



Class size: where are we now and what strategies can be used to force the city to do better

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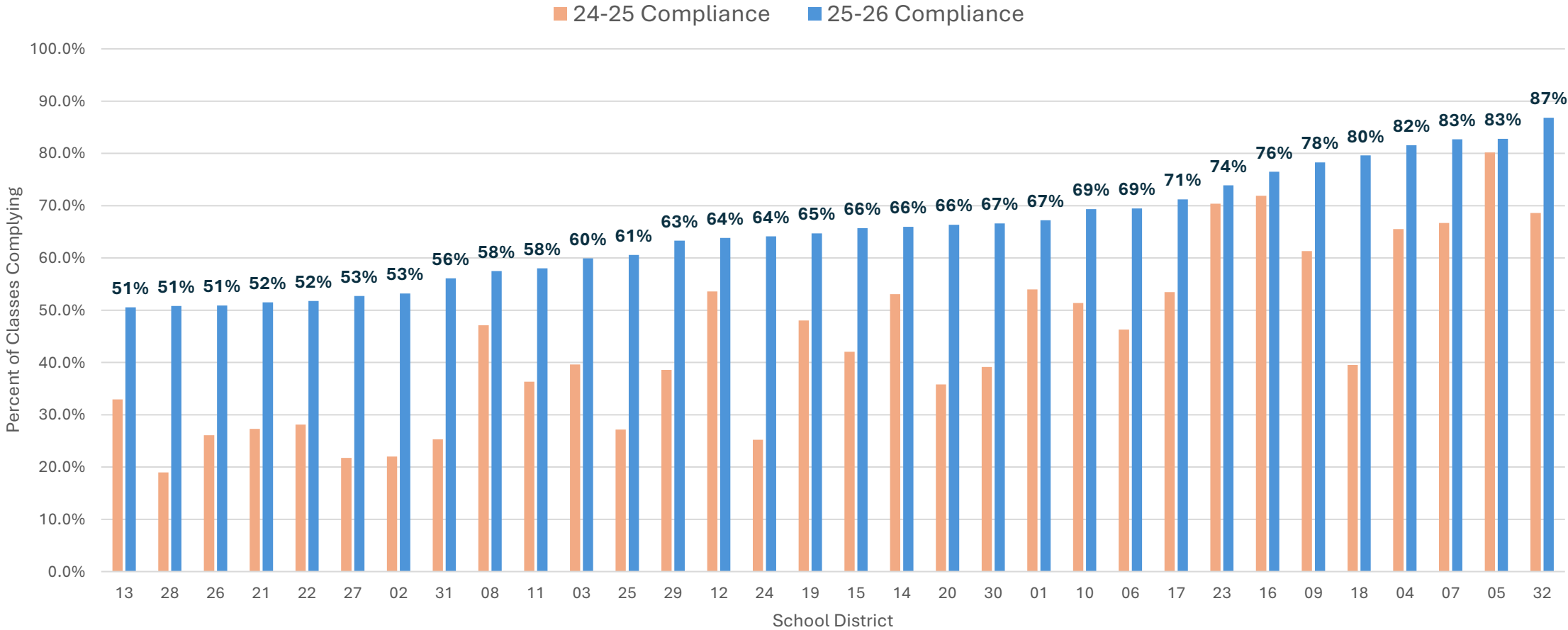
Class size law: what did it say?

- Law passed by Legislature in June 2022 & signed by Gov. in Sept 2022, who gave DOE an extra planning year to comply.
- It required 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 supposed to reach these caps each year, with schools at highest 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 in specific categories and ***only with agreement of UFT and CSA.***
- Schools already at 40% compliance when law passed, yet Adams cut school budgets, and class sizes increased instead.

What has happened since the law was passed?

- Mayor Adams also cut capital plan by over \$2 billion & though \$2B later restored through insistence of legislature that created a lag in school construction for the next 3 years.
- He did nothing to comply until his last year in office, when substantial funds were allocated for additional teachers
- More than 700 schools received funding for class size reduction this past school year but only if they had sufficient space at their current enrollment.
- DOE met 60% benchmark but only after 10,535 classes exempted in 123 schools from calculations – claiming more schools are planned nearby to provide them with more space in the future.

Last two years, K-3 Class Size Compliance ranged widely across NYC by school district



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

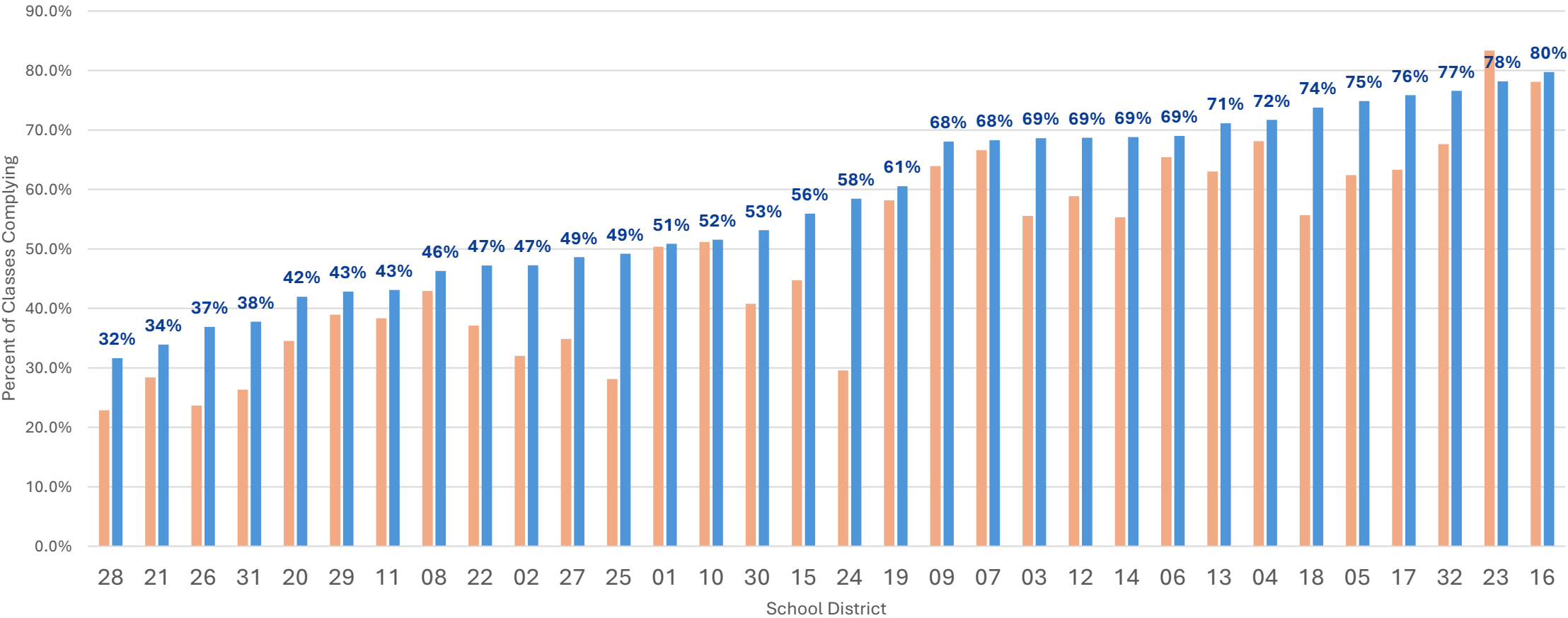
(2024-2025 Compliance): Table C, Class Size Compliance by School (10/31/2024)

