



THE CRISIS IN OUR SCHOOLS

A Report on Working and
Learning Conditions in New
York City's Public Schools

May 2016



**SOLIDARITY
RESEARCH
CENTER**

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

New York City is home to the world's largest public education system. In 32 school districts across the five boroughs, 1.1 million students are taught by a workforce of 76,674 teachers in more than 1,800 schools. New York City public schools are the most diverse in the nation, with more students, with more special needs, from more countries than anywhere in the United States.

Of New York's 1.1 million students, 212,036 have disabilities (18.7% of enrollment), 142,135 students are English Language Learners (12.5% of all students), 867,732 students are in poverty (76.5% of enrollment), and 85.2% identify as students of color.ⁱ Additionally, 84,000 students are homeless, 8% of total enrollment.ⁱⁱ

Every day, New York City's educators put in exceptionally hard work to meet the enormous needs of their students. However, this effort is not matched by sufficient levels of support or respect from the NYC Department of Education or the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), with catastrophic consequences for students and teachers.

The Movement of Rank and File Educators (MORE) recently conducted a survey of UFT members to find out more about their working conditions and students' learning conditions. The findings of this survey indicate that the decay of the New York City schools has reached crisis levels under the leadership of the Unity Caucus, the incumbents in the current elections for leadership of the UFT. Change is urgently needed.

With this report, MORE presents the survey results and other relevant data to outline the depth of the crisis and proposes common-sense solutions to give New York City's children the schools they deserve.

Key Facts and Findings

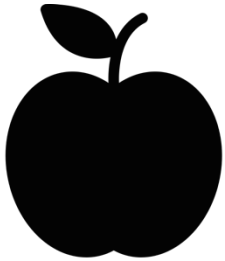
- In the 2014-15 school year, 51% of elementary and middle school buildings were overcrowded, up from 44% the year before. 38% of high schools were overcrowded, up from 35%. 540,000 students—nearly half of all students in New York—attend school in an overcrowded facility.
- 45% of teachers reported on the survey that the facilities they work in are not clean, in bad repair, and inadequate for student learning.
- 32% report that they are not able to make photocopies when they need to at their school.
- 67% report that their school does not provide adequate special education staffing, planning time for teachers and mandated services for special education students.
- 48% report that their school does not provide the mandated level of ESL services for students and adequate planning time for ESL co-teachers.

- 44% report that their school does not provide adequate arts opportunities for students.
- 39% report that their school does not provide adequate sports and physical education opportunities for students.
- 45% report that their school does not provide adequate social-emotional support services for students, such as social workers and psychologists.
- 65% reported that their school does not provide adequate training and support for alternative responses to student behavior issues, such as restorative justice.
- 97% of NYC teachers report working unpaid overtime. 51% work more than ten extra unpaid hours per week. Nearly one in five works more than 20 extra hours per week.
- Decaying working conditions are leading to increased turnover. Of the 3,514 new teachers hired in 2010, 28.6% had quit by year five. Already, of the 2011 cohort of new teachers, 25.3% have quit by their fourth year, indicating that an even larger percentage will leave the system by their fifth year.
- 26% of current teachers have less than five years of experience, and 17% have three years of experience or less, up from about 10% in 2011.

- The attack on tenure is creating a climate of fear and insecurity in the schools amongst new teachers. Survey data shows that over 77% of teachers feel that the tenure process is unfair.
- While male students of color make up 43% of NYC's public school demographic, only 8.3% of the entire teacher workforce is made up of Black, Latino and Asian men.
- Over the decade 2000 to 2011, the number of Black teachers have plummeted from 27.2% to 10.9% of new hires and the number of Latino teachers have declined from 16.3% to 14.4%, leading to worsening disparity.
- From the survey, 80% reported that the current union contract does not compensate teachers fairly.
- UFT President Michael Mulgrew draws pay of over \$261,000, and over 100 Unity Caucus members on UFT staff take home over \$100,000 per year out of our union dues.
- From the survey, 80% of teachers believe that union leaders and staff should be paid on a scale comparable to the contract they work under as members.
- When asked "Do you feel you have received adequate training and support from the UFT?", only 28% of Chapter Leaders responded Yes.

- 65% reported bringing an issue to the UFT to be addressed. Of those, 66% were not satisfied with how it was handled.
- When asked “How do you feel about how the current UFT leadership has run the union and represented teachers?”, 61% responded with Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied.

