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**[IBO Finds Drop in NYC Public School Teacher Headcount Due to Lower Retention](#)**

*Despite Increased Hiring, City Schools Ended the Last School Year with 2,500 Fewer K-12 Teachers Than Four Years Prior*

A [review](#) by the Independent Budget Office of the number of New York City public school teachers shows that increasing retention challenges have meant there were 2,500 fewer K-12 teachers employed at the end of the last school year (2022-2023) than in 2018-2019, a recent peak in the teaching force. An increase in the number of special education teachers partially offset the marked decline in general education teachers who have left the public school system. IBO examined headcount from school years 2015-2016 through 2022-2023. The data covers teachers in traditional K-12 public schools who are employed by the NYC Department of Education.

“With the need for teachers in the public schools at the center of opposing forces, ranging from student enrollment declines, compliance with the class size law, and potential budget cuts, IBO’s look at recent trends in teacher retention and hiring provides important context,” said **IBO Director Louisa Chafee**.

Teacher retention had been stable, even improving, in the years leading up to the COVID-19 outbreak. In the wake of the pandemic during the 2021-2022 school year, when the city’s public schools offered hybrid instruction—either fully remote or a combination of remote and in-person instruction—few teachers left. But there was a drop in retention in the next school year, which was further magnified during the last school year. This recent drop in teacher retention is observed across both general education teachers and special education teachers, and across teachers with varying levels of experience. All but the most experienced teachers, who are in line to reap the benefits of longevity in retirement, left the system at higher rates in the last two years compared with six years prior, the report found.

Overall, the system today employs fewer than 50,000 general education teachers compared with more than 54,000 in school years 2015-2016 through 2018-2019. The number of special education teachers rose during this period and they now comprise 34.4 percent of the teaching force, up from 28.7 percent seven years ago.

**Number of Public School Teachers in New York City Has Declined by More Than 2,500 Over the Last Three Years, With a Rise in Special Education Teachers Offsetting the Larger Decline in General Education Teachers**

	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
<b>All Teachers</b>	<b>76,349</b>	<b>77,279</b>	<b>78,212</b>	<b>78,235</b>	<b>78,174</b>	<b>77,029</b>	<b>77,610</b>	<b>75,654</b>
General Education Teachers	54,430	54,602	54,782	54,128	52,984	51,589	51,650	49,607
Special Education Teachers	21,919	22,677	23,430	24,107	25,190	25,440	25,960	26,047

SOURCE: IBO analysis based on annual Pinpoint files obtained from the New York City Department of Education

NOTES: Neither teachers in charter schools, nor teachers in community-based organizations (CBO's, which are non-profit organizations serving a majority of preschool students in grades 3K and pre-K), are hired by the NYC DOE. Thus, they are not included among the teacher counts in this table.

The system-wide declines come as teachers and schools are experiencing significant challenges, including a push to recover academically following disruption of the pandemic with sudden shifts to remote instruction, and a national decline in the number of graduates choosing teaching as a profession. Although public school student enrollment had been declining in the city over the last several years, a new state law will require further reduced class sizes over the next few years, increasing pressure to expand the teacher workforce. [A separate recent IBO brief](#) details the number of teachers and costs of compliance with the new requirements. In addition, as the city has become a destination for migrant families, there are numerous new students entering the system. In another [report](#), IBO examined the number of bilingual teachers who are available to assist these incoming students, many of whom do not speak English. Most recently, the Department of Education, along with other city agencies, faces a hiring freeze and will need to identify reductions in spending over the next three financial plans, extending from fiscal years 2024 through 2027. IBO will be monitoring these trends closely.

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**New York City Independent Budget Office**

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