

As featured in...

EDUCATION UPDATE

EDUCATION NEWS TODAY FOR A BETTER WORLD TOMORROW



Volume XXI, No. 1 • New York City • SEP/OCT 2015
CUTTING EDGE NEWS FOR ALL THE PEOPLE

www.EDUCATIONUPDATE.com

Despite citywide acknowledgement of New York City's critically overcrowded schools and engorged class sizes, this summer the Department of Education (DOE) announced that it would not adopt a recommendation to lower the target class size to the size contemplated in New York City's Contract for Excellence law passed in 2007 (with Kindergarten classes staying below 19.9 students, grades 4-8 staying below 22.9 students and high school classes staying below 24.5 students). In a city where we compromise on space in every other aspect of life, we should not compromise on the space we allocate for our children.



Overcrowding is a very real and very serious problem in New York schools. Overcrowding presents itself through a number of symptoms including overly large class sizes and conveniently located trailers. In some schools, hallways, closets and gymnasiums are utilized as classrooms. In the Local Law 60 Report published by the DOE in November 2013, the DOE reported that 37 percent of schools did not have a proper gym. Unable to accommodate all students at one time, most schools start serving lunch before noon, leaving children hungry during their afternoon classes.

The effects of overcrowding on teachers and students are overwhelmingly negative. Students struggle to learn in a loud and disorderly setting and teachers burnout quickly in the taxing environment of an overcrowded school. A 2003 New York State Court of Appeals held that the large class sizes resulting from overcrowding deprived students of their right to an education.

The challenge for City schools is that there is limited space to expand. In 2013, Portuguese architects, Ana Luisa Soares, Filipe Magalhaes, and Andre Vergueiero imagined a New York skyline with schools perched on rooftops. The imagery of the plan is clear: here in New York, we place education above everything else. More practical

For more information contact: 212.288.4607

visions already being explored by schools in the City include rooftop play areas and greenhouses where students are free to learn, play or eat.

Another frequently explored alternative is leasing space elsewhere, be it a shuttered bodega or abandoned supermarket. While this solution is the urban equivalent of locating a classroom in a trailer, some find it to be a more palatable alternative to today's wildly overcrowded classrooms. Yet another undesirable option is to bus students outside of the City where space is at less of a premium. We simply need to find more creative ways to provide our children with near and sufficient access to favorable educational environments. Whether it requires additional funding or extensive cooperation between local government officials - or both - our classrooms should be considered among our society's most essential "learning laboratories," to be treated with great care and support. It is time to go "back to the future" and rededicate efforts to lower class size.