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

Created by: Class Size Matters – December 9, 2025

Grades 4-8 Class Size Compliance ranges widely across the city (by School District)

24-25 Compliance 25-26 Compliance



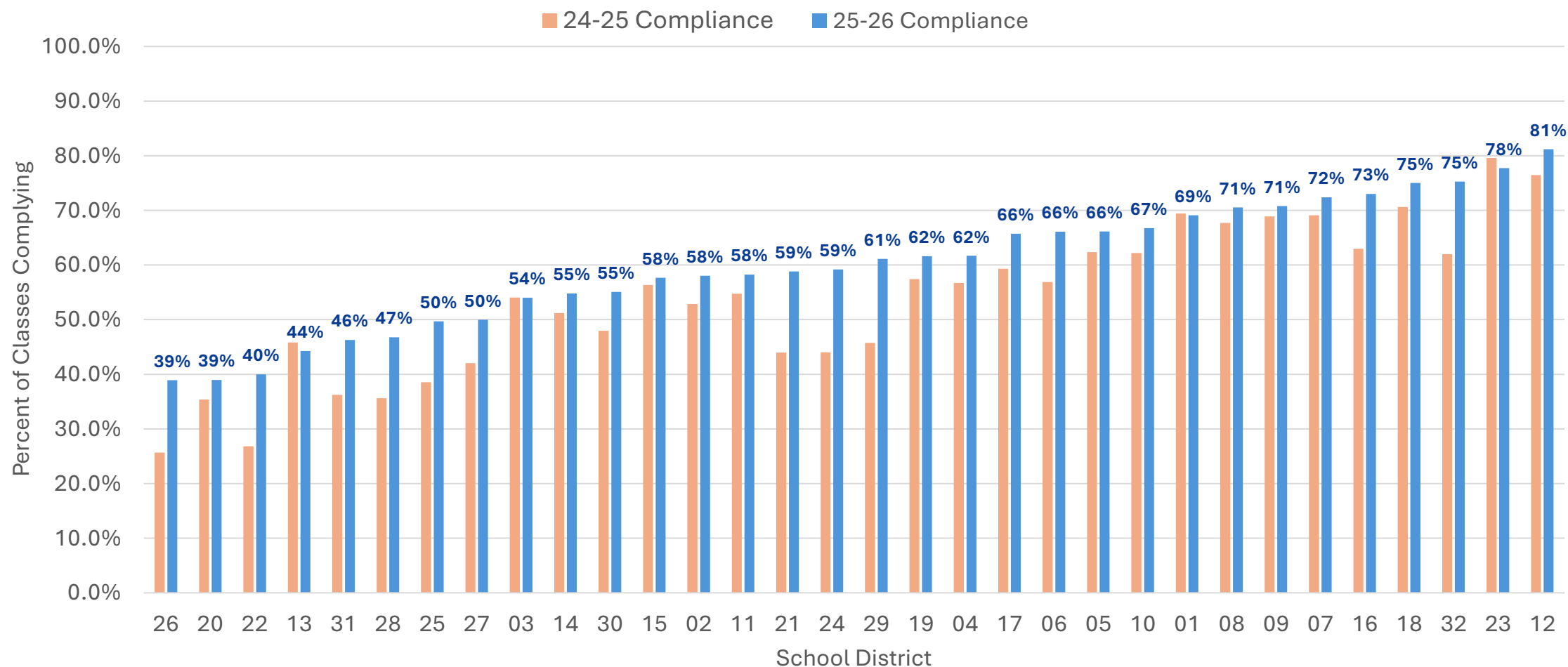
Data Sources: (2025-2026 Compliance): DOE Class Size Report, School Data [10/31/2025].

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

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

Created by: Class Size Matters – December 9, 2025

HS Class Size Compliance range widely across the city (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)

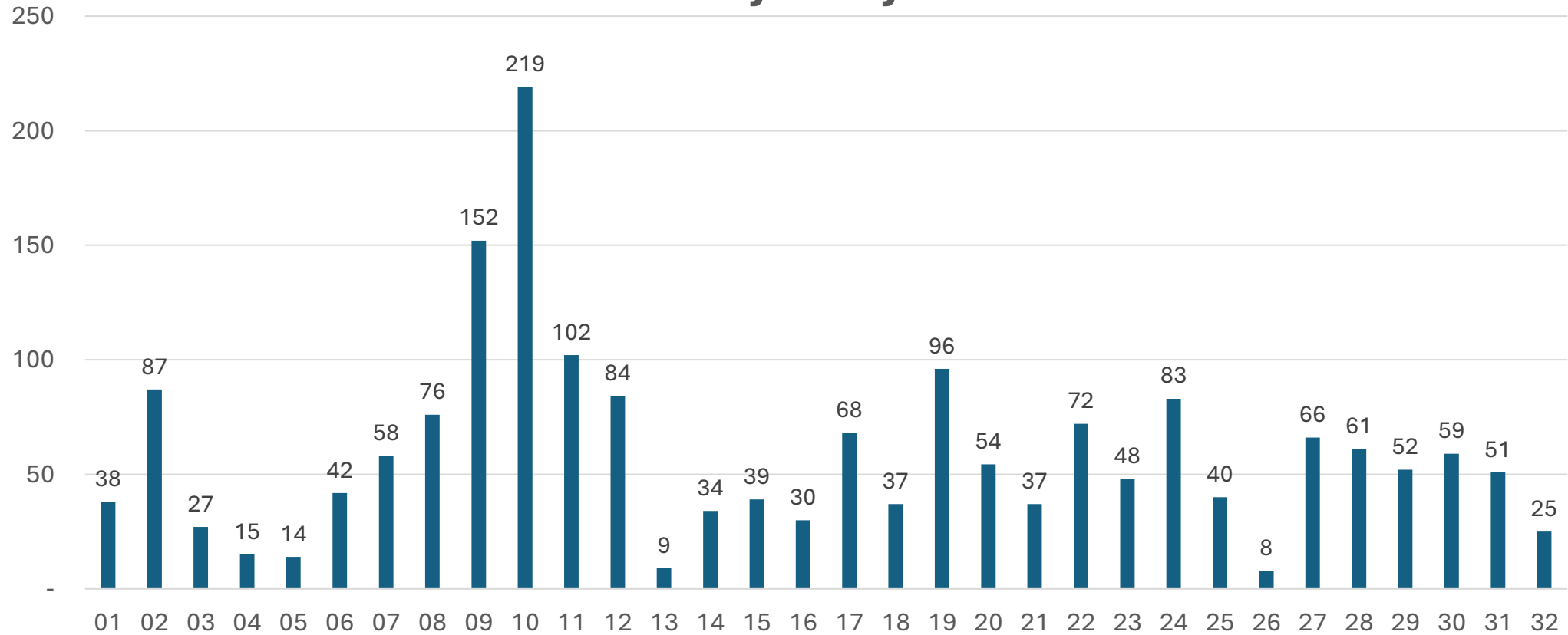
Note: Self-Contained classes and K-5 Bridge classes removed

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What happened to class size law & funding for next year

- Legislature amended law this spring to give Mayor Mamdani an extra two years to comply
- Now, DOE must meet 70% compliance next year, 80% by 2027-28, 90% by 2028-29 and 100% by 2029-2030.
- \$284M is being allocated to 366 schools to hire 1,883 more teachers for next year
- \$3.7M for extra teacher per diem + \$17.2M for additional Asst. Principals
- \$224M will come from state Contract for Excellence (C4E) program, while \$59.9M from city tax levy funds.
- All schools that received class size funds this year are also supposed to be getting same funds next year

