

United Federation of Teachers

UFT Annual Teacher Survey

Analysis of Results

UFT Research Dept.



2013 - 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In late November 2013, United Federation of Teachers researchers sent a 50-question survey to 2,510 New York City public school teachers selected at random.* The aims were to learn more about their working lives, the learning conditions in their schools and their views on the many reforms that are being done in their names or tried out on them. The survey was well received with responses from 33 percent of those selected at random, a strong response rate for an online survey.

Among the key findings:

- **At every school level, a large majority of the city's teachers have thought seriously about leaving the teaching profession;**
- **Approximately 42 percent of teachers do not plan to still be teaching in the city schools in three years; of those, only about one-fifth expect to retire, while the rest plan to move to another school system, find a different job in education or leave education entirely.**
- **On average, teachers spend just shy of \$500 a year on classroom supplies over and above what they are reimbursed. New teachers spend much more than that.**
- **Compliance-related paperwork is consuming teachers' time. Many have to spend more time on paperwork than they do on collaborating with other teachers or communicating with parents.**
- **More than 90 percent of teachers are doing school-related work during nonschool hours and this finding holds after subtracting out per-session work. For more than three-quarters of these teachers, the work takes more than three hours per week.**
- **At least half the teachers at every school level report that their students are not getting sufficient access to instructional technology. They also say that their students need more time for art and music, library, physical education and tutoring.**
- **Reliance on standardized test scores to evaluate students and schools was viewed as ineffective by large majorities of teachers. In addition, 88% did not think opening more charter schools would drive improvement in student achievement.**
- **52% or more believe that universal pre-kindergarten, an emphasis on social and emotional learning and class size reduction would be highly effective reforms.**

* About 81 percent of these teachers received the survey via email, while a remaining 466 teachers received the survey via U.S. Postal Service, as the UFT did not have their non-DOE email addresses.

INTRODUCTION

In late November 2013 the UFT surveyed a random sample of New York City public school teachers, asking about their professional lives and their views on the school system. The 50-question survey was sent to 2,510 teachers. The size of the sample and the selection process were carefully designed so that survey respondents would represent teachers from all five boroughs, all school levels, and all levels of experience [Table 1].

The survey was well received, with responses from 836 teachers, or 33 percent of those selected. The respondents provided detailed descriptions of the learning environment at their schools and thoughtful opinions on education issues. (Not all respondents replied to every question. In some instances, responses do not total 836.)

Teachers appreciated the opportunity to respond. “Most teachers feel there’s nobody hearing them,” one elementary school literacy coach wrote.

But what stood out the most was how demoralized the city’s teachers feel. They put in long hours, make do with inadequate resources, and turn in loads of paperwork. They feel they are part of a compliance culture that undervalues their skills. They are ready to turn the page on the last 10 years of reforms, and they would like the city’s leaders, parents and administrators to take collective responsibility alongside them for the children they educate.

“I am a 25 year veteran of NYC schools,” wrote one Queens high school teacher. “I love to teach but I deplore the state of the profession. The Common Core rollout and testing overkill is sapping the life out of students and teachers. Unless there is a seismic shift in the current paradigm I doubt that I will continue to do what I love - teaching. This should be the apex of my career. Instead it is the low point.”

WHO ARE THE TEACHERS?

About three quarters of teachers who took the survey were general education teachers and 84 percent had six or more years of teaching experience. More than half had 11-plus years of experience. This reflects the current balance of general education to special education teachers in the overall system and also reflects a recent increase in veteran teachers, since new-teacher hiring has slowed since 2008.

About half the respondents teach in elementary schools, 17 percent teach middle school and 23 percent teach high school. They come from all five boroughs (although more than one-quarter of respondents did not identify their borough.) A large majority came to the profession from schools of education; 81 respondents, or about 10 percent, were Teaching Fellows and just 7 came in through Teach for America, again a good reflection of those programs’ representations in the teacher population overall.

Table 1, on the next page, describes the sample and compares it with the overall active teacher workforce in the city.

