



A Memorandum for District 4  
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## Overcrowded Schools on the East Side

The New York City Department of Education (DOE) faces an overcrowding problem that is only worsening as it adds pre-k classes. In School District 2 alone (which encompasses Council District 4), 48 schools were at or above full capacity (or had 100 percent or higher target utilization of school space), according to the most recent DOE data available.<sup>1</sup> Add the 17 schools that were 95 to 99 percent utilized (organizations such as Class Size Matters and Families for Excellent Schools contend that utilization rates are actually higher than DOE figures), and you have a total of 36,227 students in overcrowded schools in School District 2. Yet the current Five-Year Capital Plan covers expansion for only five buildings in the school district, adding a total 3,150 seats.<sup>2</sup>

According to School Construction Authority President Lorraine Grillo, one of the problems is that the City won't begin the process of considering building a new school, which takes years, until there is a five percent increase in an existing school's population.<sup>3</sup> So if a school is currently operating at 110 percent capacity, the DOE won't even consider opening a possible new school until the existing one is operating

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<sup>1</sup> New York City Department of Education. "2015-2016 The Enrollment, Capacity, and Utilization Report." 2016. "2015 – 2016 Enrollment, Capacity and Utilization Report"

<sup>2</sup> NYC School Construction Authority. "FY 2015-2019 Proposed Five Year Capital Plan Amendment." 2015. "FY 2015-2019 Proposed Five Year Capital Plan Amendment"

<sup>3</sup>Zimmer, Amy, and Nikhita Venugopal. "Why New School Seats Aren't Keeping Pace With City's Housing Boom." *DNAinfo New York*. DNAinfo New York, 18 May 2016. Web. 15 Aug. 2017. <https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20160518/upper-east-side/why-new-school-seats-arent-keeping-pace-with-citys-housing-boom>

above 115 percent. What's more, the City uses outdated data for its projections. In order to make predictions of where seats will be needed, the DOE looks at housing-permit and household-size information from the 2000 Census.<sup>4</sup> This data paints the picture of a completely different real estate landscape in Manhattan.

In order to begin to address overcrowding, the City must use more accurate and transparent enrollment projections by independent experts. Educational organizations across the country are already using predictive analytics—statistical techniques that include data mining, modeling, and artificial intelligence. These analytics, using City data on land use and real estate development, should be used to predict future school enrollment throughout the City.

At the end of 2016, the DOE put out a call to data scientists, offering a \$15,000 award for the data model that most accurately predicts student population changes in communities. As your City Council Member, I will advocate that this type of innovative modeling become standard practice and be a regular line item in the DOE's budget, instead of a one-off addition. The cost of implementing this type of predictive analytics to plan for the future educational needs of our city will certainly be a smart investment.

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<sup>4</sup>NYC School Construction Authority. "Quarterly Status of Projects in Process." 2017. Web.