

# Attrition Sneaks Upward as Teachers Show Signs of Restlessness

*UFT Research Dept., December 2015*

Attrition from New York City schools by teachers and other professional staff is on the rise again, after a slowdown following the Great Recession. Starting teachers left at higher rates over the 2014-15 school year (Tables 1a and 1b). And resignations at all experience levels are increasing. They have become the principal reason that teachers and pedagogues leave the system, far surpassing retirement, which was once the principal cause [Table 2]. Even contractual raises through May 2018 have not tamped down resignations.

Higher departure rates across the spectrum has meant that the proportion of veteran teachers has declined [Table 3]. The percentage of teachers with five or fewer years of experience rose last year to about 26 percent of the teaching force, a six-year high.”

## Starting Teachers

Many fewer teachers were hired over the 12 months from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015. The city hired 4,543 teachers, almost 1,300 less than the 5,840 it hired in the 2013-14 cohort. This was at least in part the result of slower attrition in previous years. But those in their third and fourth years of teaching showed signs of growing restlessness, with a two-to-three percentage point uptick in attrition for the latest two cohorts. One quarter of teachers hired in 2011-12 were gone within four years. Still, thanks in part to the national recession, the percentage of the 2010-11 cohort that was gone in five years, 28.6 percent, was down from far higher levels among earlier cohorts.

**Table 1a: Attrition of New Teachers by Cohort NYC 2007-2015**  
Cumulative Percentages of Teachers Who Left

Year Hired/ Totals	% quit by year one	% quit by year two	% quit by year three	% quit by year four	% quit by year five
2008-09 5,309	9.9	19.3	27.2	33.0	37.4
2009-10 2,491	7.4	17.0	23.6	30.2	35.2
2010-11 3,514	6.6	13.6	18.7	23.2	28.6
2011-12 4,344	6.8	13.9	19.7	25.3	
2012-13 5,246	7.9	15.4	22.9		
2013-14 5,840	6.3	14.5			
2014-15 4,543	8.8				

Source: UFT analysis of BOE payroll data. Hiring counts run from July 1 to June 30 of the following year. Terminations are measured from October 1 to September 30. Note: *Some counts change from earlier reports as teachers' status gets resolved or adjusted.*

The main reason that new teachers left was resignation. A very distant second was “probationary discontinuance,” meaning they were not awarded tenure or were dismissed before they got tenure. Even after six years, 77 percent of those who left the 2010-11 cohort left because they didn’t like the job or got a better one. Only 158, or about four percent, failed to get tenure. Others, in the fractional percentages, left from illness, licensing issues or other termination reasons.

**Table 1b. Reasons for New Teacher Departures**

Hire Year	Total Teachers Hired	Resignations by Dec. 2015	Probation Discontinued	All other Departures by Dec. 2015	Total Departures	Resignations as % of All Departures
2010-11	3,514	795	158	80	1,033	77%
2011-12	4,344	929	137	72	1,138	82%
2012-13	5,246	1029	136	76	1,241	83%
2013-14	5,840	769	76	46	891	86%
2014-15	4,543	392	32	34	458	86%
2015-16*	4,090*	76	0	1	77	99%

\*Hires only through December 2015

### Departures of All Pedagogues at all Experience Levels

For all pedagogues, including teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, school psychologist, lab specialists and secretaries (though not paraprofessionals), at all levels of seniority, departures were again above 5,000 last year (5,363), as they have been for the previous two years.

However, the balance of the various reasons for departure has shifted noticeably. Retirements used to be the leading cause of terminations but that began changing in 2011-12 and the trend has become more pronounced. There were about 1,700 retirements last year but 2,600-plus resignations. That is close to 1,000 more resignations than retirements. By comparison, in 2010-11 there were about 250 more retirements than resignations.

Part of the trend can be explained by the UFT’s 2014 collective bargaining agreement, which requires members to stay through June 2018 to receive the final raise and be eligible for the full amount of contractual retroactive pay. That likely encourages people to delay retirement. Also, a retirement bubble of baby-boomers has mostly worked its way through the system by now. However that does not explain the steady increase in annual resignations of regulars, which has risen from 1,901 to 2,627 between 2010 and 2015. Resignations of regulars counts those who leave before retirement but do not have any problems with tenure, licensing, illness or discipline. The rise in those counts is worrisome.

**Table 2: Numbers of New York City Pedagogues Terminated, by Reason**  
School Years 2007-08 through 2013-14

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Substitute terminations	18	50	70	47	27	44
Trial on charges	34	58	30	40	37	46
Retirement	2,014	2,210	1,983	1,996	2,219	1,723
<b>Resignation of Regulars</b>	<b>1,901</b>	<b>1,957</b>	<b>2,023</b>	<b>2,084</b>	<b>2,482</b>	<b>2,627</b>
Probationary discontinuance	324	238	228	242	178	287
Failure to return from leave	211	181	39	190	113	190
Disability	97	159	129	110	132	126
Deceased	75	76	66	76	70	53
Absent without notice	27	17	14	41	17	21
Failure to meet requirements	188	129	125	78	89	80
Other	52	95	107	89	76	166
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,941</b>	<b>5,170</b>	<b>4,814</b>	<b>4,993</b>	<b>5,440</b>	<b>5,363</b>

Source: UFT Analysis of DOE payroll data.

### Teacher Experience

There has been an increase in the proportion of less-experienced teachers this year, partly a corollary of higher departure rates, particularly of new teachers. It is also the result of a hiring increase. The teacher count at November 2015, 76,674, is nearly 1,500 more than at the same time a year ago and nearly returns the city to its count at November 2009, just before the effects of the recession took hold. Student enrollment has fluctuated but not changed significantly in the last six years, according to the Mayor's Management Report.

Teachers with zero to five years' experience now account for almost 26 percent of the workforce, up from 20.4 percent in November 2012. The proportion of teachers with up to three years' experience, at 17 percent, is even larger than it was in 2009, reflecting the recent churn of newer teachers in the early years of their careers.

The table below uses salary step counts, a different data set than the BOE payroll data from which Tables 1 and 2 are drawn.

**Table 3: Teacher Experience Levels by Salary Step Counts, 2009-15**

	November 2009	November 2010	November 2011	November 2012	November 2013	November 2014	November 2015
<b>Total Teachers</b>	76,937	75,211	73,982	74,380	74,497	75,229	76,674
<b>Zero to Three Years</b>	10,889	8,171	7,523	9,638	10,880	12,297	13,039
<b>Four to Five Years</b>	8,943	8,822	7,778	5,563	4,658	5,782	6,822
<b>Total 0-5 Yrs.</b>	19,832	16,993	15,301	15,201	15,538	18,079	19,861
<b>More than 5 Years</b>	57,105	58,218	58,681	59,179	58,959	57,150	56,813
<b>0-5 Yrs as % of Total</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>25.9</b>
<b>0-3 Yrs as % of Total</b>	14.2	10.9	10.2	13.0	14.6	16.3	17.0

Source: UFT analysis of salary step counts.