



## Chancellor's Parent Advisory Council

Tweed Courthouse \*52 Chamber Street, New York 10007/Email: [InfoCPACNYC@gmail.com](mailto:InfoCPACNYC@gmail.com)

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April 14, 2022

Chancellor David Banks  
Department of Education  
Tweed Courthouse  
52 Chambers Street  
New York, New York 10007

Dear Chancellor Banks,

**We urge you to rescind [the retroactive restatement of the 2019-2020 Blue Book](#) that was slipped in during the last weeks of the De Blasio administration and reinstate [the original 2019-2020 Blue Book](#) that was published last spring.** In a sharp reversal of the transparent process involving all stakeholders that underpinned the formula used to calculate school capacity since the 2014-2015 Blue Book, the retroactive restatement of the 2019-2020 Blue Book was quietly published online, without input from stakeholders or even public notice, despite the fact that the restatement significantly and magically increases capacity at our schools. We fear the restatement will lead the DOE to pack more students into already overcrowded schools and delay the construction of much-needed new school buildings.

### **History:**

Ahead of the publication of the 2014-2015 Blue Book, the DOE convened the Blue Book Working Group “comprised of community stakeholders, including families from district schools, principals from both district and charter schools, advocacy organizations, Community Education Councils, the United Federation of Teachers, and elected officials.” Membership also included CPAC. Over a year and a half, the Working Group met regularly to thoroughly review “each formula, assumption, and factor” and completed “site visits to school buildings representing all grade levels” to develop a new formula for calculating building capacity. (2014-2015 Blue Book) Parents were kept apprised throughout the process with updates from parent leadership and FACE. The new formula was launched in the 2014-2015 Blue Book and was used, with minor tweaking, through the publication of the initial 2019-2020 Blue Book last spring. The importance of the Blue Book Working Group was lauded in great detail in all the published Blue Books through the original 2019-2020 Blue Book.

### **The Restatement:**

In December 2021 the DOE quietly and retroactively restated the 2019-2020 Blue Book. Without public notice, the initial document was removed and replaced online, without any change to the cover page. We believe the restatement was made without input from any of the stakeholder groups who participated in the original Blue Book working group. We do not know who made the decision to make the change.

The restated Blue Book suggests, with excitement, that maximum class sizes are being reduced from 30 to 25 students per classroom – the clearly stated goal of parents and teachers alike, so the adjustment appears promising. But in fact, this reduction is more than offset by the elimination of “program efficiency ratios” (mind-numbing terminology) which the revised Blue Book claims “are no longer needed.” BUT THEY ARE! These program efficiency ratios assumed that regular classrooms were used 7 of 8 periods per day and, more importantly, specialty instruction rooms (music rooms, art rooms, computer labs, science labs, weight rooms, dance studios, and gyms) were used just 5 periods a day because, as stipulated by earlier versions of the Blue Book, “it is difficult to use the spaces for other subjects.” The new capacity calculation now appears to assume that every classroom and every specialty instructional space will be used every period of every day. So while suggesting that the change will reduce class sizes and school capacity, the new formula does the exact opposite.

**The Impact on Capacity Calculations:**

**Since we had to input all data by hand, this analysis looks only at high schools – but we are confident that middle schools and elementary schools were similarly impacted.** With a wave of a magic wand, without constructing anything, the restatement adds **20,902** high school seats throughout New York City (equivalent to the construction of 10-40 high schools). [Here is the spreadsheet with all the data.](#)

IMPACT OF RESTATEMENT OF 2019-2020 BLUE BOOK ON NYC HIGH SCHOOL SEATS			
	Initial Targeted Capacity	Restated Targeted Capacity	Change in # of Seats due to Restatement
Bronx	66,537	69,781	3,244
Brooklyn	96,230	103,766	7,536
Manhattan	70,672	74,657	3,985
Queens	72,109	77,627	5,518
Staten Island	18,552	19,171	619
NYC	324,100	345,002	<b>20,902</b>

**We are extremely concerned that this restatement of school capacity will RAISE class sizes, force schools to offer curriculum in unsuitable spaces (dance class in the computer lab?), further overcrowd many of our schools, and delay construction of new school buildings.**

Chancellor Banks, one of your frequently stated goals has been to rebuild trust in the NYC public school system. This surreptitious restatement of one the DOE’s key documents undermines trust. We urge you to rescind the restatement of the 2019-2020 Blue Book and revert to the original 2019-2020 Blue Book. If changes need to be considered, please reconstitute the Blue Book Working Group and conduct a transparent process.

With much appreciation,

The Chancellor’s Parent Advisory Council

Approved by the membership at its April 14, 2022 meeting

Cc: SCA President Nina Kubota, First Deputy Chancellor Daniel Weisberg, Chief of Staff Savita Bharadwa, Deputy Chancellor of School Leadership Desmond Blackburn, Deputy Chancellor of Family and Community Engagement and External Affairs Kenita Lloyd