Legend



Survey Result



Unity Caucus



MORE's Recommendation

Working Conditions

Teacher Turnover On the Rise

Since the 2009 school year, attrition has increased with a total of 30,721 teachers leaving the system over a six-year period, equivalent to 40% of New York's teaching workforce. This includes teacher resignations, which have increased each year, with a total of 13,074 teachers leaving the system, equivalent to 17% of the teaching workforce.

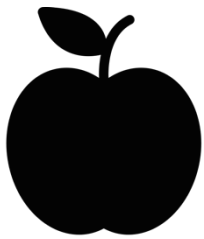
Of the 3,514 new teachers hired in 2010, 28.6% had quit by year five. Already, of the 2011 cohort of new teachers, 25.3% have quit by their fourth year, indicating that an even larger percentage will leave the system by their fifth year.

26% of current teachers have less than five years of experience, and 17% have three years of experience or less, up from about 10% in 2011.ⁱⁱⁱ

Job Insecurity: The Attack on Tenure

As little as ten years ago, the system functioned as it was intended - all teachers rated “Satisfactory” after three years of probation gained tenure. This changed in 2010 when then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg threatened to “end tenure as we know it.” That year, extension of probation and denial of tenure shot up from 11% to an unprecedented 42% of all tenure applications in 2011, 45% in 2012, and 47% in 2013, with a slight decline afterwards.^{iv}

The attack on tenure is likely to go from bad to worse. In spring 2015, Governor Andrew Cuomo forced through a change to the teacher tenure process that increases the probationary period of educators from three to four years.^v



77% of survey respondents felt that the current tenure process is unfair. Only 14% said that it is fair, with the remainder unsure. These numbers are the product of a climate of increasing fear and insecurity surrounding the tenure process in the schools.

From the survey, 86% reported that restoring tenure protections is Extremely Important or Important to them.



Under the leadership of Unity Caucus, the UFT has failed to wage an active fight to defend or expand tenure protections.



MORE will go on the offensive to enhance job security for all New York City workers (not just teachers) with a campaign for a city ordinance granting due process for all workers.

Racial Inequity

While male students of color make up 43% of NYC's public school demographic, only 8.3% of the entire teacher workforce is made up of Black, Latino and Asian men.^{vi}

Over the decade 2000 to 2011, Black teachers have plummeted from 27.2% to 10.9% of new hires and Latino teachers have declined from 16.3% to 14.4%, leading to a worsening disparity.^{vii}



From the survey, 81% reported that racial equity in DOE hiring is Extremely Important or Important to them.



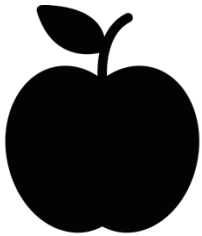
Unity Caucus has done little to stop this systematic attack of educators and students of color.



MORE stands with the Committee for Teacher Diversity, Teachers Unite, and other allies in demanding racial equity in hiring now.

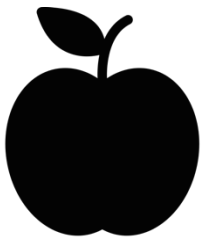
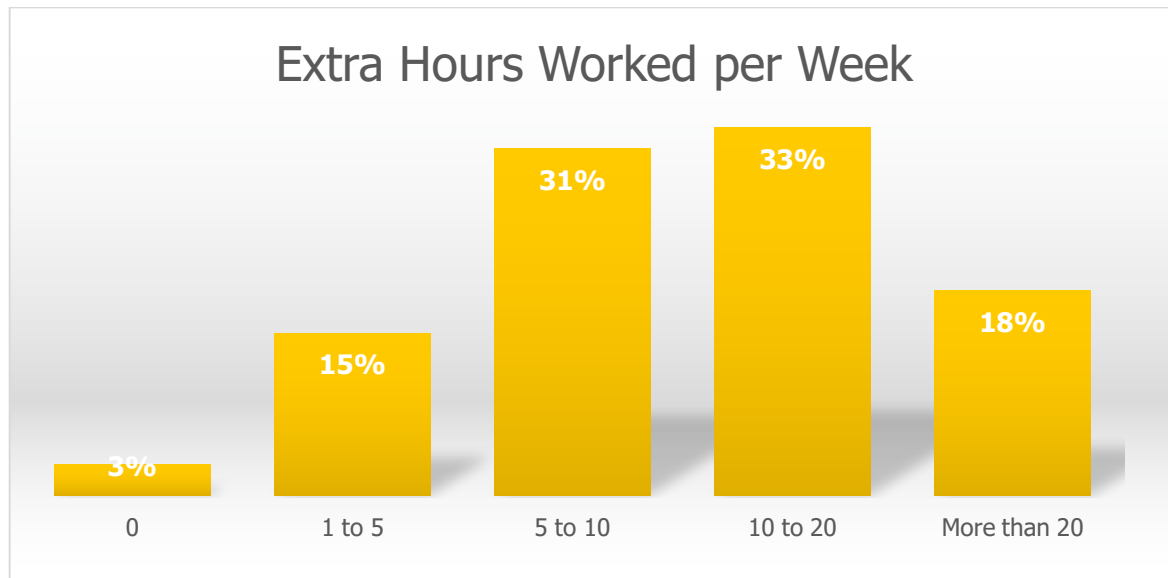
Teaching Fellows

