

Response to SED C4E Class Size Questions – Submitted on November 23, 2009

1. **Provide the average class sizes for the following grade ranges: prekindergarten¹ – three, four – eight and nine – twelve for the 2009-10 school year and the average class sizes for the 200809 school year.**

Class sizes are calculated using data manually entered by thousands of school-based staff into numerous data systems designed to meet multiple purposes. Data entry errors occur at the school level for a variety of understandable reasons. Correcting those errors and validating the data requires careful scrutiny over several months. In recent years, we have dramatically improved the capabilities of the systems and the users. However, this year, all of our middle schools transitioned to a new course scheduling system, and thus there are even greater needs for cleaning and correcting the data. Class size projections based on the October 31 register should be considered preliminary. Official class sizes are more reliably reported from the fully audited register reports which will be available in February.

Grade Range	FY 10 Projected			FY10 Target ²
	# Classes	# Students	Average Class Size	
K-3	12,146	268,387	22.10	20.3
4-8	12,039	309,630	25.72	23.8
MS Core	20,955	557,471	26.60	
09-12	45,243	1,213,823 ³	26.83	25.2

Note that school budgets were reduced by 4.9% this school year. After factoring in rollover funds from last year, schools experienced an average reduction of 3.9%. At the same time, the average teacher salary increased by over 4%. The end result was that schools had reduced funding and faced higher staff costs than previous years. . Schools were strongly encouraged to retain teachers and make cuts as far from the classroom as possible. This strategy has successfully mitigated class size increases of the magnitude experienced in other major urban areas. However, salaries are the single largest expense in school budgets, and about 1650 teaching positions were eliminated at the schools. No teachers were laid off, and most positions were absorbed largely through attrition.

Preliminary numbers suggest that after a 10-year trend of declining enrollment, NYC may have experienced a slight increase in the overall system enrollment of under 1%. This could explain some portion of the class size increases. However, the numbers are too preliminary at this point in time to draw any conclusions regarding their impact. Given the sensitivity to very small changes in numbers for such a small percentage increase, further data clean up is needed to determine the actual number and additional analysis is required to understand the underlying factors.

2. **Provide the average class sizes for the following grade ranges: prekindergarten – three, four – eight and nine – twelve for the 200910 school year at the building⁴ level and the average class sizes for the 2008-09 school year at the building level.**

¹ Data is not available for PK class sizes, because NYCDOE implements under 50% of pre-kindergarten programs, and the data is not managed centrally.

² Class size targets are a part of a 5-year interim plan that was generated as a space holder until the Commissioner formed a panel to make official class size recommendations. To date, no panel has been formed or official class size targets established.

³ High school students are counted once for each core class. Thus, this is not the number of students in high school, but the number of students sitting in core classes at any point in the school day.

See tab 2 of file.

3. Provide a plan for reducing or maintaining 2008-09 class sizes in the five percent of schools with the largest class sizes and lowest 2009-10⁵ student achievement by the 2010-11 school year.

In 2007, the New York City Department of Education developed a 5-year plan to reduce class-size. The ambitious plan was to be funded in part by continuous increases in Contracts for Excellence funds as the Campaign for Fiscal Equity settlement was phased in over several years. However, in that same time period, New York City has suffered the repercussions of the international financial crisis. The DOE experienced significant budget cuts in FY08 which carried over and increased in FY09. Tax shortfalls and increases in operating costs generated a massive FY10 budget gap. On Oct 15, 2009 Governor Paterson proposed a budget cut to current school year school aid that would cut NYC by \$223 million (not agreed to as of now), and we anticipate an additional \$113 million cut from the city for this school year. Next year, we anticipate further cuts. Given the already constricted resources and uncertain fiscal horizon, all of the plans described below are highly dependant on the availability of fiscal resources. (Identified high class-size, low-performance schools are indicated by a 1 in column M of tab 3)

To reduce class size in identified high class-size, low-performance schools, at the central level, we will:

- If new C4E funds become available, continue to allocate at least 25% of new C4E funds for class size reduction and prioritize assignment of funds to identified schools within the C4E regulations for distributing funds,
- Where feasible, institute capping plans and other enrollment strategies that limit student enrollment to FY11 target class sizes in identified schools. Enrollment projections will continue to take into account class size targets for all schools.
- Provide class size coaching that will help identified schools reallocate teaching resources and revise scheduling and space utilization to reduce class sizes.

At the school level, school support teams will work with school leadership to:

- Review current budget utilization to determine if funds are available to add additional teaching positions and classrooms.
- Evaluate efficacy of C4E funded program strategies implemented in previous years, and determine if funds should be redirected to lower class size in 2010-11.
- Analyze previous staffing plans to identify maximum utilization of teachers and develop a 2010-11 staffing strategy that prioritizes class size reduction. Focus on non-classroom positions that could be moved into new classrooms.
- Work with Human Resource partners to implement a more robust hiring strategy to attract the most qualified teachers and fill vacancies early in the hiring season.
- Where it is not physically possible to reduce class size significantly due to building capacity, work with the school to allocate resources to provide stronger intervention services for the lowest performing students. Strategies might include decreasing the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR), push-in teachers, decreasing Pupil Teacher Load, or other academic interventions.

4. Provide the estimated number of additional teachers, classrooms, school buildings and the total costs necessary for achieving the full phase-in of your five year class size reduction plan targets in the 2011-12 school year.

⁴ Many NYC school buildings include multiple schools, and thus data is reported at the school rather than building level.

⁵ 2009-10 student achievement data will not be available until the fall of 2010. As a proxy, we have utilized the math and ELA scores for K-8 and graduation rates for high schools.

