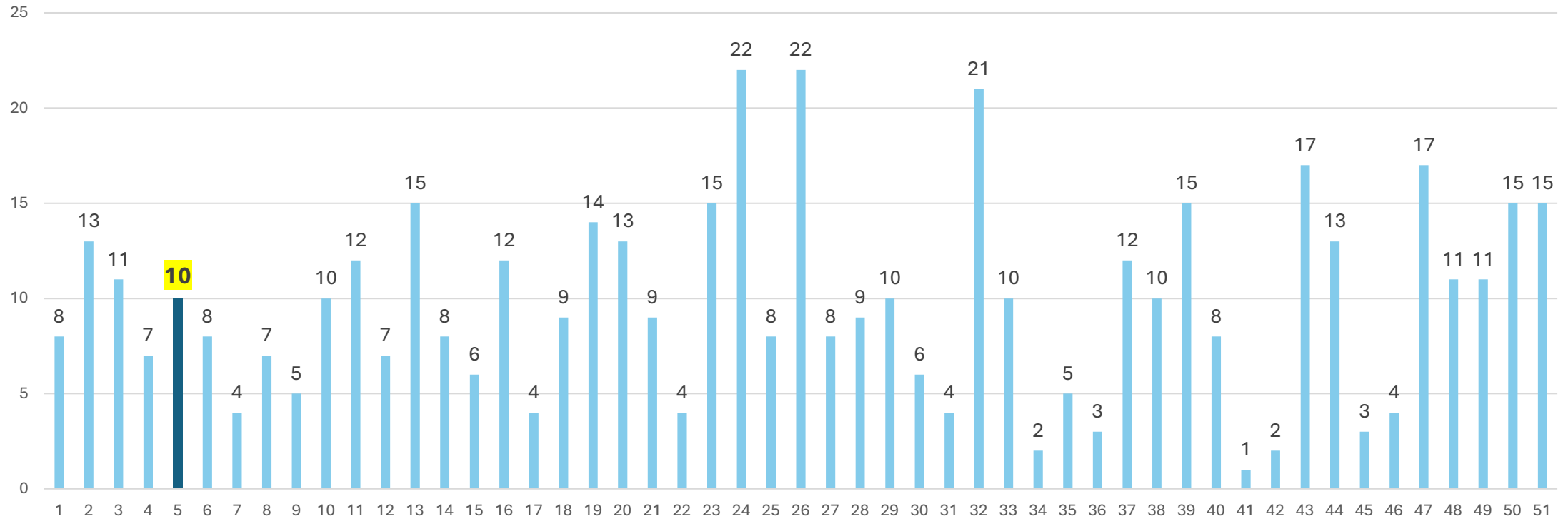
What about next year?

- Principals 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, and a total of \$943 million thereafter.
- [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.