Table 1. Characteristics of UFT Teacher Sample vs. All NYC Teachers

Characteristic	Sample N = 836	All = 66,013
Type of Teacher		
General Education	76%	74%
Special Education	24%	26%
Teaching Location		
Bronx	11%	22%
Brooklyn	20%	30%
Manhattan	11%	15%
Queens	25%	27%
Staten Island	5%	6%
Not Available	28%*	Less than 1%
School Type		
Elementary	51%	42%
K to 8	8%	11%
Middle School	17%	20%
Secondary and High School	23%	27%
Years Teaching Experience		
In first year of teaching	1%	Less than 1%
1 to 3 years	8%	12%
4 to 5 years	7%	7%
6 to 10 years	29%	30%
11 or more years	55%	51%
Certification Program		
Career ladder program	3%	n/a
College Certified	76%	n/a
DOE recruitment of non US educators	1%	n/a
Teach for America	1%	<1%
Teaching Fellows	10%	11%

*Some teachers did not identify the borough that they teach in.

The sample of teachers surveyed included mostly tenured teachers; only about 100 were probationary. Sixty percent of the respondents play some role other than teacher in their school. These roles include math or literacy coach, dean, member of the School Leadership Team or Inquiry Team, or chapter leader.

WHAT ARE TEACHERS THINKING ABOUT THEIR CAREERS?

One of the strongest findings of this survey is the number of teachers who are thinking of leaving. A full 70 percent of respondents agreed with the statement: “Recently, I have thought seriously about leaving the teaching profession.” This finding held true across general and special education teachers at all school levels: elementary, K-8, middle, 6-12 and high schools [Table 2].

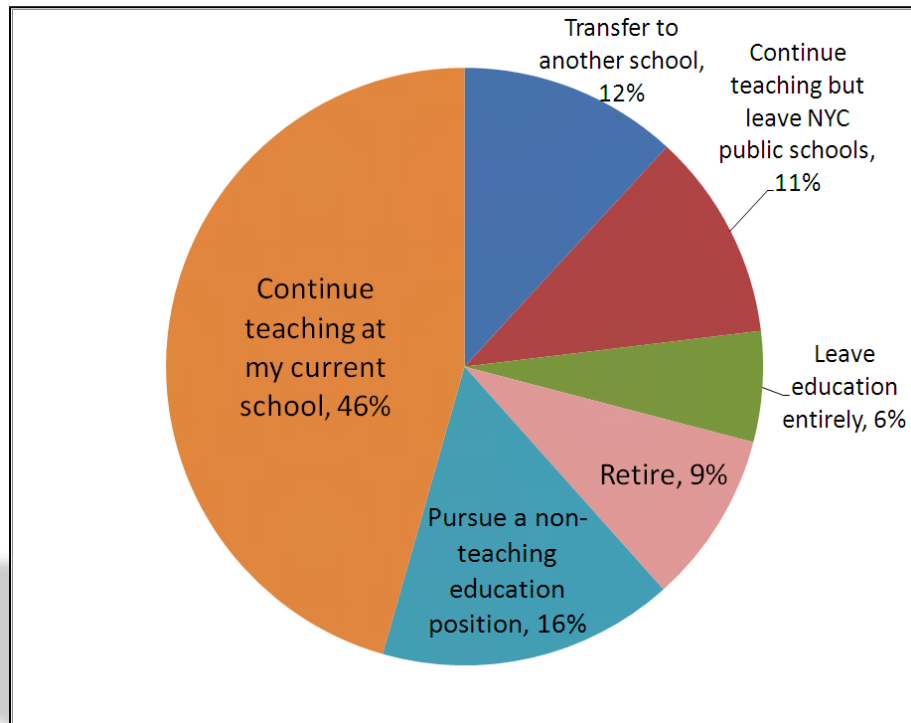
Table 2: Teachers with Serious Thoughts of Leaving the Profession

Type of Teacher	# of Teachers Responding	% Seriously thought about leaving
Overall	835	70%
General education all grades combined	634	72%
Special education all grades combined	201	62%
Elementary School	422	76%
K-8	68	71%
Middle School	139	61%
Secondary Schools (Grades 6-12)*	25	48%
High School	168	64%

*The secondary schools in the sample had proportionately more teachers with 5 or less years of experience than the other types of schools in the survey.

