



**class size matters**

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Before the NYC Council Education Committee on the 5-yr School Capital Plan

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**Mayor's unfulfilled promises to our children**

Thank you, Chair Jackson, for holding these hearings today. In 2001, when Mayor Bloomberg first ran for election, he promised to accelerate school construction, so that class sizes could be reduced. Here is an excerpt from his 2001 campaign brochure:

*New schools are needed, but they are not being built fast enough. Go-along, get-along career politicians gave us this mess...and they don't have the independence -- or the guts -- to fix it by standing up to the special interests. Here's what Mike will do: Put School Construction on the Fast Track.*<sup>1</sup>

In 2005, in his State of the City address, and again, in the DOE's first five-year capital plan, the Mayor pledged that by the plan's end, it would provide enough space to relieve overcrowding, eliminate the need for trailers, and allow class sizes to be reduced to twenty or less in all schools in grades K-3.<sup>2</sup>

As late as in Feb. 2008 amendment to the capital plan, the administration still was claiming that the plan would achieve the following goals:

- *Transition from the use of Transportable Classroom Units (TCUs), as well as mini-schools over 20 years old, throughout the system.*
- *Institute class size reduction for Grades K-3 at every elementary school throughout the City.*

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<sup>1</sup> For an archived copy of campaign literature, see <http://web.archive.org/web/20011001055946/http://www.mikeformayor.org/downloads/edubk3a.pdf> . See also NYC Public School Parents, [Bloomberg's original campaign promises: how'd he do?](#), October 22, 2009; and "Class sizes sharply rising & 7,000 violations this fall despite Bloomberg campaign promises," September 24, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Fernanda Santos, "Mayor Bloomberg's Promises for Education; An Annotated Scorecard," NY Times, Jan. 13, 2012.

- Alleviate overcrowding system-wide, including on the high school level;
- Significantly reduce high school split sessions.<sup>3</sup>

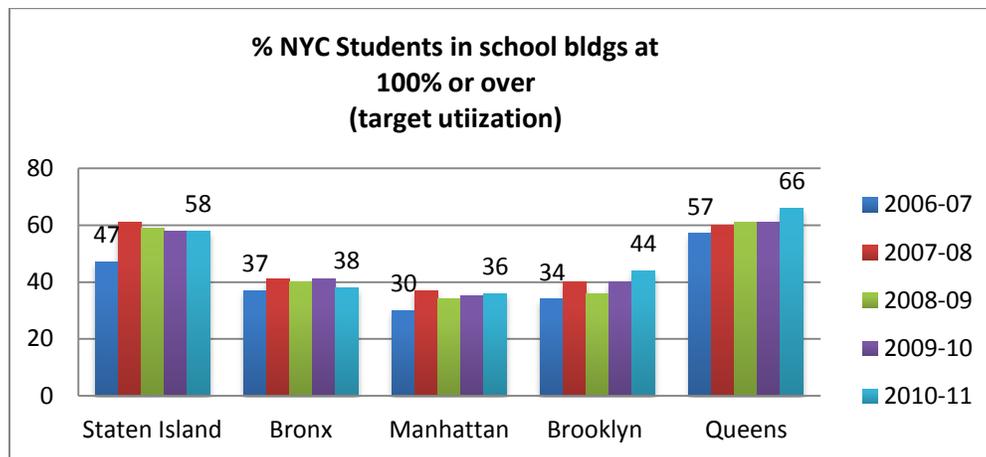
As yet as the NY Times recently pointed out, despite the mayor’s promises in his 2005 State of the City address,

*There were no waiting lists for kindergarten that year. Last spring, there were waiting lists in roughly 25 percent of city [elementary] schools, according to education department data. An analysis of the same data by Class Size Matters, an advocacy group that has been one of the mayor’s most vocal critics, showed that 42 percent of kindergarten students were in classes of 25 students or more in the current school year; 25 is the limit set in the teachers’ union contract.*

*Gyms in many of the buildings that house more than one school are overcrowded, preventing schools from fulfilling the state’s physical-education mandates. Some of the new schools do not have a gym. There are schools where cafeterias and auditoriums double as gym space.*