Over 12% of New York City's teaching workforce entered the profession through alternative certification programs that allow aspiring teachers to enter the classroom without completing a teacher preparation program.^{viii}

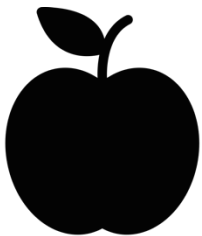


From the survey, 73% of Teaching Fellows responded that they had not gotten adequate training and preparation to meet the needs of their students in their first two years of teaching.

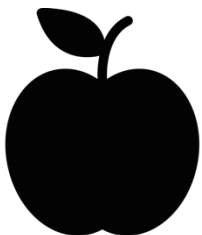
Staggering Teacher Workloads



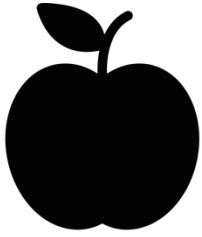
97% over teachers surveyed responded that they are working unpaid overtime beyond the contractual workday.



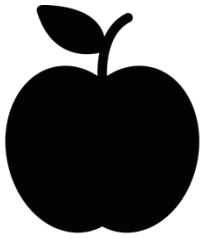
Over half, 51%, reported working more than 10 extra hours per week. 18% reported working more than 20 hours per week.



Larger percentages of newer teachers reported working more than 10 extra hours per week, including more than two-thirds of teachers with less than 5 years on the job.

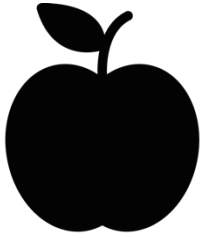


Teaching Fellows are more likely to work extra hours. 60% reported working more than 10 extra hours per week and 26% reported working more than 20 extra hours.



Lack of tenure is also associated with working extra hours. 70% of those without tenure and 46% of those with tenure reported working more than 10 extra hours per week.

Lack of Prep Periods



80% reported that increased prep periods are Extremely Important or Important to them.

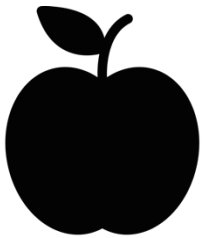
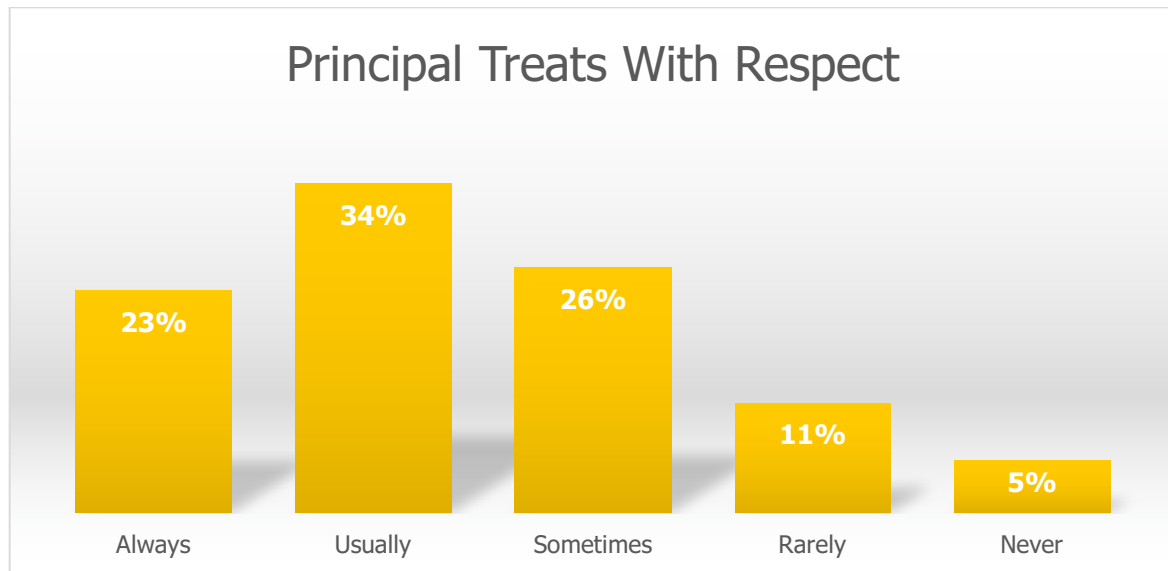


