

# Attrition and Experience of NYC Teachers and Pedagogues

*UFT Research Department, February 2010*

## New Teacher Attrition

New York City hired almost 2,000 fewer teachers over the course of the 2008-09 school year than it did in each of the previous four years, as enrollments declined and the recession took hold. But though their numbers decreased, the percentage of teachers who leave the city's public schools within their first year of teaching has remained mostly unchanged since 2003-04, updated data show. Just under 12 percent of the 5,379 certified teachers who started in 2008-09 left by this fall, in line with the five previous years.

Attrition of teachers in their second through sixth years of teaching has slowed, likely the result of better salaries and benefits as well as the adverse economy. Of teachers who started in 2007-08, 21 percent left after two years, down from 23 to 24 percent previously. Slightly fewer of the 2006-07 new hires left after three years (31 percent, compared with 32-36 percent previously). About 42 percent of new teachers leave after five years. **(Table 1)**

While research has shown the city is attracting more highly-qualified teachers, the attrition data show many of those teachers move on after a few years. The data cannot tell us where they go, but other reports suggests they leave to teach in suburban schools, they take on administrative assignments, or they leave the profession after putting in a few years. The two-year Teaching Fellows program, which brought in about 1,500 teachers in 2008-09, and the two-year Teach for America program, which has accounted for about 500 new teachers each year, contribute to this attrition because of their very program designs. (However, the Fellows program claims to have no higher attrition rate than city teachers who enter via a traditional route.)

*Some attrition rates are changed from last year's report. This new update captures teachers who may have left and returned and teachers whose status has been resolved or adjusted.*

**Table 1: Attrition of New Teachers NYC 2002-2009**  
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	% quit by year six	% quit by yr seven
2002-03 7,882	14.2	24.5	33.1	39.9	44.6	47.9	49.9
2003-04 8,234	11.3	23.3	32.2	38.6	42.9	45.3	
2004-05 7,471	11.9	22.9	32.8	38.7	42.0		
2005-06 7,517	10.9	24.1	35.6	37.9			
2006-07 7,123	11.9	24.0	31.2				
2007-08 7,123	11.5	21.0					
2008-09 5,379	11.6						

Source: UFT analysis of BOE payroll data

### Details on Attrition of New Teachers (no tables)

Of 18,629 new teachers who have left the system over the past seven years, the vast majority (77%) simply resigned. Much smaller numbers failed to complete certification requirements (4%) or were discontinued during probation (6%).

Attrition of new teachers was highest in upper Manhattan and the South Bronx, where 48% left Districts 5 and 7 and 50% left District 6 over the last seven years. New-teacher attrition was also very high in District 10 in the Bronx (46%), District 16 in Brooklyn (46%), and District 23 in Brooklyn (47%). About one-third of new teachers left the higher-income districts in Manhattan and Brooklyn, namely districts 1, 2, 14, 15 and 18. Fewer still (20-27%) left the large south-central Brooklyn districts of 20, 21 and 22. New-teacher attrition was lowest in Staten Island (15%), followed by Districts 25 and 26 in Queens (19% each).

By license, the largest group that left was common branch teachers, about 5,400 or one third of 15,000 hired from 2002-2009. But by percentage, the largest attrition came among secondary-level English (45%) and Spanish (44%) teachers, and teachers of math (42%) and sciences (40-44%).

### Departures of All Pedagogues in School Year 2008-09

For all pedagogues—that is, teachers plus guidance counselors, social workers, school psychologists, lab specialists and school secretaries—at all levels of seniority, attrition declined again this year, to 6,389 for the 2008-09 school year, from 7,866 in 2007-08 and 8,864 the year before (**Table 2**).

As has been typical over the last several years, “resignation of regulars,” at 3,337, is the top reason for termination. “Regulars” are fully-certified and licensed teachers or other school-based personnel who are not yet eligible for retirement and who have satisfactory records and work histories. Last year, though, there were far fewer resignations than in previous years. In part, this is explained by the overall drop in pedagogue attrition. But resignations also accounted for a smaller percentage of overall attrition--47% of attrition this year compared with 57% in 2007-08 and 58% the year before. Pedagogues are thinking twice before leaving.

**Table 2: Termination of New York City Pedagogues  
School Years 2003 - 2009**

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Sub terminations	2,977	311	574	48	68	123	161
Trial on charges	24	24	12	17	14	11	21
Retirement	3,358	2,462	1,997	1,708	1,821	1,940	1,686
<b>Resignation of Regular</b>	<b>2,574</b>	<b>3,939</b>	<b>4,203</b>	<b>4,303</b>	<b>5,146</b>	<b>4,489</b>	<b>3,337</b>
Probationary Discontinuance	87	162	268	201	259	309	302
Failure to return from leave	136	250	193	134	581	64	157
Disability	74	101	116	122	142	124	107
Deceased	109	99	100	77	122	122	106
Absent without Notice	82	109	134	54	67	77	44
Failure to meet state reqrmnts			226	998	497	487	406
Other	137	96	35	22	147	120	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,558</b>	<b>7,553</b>	<b>7,858</b>	<b>7,684</b>	<b>8,864</b>	<b>7,866</b>	<b>6,389</b>

Source: UFT analysis of BOE payroll data

Retirements continued to decline, and at 1,686 in 2008-09 were at their lowest level in at least ten years. This makes sense as the city educator force overall has become younger over this time, especially in the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island.

Probationary discontinuance, which reflects severance of non-tenured teachers, remains much higher than when this mayor and chancellor first took office. There were about 300 such terminations in each of the last two years, as the Dept. of Education has stepped up its dismissals of new teachers in their first three years of service. The State Education Dept. has also tightened its oversight of educators who fail to get their paperwork in order or take and pass all required courses by state deadlines, resulting in continuing high rates of terminations for “failure to meet state requirements.”

District 2 had the second-highest number of terminations last year at 456, or 20 percent of all pedagogues. The highest number was in the much larger District 10, where 533 pedagogues left last year, 15 percent of the total. The largest district, District 31 in Staten Island, saw a turnover of just 6 percent.

### Teacher Experience

The percentage of relatively inexperienced teachers—those with less than five full years experience—has decreased dramatically since 2003, when 44 percent of all teachers had taught five or fewer years (**Table 3**). Today, just 26 percent of teachers have five or fewer years’ experience; or on the flip side, 74 percent have more than five years under their belts. Aside from the recession, a 43 percent salary increase, a five-year longevity bonus, and other programs designed to retain teachers in the system have clearly had their desired impact. Table 3 shows that of 76,937 classroom teachers counted in November 2009, just under 11,000 were in their first, second or third year of teaching.

**Table 3: Teacher Experience Levels by Salary Step Counts, 2003-09**

	November 2003	November 2004	December 2005	November 2006	November 2007	November 2008	November 2009
<b>Total Teachers</b>	77,852	78,837	77,666	78,860	79,792	79,371	76,937
<b>Zero to Three Years</b>	27,455	25,689	17,887	16,506	16,598	14,875	10,889
<b>Four to Five Years</b>	6,981	8,565	9,454	10,111	9,826	9,201	8,943
<b>Total 0-5 Yrs.</b>	34,436	34,254	27,341	26,617	26,424	24,076	19,832
<b>0-5 Yrs as % of Total</b>	<b>44.2</b>	<b>43.4</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>33.8</b>	<b>33.1</b>	<b>30.3</b>	<b>25.8</b>
<b>0-3 Yrs as % of Total</b>	35.3	32.6	23	20.9	20.1	18.7	14.2

Source: UFT analysis of salary step counts