495 Schools without space to comply

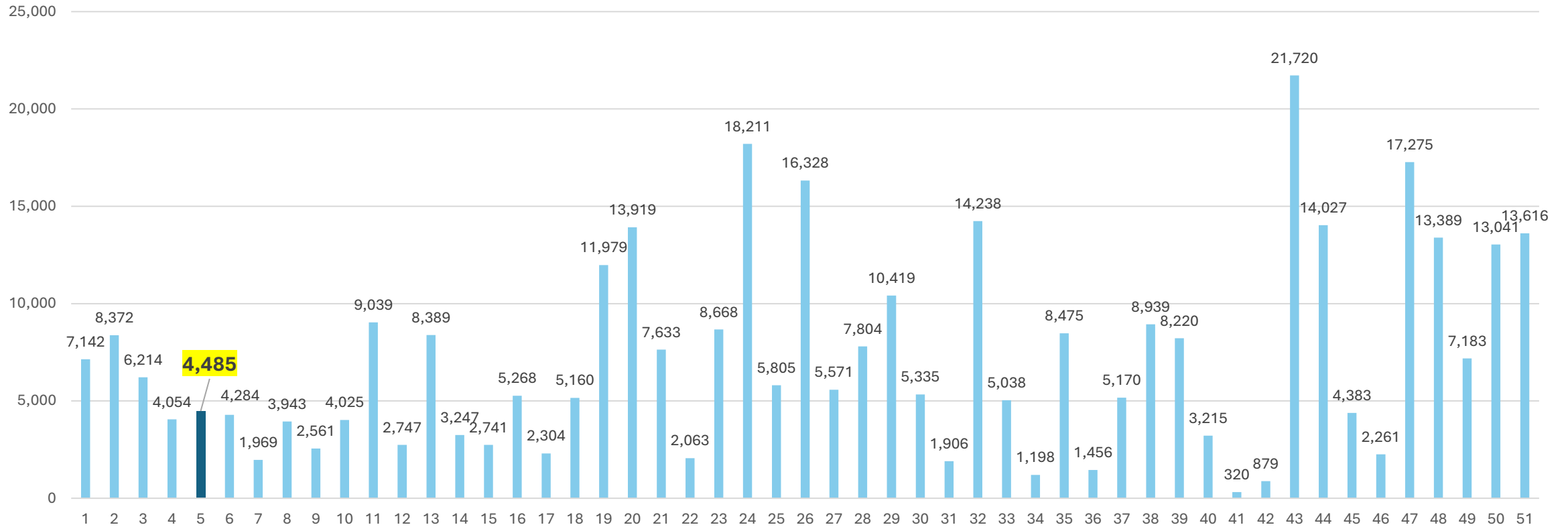
- DOE says there are 495 schools without sufficient space to lower class size to mandated levels at their current enrollment
- You can look up schools to see if they are on the list at <https://tinyurl.com/495schools>
- These schools enroll nearly half of all students and more than 250,000 students in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

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



Data Sources: [DOE Class Size Space Analysis 2024-2025](#)
[NYC DOE School Locations Data \(as of 11/17/2025\)](#).

46% of K-12 students* (358,589) in schools with insufficient space to lower class size at current enrollment (by council 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 \(as of 11/17/2025\).](#)
 * - Data excludes District 75 students.

Which schools have smaller classes & which not?

