



New York City Comptroller
Scott M. Stringer

NEWS

PRESS RELEASE

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COMPTROLLER STRINGER: DOE VIOLATING STATE LAWS REGARDING PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN CITY SCHOOLS, DEEP DISPARITIES IN ACCESS, NEW REPORT SHOWS

Nearly one-third of city schools have no full-time certified physical education teacher; 80 percent of co-located schools lack physical fitness space

149 schools lack both a full-time, certified physical education teacher and a space for physical fitness

(New York, NY) - The New York City Department of Education (DOE) is in violation of state physical education requirements and is failing to provide students with equal access to physical education resources, according to an [interactive](#), school-by-school [analysis](#) released today by New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer.

The [report](#), “Dropping the Ball: Disparities in Physical Education in New York City Schools,” found that at a time when more than 26 percent of children in grades K-8 are obese or severely obese, nearly one-third of New York City schools lack a full-time certified physical education teacher and nearly 30 percent of schools do not have a space dedicated for physical fitness.

“The Department of Education needs to get in shape and prioritize keeping our kids active and fit, because right now the agency is failing to provide equal access to physical education resources – a shortfall that will have long-term effects on children in underserved neighborhoods,” Comptroller Stringer said. “We know that physical fitness is critical for both academic success and long-term health, which is why it’s so distressing that our schoolchildren, including many in neighborhoods with high obesity rates, lack access to certified PE teachers and spaces for physical education.”

New York State Education Department (NYSED) requires that the DOE submit a District Physical Education Plan. However, the Comptroller’s Office found that the last known time the DOE submitted one to the state was in 1982. A draft plan dated December 2012 was provided to the Comptroller’s Office in December 2014, with incomplete and missing information.

NYSED regulations also require that all children in grades K-12 participate in regular physical education classes that must be taught directly by a certified physical education teacher (for grades 7-12), or by a classroom teacher “under the direction and supervision of a certified physical education teacher” (for grades K-6). Students in grades 7-12 must meet minimum PE instructional time requirements with a licensed instructor in order to graduate.

The Comptroller’s office analyzed data provided by the DOE to determine compliance with these requirements, as well as whether students had access to indoor and/or outdoor space where schools can deliver physical education programming.

Significant findings of the report include:

- **Nearly one third of schools do not have a full-time certified physical education teacher:** 506 of the 1,579 schools reviewed (32 percent) do not have a full-time certified physical education teacher. This includes 17 percent of middle schools, 8 percent of high schools, and 59 percent of elementary schools. While some of these schools may have access to a part-time, certified PE teacher, the DOE failed to provide data that would substantiate that possibility.
- **Nearly 3 out of 10 schools have no dedicated physical fitness space:** 435 schools in New York City (28 percent), do not have a space dedicated to

physical fitness. 41 percent of high schools and more than 35 percent of middle schools lack such space.

- **Co-located schools have the least amount of space:** Of the 435 schools without physical fitness space, nearly 80 percent are co-located with another district or charter school. More than 46 percent of the 519 DOE buildings that are home to co-located schools have schools with no physical fitness space.
- **Many schools have neither a full-time physical education teacher nor a dedicated physical fitness space:** The analysis found that 149 schools citywide (nearly 10 percent of all city schools) lack both a full-time, certified physical education teacher as well as a physical fitness space. These schools are primarily clustered in the Bronx, Northern Manhattan and Central Brooklyn.
- **In total, over 400,000 students in New York City public schools lack one of the three following physical education attributes:**
 - 230,000 students lack a full-time, certified PE teacher;
 - 153,000 students attend a school without a physical fitness space; and
 - 91,000 students attend a school that does not have access to an outdoor school yard or nearby park.



