

April 2019

Under the Radar:

Big Rise in After-School Programs for Elementary and Middle School Students

Summary

While much press and public attention has focused on the de Blasio Administration's expansion of pre-kindergarten, and more recently its efforts to establish 3-K for All, the Mayor has also undertaken a substantial expansion of after-school programs for elementary and middle school students. Under the rubric of COMPASS NYC, or the Comprehensive After School System of New York City, a set of interrelated school year and summer programs has grown from an enrollment of about 123,000 when the Mayor took office to more than 196,000 last year.

IBO has tracked the spending and enrollment growth for these after-school programs over the past five years. Among our findings:

- Much of the growth in the after-school programs has been aimed at middle school students, with the biggest boost in funding and slots in 2015 and 2016. Growth has continued but at a slower rate for both elementary and middle school programs since then.
- Initially, the expansion of the programs was primarily funded with an infusion of state dollars. But as the after-school initiative has grown, the share of funding that comes from the city has grown as well, from 48 percent of the \$264.0 million set of programs in 2015 to 54 percent of the \$334.5 million budgeted this year.
- Enrollment in nearly all of the programs has continued to be strong and frequently exceeds the number of budgeted slots; more than one student can be served by each slot because students do not always participate every day.
- In contrast, enrollment in the summer program for middle school students has lagged behind available slots.

One factor that may have impeded enrollment in the middle school summer program is annual uncertainty in funding for that part of the after-school programs. A \$15 million allocation for these summer slots has routinely been left out of the Mayor's budget plans and subject to negotiations with the City Council. That means the size of the summer program often remains uncertain until June, just as the program should be getting underway. This year is no different, with the same \$15 million in funding for the upcoming summer not in the Mayor's preliminary budget plan.

From Out of School Time to COMPASS

In fiscal year 2015, the de Blasio Administration expanded the set of related after-school programs formerly known as Out of School Time, renaming them the Comprehensive After School System of New York City (COMPASS NYC). The expansion brought a large increase in funding and capacity with a focus on serving middle school students, almost tripling the number of middle school slots available.

COMPASS NYC programs are administered by the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and offered at no cost, providing a mix of academic, recreational, and cultural programming for school-age youth from elementary to high school. These programs are offered after school and during school vacations. COMPASS providers operate mostly in public school buildings, with a smaller number operating in locations such as community centers and facilities of the parks department and New York City Housing Authority. Although part of the COMPASS system, the middle school program is known as School's Out New York City (SONYC).

A December 2015 IBO [report](#) examined the expansion of the COMPASS NYC programs in 2015 and 2016. At that time, funding, capacity, and participation had increased greatly, but there was uncertainty over whether the same level of funding would continue to be available in future years, especially from state Foundation Aid funds that are received by the city's Department of Education and then transferred to DYCD. This report provides an update on COMPASS funding and capacity through 2019 (unless otherwise noted all years refer to fiscal years).

Now in its fifth year, COMPASS NYC has continued to grow overall, but there is still uncertainty regarding the sustainability of funding for middle school summer programming, which will likely once again be an issue in the 2020 budget process. From 2015 through 2019, the COMPASS NYC programs' budget grew from \$264.0 million to \$334.5 million, a \$70.5 million increase in funding, as the number of overall COMPASS slots grew by over 33,000 to almost 178,800 slots for this year. As the program grew, the share of the budget funded by the city gradually increased. While funding for most COMPASS programs has been baselined for each year of the financial plan, middle school SONYC summer funding has instead been renewed in yearly increments.

Initial Expansion

The initial expansion of COMPASS NYC school-year programs took place in 2015 and included both elementary and middle school slots. The combined programs' budget

grew from \$150.6 million in 2014 to \$264.0 million in the first year of the expansion. (All funding figures referred to in this report exclude administrative costs.) Including all grade levels, the number of COMPASS NYC slots in 2015 totaled 87,914 school year slots and 57,845 summer slots.