Unity Caucus has not fought for increased prep time since the 1960s, while teachers work staggering amounts of unpaid overtime.

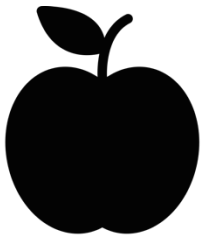


MORE will fight for funding for additional prep time during the school day and payment for overtime work at time-and-a-half rates based on salary, not per session rate.

No Respect



42% reported on the survey that their principal sometimes, rarely, or never treats them with respect.



96% reported that respect on the job is Extremely Important or Important to them.

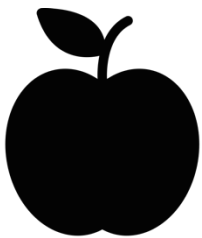


Unity Caucus signed away the right to grieve letters to our files in contract negotiations under Randi Weingarten, and supports use of the Danielson Rubric.



MORE will strengthen the grievance procedure by removing the cap that has been placed on the number of arbitration cases permitted annually; providing a UFT investigative team for each case; and restoring rights that have been bargained away such as the right to grieve disciplinary letters to our files.

Declining Real Compensation



From the survey, 80% reported that the current union contract does not compensate teachers fairly.

96% reported that pay increases that keep pace with inflation are Extremely Important or Important to them

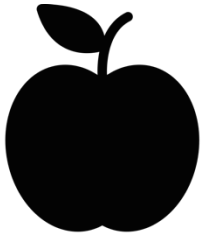


Unity Caucus sold a contract to the membership that included raises that fail to keep pace with inflation and included an extended work day with no corresponding increase in pay.



MORE will mobilize members for a stronger contract with higher salaries.

Delayed Retroactive Pay



From the survey, 78% reported that the UFT should renegotiate the retroactive pay so that members get the money they are owed before 2020.

74% reported that renegotiating immediate pay of back-wages owed by DOE is Extremely Important or Important to them.

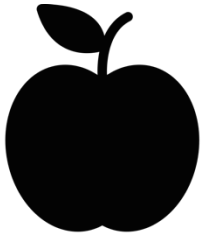


Unity Caucus settled for a retro pay deal that forces teachers to stay on the job until 2020 simply to get the money we are owed, and denies retro to those who are out on maternity or medical leave on the payout dates.



MORE will reopen negotiations with the City for immediate payment of retro out of the current budget surplus.

High-Stakes Testing



From the survey, 90% believe that the union should oppose the use of high stakes testing results in generating teacher ratings.

92% reported on the survey that reducing the use of high-stakes standardized testing is Extremely Important or Important to them.

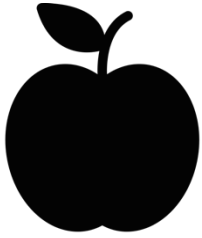


Unity Caucus supported the use of high-stakes tests to evaluate teachers and has refused to defend teachers who conscientiously object to the tests.



MORE members are leaders in the opt-out movement and will vigorously defend teachers who inform parents and students of their rights.

Fight for Paid Parental Leave



76% reported that maternity and paternity leave are Extremely Important or Important to them.

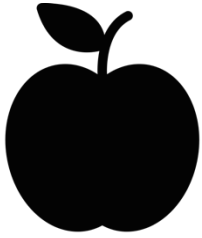


Unity Caucus has failed to fight for anything beyond the legal minimum of six weeks of unpaid leave in its 56 years in control of the UFT, despite the fact that teachers are a 75% female workforce.



MORE members are campaigning for the extension to all city workers of the six-weeks paid parental leave negotiated between De Blasio and the city's managerial employees.

Ambassador Teachers on Rotation (ATR)



73% reported on the survey that appointing ATRs to permanent assignments is Extremely Important or Important to them.