Teachers funded for class size reduction 2026-2027 school year by school district



Data sources: School Allocation Memorandum No. 31, FY 2027: Table 3: FY 2027 Selection

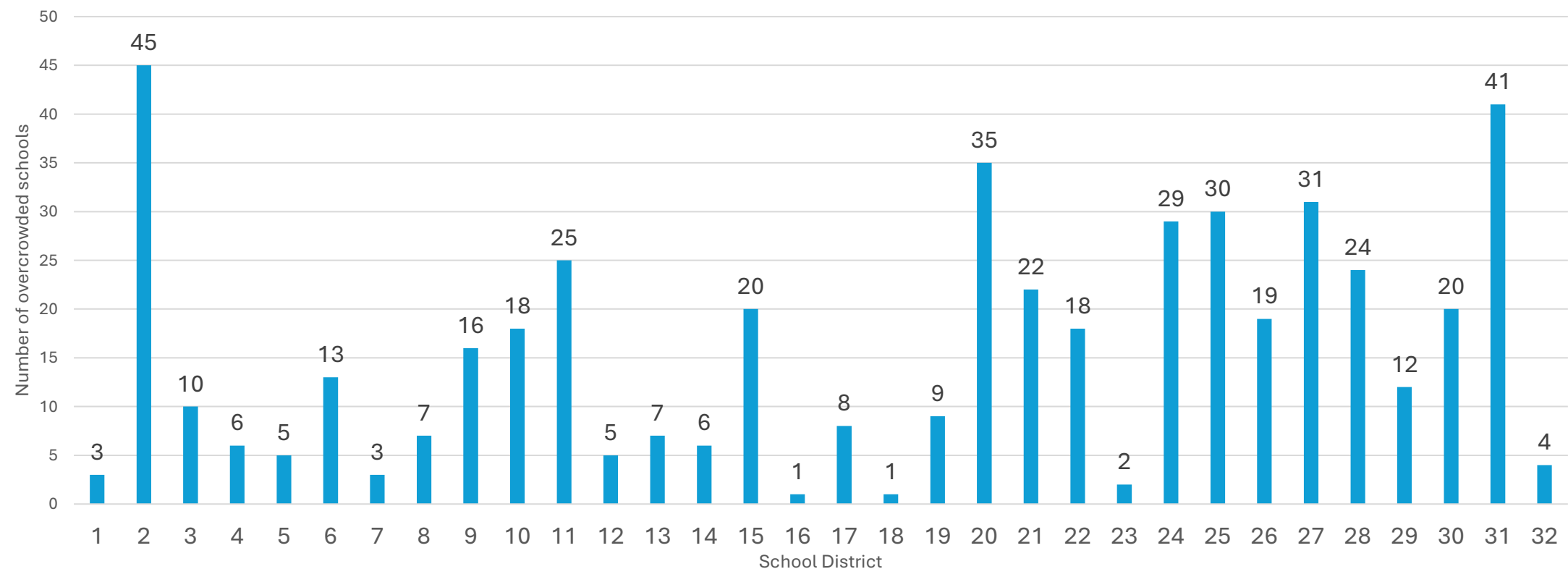
How were schools chosen for funds?

- Only schools with available space at current enrollment or who could make enough space were eligible
- DOE emphasized that most of the funding went to high need schools, which both the class size law and the C4E funding rules require.
- NYSED lists schools according to their weighted need requiring that 75% of funding should go to schools in the top 50% of weighted need. [2026-2027 Needs and Weights by School – SED](#)
- The weighted need formula takes into account number & percentage of students in poverty, ELLs, SWDs & low achievement.
- We found that at least 75% of the class size funding for next year is primarily going to high need schools
- Yet 129 schools out of 336 receiving class size funding for next year are low or medium need

495 Schools without space to comply

- In Dec. 2024, DOE posted a list of 495 schools without sufficient space to lower class size to mandated levels at their current enrollment
- These schools enroll nearly half of all students and more than 250,000 students in poverty
- You can look up your school to see if it is on the list at <https://tinyurl.com/495schools>
- DOE has provided no real plans on how most of these schools will lower class size with enough space

495 schools with insufficient space to lower class size at current enrollment by district, Dec. 2024



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

City's proposed "plan" does not comply with the law

- According to the class size law, the city's class size plan must be multi-year and specific.
- It must include the ***"actual class sizes for the current school year, and the projected class sizes for the upcoming school year for each school by grade level, as well as the annual capital plan for school construction and leasing to show how many classrooms will be added in each year and in which schools and districts to achieve the class size targets."***
- But the proposed plan for 2025-2026 as well as past year doesn't include any specific plans for any specific schools, aside for a few cases where annexes are already sited
- Nor does it include projected class sizes for next year or show how benchmarks will be achieved for following years.
- Though it claims that ***"each school with an identified space need has a clear path forward to support class size reduction efforts,"*** it lacks any concrete description as to how specific schools will receive the funding and space needed to lower class size to mandated levels within any specified time frame.

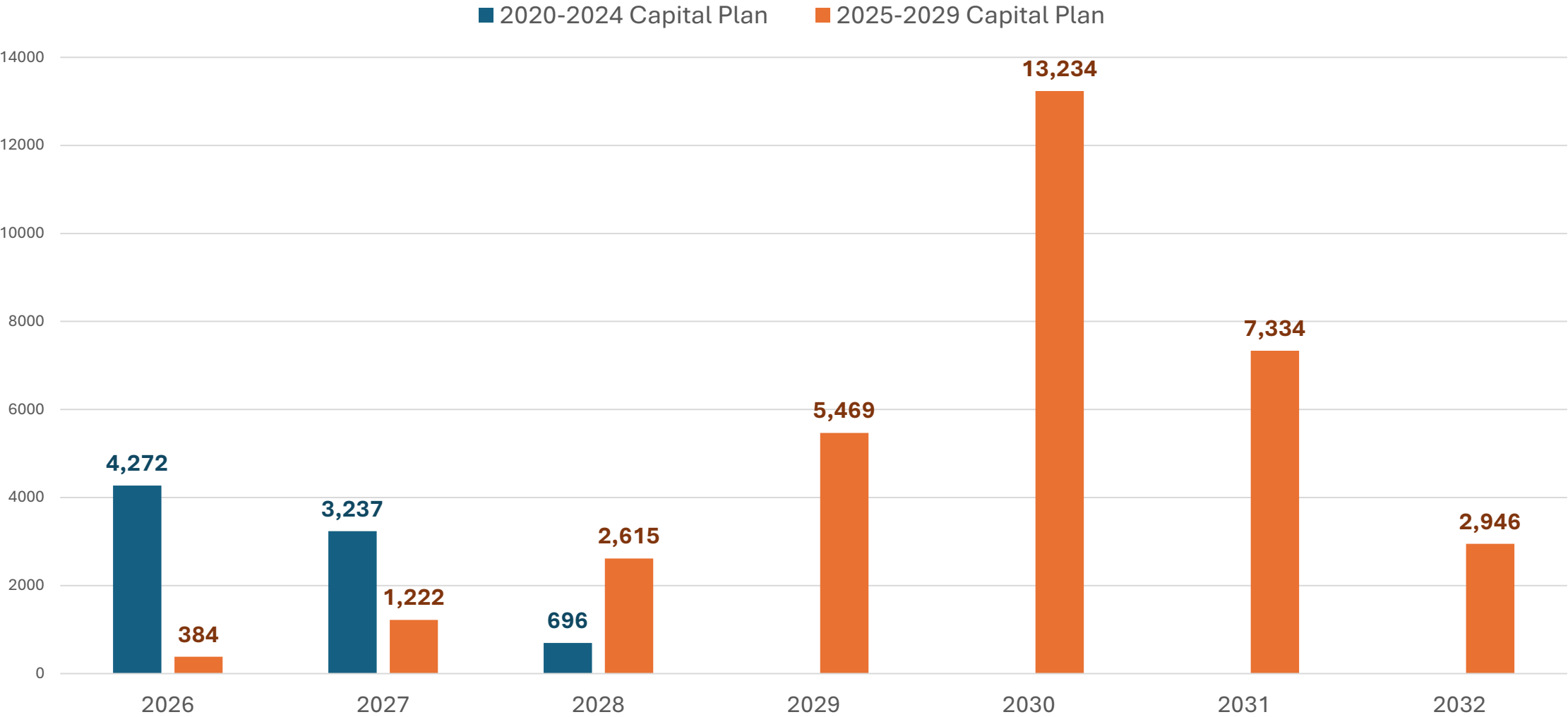
Now DOE says there are **610 schools** too overcrowded at current enrollment to comply

