

MARCH 2011 Report from Steve Question, UFT Representative

On Feb. 28, 2011, New York City's Department of Education release its list of proposed layoffs, including all general education ("Common Branch" and "Early Childhood") teachers with 4 years of experience or less, and all reading teacher with 9 years of experience or less.

The list, which can be downloaded at "DOE Releases List Of Proposed Teacher Layoffs" <http://www.ny1.com/content/134688/doe-releases-list-of-proposed-teacher-layoffs> , notes that 15K418, the general ed. component of The Children's School, would lose 2 teachers. Those teachers are Emily Hallenbeck (Class 5-3), and Beth DiMarco (Class 1-3), both treasured members of our staff who started here as student teachers, and whose cooperating teachers (in Emily's case, Mead and I) urged Artie to hire them.

The list further notes that 97K372, the special ed. component of The Children's School, would also lose 2 teachers. Those teachers, 2/3 of our reading department, are Susan Tierney and Mary Beth Crosby Carroll. The loss of these highly skilled Orton-Gillingham certified educators would be devastating to our students with reading disabilities.

On March 1, the mayor's bill to change seniority layoff provisions passed the State Senate, but stalled after that, and will not become law. Had the mayor prevailed, seniority layoff provisions would have remained in effect for teachers in every New York State municipality except New York City, and would have remained in effect for every public employee, uniform and civilian, except NYC teachers. Seniority layoff provisions would have been abolished for NYC teachers in exchange for a system that, in effect, would have made us at-will employees. See "Maze of rules in bill to end seniority layoffs starts with U-rated" <http://gothamschools.org/2011/02/24/maze-of-rules-in-bill-to-end-seniority-layoffs-starts-with-u-rated/> .

It's worth noting here that, had the mayor prevailed, I might have found myself on a layoff list, since teachers with criminal convictions are #4 in the 9+ categories of teachers to be laid off. I am an activist who embraces nonviolent civil disobedience, and have more than one misdemeanor on my record (a record thoroughly vetted by the Department of Education's Office of Personnel Investigation).

While the mayor insists on arguing about whom to lay off, the UFT and parent advocacy organizations are demanding that no teachers be laid off. New York City has lost thousands of teachers through attrition in the past few years. Class sizes are higher than at any time since the fiscal crisis of the 1970s. Mayors Koch, Dinkins, and Giuliani managed to weather the many crises our city has faced, the bursting of the dot-com bubble and 9/11 among them, without laying off a single teacher.

Mayor Bloomberg doesn't need to lay off teachers. He wants to lay off teachers. He's moved \$1B in DOE funding into IT contracts, while proposing teacher layoffs that would save \$300M. Are we to understand that the Department can't possibly get by with only \$700M in IT funding, in order to keep Beth, Emily, Mary Beth, Susan, and more than 4000 others?

Here's what we need to do:

1. Call 311 and demand that the mayor rescind his teacher layoff threat.
2. Stay tuned to this space for further action.