Unity Caucus has signed off on the DOE's attempt to push veteran teachers out of the system by forcing them into the ATR pool, and has disenfranchised ATRs within the union by leaving them without their own chapter.

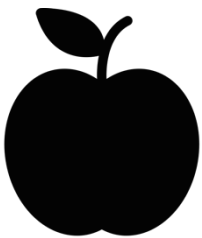


MORE will fight for the assignment of ATRs to a school of their choice, and for the creation of an ATR chapter in the UFT.

Learning Conditions

Class Sizes and Overcrowding

In the 2014-15 school year, 51% of elementary and middle school buildings were overcrowded, up from 44% the year before. 38% of high schools are overcrowded, up from 35%. 540,000 students– nearly half of all students in New York– attend school in an overcrowded facility.^{ix}



94% reported on the survey that a safe working and learning environment is Extremely Important or Important to them.

45% reported that the facilities they work in are not clean, in good repair, and adequate for student learning.

78% reported that renewing and/or expanding school facilities is Extremely Important or Important to them.

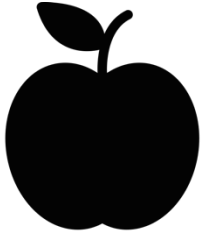


Unity Caucus has failed to engage members in an effective campaign for funding New York City schools are entitled to while our work environment literally falls apart.



MORE will organize with parents to ensure New York City enforces the Contracts for Excellence (C4E) law, passed in 2007, which required NYC's Department of Education (DOE) to achieve the following numbers: no more than 20 students in K-3 classes, 23 in grades 4-8, 25 in HS.

Access to Photocopies and Supplies



32% report on the survey that they are not able to make photocopies when they need to at their school.

87% reported that access to photocopiers and other essential supplies is Extremely Important or Important to them.

85% reported that increased funding for school supplies is Extremely Important or Important to them.

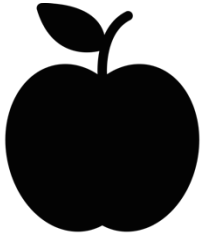


Unity Caucus has done nothing to end the crisis of copier access.



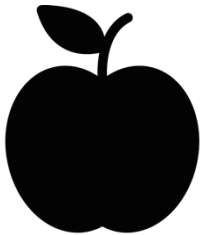
MORE will fight for the empowerment of educators at the school level for access to the supplies and equipment our students need.

Special Education



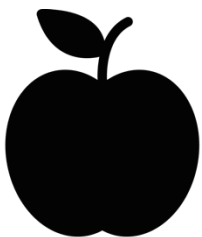
67% report on the survey that their school does not provide adequate special education staffing and planning time for teachers and mandated services for special education students.

English as Second Language (ESL)



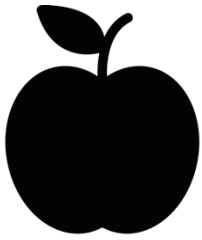
48% report that their school does not provide the mandated level of ESL services for students and adequate planning time for ESL co-teachers.

The Arts



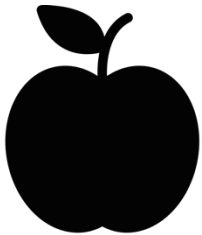
44% report that their school does not provide adequate arts opportunities for students.

Sports

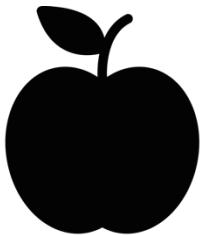


39% report that their school does not provide adequate sports and physical education opportunities for students.

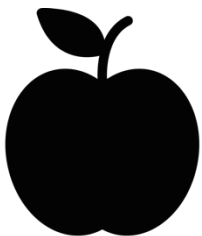
Behavioral Support and Restorative Justice



45% report that their school does not provide adequate social-emotional support services for students, such as social workers and psychologists.