- Though this estimate has increased, they have not identified these schools by name
- Nor in most cases do they make firm commitments nor propose any timetable to address their need for more space.
- Examples: For 45 unspecified schools that they say only need small shifts in enrollment to meet class size goals, they say they “*will be **considered** for such adjustments by District Planning, Student Enrollment, Superintendents and teams.*”
- For 133 unspecified schools that DOE admits more school space must be built to provide sufficient space, they say “*SCA will work to identify viable solutions for these schools in accordance with available funding.*”

Lack of space in capital plan

- SCA testified before the NYC Council last year that 70K additional school seats would be needed to comply with the law, but fewer than half of those seats -- 33,417 -- are funded in current 2025-2029 Capital Plan
- 57% of these seats still unsited; 39% unspecified as to district/subdistrict/ or grade level;
- Executive budget will add \$1.5B to capital plan but SCA has not released any updated plan nor indicated how these funds will be spent or where additional space created.
- In any case, \$1.5B would fund only about 8,000 more seats
- According to City Council, DOE estimated that 4,656 extra seats that came online in Sept. 2025 increased class size compliance rates by only 1.2%.
- If the same ratio holds, an additional 8,300 seats would improve compliance by a little more than 2%.

Number of seats to be completed over the next seven years

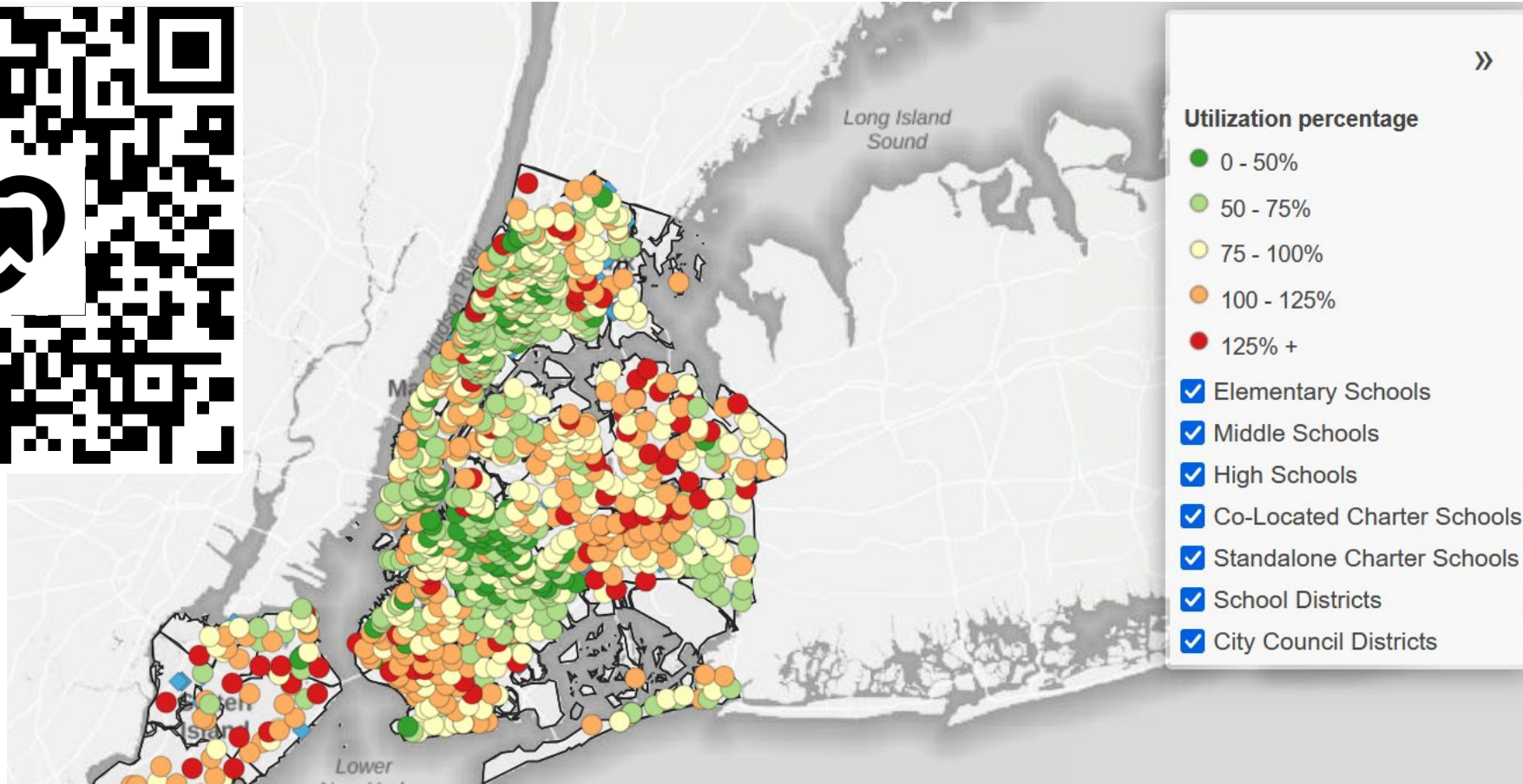


Data Sources: [FY 2025-2029 Five Year Capital Plan Proposed Amendment - February 2026](#), FY25-29 New Capacity Projects (C7-C12), FY20-24 Capacity Projects in Process (C15).

Aligning enrollment with class size goals would allow more schools to comply more quickly & affordably

- In many cases, underutilized schools sit nearby overcrowded schools; balancing enrollment would save billions in staffing and school construction costs and years of time
- This strategy could also lead to more diversity & help support underenrolled schools which now struggle with inadequate budgets
- Yet so far DOE has refused to allow any school to cap enrollment to help them meet legal goals, tho some schools like Bard HS & Special Music school already cap enrollment to keep class sizes low.
- Many other schools cap enrollment to meet UFT class size contractual limits which haven't changed in over 50 years
- Without aligning enrollment with the class size goals unlikely that most overcrowded schools will ever be able to comply – and schools that comply now may no longer as enrollment increases in the future.

Sortable map of schools with utilization rates at <https://tinyurl.com/NYCutilizationmap>



DOE arguments against capping enrollment & balancing it between schools 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 r 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.
- DOE also argues that capping enrollment at “popular schools” might disproportionately impact Black and Hispanic students, though provide no data to back this up.
- Instead, reducing class sizes in these schools could benefit these students enrolled in these schools the most.

