

BLOOMBERG BUDGET CALLS FOR MORE TEACHERS THIS FALL, NOT LESS



Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, concerned about the shortage of teachers, having lost around 5,300 teachers, to budget cuts over the years, leading to a skewed student-teacher ratio, announced plans on Thursday to turnaround this trend, and add some teachers this fall. Mayor Bloomberg's plan will be a blessing to the school principals, who will now have the monetary resources, to replace outgoing teachers. It is estimated that 2,570 open teach positions will now be filled. According to city estimates, 5 rounds of budget estimates brought the total number of teachers down from 79,300 to 73,982. Earlier this year, it was projected that 1,100 teaching jobs would be vacant, owing to various reasons, which led the leading City Council members to raise apprehensions of increasing class sizes and decreasing teachers. However, the Mayor assured that he had decided not to impose the budgetary cuts; on the contrary he planned to spend \$185 million, to fill vacancies caused by retiring teachers. He said, "The good news is the number of teachers in our schools will rise next year. We've made up for some of the attrition of the teachers from this past year and into next year." Most of the new teachers will work in classrooms with students who have learning disabilities and need special education classes. Other teachers will have classrooms with both special education and general students. For the moment it is not apparent to what extent the extra-hiring will affect class sizes. Class sizes have risen steadily. Councilman Brad Lander in a report wrote that students in classes of 30 or more have tripled. Mr. Bloomberg also announced his intention of dropping plans to cut per-session spending through which the city paid teachers to run student clubs and sports programs. Officials estimate that it will cost the city exchequer, approximately \$30 million each year. Aware that his proposals would have to be negotiated with the City Council, Mr. Bloomberg said, "We'll see how all of that works out." Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn said that the cuts could be mitigated. Mr. Bloomberg used his budget presentation to caution the city's teachers' union, that they stood to lose \$300 million in state aid, if they failed to reach an agreement with city officials on a new teacher evaluation system. "In order to receive these funds, the United Federation of Teachers has to come back to the bargaining table in a serious way and agree on the final details of this new evaluation system," he said. The union's president, Michael Mulgrew, alleged that the City Council was responsible, and not they, for failing to reach an agreement on teacher evaluation talks in late December. In a statement he said, "The U.F.T. went to Albany to fight for better teacher evaluations, and we will continue to work toward a system that works for the students and teachers of New York." However, Mr. Mulgrew welcomed the initiative taken by the Mayor and described his proposed budget as "good news." "New York City has lost thousands of teachers over the last few years and its good news to hear that we will be adding educators to the system. I can't thank the City Council enough for making education a priority."

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