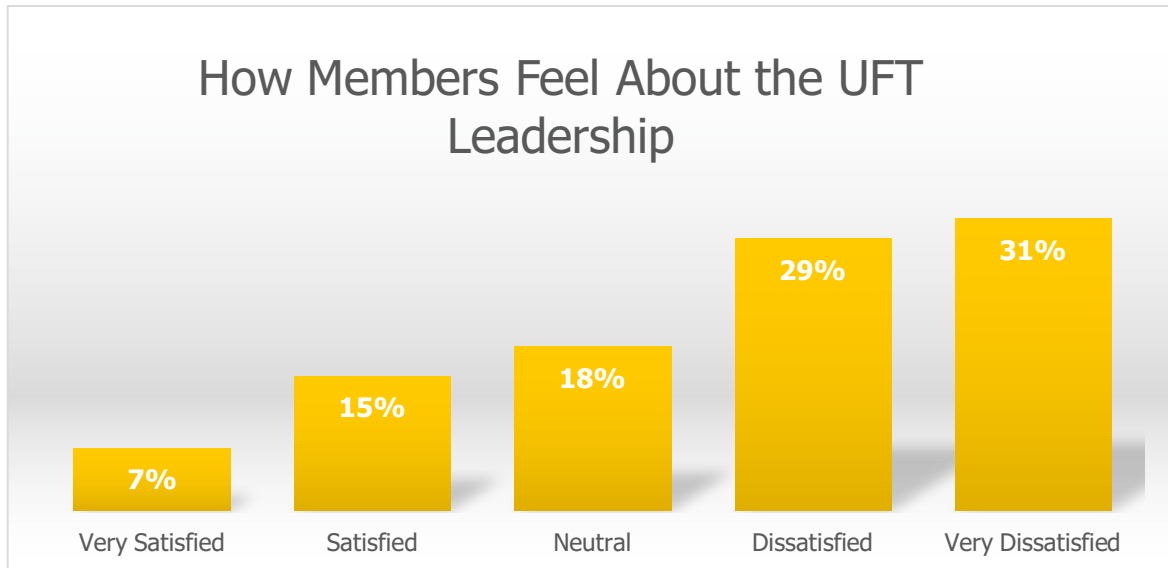


65% reported that their school does not provide adequate training and support for alternative responses to student behavior issues, such as restorative justice.

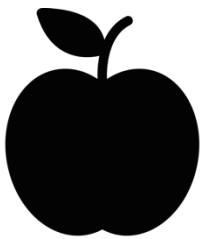


74% reported that increase support for Restorative Justice and alternatives to suspending students is Extremely Important or Important to them.

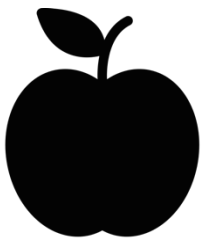
The Union



Massive Dissatisfaction with UFT Leadership

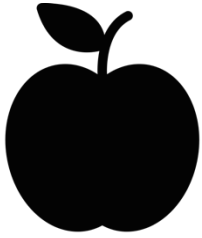


65% reported bringing an issue to the UFT to be addressed. Of those, 66% were not satisfied with how it was handled.



When asked “How do you feel about how the current UFT leadership has run the union and represented teachers?”, 61% responded with Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied.

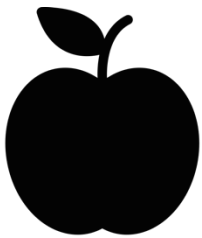
Lack of Support for Chapter Leaders



When asked “Do you feel you have received adequate training and support from the UFT?”, only 28% of Chapter Leaders responded Yes.

Bloated Salaries of UFT Officers and Staff

UFT President Michael Mulgrew draws pay of over \$261,000, and over 100 Unity Caucus members on UFT staff take home over \$100,000 per year out of our union dues.^x



From the survey, 80% of teachers believe that union leaders and staff should be paid on a scale comparable to the contract they work under as members.

72% reported that reasonable pay for UFT leaders is Extremely Important or Important to them.

Time for Change

MORE strongly believes that our working conditions are our students' learning conditions. With a membership-driven union we can:

- Enforce Our Contract and Organize for a Just Contract in 2018
- Defend Public Education
- Combat Systemic School Segregation and Racism
- Support Opt Out and Oppose Common Core, Danielson Evaluations and High Stakes Testing
- Make the UFT a Democratic, Transparent and Accountable Union

For more information on the MORE Platform, see [**https://morecaucusnyc.org/2016/01/02/our-2016-platform**](https://morecaucusnyc.org/2016/01/02/our-2016-platform)