We've also heard reports of schools denied class size funds though they have available space.....

- Several schools with smaller classes this year are predicting class sizes will grow & compliance levels fall because enrollment office is sending them more students
- Other schools say they are losing teachers & class sizes will grow because they cannot afford to cover their higher salaries due to longevity
- As a result, DOE may fall backwards in terms of overall compliance

DOE admits they plan to use exemption process increasingly in the future

- They say: we “*hope to use the exemption process as part of the overall strategy to comply with the law*” & use the word 35 times in the report.
- Last year they did not name exempted schools in advance in their proposed plan, but only afterwards when they produced their Nov. report to “show” they reached 60% compliance by exempting 10,535 classes
- They also say there are 15 unnamed “Specialized HS/G&T” schools that they would like to exempt with UFT/CSA approval – even as there are only 9 specialized HS

What other steps could DOE take to create space for smaller classes?

- [Class Size Working Group report](#) in Dec. 2023 made several proposals to facilitate and accelerate the acquisition of more space
- Re-start School Siting Task force to more quickly identify suitable sites with more community involvement
- Revive Educational Construction Fund created in 1967 to create new schools in mixed development projects
- Incorporate schools in the planning process for new housing where they can serve as an anchor tenant and help with financing
- New high rises being built in many neighborhoods where schools already overcrowded & likely to become more so in the future
- DOE has adopted none of these proposals, despite many districts may see enrollment growth based on analysis of housing starts, combined with formula derived from Census data

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

- Nearly 75% of the 266 elementary schools on the DOE list of schools that are too overcrowded to meet the class size goals have 3K and PreK classes
- Yet nearly twice as many empty PreK and 3K seats (15,778) are in CBOs and ECCs as the number of PreK and 3K students in public schools in same district
- By shifting some of these classes to nearby CBOs and ECCs, DOE could free up as many as 450 classrooms in overcrowded elementary schools, with construction savings as much as \$1.7B.
- CBOs rate higher in school quality & also are 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 shift --this year they were told they could not ask – though we know of at least one elementary school that was allowed to do this, others were not.

DOE proposes only one new policy change to accelerate acquisition of space for schools

- Instead of any of these positive, pro-active and practical proposals to speed up school siting and construction, instead DOE proposed plan reveals:
- *“City is currently engaging with elected officials at the State level on a proposed SEQRA reform that would carve out public school construction projects from environmental review.”*
- **The answer to providing NYC students with smaller classes they are entitled is not to expose them to environmental harm.**

Strategies for parents/teachers moving forward

- Urge your principal or SLT to ask your Superintendent &/or Erin Gehant at EGehant2@schools.nyc.gov what the short term or LT plan for compliance is for your particular school – point out this is what the law requires.
- If you get an answer, demand that this strategy be put in writing & incorporated into the city's proposed plan so that it is enforceable.
- Also demand this at the C4E/class size hearings starting tomorrow Monday June 29 at 6 PM via Zoom, running through July 2; more info at <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/about-us/funding/contracts-for-excellence>

Borough hearings start tomorrow – though you can attend and speak at any no matters where you live or yr child attends school links at: <https://learndoe.org/contractforexcellence/>

These hearings will take place on Zoom. Please register here to attend the event and indicate whether you would like to provide public comment by speaking at the meeting. You may also provide comments during the meeting by writing them in the Meeting Chat.

+ MANHATTAN - Monday, June 29, 2026 - 6:00 PM

+ STATEN ISLAND - Tuesday, June 30, 2026 - 6:00 PM

+ QUEENS - Wednesday, July 01, 2026 - 6:00 PM

+ BROOKLYN - Thursday, July 02, 2026 - 6:00 PM

What you can say at these hearings

- Parents and teachers speak about how city's proposal does not comply with the law because it doesn't explain how your school, along with many others, will be able to have smaller classes any time in the future
- You should demand that the plan be revised accordingly with those specifics added before it is submitted to the state.
- Also ask your elected officials to attend and speak out at these hearings; by law elected officials were supposed to be alerted to hearings but were not.

More strategies to push DOE to submit a real plan

- People should also submit written comments up to July 29 at ContractsForExcellence@schools.nyc.gov
- If you do, copy them to Chancellor Samuels nycchancellor@schools.nyc.gov, State Ed Commissioner at Betty.Rosa@nysed.gov & your state & local elected officials, and copy us at info@classsizematters.org
- Also share them in a separate email with a cover note to the Mayor's two City Hall education advisers – abrady@cityhall.nyc.gov and CBaytemur@cityhall.nyc.gov &

Also remember – UFT & CSA both have veto power over every DOE class size plan

- **No class size “plan” can be submitted to the state for its consideration without UFT & CSA prior approval, according to the law.**
- Teachers should ask your UFT chapter leader or you could email Michael Mulgrew directly at mmulgrew@uft.org to urge him not to approve any plan without a specific pathway towards compliance for your school explicitly stated in the plan
- Ask your principal to urge the CSA to demand the same
- Subscribe to our CSM email list for updates at <https://classsizematters.org/subscribe/>
- Email us if you have questions at info@classsizematters.org

Questions?