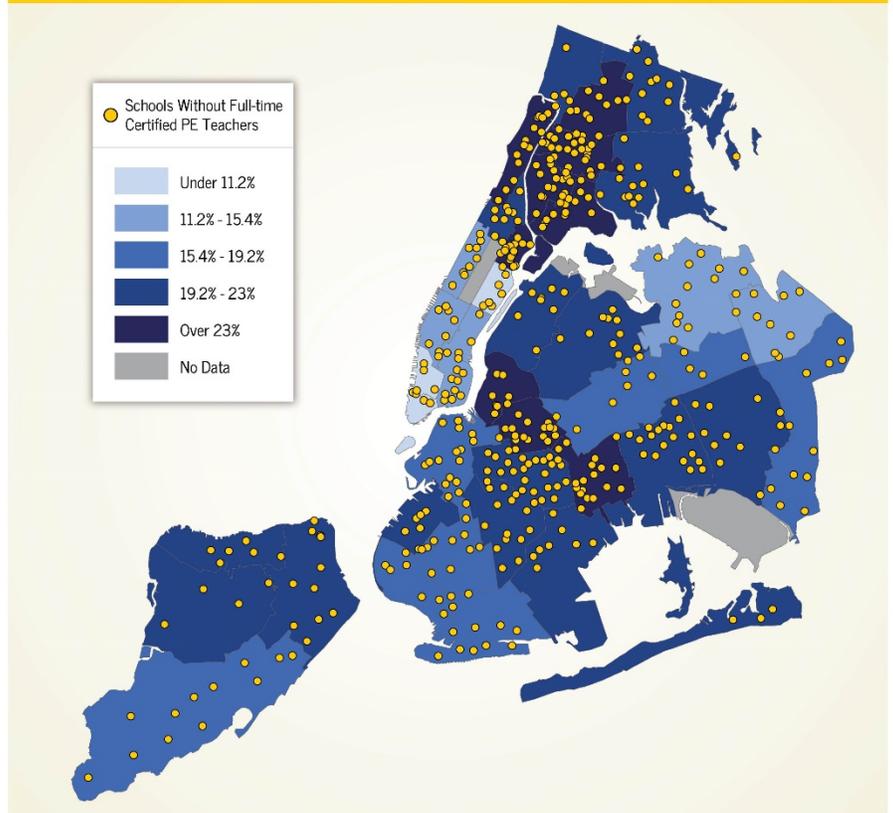
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High obesity levels are prevalent in neighborhoods with schools lacking access to physical education programming

Source: "Dropping the Ball: Disparities in Physical Education in New York City Schools," April 2015. Office of New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer

Obesity data source: Citizens' Committee for Children, Dataset: "Obesity Among Public Elementary and Middle School Students"

NYC SCHOOLS WITHOUT A FULL-TIME, CERTIFIED PE TEACHER, AND OBESITY AMONG PUBLIC ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS



The report features school-by-school data plotted on an [interactive digital map](#), which highlights the alarming nature of the Comptroller's findings.

