



Accessibility, Age, and Air Conditioning of NYC School Buildings

This report provides a comprehensive look at the infrastructure challenges facing New York City's schools.

To comply with the 2019 State law on class size limits, New York City may need to expand its school physical footprint. However, discussions have largely focused on building new schools, often overlooking the state of existing aging infrastructure.

Key Findings of Our Newest Report

- **Accessibility Gaps:** Only one-third of City school buildings are fully accessible, although the level of accessibility varies across Community School Districts 1-32.
- **Aging Infrastructure:** The average City school building is 75 years old, and most schools are over 30 years old.
- **Overcrowding:** Schools experiencing overcrowding have less space per student, which may impact learning conditions and operational efficiency.
- **Climate Control Issues:** While all districts have air conditioning in at least 55% of their school building space, significant gaps remain in ensuring all classrooms provide a comfortable learning environment year-round.

To learn more about NYC's school buildings, [see the report](#).

As budget negotiations continue, IBO's report and related research provides critical data for policymakers to assess the state of the City's school infrastructure and the broader challenges facing public education

Broader Issues Facing the City's Education System

The Independent Budget Office (IBO) found that New York City must hire [17,000 additional teachers](#) to comply with State-mandated class size reductions. This effort requires not only funding for salaries but also sufficient classroom space—the focus on constructing new buildings often overshadows the need to address existing aging infrastructure.

As the City moves toward compliance with State law, the challenge of hiring and retaining teachers becomes more pressing. A competitive labor market and New York City's high cost of living make it difficult to attract educators. Despite [median salaries](#) appearing higher than in many other regions, when adjusted for cost-of-living and local labor market conditions, these salaries are less competitive than they may seem.

Complicating matters further, New York City's [public school enrollment](#) has yet to recover to pre-pandemic levels. While 2023 saw the first enrollment increase since 2016, overall enrollment remains on a downward trend. Combined with [potential funding challenges](#)

currently under consideration at the State level, this could lead to a decline in investment in the City's public schools.

The infrastructure challenges highlighted in this report align with broader issues facing the City's education system, as highlighted in IBO's recent reports on [class size](#), [teacher salaries](#), [enrollment trends](#), and potential changes to [Foundation Aid funding](#). Each of these factors underscore the growing need for strategic investment in public education infrastructure.