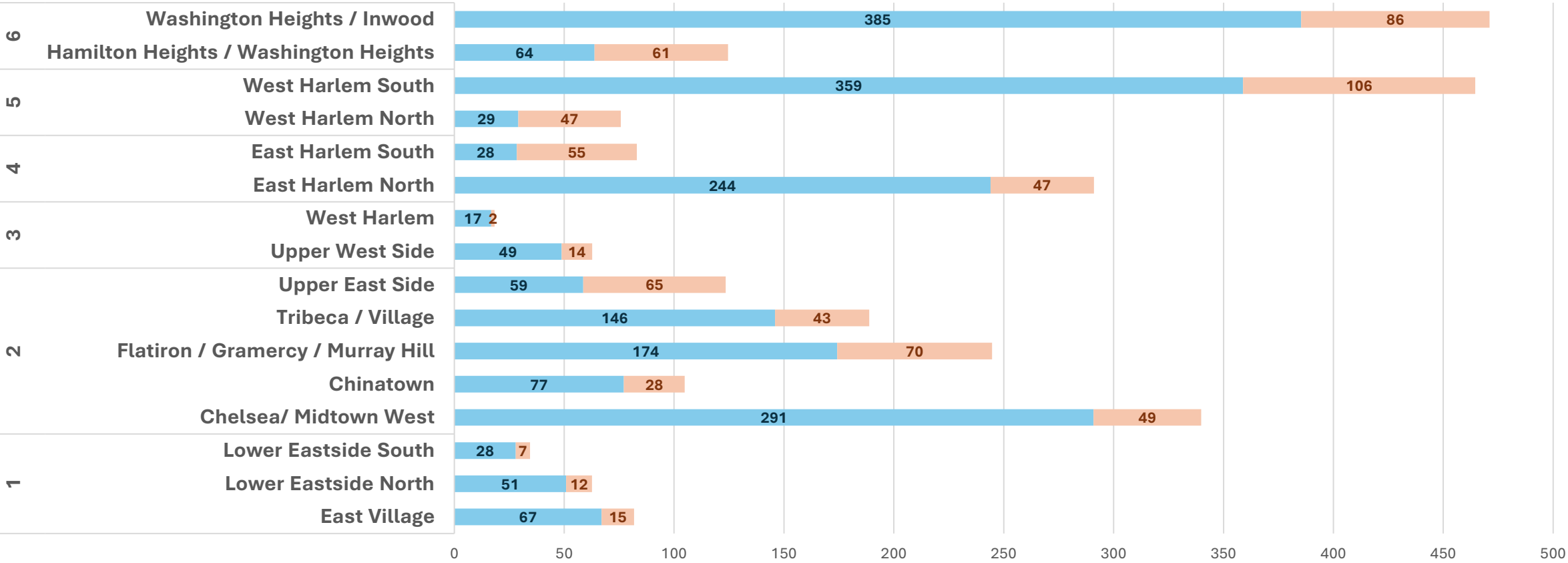


Type of Class/ Exemption	Requirements
Space Exemption	Approval by Chancellor and UFT and CSA presidents NYCPS must demonstrate capital budget is aligned to resolve exemption
Over-Enrolled Students Exemption	Approval by Chancellor and UFT and CSA presidents
License Area Shortage* Exemption	Approval by Chancellor and UFT and CSA presidents
Severe Economic Distress Exemption	Approval by Chancellor and UFT and CSA presidents
Elective & Specialty Classes	UFT may negotiate higher class sizes than targets if majority of school staff approve increase

* This refers to areas where there are an insufficient number of teachers in a certain license area (e.g., bilingual math).

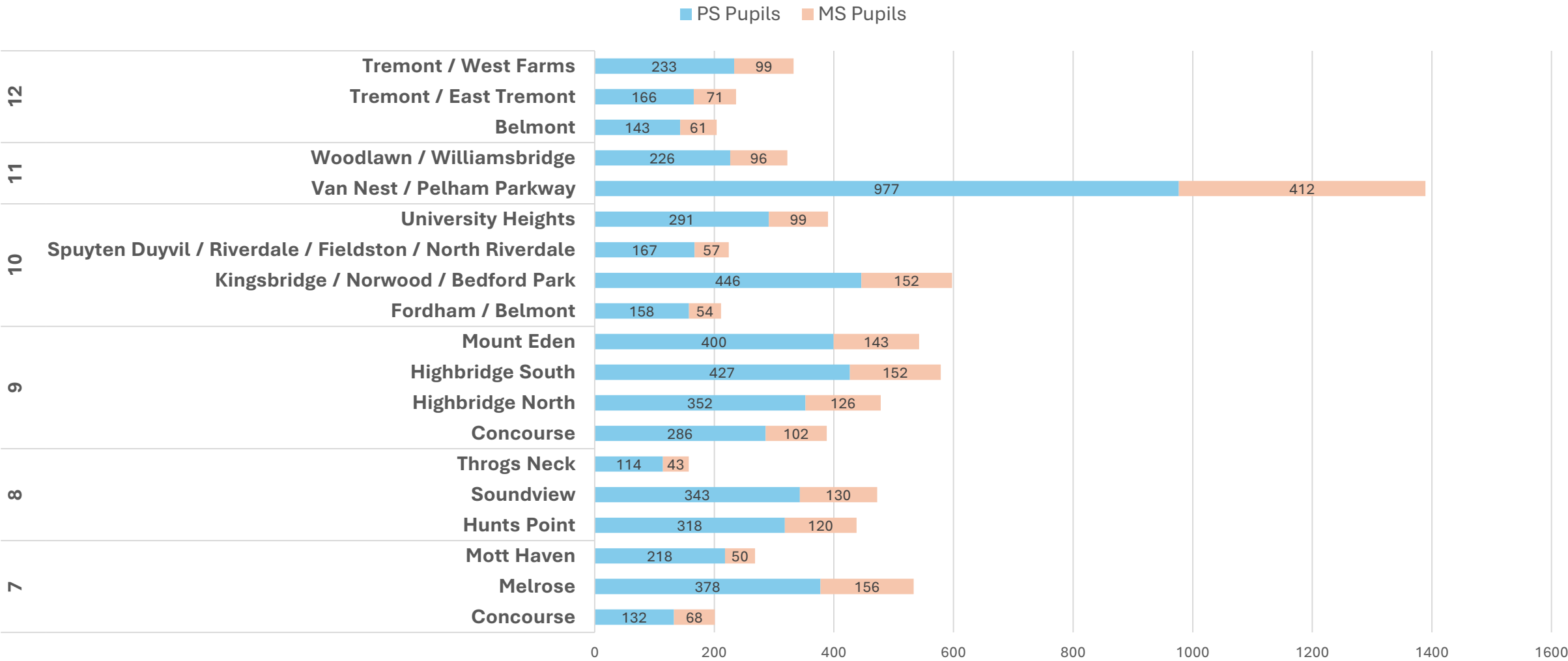
SCA projected student growth from housing starts in Manhattan

PS Pupils MS Pupils



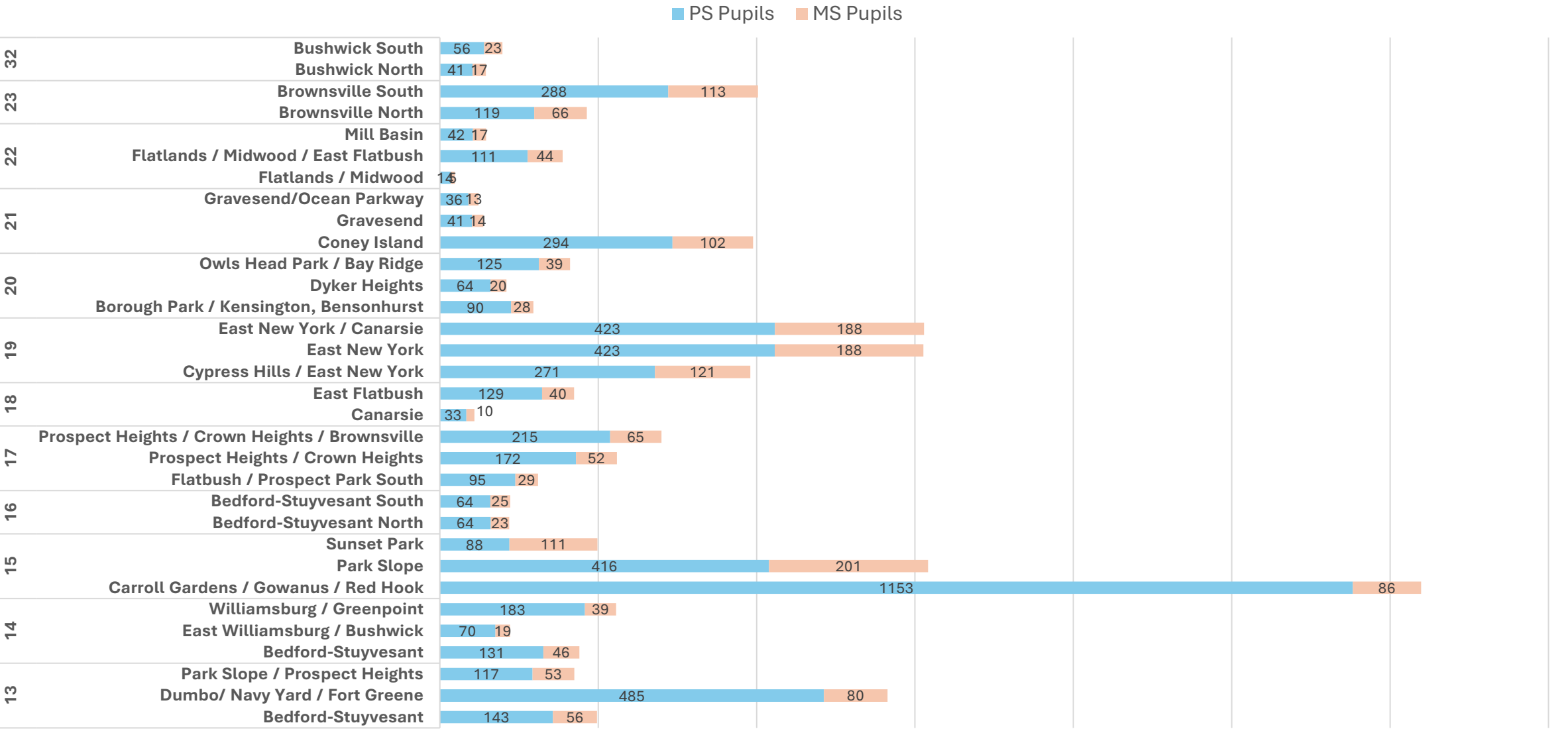
Data Sources: NYC SCA Section 2. Projected Housing (November 2025), Section 5: Projected Public School Ratio (March 2025, based on 2020 Census Data)