Fulfilling the class size plan depends on numerous variables. We must make an annual investment in additional teachers, maximize utilization of space, and in some areas construct additional buildings. Below are estimates based on three relatively unrealistic assumptions: the student population, teacher salaries, and construction costs will remain steady at 2009-10 levels.

Note that in the current distressed economic situation, schools will not have the funding to increase the number of teachers and to cover the other operating costs needed to reach the class size targets. And, while the dollars are committed or have already actually been spent for construction of the additional classrooms, delays in the availability of appropriate sites has created a risk to the completion of all seats proposed in the FY05-FY09 Capital Plan by the beginning of school year 2012.

Teachers

Teacher salaries generally rise each year in predictable step increments, the NYC teacher contract expired at the end of October, and no prediction can be made about the teacher salaries that might result from the new contract that will be negotiated. Thus, we can only work from the current known salary. Note that the teacher salary investment is NOT a one-year investment. Hiring an additional teacher lowers the class size in year one. To maintain that class size reduction, schools must continue to pay that same teacher and related salary increases each year thereafter. Thus, the amount listed below would need to be made each year to simply maintain the FY12 class size targets from year to year. Additional funds would need to be invested to account for annual salary increases and/or to further lower class size.

Annual Teacher Requirements		
Grade Range	Additional Classes/Teachers	Cost of Additional Teachers
K-3	1341	\$ 123,538,221
4-8	1482	\$ 136,546,080
HS Core/4	1067	\$ 98,326,202
Total	3890	\$ 358,410,504

These calculations are to achieve a city-wide average that meets class size plan targets. Achieving the class size targets in every school would increase the cost by about 25% to 4862 teachers at an annual cost of over \$448 million. These calculations do not take into account other operating expenses such as facilities and support staff.

Construction

Construction of new classrooms and schools could be considered in two different approaches: 1) the significant funding commitment already made by DOE's Capital Plan for new school capacity, which is aligned with past Contracts for Excellence submissions 2) a theoretical approach that calls for construction on a more aggressive, if unrealistic, basis.

Scenario 1 – (Existing Capital Plan) Class size is generally considered as a city-wide average allowing for class sizes to be above the targets in some schools and below the targets in others. Existing utilization rates and projections for increased student population in some neighborhoods and decreased student population in others is taken into account. All funding for the required buildings has either already been committed as part of the City's capital budget or is earmarked in the FY10-FY14 Capital Plan. Many of the buildings are already under construction or are at various stages in the process.

Scenario 1

Grade Range	New Classrooms	New Schools	Cost
K-3	976	22	\$ 2,186,411,765
4-8	35	2	\$ 198,764,706
HS Core/4	284	10	\$ 993,823,529
Total	1295	34	\$ 3,379,000,000

Scenario 2 – (theoretical approach) To achieve the class size targets in every school, we could assume that the city would need to build new schools and classrooms to accommodate all new classes. However this overstates the need for classrooms in several ways. This approach looks at the classroom needs in isolation without taking into consideration demographic trends, zoning requirements, or efforts to fill seats in neighborhoods with under-utilized schools. Of course, this theoretical approach also makes the unrealistic assumption that shovel-ready property would be available in every neighborhood tomorrow.

Scenario 2

Grade Range	New Classrooms	New Schools	Cost
K-3	1676	76	\$ 8,760,804,020
4-8	1852	84	\$ 9,683,265,929
HS Core/4	1334	40	\$ 9,095,054,499
Total	4862	201	\$ 27,539,124,448

5. **After the October 31st enrollment reporting deadline, please provide the steps you will take to identify schools where class sizes are significantly larger than anticipated and the steps you will take to reduce those class sizes.**

We have taken numerous steps already to mitigate the potential rise in class sizes, and teams will continue to work with schools to maximize the learning experience for students. However, two factors will significantly limit the potential to further reduce class sizes at this point in the current school year. 1. Available resources are virtually nonexistent given the initial budget cut already taken this year and an additional \$113 million midyear cut was recently proposed. 2. Changing programming for students and overall instructional strategies three months into the school year can be very disruptive. Many schools will inevitably weigh the value of a smaller classroom with the potential frustration for students and parents if students are now moved into new classrooms.

Overall growth in class size was significantly less than other major cities around the country. Schools took a 4.9% budget cut, and thus we anticipated that class sizes might rise at an equivalent rate. However, the majority of schools did not increase class sizes by 5%. We anticipated that the schools seeing the largest class size increases would be schools with average class sizes well below the FY09 or FY10 targets. It was also reasonable to expect small schools with very small classes in FY09 would show large increases, simply because a shift of only a few students or a single teacher would dramatically inflate changes in percentages. In the end, 145 schools experienced larger increases than anticipated. See file for identified schools. (schools are indicated with 1 in column V of tab 5)

We already took steps to mitigate potential growth in class sizes, including:

- Strongly encouraged schools to avoid cutting teachers. Support staff worked with schools to minimize the number of teaching positions eliminated, strongly encouraging schools to reduce spending in non-teacher costs.
- Over the summer, support teams reviewed projected class size and pupil teacher data to identify schools that may have cut too many teachers. Urged identified schools to add teaching positions.
- In September, we reviewed preliminary class sizes, and counseled schools receiving C4E funds to consider class size reduction as an appropriate strategy.

For the 145 schools, we plan to take the following additional steps:

- Further review student register and course schedules for coding errors, remove long-term absences, and appropriately classify teacher assignments that might misrepresent the average class size.
- Consult with schools to determine driving factor in class size increase.
- Review current resource and space allocation to determine if funds can be repurposed for additional classrooms and teaching positions and classrooms.
- Where class size rose, but pupil-teacher ratio remained constant evaluate school staffing plans and space utilization to determine if any teachers are in non-teaching positions that could be moved to form new classrooms.