Survey

Methodology

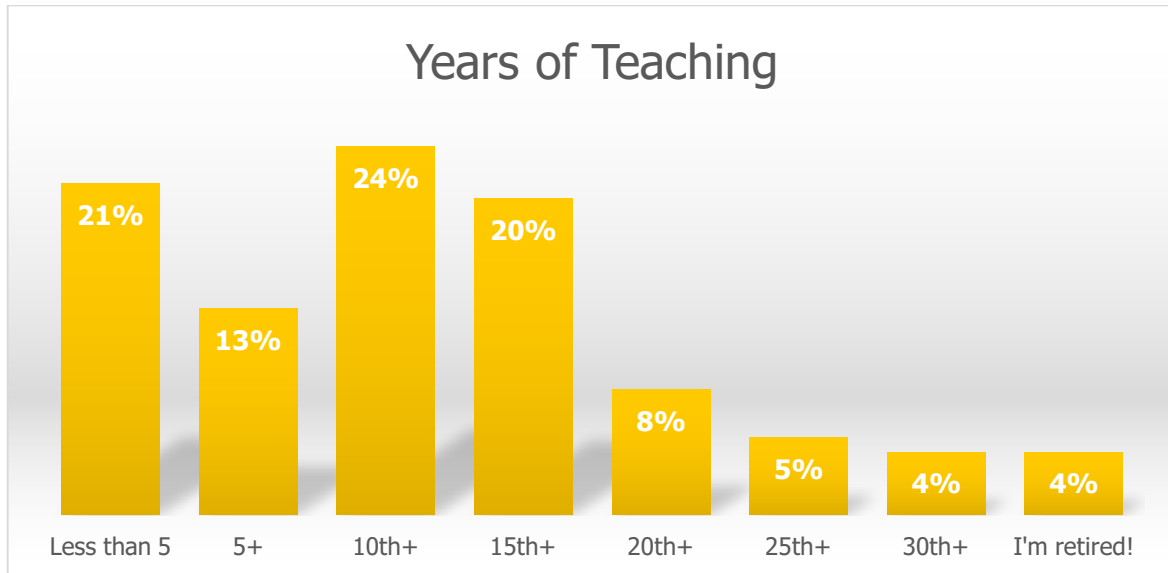
Methodology

The survey was developed by MORE with the assistance of the Solidarity Research Center. It was sent to UFT members in October 2015 and responses were collected online for several months. The data was analyzed in Excel by the Solidarity Research Center. The survey questions can be found at <http://bit.ly/StateofOurSchoolsSurvey>.

Who Responded

- The survey obtained 438 responses. There were 343 complete surveys and 95 surveys partially filled out.
- Respondents work in all five boroughs and come from 32 districts.
- 90% of respondents are teachers, with smaller numbers of paraprofessionals, psychologists or social workers, guidance counselors, retirees or other positions.
- 78% are tenured.
- 20% are Teaching Fellows.
- 14% are Chapter Leaders.
- More than three quarters of respondents have taught in 3 or fewer schools.

- The range of teaching time of the respondents varied from 1 year to 30+, with some being retired. The largest groups of respondents have been teaching less than 5 years or between 10 and 20 years.



Appendix:

MORE Platform

With A Membership-Driven Union We Can:

- Enforce Our Contract and Organize for a Just Contract in 2018
- Defend Public Education
- Combat Systemic School Segregation and Racism
- Support Opt Out and Oppose Common Core, Danielson Evaluations and High-Stakes Testing
- Make the UFT a Democratic, Transparent and Accountable Union

Our Working Conditions are Our Students' Learning Conditions

Issues on Each Platform Point Raised by UFT Members:

1. Enforce Our Contract & Organize for a Just Contract in 2018

- Mobilize members for a stronger contract with higher salaries and immediate payment of retro.
- Fight for CFE (Campaign for Fiscal Equity Funding) funding to lower class size, provide more books, art materials, and after school programs, and also to improve teachers' capacities by increasing per session funding and the number of prep periods
- End the per session pay formula and restore real time and a half for work beyond the school day based on salary.

- Establish paid maternity and paternity leave on par with international standards.
- Win due process rights for untenured educators and launch a campaign for due process for all New York City workers. Strengthen whistleblower protections for all educators and make the tenure process shorter, clearer, and fair.
- Revise the 'Fair Student Funding' Formula. The DOE must return to the system in which each school's budget was charged the same fixed amount per teacher. The current system incentivizes principals to hire inexperienced teachers. We must restore the right of an educator to transfer on the basis of seniority or to further integration.
- More teacher voice in shaping professional development and equal access to PD opportunities.
- Take on abusive administrators and allow teacher evaluation of administrators.
- Expand contract Article 8E so that not only the format of a lesson plan, but the teaching of the lesson is up to the professional discretion of each teacher.
- Strengthen the grievance procedure by removing the cap that has been placed on the number of arbitration cases permitted annually; providing a UFT investigative team for each case; and restoring rights that have been bargained away such as the right to grieve any material in our file.
- Eliminate the designation "ATR" and assign teachers to a school of their choice in their District. Until the ATR designation is abolished, the UFT shall have an ATR chapter with elected representatives.