The expansion focused particularly on capacity for middle school students under SONYC. The middle school years are seen as a critical time when community factors play a larger role in shaping students' academic development.¹ This is a time when many students begin to fall behind grade level, and the de Blasio Administration believed that quality after-school programs could help keep them on track and better prepare them for high school and beyond.²

As a result, the number of after school slots for middle school students almost tripled, rising to 42,750 school year slots in 2015, up from 15,241 slots in 2014. Because the city's fiscal year runs from July to June, the 2015 budget, which covered July 2014 through June 2015, did not include an expansion for summer middle school programming for calendar year 2015. The middle school summer expansion was included in fiscal year 2016. The number of summer slots available for middle school students increased by over 60 percent, from 14,785 slots in 2015 (under the program prior to SONYC) to 23,808 slots under COMPASS NYC for 2016. Middle school slots totaled 72,894 in 2016, compared with 57,535 in 2015. For a comparative table on funding, slots, and enrollment in the COMPASS NYC program over the years 2014-2019 click [here](#).

COMPASS Programs Have Grown More Rapidly In Middle Schools Than in Elementary Schools

While the COMPASS programs are larger than those they replaced, the growth has been uneven. In 2015 the implementation of the SONYC initiative quickly tripled the number of after-school slots available for the city's middle school students. From 2015 through 2019, growth of slots and funding for middle school programs outpaced expansion for elementary school students overall. However, after 2016, growth in slots varied for both middle school and elementary programs from year to year, increasing anywhere from 4 percent to 6 percent in some years and increasing by less than 1 percent in other years. This has meant more comparable rates of growth between elementary and middle school slots since 2017. In addition, summer program capacity has increased faster than school year programs, although the summer programs have had more difficulty filling all of their slots.

COMPASS NYC Funding, Budgeted Slots, and Enrollment by Grade Level and Program Area

Dollars in millions

Program Areas	Fiscal Year 2015				
	Funding	Budgeted Summer Slots	Actual Enrollment	Budgeted School Year Slots	Actual Enrollment
Total Elementary	\$116.4	39,242	42,395	39,290	47,123
Total Middle School	135.7	14,785	13,781	42,750	58,745
Program Prior to SONYC	49.1	14,785	13,781	13,114	18,869
SONYC	86.6	0	0	29,636	39,876
COMPASS High and COMPASS Explore	4.4	3,818	1,955	5,874	6,732
TA/Evaluation & Support	7.5				
TOTAL	\$264.0	57,845	58,131	87,914	112,600
Program Areas	Fiscal Year 2018				
	Funding	Budgeted Summer Slots	Actual Enrollment	Budgeted School Year Slots	Actual Enrollment
Total Elementary	\$140.3	47,619	45,054	46,011	51,773
Total Middle School	\$173.5	25,910	24,246	51,645	70,288
Program Prior to SONYC	\$49.1	11,656	10,422	13,355	18,122
SONYC	\$124.4	14,254	13,824	38,290	52,166
COMPASS High and COMPASS Explore	\$4.5	3,592	678	3,592	4,142
TA/Evaluation & Support	\$8.6				
TOTAL	\$326.8	77,121	69,978	101,248	126,203

SOURCE: Department of Youth and Community Development
 NOTE: COMPASS high is COMPASS programming for high school students and COMPASS Explore are programs that focus on specific topics and include slots of all age ranges; the totals for elementary and middle school listed in this report do not include corresponding portions of Explore programming. Information on all fiscal years 2014-2019 [here](#).

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the number of slots) than elementary summer programs, although both generally have greater enrollment than the available number of slots. The only exception is 2018, when, according to the Mayor’s Management Report, there was a shortfall in enrollment due in part to challenges in switching to a new data system and delayed enrollment for elementary students mandated to attend summer school. In 2018, DYCD reported 45,054 students enrolled in 47,619 summer slots.

Middle School Programs. From 2015 through 2019, funding for middle school programs increased 33 percent from \$135.7 million to \$180.5 million. The total number of slots increased 35 percent from 57,535 to 77,747—a 21 percent increase for school year slots and 76 percent for summer slots. Most of the growth in the number of middle school slots occurred in 2016, the first year of the summer portion of the SONYC initiative. More recently, growth in middle school programs has leveled off, with fewer than 200 slots added for both summer and school year combined in 2019.

Elementary School Programs. From 2015 through 2018, funding for elementary school programs increased 21 percent, from \$116.4 million to \$140.3 million. The total number of elementary slots increased 19 percent, from 78,532 in 2015 to 93,630 in 2018 (46,011 for school year, and 47,619 for summer). In the 2019 budget, elementary school funding held steady at \$140.3 million and the number of slots increased by just 135 for the summer and school year combined.