SCA projected student growth from housing starts in the Bronx



Data Sources: NYC SCA Section 2. Projected Housing (November 2025), Section 5: Projected Public School Ratio (March 2025, based on 2020 Census Data)

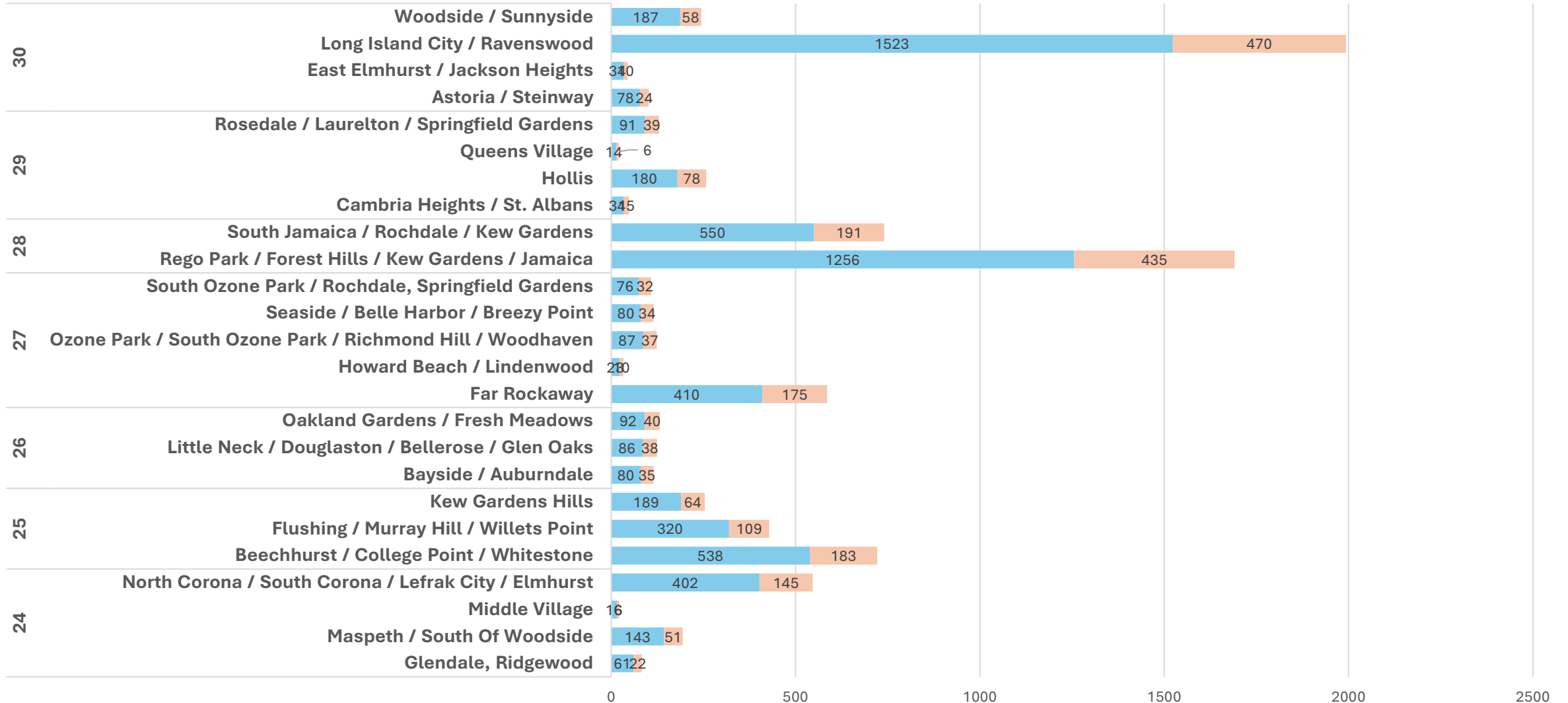
SCA projected student growth from housing starts in Brooklyn



Data Sources: NYC SCA Section 2. Projected Housing (November 2025), Section 5: Projected Public School Ratio (March 2025, based on 2020 Census Data)

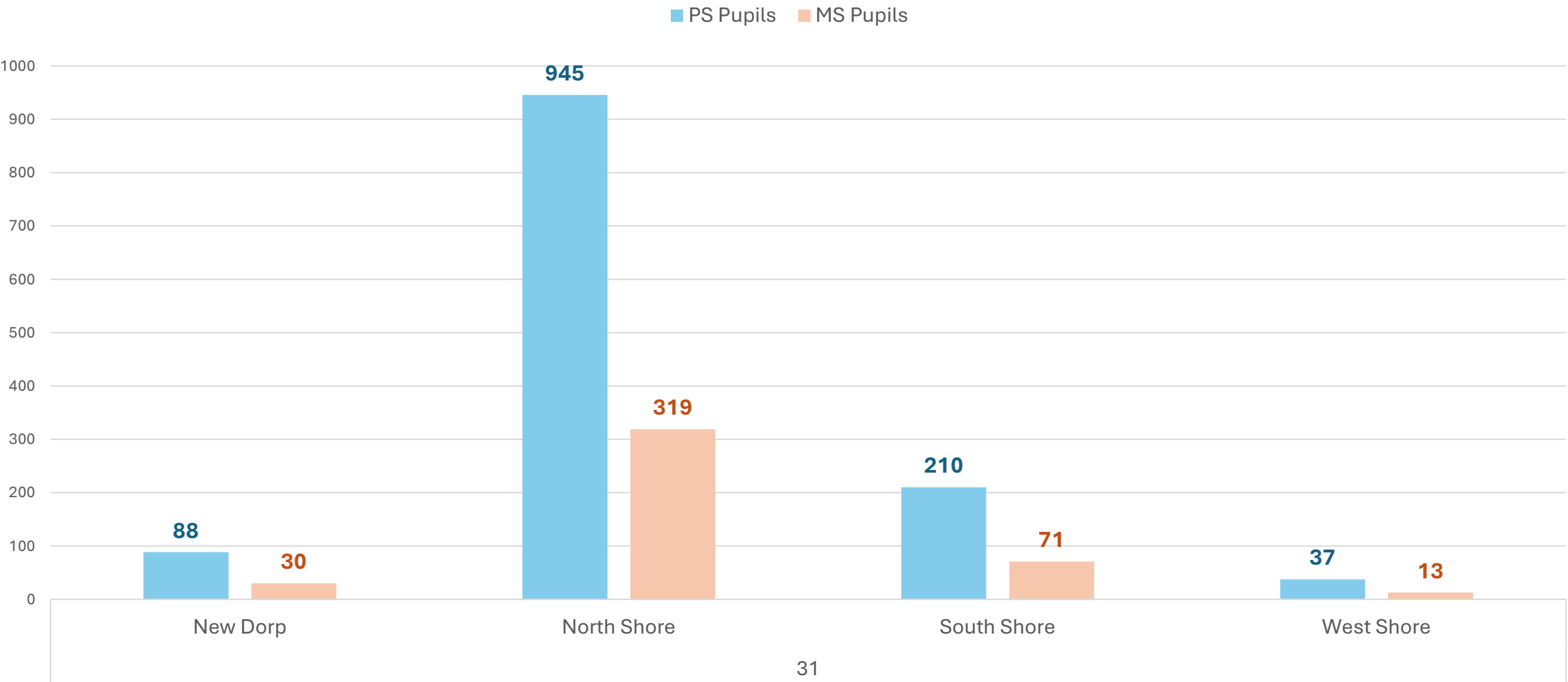
SCA projected student growth from housing starts in Queens