Asked about their plans for the next three years [Figure 1], fewer than half (46 percent) expect to be teaching in their current school by 2017. Another 12 percent plan to move to a different city school and 11 percent plan to move to a school outside New York City. A total of 31 percent plan to leave teaching entirely, to either pursue a non-teaching position in education, retire or leave the field.

Figure 1: Teachers' Plans for the Next 3 years



There were clear differences among teachers in how they rated their preparation programs [Table 3]. About half of all respondents said their pre-service preparation program was very good or excellent, giving them the skills they needed to do the job. But this was not true for the subset of teachers who entered the system under provisional certification, who were far more likely to report that they felt unprepared for teaching in the city schools. The survey found that 49 percent of those certified through the Teaching Fellows rated their preparation as fair or poor, compared with just 18 percent of traditionally-certified teachers.

Table 3. Teachers Rate their Certification Programs

Rating	College Recommended/ Traditional Program	Other Provisional Certification & Non US Educators	Teach for America	TNTP Teaching Fellows Program
Excellent	21%	19%	14%	5%
Very Good	33%	43%	14%	28%
Good	29%	24%	43%	17%
Fair	15%	14%	29%	33%
Poor	3%	0%	0%	16%

WHAT ARE TEACHERS' WORKING CONDITIONS?

More than 70 percent of teachers at every school level are spending very little time (less than three hours per week) collaborating other teachers [Table 4a] even though 40 percent of teachers said they felt having more time to collaborate with colleagues and/or plan instruction would improve student performance. High school teachers spend more time on administrative duties, such as monitoring halls and lunch rooms, and attending staff meetings than do their elementary and middle school colleagues.

Teachers spend an inordinate amount of school time doing paperwork. Some 34 to 44 percent spend three or more hours a week on paperwork, such as documenting their teaching practice or student performance, more than they spend collaborating with other teachers (20 to 25 percent) or communicating with parents (12 to 20 percent). This finding does not differ much between elementary, middle and high school teachers.

Table 4a. Percentage of Teachers and the Time they Spend on Different Activities

Activity	Elementary School			Middle School			High School		
	0-2.9 Hrs	3-10 Hrs	10+ Hrs	0-2.9 Hrs	3-10 Hrs	10+ Hrs	0-2.9 Hrs	3-10 Hrs	10+ Hrs
Collaborating with other teachers	79%	18%	2%	71%	22%	3%	76%	19%	<1%*
Admin Duties	93%	6%	<1%*	83%	17%	0%	79%	17%	3%
Staff Meetings	88%	11%	<1%*	84%	12%	<1%*	72%	22%	2%
Paperwork	64%	28%	7%	53%	35%	9%	62%	28%	6%
Communicating With Parents	87%	11%	1%	76%	18%	2%	76%	17%	3%

*< = Less than

Looked at another way, the results for paperwork showed that for one-quarter of teachers, paperwork takes more time than *any* other non-instructional activity [Table 4b]. Forty-six percent of teachers said they spend more time on paperwork than they do collaborating with other teachers, and 45 percent reported that they spend more time on paperwork than they do talking with parents.

Table 4b. Paperwork Tasks Eat Up Planning Time

Teacher Spends More time on Required Paperwork than on...	% of Teachers Affected
Collaborating with other teachers	46%
Administrative duties	74%
Attending staff meetings	47%
Communicating with parents	45%
<i>Among these activities paperwork is the most time consuming for...</i>	26%

Many bemoaned this state of affairs. “A lot of what we do in the classroom is so far from child friendly,” one teacher wrote. “Evaluations, common core, assessments—it’s all about paper work and not about what kids need to learn.”

Teachers also spend many hours working outside their regular work days, dispelling the myth that their job ends at 3:00 PM [Table 5]. Most (81 percent) spend more than three hours a week working on school-related business during non-school hours, exclusive of paid per-session or per-diem work. In high schools, more than half of all teachers spend more than 10 hours a week on school business when they are off the clock, while about 40 percent of elementary and middle school teachers spend that much extra time.