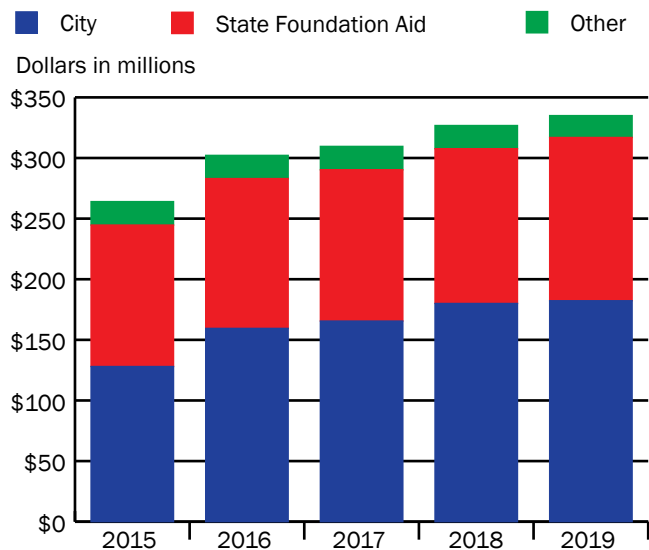
Total elementary enrollment increased each year from 2015 through 2017, but was largely flat in 2018, the most recent year for which enrollment data is available. DYCD estimates that about 1.25 students can be served by each slot because students do not participate every day due to other after-school and extra-curricular activities, which is why actual enrollment can exceed the number of budgeted slots. In general, elementary school year programs have come closer to reaching their capacity limits (1.25 times

Total middle school enrollment increased each year from 2015 through 2018. Consistent with the changes in capacity, enrollment growth was greater for the summer programs (76 percent) than the school year programs (20 percent). As was the case with elementary programs, school year programs for middle school students were more successful than the summer programs in filling their slots. In fact, middle school summer enrollment remained below the number of slots available each year.

Changes in Funding Sources

The 2015 COMPASS NYC expansion was funded largely by transferring state Foundation Aid from the Department of Education (DOE) to DYCD. Funding for COMPASS NYC for all grade levels totaled \$264.0 million. State Foundation Aid from DOE made up 44 percent of the \$264.0 million, and city funds made up 48 percent. In the 2019 adopted budget,

COMPASS NYC Funding Increased as City Share of Funds Grew



SOURCES: IBO analysis of Financial Management System and Department of Youth and Community Development data

NOTE: Category "Other" consists of state, non-Department of Education intracity, and other categorical funds.

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COMPASS NYC funding reached \$334.5 million, an increase of 27 percent since 2015. State Foundation Aid made up 40 percent of funding, while city funding made up 54 percent. While the amount of Foundation Aid and city funds have both increased each year, the city funds share of the total has been increasing as the Foundation Aid share has been decreasing.

Despite overall growth in COMPASS NYC enrollment, in most years the number of funded slots that will be available remains uncertain until the budget for the upcoming year is adopted because the summer portion of SONYC is not baselined, and is allocated each year on a one-time basis. In the 2016 Executive Budget, the amount of DOE funding to be transferred to DYCD was reduced by \$27.7 million, which would have resulted in a decline in SONYC summer slots. Following pushback from providers and participants, the de Blasio Administration and the City Council reached a deal to restore \$20.3 million for middle school summer programming, replacing Foundation Aid with city funds in the 2016 adopted budget. In 2017, a one-time \$17.5 million allocation was added at adoption for SONYC summer, and in 2018, a one-time \$15 million was added in the Preliminary Budget for SONYC summer. Most recently, in the 2019 adopted budget, \$15 million was restored for only this fiscal year to fund 22,800 total summer middle school slots.

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Endnotes

¹Kranes, Stephanie. (2018, August.) Middle School Concentration: Some Schools Had a Large Share of Students From Lower-Income & Education, High-Crime Neighborhoods. Retrieved February 27, 2019 from: <https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/middle-school-concentration-some-schools-had-a-large-share-of-students-from-lower-income-education-high-crime-neighborhoods-august-2018.pdf>

²Office of the Mayor. Afterschool Programs for Middle School Students. (2014, March.) Retrieved September 19 2018 from: https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/home/downloads/pdf/reports/2014/after_school_programs_white_paper.pdf

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