

NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS TO LAY OFF 672



Two weeks ago the employees of the New York City School department were given pink slips. The grand total of jobs to be lost was 777. In what is the largest single-agency lay off in the history of this mayor's term in the of the city of New York. The 672 education jobs lost on Friday are all from support staff. Though this final number does mean that little more than 100 of those jobs were spared, it is still a large loss. Positions that were lost include job titles such as school aides, parent coordinators, family workers and others in support positions. This laying off of work represents the largest single layoff since Mayor Bloomberg took office in 2002. Members of the union held a protest on the steps of the city hall to protest the layoffs, though they were not able to stop the jobs from being lost. This was not the only set of layoffs planned for this year, if arrangements to correct the budget could not be made. The city was slated to lay off thousands of teachers in June, but that was averted when the city reached an agreement with the teachers union. This agreement did not include any of the jobs that were labeled as support positions, only the actual classroom teachers. The bargaining agency for the support staff was offered a similar agreement in the spring, one that would have saved jobs by raiding other parts of their budget. The union choose to reject the plan. In order to keep the layoff's at bay the plan would have required the union to allow the city to access their health care fund in order to balance its books A statement made by Dennis M. Walcott, the schools chancellor for the city of New York, had this to say about the agreement that the city wished to make with the union. "I am sympathetic to these workers," Mr. Walcott said. "But in part because other unions would not work with us to find more savings, schools have to absorb cuts to their budgets, and from there our principals made the best staffing decisions for their students." The union, District Council 37, would not ratify the cities proposal. They did however make three counter-proposals that would have helped to save money. Those proposals included the following: giving up paid holidays and making a reduction to the maximum number of hours that aides could work in order to reduce payroll. The city rejected all of these proposals. The union leaders at the protest choose to dress in all black. This mourning garb was means to keep the pressure of city hall officials until the very last second, in hopes of averting the layoffs, as well as to make the issue publicly known. For days before the layoffs leaders from the union had been attempting to intervene by speaking with other city officials. Christine C. Quinn, the City Council speaker, had a conversation with Mr. Bloomberg about a letter signed by 17 council members written to the mayor that said, "The constant attack on our education system will continue to burden the most vulnerable population of this city — our children."

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