Table 5. Percentage of Teachers Doing School Related Work During Nonschool Hours

Time Spent on Schoolwork during Off Time	Elementary and K-8 Schools	Middle Schools	Secondary and High Schools
No time	<1%**	1%	2%
Up to 3 hours	13%	7%	12%
Over 3 hours <10 hrs*	43%	45%	30%
More than 10 hrs	38%	42%	51%
Total working during off time*	94%	94%	93%

*Numbers do not add to 100% due to a small amount of missing information.

**< = Less than

Teachers also spend a lot of their own money—just shy of \$500 per year on average—on classroom supplies, over and above what they are reimbursed through Teachers Choice [Table 6]. First-year

teachers spend closer to \$800 out of their own pockets. And when a teacher changes grades it costs them an average of \$564 to equip the new classroom.

Table 6. Average Out of Pocket Spending Excluding Teacher’s Choice

Overall = \$496	
Average Spent by School Level	
Elementary and K to 8 school teachers	\$531
Middle school teachers	\$529
Secondary and high school teachers	\$375
Average Spent by License	
General education teachers	\$483
Special education teachers	\$532
Average Spent by Experience	
First year teachers	\$794
Teachers in their first 3 years	\$554
Teachers with 4 or more years of experience	\$486
Average Spent when Grade Taught is Changed	
Teachers who change grade	\$564
Teachers who are teaching the same grade	\$486

Asked about the sore subject of evaluations, teachers expressed concern about the tools used to rate them. Reflecting widespread dissatisfaction with the overemphasis on test scores, survey takers by a large margin (70-30) said they do not believe student performance measures should be part of a teacher evaluation. This finding holds true across general and special education teachers and does not vary much by experience. It is likely this finding also reflects the concerns teachers feel about the fairness of evaluations.

A (slim) majority of teachers say they don’t have confidence in their principal’s ability to accurately rate their classroom performance.. Approximately 46 percent agree or strongly agree that their school leader has the background to evaluate classroom instruction while 51 percent feel he or she does not.

WHAT ARE THE LEARNING CONDITIONS FOR STUDENTS IN THEIR SCHOOLS?

The survey responses reveal a deep sense of shortages in the schools.

The majority of teachers at all school levels say their students need more time for art and music, better access to and/or experience using a school library and more guidance counseling [Table 7]. Two-thirds of elementary school teachers say their students also need more tutoring time. Most middle and high school teachers feel their students are getting sufficient social studies instruction, but only about half of

elementary teachers feel this way. Similarly, middle and high school teachers say their students have sufficient physical education while elementary teachers say their students are not getting enough PE.

Table 7. Percentages of teachers who say their students need more time for...

School Activity	Elementary and K-8 Schools	Middle Schools	Secondary and High Schools
Art and music	58%	56%	59%
Library	69%	69%	74%
Guidance counseling	64%	48%	57%
Social studies	51%	26%	9%
Recess	59%	51%	Not applicable
Physical education	52%	46%	26%
Tutoring	64%	44%	43%
Clubs and activities	60%	40%	39%

More than half of teachers (60 percent) say their special education students are not getting the services they need, while 53 percent said English language learners are missing out on services. (There is an exception in K-8 schools, where 57 percent of teachers say their ELL students are getting the appropriate services.)

Half of teachers report their school does not have the curriculum and materials needed to teach to the new Common Core Learning Standards. The problem is most severe in the middle schools.

Only 61 percent of teachers say they have sufficient access to computers, smart boards and other forms of technology in their classrooms; 39 percent do not [Table 8a]. And 49 percent say the reliability and speed of their school's internet connection is insufficient to support instruction. Secondary and high school teachers in particular were affected by these problems.

Table 8a. Schools and Technology

School Type	Access to Technology	
	% Teachers with Poor Access	% Teachers with Slow Internet
Elementary schools	40%	55%
K to 8 schools	38%	42%
Middle schools	27%	37%
Secondary schools	47%	44%
High schools	43%	50%
All Schools	39%	49%

Asked if they felt every student needs to be equipped with a computer or tablet in school, teachers had mixed views [Table 8b], with a small majority agreeing that every student needs to be equipped with a PC or tablet. Interestingly, that view was somewhat more prevalent in elementary schools.