■ PS Pupils ■ MS Pupils



Data Sources: NYC SCA Section 2. Projected Housing (November 2025), Section 5: Projected Public School Ratio (March 2025, based on 2020 Census Data)

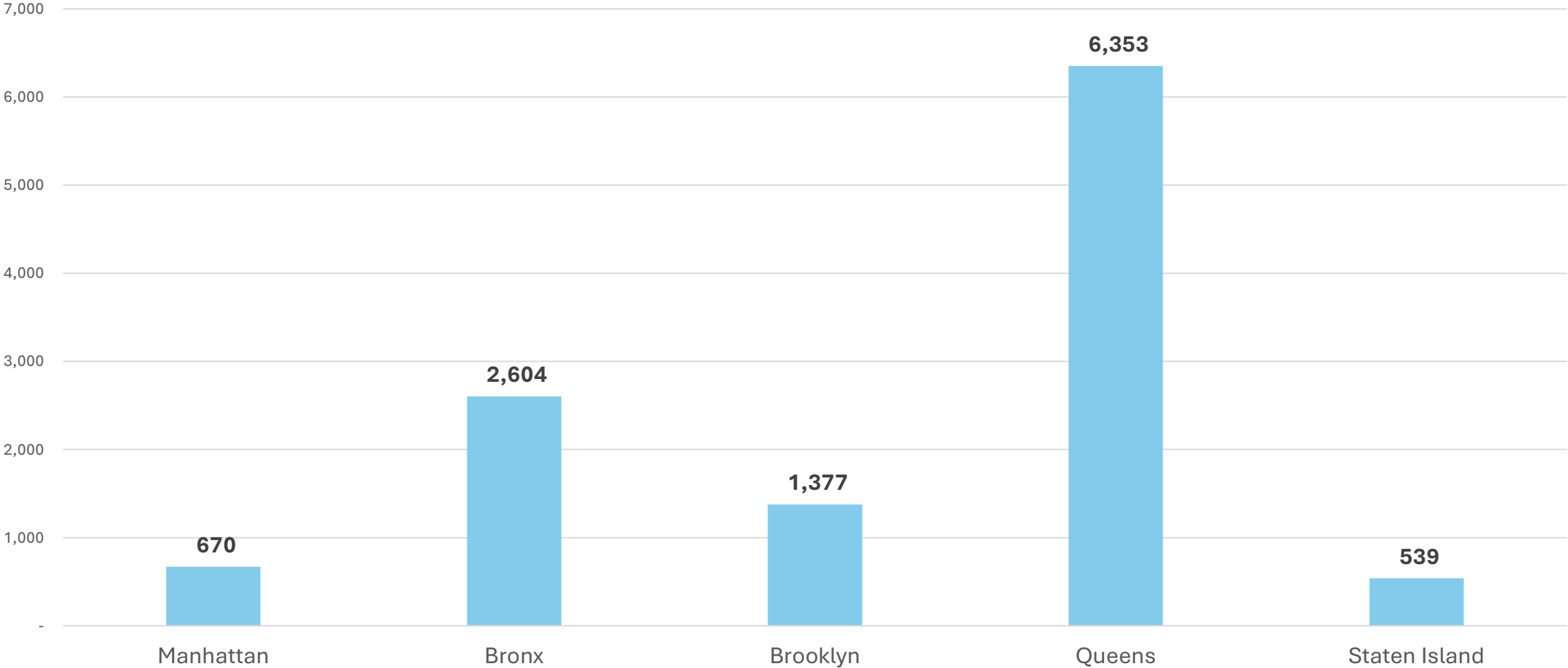
SCA projected student growth from housing starts in Staten Island



Data Sources: NYC SCA Section 2. Projected Housing (November 2025), Section 5: Projected Public School Ratio (March 2025, based on 2020 Census Data)

SCA projected HS student growth from housing start, by borough

■ Projected HS Students



Data Sources: NYC SCA Section 2. Projected Housing (November 2025), Section 5: Projected Public School Ratio (March 2025, based on 2020 Census Data)

Which schools have smaller classes & which not according to their need?

- NYSED each year prepares a list of NYC schools according to their weighted need, to determine how the state Contract for Excellence funds should be allocated. Class size reduction is funded primarily through the C4E program.
- The state weighted need formula takes into both the number and percentage of high needs 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 to the NYSED's 2026-2027 weighted need, schools with the highest greatest need had the LOWEST class size compliance of 49.5% as of Oct. 2025, compared to 75.5% for 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 twice as many Black students, more than 5X as many Hispanic students, more than twice 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.
- Thus, to persist in arguing that further class size reduction should be halted because the funding will go primarily to those students who need smaller classes the least is incorrect.

Figure 1: Class Size Compliance and Number of High-Needs Students by SED Weighted Need (Citywide)

2026-2027 Weighted Need Quartiles (From SED)	Number of Schools	Percent of all non-exempt classes complying (2025-2026)	Percent of All Classes Complying (2025-2026)	*Enrollment (2024-2025)	% of All Enrollment in Borough	Black Students	Hispanic Students	Multi-Racial Students	Native American Students	Students with Disabilities	English Language Learner Students	**Students in Poverty (Minimum)
1 - Lowest Need	381	77.9%	75.5%	91,391	11.4%	23,806	32,195	3,799	803	20,955	10,798	58,032
2 - Moderate Need	382	72.8%	71.4%	143,982	17.9%	39,590	58,937	3,618	1,792	31,480	20,482	104,988
3 - High Need	382	65.7%	63.8%	182,579	22.7%	41,005	88,736	3,268	2,322	41,001	33,291	146,301
4 - Highest Need	382	56.0%	49.5%	387,191	48.1%	46,695	167,124	5,375	5,099	70,773	79,632	307,029
Grand Total	1527	64.0%	59.5%	805,143	100.0%	151,096	346,992	16,060	10,016	164,209	144,203	616,350

Data Sources

[2026-2027 Needs and Weights by School – SED](#)

[Enrollment Data & Data for High Needs Students from: Demographic Snapshot, 2024-2025](#)

[Class Size Compliance Numbers from: Table C - Class Size Compliance by School, FY26](#)

*Note: Enrollment figures are from the 2024-2025 Demographic Snapshot

** Note: Number of Students in Poverty only a minimum, since the data lists 'Above 95%' for some schools, and not actual numbers.