**High levels of overcrowding persist**

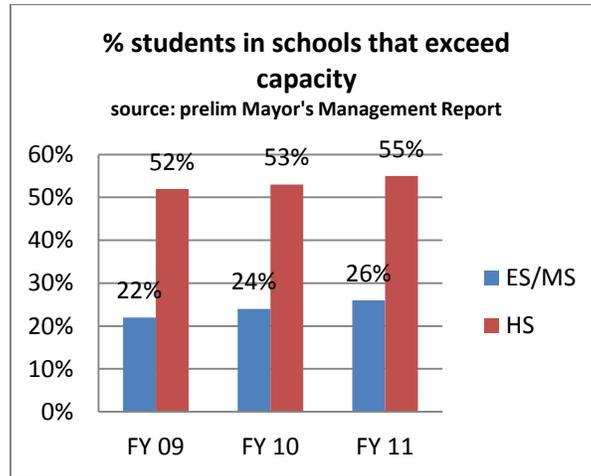
What else have been the results of his promises? Since 2006, a higher percentage of our students are in overcrowded buildings in every borough, according to the “target” utilization data in the “blue book”.



According to the latest available data, in 2010-2011, there were 470,240 students – 47% of the total—in school buildings that were at 100% target utilization or more.<sup>4</sup> Using the “historic” utilization figure,

<sup>3</sup> Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor, Joel I. Klein, Chancellor, “Children First 2005 – 2009 Five-year Capital plan, Proposed 2008 Amendment”, Feb. 2008, p. 32, [http://www.nycsca.org/Community/CapitalPlanManagementReportsData/CapPlan/200802\\_CapPlanAmendment.pdf](http://www.nycsca.org/Community/CapitalPlanManagementReportsData/CapPlan/200802_CapPlanAmendment.pdf)

the formula for which has not changed over time, progress has been no better. According to the Mayor's Management report, a higher percentage of elementary/middle school and high school students are now in overcrowded schools than in FY 2009.



### **Trailers and TCUs**

Now, both estimates represent an underestimate of the number of students who are enrolled in overcrowded schools, for many reasons. For elementary and middle schools, the Blue Book does not necessarily count schools with trailers and annexes as overcrowded, but lists these spaces separately, with individual enrollment and capacity figures for each structure, rather than attributing these spaces to the main building, as they should be, if there is the goal to eventually eliminate the need for them. In addition, neither the Blue Book nor the DOE annual reports on trailers (call the Report on Temporary and Nontraditional Classrooms) include enrollment figures for high school and District 75 students, or students who are attending special education classes, or non-general instruction classes such as art, science, and theater in trailers or other temporary structures.<sup>5</sup>

See the chart below for the adjusted utilization, enrollment, and capacity figures of all schools with multiple spaces, from the 2010-2011 DOE Blue Book. There are 88 elementary schools, six District 75 schools, and 8 high schools that are categorized as “under-utilized” by DOE, but that have temporary or substandard spaces associated with their spaces.

	<i>Buildings with Temporary Spaces</i> <sup>6</sup>	<i>Students in School Buildings with Temporary Spaces</i>	<i>Buildings with multiple spaces with Main Buildings Listed as Under-Utilized</i>
<i>PS/IS (Districts 1-32)</i>	192	163,731 <sup>+</sup>	88
<i>D75</i>	13	3,029 <sup>+</sup>	6
<i>HS (District 78)</i>	21	54,207 <sup>+</sup>	8
<i>Total, Citywide</i>	<b>226</b>	<b>220,967<sup>+</sup></b>	<b>102</b>

How many trailers and TCUs are there in total? The “Blue Book” does not report on the figures for TCUs in high schools, so one must consult the DOE TCU report.<sup>7</sup> According to the latest available figures, in 2009-2010 there were 373 TCUs, more than in 2005-6; though the “enrollment” figure of students housed in these structures was slightly lower, according to DOE.

	<b># of TCU Units</b>	<b>TCU Enrollment (Actual)</b>	<b>TCU Enrollment (Capacity)</b>
<b>2005-06</b>	<b>368 *</b>	<b>10,215</b>	<b>15,477</b>
<b>2006-07</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>11,004</b>	<b>16,077</b>
<b>2007-08</b>	<b>402 **</b>	<b>10,929</b>	<b>14,063</b>
<b>2008-09</b>	<b>387 **</b>	<b>10,115</b>	<b>13,293</b>
<b>2009-10</b>	<b>373 **</b>	<b>8,819</b>	<b>12,773</b>

And yet the actual number of students in trailers is far larger than the figure listed above, as this includes no high school students, being educated in approximately 70 trailers – for whom, to this day, the DOE claims they are unable to count, nor any figures for the number of students who attend art or science classes in trailers in middle or elementary schools.