2. Defend Public Education

- Organize with parents to ensure New York City enforces the Contracts for Excellence (C4E) law, passed in 2007, which required NYC's Department of Education (DOE) to achieve the following numbers: no more than 20 students in K-3 classes, 23 in grades 4-8, 25 in HS.

- Oppose co-locations, convert charter schools into public schools covered by the contract and end involvement in UFT Charter Schools except as a representative of union members.
- Fight to end closures and receivership.
- Hold principals accountable to parents, teachers and students with regular audits and contractually-empowered SLTs.
- Fully staff schools and provide wrap around services, including more teachers, paraprofessionals, guidance counselors, social workers, psychologists, and school counselors with reduced caseloads.

3. Combat Systemic School Segregation and Racism.

- Work with the DOE to recruit and retain a teacher workforce that matches the diversity of New York City.
- Initiate and promote programs to integrate schools and provide equitable allocation of resources such as arts, music, after-school programs, sports, food programs, etc.
- Win funding for restorative justice coordinators and racial equity teams in every school. These coordinators and teams should work with safety committees and school leadership teams to come up with school-based safety programs that fit each school.
- Work for an overhaul of the state standards based on a democratic, grassroots process involving teachers, students, and parents to determine what our communities want students to learn.

4. Support Opt Out and Oppose Common Core, Danielson Evaluations and High Stakes Testing

- Support the opt-out movement and oppose high stakes testing which disproportionately harms special education and ESL students.
- Initiate a shift to alternative and teacher-generated portfolio/project-based assessments.

- Educate parents about their rights to oppose testing.
- End test-based, snapshot evaluations, and outside evaluators.
- End mayoral (and gubernatorial) control of the schools.

5. Make the UFT a Democratic, Transparent and Accountable Member Driven Union.

- Subject all UFT positions to election and recall, including DRs, and put union officers and staff on the member's pay scale.
- Build school-level and borough-wide alliances between UFT members, parents, and communities
- Create a fully staffed internal organizing department to rebuild chapters that are not functioning and improve support of Chapter Leaders
- Open negotiations. Let the members know what is on the table.
- Create a sliding scale for union dues based on salary and require dues increases to be voted on at the Delegate's Assembly.

Endnotes

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- ⁱ NYC DOE, Data About Schools, <http://schools.nyc.gov/AboutUs/schools/data/default.htm>; UFT, Attrition Sneaks Upward as Teachers Show Signs of Restlessness, Dec 2015, <http://www.uft.org/files/attachments/attrition-report-dec-2015.pdf>
- ⁱⁱ Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness, The Atlas of Student Homelessness in New York City, August 2015, http://www.icphusa.org/PDF/reports/OnTheMap_TheAtlasofStudentHomelessnessinNewYorkCity2015.pdf
- ⁱⁱⁱ UFT, Attrition Sneaks Upward as Teachers Show Signs of Restlessness, December 2015, <http://www.uft.org/files/attachments/attrition-reportdec-2015.pdf>
- ^{iv} Chalkbeat, Teacher tenure approvals tick up, continuing a de Blasio-era shift, May 6, 2016, <http://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2016/05/06/exclusive-teacher-tenure-approvals-tick-up-continuing-a-de-blasio-era-shift/#.Vy-vcYQrLIU>
- ^v Governor Cuomo Announces Highlights from the Passage of the 2015-16 State Budget, April 2015, <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-announces-highlights-passage-2015-16-state-budget>
- ^{vi} NYC Men Teach, <http://www1.nyc.gov/site/ymi/teach/nyc-men-teach.page>
- ^{vii} Teachers Unite, The Disappearance of Black and Latino Teachers in New York City, Oct 2014, <http://www.teachersunite.net/sites/default/files/Disappearance%20report%20October%2017%202014-1.pdf>
- ^{viii} NYC Teaching Fellows, About Us, <https://www.nycteachingfellows.org/about/overview.asp>
- ^{ix} WNYC, New Formula Increases Number of Overcrowded Schools in New York City, 10/30/15, <http://www.wnyc.org/story/more-half-city-elementary-and-middle-school-buildings-overcrowded/>
- ^x UFT LM-2 Labor Organization Annual Report, FY2014-2015.