Table 8b. Students' instructional technology needs

Students at my school. . .	Elementary School	Middle School	High School
Don't have sufficient access to technology at school	58%	51%	61%
Need to be equipped with a PC or tablet to learn effectively	58%	57%	53%

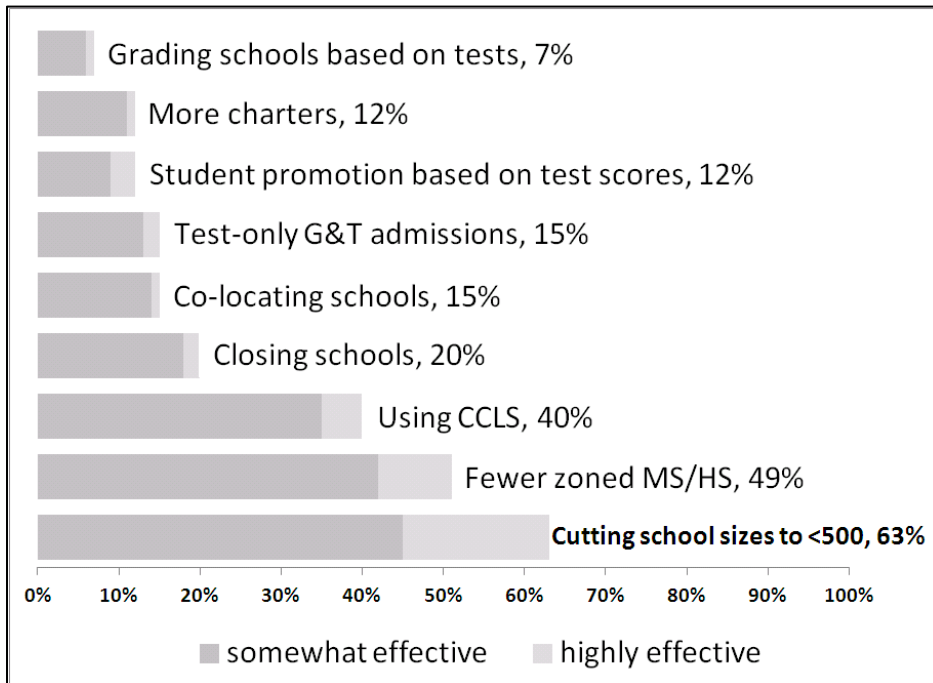
WHAT ARE TEACHERS' VIEWS ON RECENT REFORMS?

Teachers were asked to rate how effective various policies had been at improving educational outcomes for New York City students. They could choose “not effective,” “somewhat ineffective,” “somewhat effective” or “highly effective” [Figure 2].

Very few percentages of teachers said that the following reforms were effective (either somewhat or highly effective): grading schools, promoting students or admitting children to gifted and talented programs based mainly on standardized test scores; creating more charter schools; co-locating multiple schools in the same building; or closing schools that don't meet educational benchmarks.

A respectable percentage of teachers (40 percent) thought using the Common Core Learning Standards to guide instruction was effective. And many were willing to give credit to moving away from zoned schools for middle and high school admissions. The one reform of the Bloomberg era that got a majority of “effective” votes was reducing school size to less than 500.