If at least 25 students on average are housed in each of the high school trailers, one must add approximately 1750 students to the enrollment figures above, totaling a minimum of 10,500 students. Many of these structures are now far older than their projected lifetime of twenty years, many of them moldy, leaking, and rotting away.<sup>8</sup> The DOE has no longer has any plans to build enough new school

<sup>6</sup> Temporary Spaces include spaces classified in the Blue Book as “Annex,” “AX,” “Portable,” “Transportable,” “Trans,” “Temp C. R. Bldg.,” and “Minischool.” Under-utilized buildings have a target utilization listing below 100% in the 2010 Blue Book.)

<sup>7</sup> This annual mandated report the DOE has asked for the Commission on Reports to eliminate, claiming it is “duplicative”, yet nowhere else including the blue book is there any figure for the number of high school trailers available.

<sup>8</sup> See for example, Tanyanika Samuels, 'Small victory' for PS 106 parents; Students move out of moldy trailers to main building,” Daily News, Feb. 2, 2010.

space to eliminate them, but instead, in recent testimony before the State legislature, Chancellor Walcott claimed that principals “wanted them.”<sup>9</sup>

In addition, the above chart, drawn directly from the TCU report, is highly deceptive, as it includes “capacity” for all high school trailers and elementary and middle school trailers used for cluster spaces or special education classrooms, but includes no “enrollment” for them, with the implication that the trailers themselves are underutilized.

The exact opposite is true. When high school and non-general education classrooms are removed from the above table, with “0” enrollment, the trailers remaining have 109% utilization, showing that overcrowding is occurring within the trailers themselves. *See chart below.*

**P.S./I.S. Transportables, from Blue Book 2009-2010 and DOE Report on Temporary and Substandard Classrooms 2009-2010 (not including HS TCUs)**

**P.S./I.S. Transportables, from 2009 Blue Book**

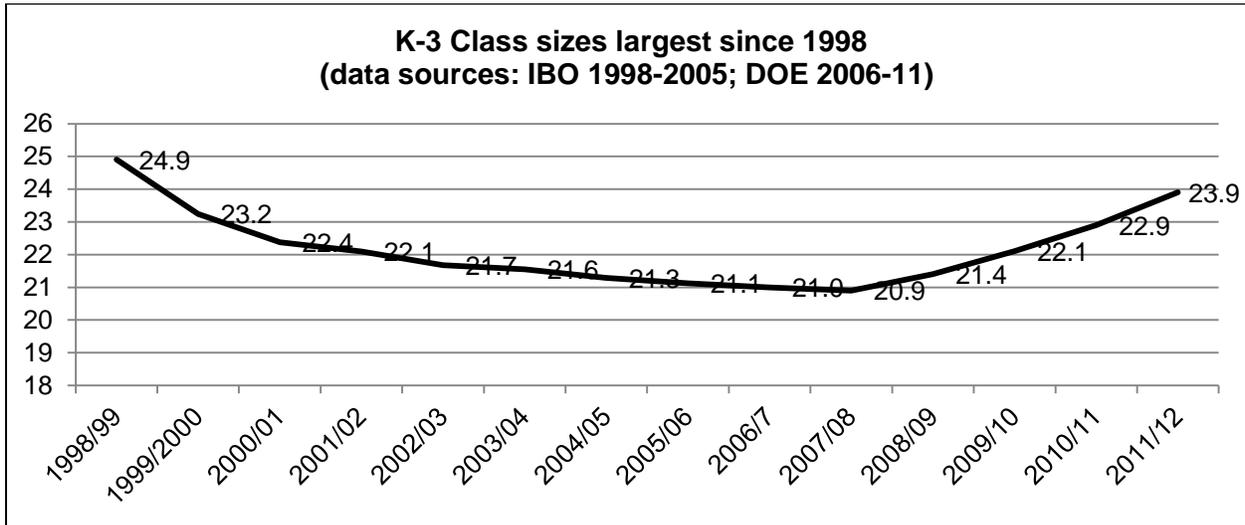
<i># of TCU Units</i> [Source: DOE Report on Temporary and Non-Standardized Classrooms, Part 1]	<i># of TCU Classrooms</i> [Source: DOE Report on Temporary and Non-Standardized Classrooms, Part 2]	<i>TCU Enrollment (Actual)</i> [Source: <i>Blue book</i> ]	<i>TCU Enrollment Capacity* (2009 Blue Book Target)</i> [ <i>bluebook source</i> ]	<i>TCU Enrollment Capacity* (DOE Report on Temporary and Non-Standardized Classrooms Pt. 2)</i>	<i>Average Utilization of TCU’s</i> [ <i>Blue book enrollment/ blue book capacity</i> ]
294	487	8,691 <sup>1</sup> [TCU report lists 8,819]	7,980	9,135	109%

