



class size matters

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Hello, my name is Eugenia Simmons-Taylor, I'm the president of the President's Council in District 4 East Harlem, but today I'm speaking primarily on behalf of Class Size Matters, on whose board I sit.

NYC's proposed contract for excellence is a violation of state law in several respects, especially when it comes to class size. Despite the fact that the law requires the city to submit a five year plan showing continuous reductions in class size in all grades, and a capital plan for school construction aligned with this plan, there is nothing in the city's submission that projects smaller classes beyond next year.

The city's proposal has no real benchmarks, no goals, no timetables, not enough resources to the schools that need them most, and not enough space.

Even as a one year plan, this proposal falls far short. It projects a reduction in size of only .3-.8 of a student, yes, one third to four fifths of a student – which is so small it may not even be measurable, given the errors in NYC's class size reporting.

There is no specificity about how any of the additional teachers will be deployed, and how many of them will be used to reduce class size. There is no mention of how many new general education classes will be created and in what schools. It does say that 430 teachers will be hired to staff new CTT classes, and others to staff new autism classes, but in neither case will this reduce class size. In fact, for special education students, this may lead to an increase in class size rather than a decrease.

Finally, few of our low-performing or overcrowded schools – those that were supposed to receive smaller classes first, according to law – will

have the resources or the space to be able to reduce class size, even if their principals had this as their highest priority.

Half of all our schools will receive no extra funding through the “fair student formula” to reduce class size ***including 47% of the city schools on the state’s failing list*** – even though the city is supposed to create smaller classes in our low-performing schools first.

As to my own district, and I’m now speaking as the President of the President’s council in D4 in East Harlem, seven out of our eight failing schools will receive no extra funds through this formula – and the one that does will receive only \$22,000 – not enough to pay the salary of a single teacher to reduce class size. Moreover, many other failing schools do not currently have the room to lower class size and will not in the future if the city doesn’t create more space.

According to DOE’s own statistics, half of the failing schools with large class are severely overcrowded, at 100% capacity or more. And yet the city’s capital plan creates room only for smaller classes in grades K-3, rather than in all grades, as the law requires.

Our Mayor was given enhanced accountability for running our schools, and the Chancellor under his direction should stand up and take responsibility to ensure that class sizes are substantially reduced, starting next year and thereafter. This is their mandate under the law.

Instead, they are attempting to short-circuit this process, by shifting their own responsibility onto the shoulders of principals, without providing them with either the resources or the capacity to make this possible.

Finally, according to the law, the city must contribute at least \$2.2 billion of its own funds to our schools over the next four years – with the top priority for those funds being smaller classes. There is nothing in this proposal or any other which shows that the city has committed a single penny towards these goals.

We hope that you, on the City Council, will join us in urging the State to make New York City amend its proposal, and for the Mayor and the Chancellor to be held accountable for the quality of education in this city, by delivering the smaller classes to our children that are required by law – and that the state’s highest court concluded would be necessary to receive their constitutional right to an adequate education.