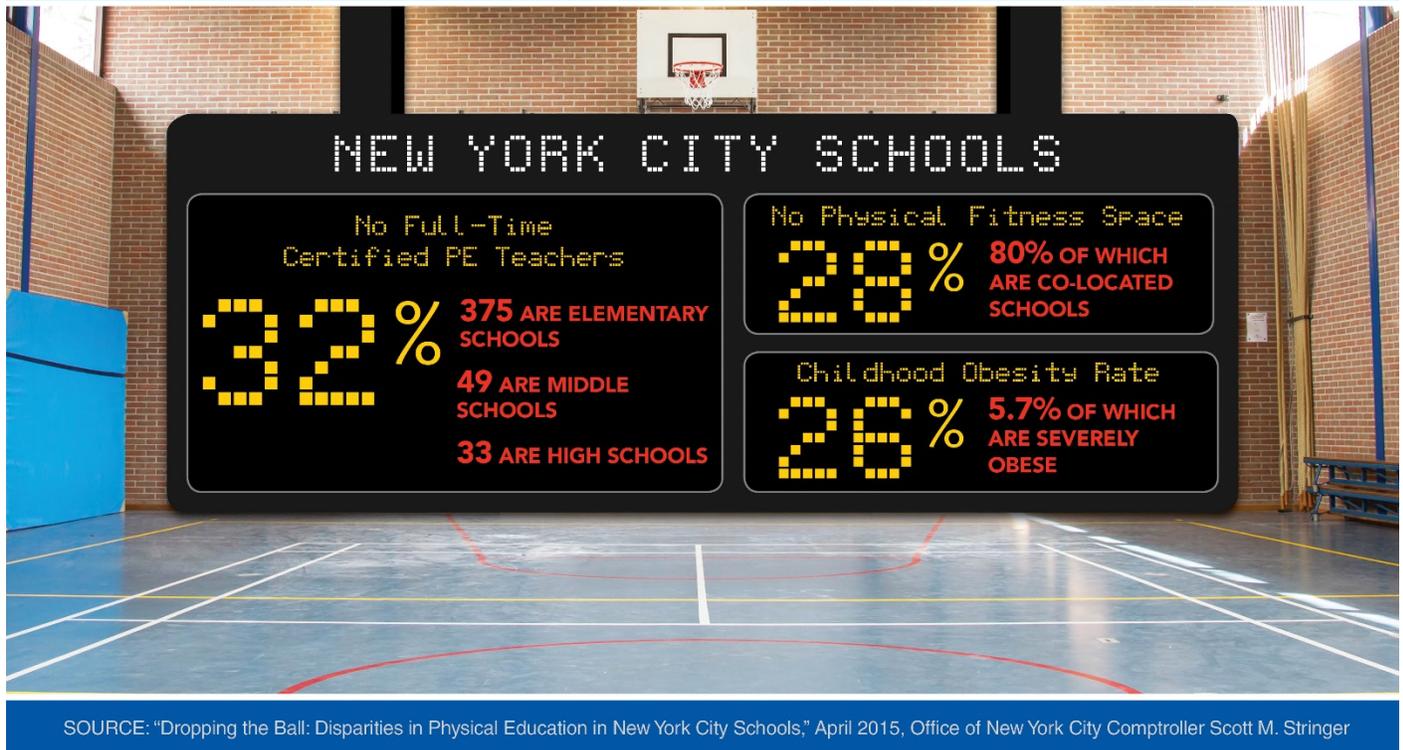
- In East Harlem's School District 4, over 54 percent of schools lack a full-time certified PE teacher and nearly a third do not have access to a dedicated physical fitness space.
- In the South Bronx, School Districts 7, 9 and 12, over 40 percent of schools do not have dedicated fitness spaces.
- In Central Brooklyn, School Districts 16, 19, 23, and 32, nearly 35 percent of schools have neither a full-time instructor nor a fitness space.

“The last time DOE had a formal plan for providing PE in our schools Ronald Reagan was our president. We can't afford to leave kids on the bench by failing to provide a plan for consistent, quality physical education for all students. 1 in 4 New York City schoolchildren is obese or severely obese, putting them at a higher risk for developing diabetes, depression, and other related diseases. The DOE needs to give all our schoolchildren the tools they need to succeed, and that starts by taking action to improve access to physical education,” Stringer said.



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PHYSICAL EDUCATION DISPARITIES IN NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS



Comptroller Stringer recommends DOE take the following steps:

- Undertake a system-wide assessment of certified physical education teaching positions and fitness spaces, in order to comply with state law. Every school should be encouraged to have at least one certified physical education teacher on staff and district superintendents should identify neighborhood spaces with excess capacity – including school gyms and fitness areas, outdoor play spaces and local recreational facilities – as part of a broader plan to provide improved access to physical fitness activities to all children.
- Update the DOE's District Physical Education Plan, submit it to NYSED as required, and post a copy on the DOE website;
- Develop instruments for tracking and monitoring schools' provision of PE to all students; and
- Post physical education data for every City school in a single, clear location on the DOE website.

“Our children have a right to healthy, active lives – and that starts with healthy, active schools,” said Sascha Murillo, Community Organizer in the Health Justice program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest, and a representative of the PE for All Coalition. “The Comptroller’s report demonstrates that New York City is not meeting its legal obligation to provide K-12 students with the physical education they deserve. Sadly, the Comptroller found the fewest PE resources in low-income communities of color, where children also have the least access to adequate healthcare and green space, and would benefit the most from learning about health and exercise. We hope this report will spur the City to improve physical education, and to tackle health and educational disparities among New York City children.”

To read the full report, click [here](#).

To view the interactive digital map, click [here](#).