*\*TCU Enrollment Actual and TCU Enrollment capacity only include enrollment and capacity figures for TCU classrooms with enrollment greater than 0 (general education classrooms). DOE summary failed to specify that capacity figures are included for some classrooms listed as having zero enrollment because they are in HS, or they are not general education classrooms, but serve as art, music, theater, or special education classrooms. The TCU report lists 12,773 for capacity, which includes the capacity data for trailers housing high schools and non-general education classes, while the enrollment figure excludes them. Real enrollment figures for HS and/or non-general education classrooms are not known, and as such, neither their enrollment figures nor their capacities are included in the above table.*

<sup>9</sup> Zack Fink, “Albany Lawmakers Visit Stalemate Over State Teacher Evaluations,” NY1, Jan. 23, 2012.

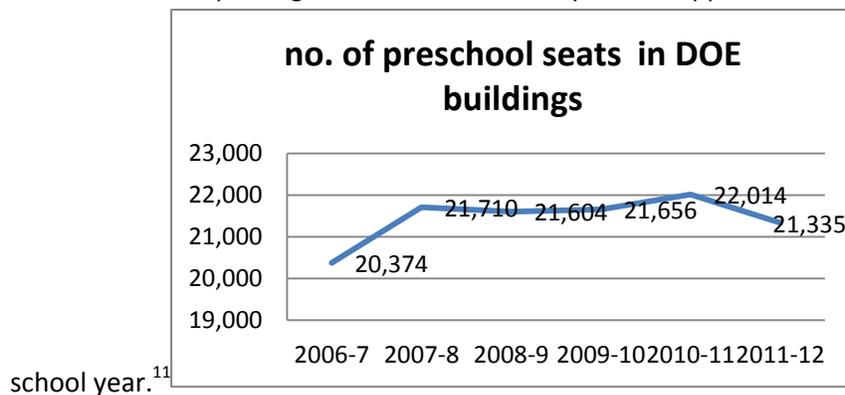
**Class Size and preK seats**

What else? As mentioned above, class sizes have risen for the last four years in all grades, and currently we have the largest class sizes in eleven years in grades K-3, the same grades that the mayor promised in 2000, 2005 and as late as in the 2008 capital plan to reduce to twenty or less in all schools – a promise also made in the city’s Contract for Excellence plan.



In addition, there were waiting lists at 25% of elementary schools last year; and though the data has not been released yet for this year, there are reasons to believe that the problem may reoccur or even worsen, as a result of the DOE’s policy to require schools to enroll all special education students in their zones.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, the number of preschool seats with has now declined, and this year is at the lowest number since 2006-7, despite high demand. In fact, only 68% of applicants received preK seats for this current



school year.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Meredith Kolodner, “Will overcrowding undermine special education reform?” InsideSchools, March 13, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Fernanda Santos, “Big Kindergarten Wait List Limits City’s Pre-K Slots,” NY Times, June 10, 2011.

### Other unacknowledged flaws in the capital plan

This year's capital plan will clearly not fill the need for new school seats, as the plan itself admits. For the first time, the doe has explicitly pointed that their estimates show a need for about 50,000 seats -- with 16,186 of these seats as yet unfunded. As usual however, the DOE's enrollment projections remain obscure.

Our calculations for the 10 year need from building starts alone, using the City Planning department multiplier, is more than 58,000 – 40,000 ES and 18,000 HS seats -- and this is likely to be a sharp underestimate. Why?