Figure 2. Teachers rate the effectiveness of recent reforms

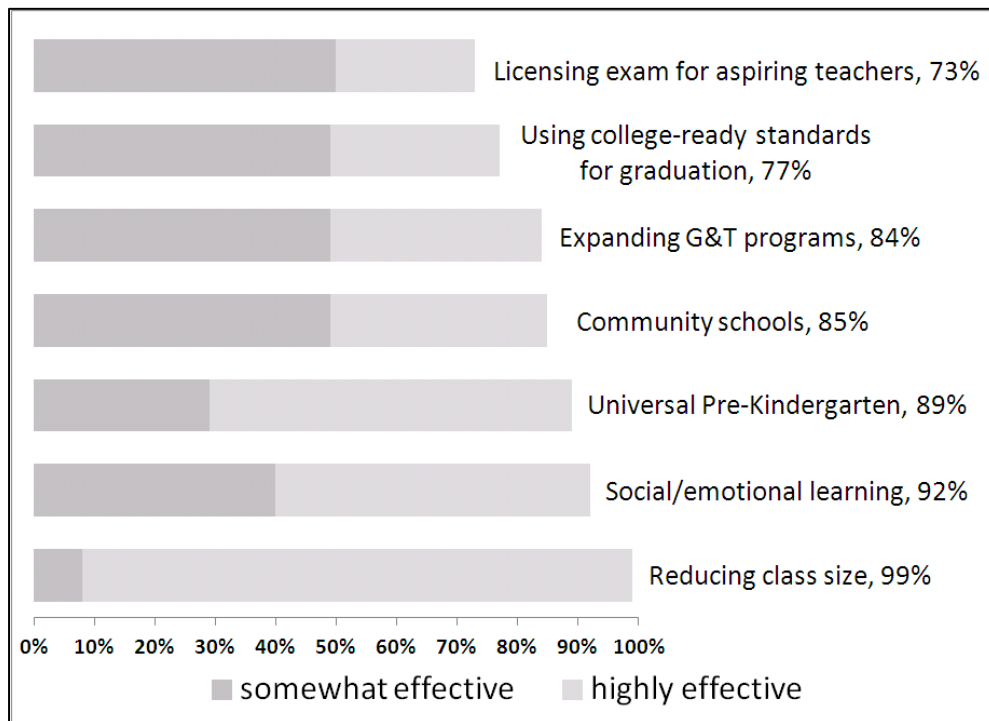


WHAT WILL WORK?

Teachers were also asked to rate how effective several proposed reforms would be at improving educational outcomes for New York City students. Once again, the rating choices were “not effective,” “somewhat ineffective,” “somewhat effective,” and “highly effective.”

Implementing universal pre-kindergarten and reducing class size were top rated—described as “highly effective” by large majorities of teachers. Integrating social and community services into school buildings, teaching social and emotional learning, and expanding gifted and talented programs were also highly rated.

Figure 3: What are effective reforms?



Teachers were somewhat more mixed, but still generally positive, on using a college and career-ready standard for high school graduation and creating a new bar-like licensing exam for aspiring teachers.

CONCLUSION

The idea for this survey was conceived in the spring of 2013, in part to fill in evident gaps in the NYC DOE’s School Survey. The DOE survey, which was first given in 2007, uses a series of statements describing conditions that should exist in an exemplary school and asks educators to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree that those conditions exist in their school. The survey does not ask the survey respondents what they think an exemplary school looks like or what they need to achieve their schools’ goals. The union believes teachers have a lot of insight on these subjects.

The UFT survey was designed to get information about teaching and learning conditions in the schools and to ask classroom teachers for their opinions on various educational policies. There were no right or wrong answers--just what they thought based on their experiences as professional educators.

The results showed widespread agreement on what schools need, particularly among teachers working in schools with similar grade configurations. The results contained a few surprises, but they also underscored what the union has been hearing for years --working conditions for teachers are unacceptable and getting worse.

The findings are the first of what the union hopes will become an annual survey. Some questions will be "evergreens, used to track changes over time. Others will be newly introduced each year as the school system and education policies evolve. The random sampling technique will remain the same, although in all likelihood completely different teachers will be selected each year. The union also plans to include other titles, such as guidance counselors, school social workers and lab specialists in future surveys.

Some results showed us that certain questions didn't survey well and will require revision before they can be used again. For example, we asked teachers whether their license was in general or special education to see if responses varied by this kind of experience. We found that while categorization may exist in licensing procedures they aren't so neat and tidy in the real world. Many teachers said they were licensed in special education but teach in both self-contained and integrated classrooms or are licensed in general education but teach physical education to all students.

One question asked respondents to comment on how much time they spent preparing for the state's standardized tests in English and math. The results were unreliable because some respondents were cluster teachers or other specialized teachers not involved with the tests. In another case, in probing teachers' views on extending the school day and the school year, we did not make clear that teachers work days would not be lengthened and we believe that skewed results to a highly negative response.

In addition to refining these problematic questions, our plan for next year is to craft questions that allow us to dig deeper into teachers' views on policies. We would like to understand what experiences have led them to develop their views and what challenges the typical and atypical student faces in their class.

We thank the respondents for generously sharing their time and expertise with us. In many ways the future of the schools is in their hands.