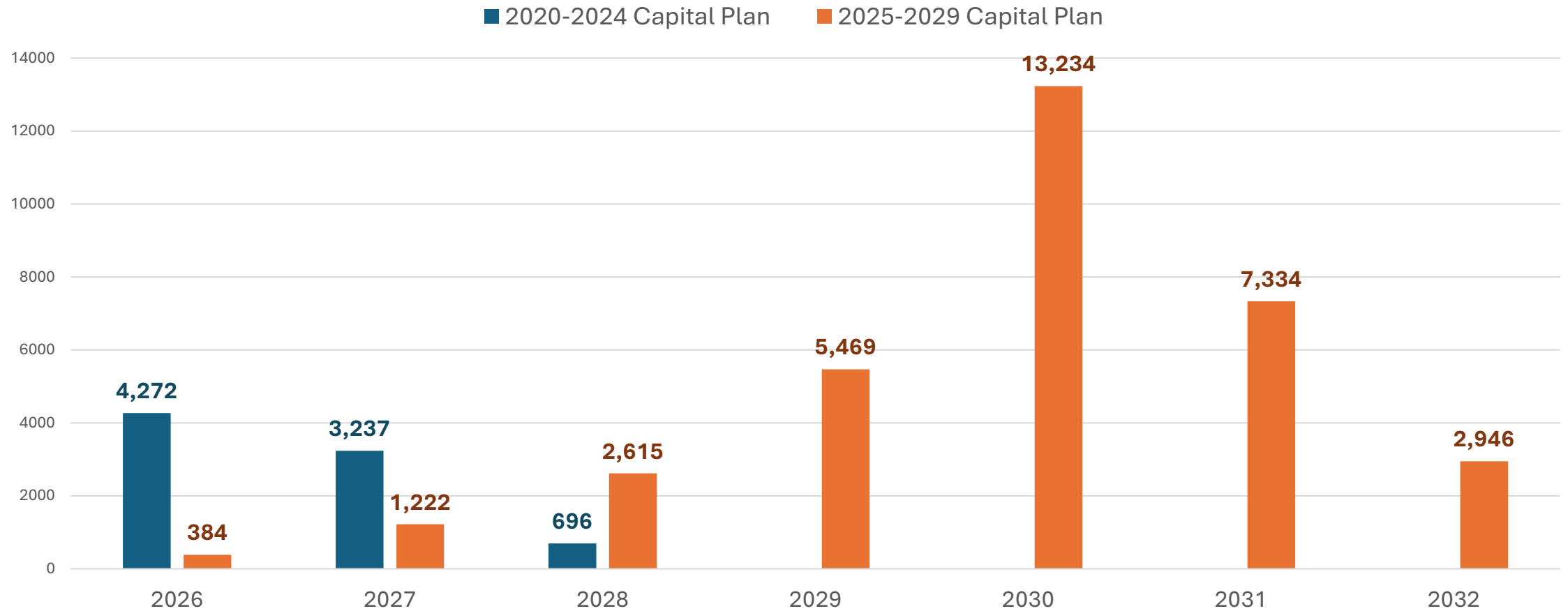
- There are school in every district with low rates of class size compliance.
- NYSED each year prepares a list of NYC schools according to their weighted need, to determine how the state C4E funds should be allocated. Class size reduction is supposed to be funded primarily though the C4E program.
- This weighted need formula takes into numbers and percentages of students at each school including those in poverty, English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and low-achievement. The formula is [described in more detail here](#). [This is different from the [ENI rate](#) that the DOE and some other groups have used in their analyses, that incorporates a narrower set of factors, doesn't include low-achievement, and considers only the percentage of high needs students at a school, rather than the rate and number of such students.]
- If schools are divided into quartiles, according the NYSED's [2025-26 weighted need list](#), those schools with the highest greatest need had the LOWEST class size compliance of 49.3% as of Oct. 205, compared to 73.6% of schools with the lowest weighted need. In fact, the higher the weighted need, the lower their percentage of classes in compliance with the law.
- Schools in the highest weighted need and the lowest class size compliance rate enroll more than twice as many Black students, more than 5X as many Hispanic students, 8X the number of students with disabilities, nearly 9X the number of ELLs, and more than 6X the number of students in poverty than schools in the lowest weighted need quartile.

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 before the NYC Council last year 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 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
- SCA now says they are re-evaluating those figures but haven't released any new estimates.

Number of seats to be completed over the next seven years, with only 12,426 seats projected to be completed by Sept. 2028 (deadline in the class size law).



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).

**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 – none in D2**



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)

What other steps has the DOE not taken to create space for smaller classes?

- DOE has adopted none of the recommendations made by the [Class Size Working Group report](#) in Dec. 2023 to facilitate and accelerate the acquisition of more space/
- These include Re-starting School Siting Task force to more quickly identify suitable sites with more community involvement
- Reviving Educational Construction Fund created in 1967 to create new schools in mixed development projects
- Include schools in the initial planning process for new housing where they can serve as an anchor tenant and help with financing
- New high rises going up in lots of neighborhoods where schools are already overcrowded and likely to become more so in the future

Aligning enrollment with class size goals

- Balancing enrollment between nearby schools would save billions in staffing and school construction costs and years of time – it 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 to meet the UFT class size contractual limits
- Without aligning enrollment with the class size goals in the law it is unlikely that most of the 500 overcrowded schools will ever be able to comply.

DOE arguments against this 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.

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

- Our [Dec. 2023 report](#) also called for 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.
- Shifting some 3K and PreK classes to nearby CBOs that have thousands of empty seats
- None of these recommendations have been adopted so far by DOE

Class Size Working Group also recommended shifting 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.