- Certain districts where there is rapid enrollment growth, such as District 20, the growth is not explained or caused by new reported residential units, but from the apparent conversion of one family houses to multi—family dwellings, many of which are not reported as such.
- The capital plan does not address the need to eliminate existing overcrowding which afflicts 47% percentage of NYC students, according to the DOE's own "target" figures.
- It does not reflect the need to eliminate trailers, which house at least 10,000 number of students;
- It does not include the need to reduce class size, which has been increasing for the last four years, and is now the largest in eleven years in the early grades.
- It does not reflect the fact that about 25% of all elementary schools had waiting lists for Kindergarten last year.
- It does not reflect the large unmet need to provide seats for preK.
- It does not reflect the rising birth rate in many parts of the city; and the growing trend of families who would like to stay in the city to raise their children;
- It does not reflect the loss of parochial schools, which continues throughout the city.<sup>12</sup>
- It does not acknowledge the fact that the "blue book" utilization formula actually overestimates the actual level of overcrowding in our schools, according to most principals, providing an inadequate amount of space needed for art, music and special education services.<sup>13</sup>
- It does not reflect the fact that when a school becomes so overcrowded that it needs to convert an art room, music room, or science lab to classroom space, the school actually registers as **less overcrowded** because this space is now counted as an extra classroom and added to capacity , which is counterintuitive and the opposite of what should occur.
- It does not reflect the rising number of charter school students, with about 2/3 of them in school located in DOE buildings.<sup>14</sup>

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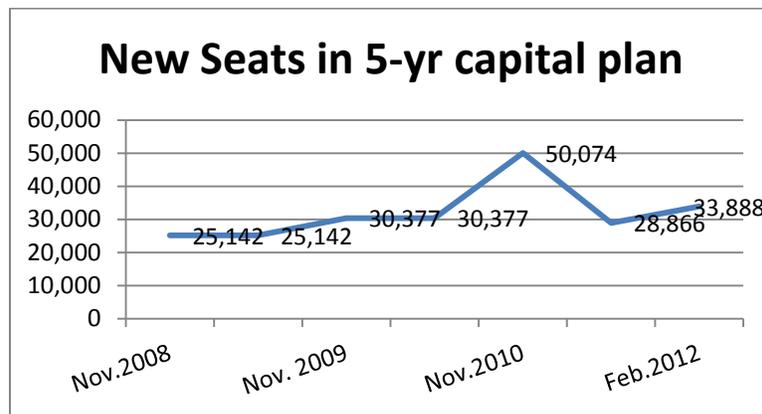
<sup>12</sup> David Gonzalez, "School's Out, Forever," NY Times, June 24, 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Prof. Emily Horowitz and Leonie Haimson, "How Crowded Are Our Schools? New Results from a Survey of NYC Public School Principals", October 3, 2008, posted at [http://www.classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/principal\\_survey\\_report\\_10.08\\_final1.pdf](http://www.classsizematters.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/principal_survey_report_10.08_final1.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> As of September 2009, 78 of the 125 charter schools were housed in DOE-provided facilities. As of Sept. 2011, the DOE estimated that there were about 53,754 charter school students, with about two-thirds of them in co-located

- It does not reflect the increased number of co-locations in all, that put additional strains on a building, making it even more difficult to schedule the gym, the lunchroom and other shared spaces.
- It does not take into account the Speaker’s proposal to make Kindergarten mandatory, which will require 3,000 to 6,000 more seats for the additional students each year, especially as many schools are already at maximum class sizes in this grade already.<sup>15</sup>

All of these trends have led to a crisis situation in which the city’s school planning lags considerably behind the need for seats. It is inexcusable the manner in which last year, the number of seats was cut back from capital plan by nearly 50 percent, the only category of the plan that was cut back so radically – when it is clear there is an intense need for new capacity.



Indeed, over the last ten years, the evidence is clear that the Bloomberg administration has entirely failed to make any significant progress in relieving school overcrowding and providing sufficient room for a quality education.

As economist Barbara Denham recently observed in the Wall St. Journal, several public schools still in the planning stages will likely be overcrowded the day they open: "The city has embraced new construction and development and they seemingly have the appropriate planning procedures on paper. But various agencies aren't speaking together, or they just aren't planning it appropriately."<sup>16</sup> Given the

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buildings. NYC DOE, "Building on Success, FY 2010-2014 Five Year Capital plan, Proposed 2012 Amendment," Feb. 2012, p.32. And yet neither the DOE’s enrollment projections nor its capital plan takes account of the growing number of these students.

<sup>15</sup> Winnie Hu, "To Quinn, No City Child Should Miss Kindergarten, NY Times, March 21, 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Barbara Denham of Eastern Consolidated, quoted in: Joseph De Avila, "Added Schools Lag Housing," Wall St. Journal, March 13, 2012; see also Real Estate Weekly, "Schools shortage only going to get worse, says economist," March 15, 2012.

entirely inadequate capital plan and the few seats planned in the future, this failure will doom NYC children to overcrowded conditions and excessive class sizes for years to come.

