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**New York City Schools And Teachers' Union Join Forces To Attract New Teaching Talent**  
**Through Innovative Housing Support Program**

**By Patricia Hawke**

Like many other school districts in large, metropolitan cities, New York City Schools currently have a shortage of qualified teachers, especially in the most challenging schools. Though state law requires teachers in the targeted critical subject areas of mathematics, science and special education to be certified, there are 600 positions now held by teachers without the proper credentials. This shortage, which covers all grades in the middle and high schools, demanded an innovative solution to the problem.

New York City schools and the United Federation of Teachers developed a creative method to fill the need for experienced, certified teachers — a new housing support program. It is considered one of the most concerted and generous programs aimed at recruiting teachers in subject areas with the worse shortages. The joint effort is a rare example of cooperation between the two parties.

The housing support program gives incentives worth up to \$15,000 to certified teachers in the shortage areas. The initial payment incentive is up to \$5,000 for housing-related expenses. These expenses include relocation costs, down payment on a mortgage, and rental fees and deposits. This initial payment is followed by a monthly housing stipend of \$400 for a two-year period.

Additionally, the New York City schools and teachers' union have partnered with the city's Department of Housing Preservation and Development to provide home ownership assistance to these teachers. This will include home ownership counseling and access to down payment assistance for eligible teachers and their families.

To qualify for the housing support program, teachers must have at least two years teaching experience, be able to pass a rigorous selection process, and be willing to commit to teach in New York City schools for at least three years. Former New York City schools teachers with two years teaching experience, certified and have been out of the New York City schools system for at least two years also are eligible for the program. Teachers already living in the New York City schools area and wish to switch to the city schools could use the money for existing rent and mortgage payments.

The innovative program creates an opportunity for all members of the teachers union to avail themselves of these housing subsidies and defray the higher cost of housing in the New York City schools area. It is one of the most aggressive housing incentive programs in the United States. In comparison, Chicago schools offer a \$7,500 subsidy, while California offers up to \$20,000 but all of it must be repaid.

The New York City schools are strategically recruiting with trips to the state of California, which has comparable housing costs, as well as other states in the northwestern and southeastern areas of the United States. Additionally, an advertising campaign will promote the New York City schools program in the local and national newspapers, as well as other print and electronic media. The New York City schools are hoping to hire an extra 100 teachers for the 2006–07 school year. Teachers hired will begin work in a high–need middle or high school, where these teachers are most in demand.

The new housing support program will make a real difference to underserved students and gives a competitive advantage to the New York City schools.

Patricia Hawke is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in–depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. Patricia has a nose for research and writes stimulating news and views on school issues. For more on New York City schools visit

<http://www.schoolsk-12.com/New-York/New-York/index.html>

## **Detroit Schools Has A Difficult Start To The 2006–2007 School Year**

**By Stacy Andell**

Detroit Schools' Teachers Delay School Starts with Strike

There has been a slow and turbulent start to the Detroit Schools ' new school year. In a battle over contracts, some 7,000 teachers and 2,000 staff members refused to start school in September. These contract disagreements lead finally to a court battle. The contract disagreement began on August 28 after the Teachers Union rejected a two year contract that included salary cuts of 5% and increased health insurance co–payments. Detroit Schools wants an \$88 million concession from the Detroit Schools' Teachers' Union to help with the \$105 million deficit to its \$1.36 billion budget.

On September 16, Detroit Circuit Court Judge Susan Borman ordered that the 7,000 striking Detroit Schools' teachers return to work. After this order, Detroit Teachers' Union president Janna Garrison read the order aloud to 3,000 Detroit Federation of Teachers members but did not comment or give any instructions as to whether the order should be obeyed. The vast majority of the teachers did not return to work.

Detroit Schools' spokesman Lekan Oguntoyinbo stated that under state law teachers who defied the order could face penalties which include fines and other actions. Oguntoyinbo said that Detroit Schools

would go back to the courts and request that the order be enforced. As of the 18th of September, teachers had not returned and Detroit Schools has not decided what action it would take.

On the official first day of school, the 130,000 students in the Detroit Schools were greeted by their teachers not in the classroom but protesting outside. The picketing teachers were most of the teachers, only about 9% of Detroit Schools had returned to work. The Detroit Schools Board of Education worried that the strike would cause students to pull out of the Detroit schools and that their families will leave the city, however most parents support the teachers.

### Detroit Schools' Teachers Return to Work

Even though the contract issues have not been fully resolved but the Teachers' Union has announced that the teachers returned to work on September 20. This was mainly due to pressures from the court and not due to reconciliation between the Detroit Schools and the teachers.

Many Union members, parents and other supporters of the teachers do not want the issue to remain tabled. These supporters want the Detroit Schools system revised. They claim the administration is top heavy and each position should be justified in some way. Others want the Detroit Schools to consider the consolidation of schools. This idea has fewer supporters because it would involve school closures that would greatly affect parents and neighborhoods. Even though this would be the most drastic of the possible ways to change the Detroit Schools, it may be the most cost effective. Like all issues there are many sides. Some wish the Detroit Schools to be run more like a business, which would include offering teacher buyouts, others believe education should be the main focus no matter what the costs.

Patricia Hawke is a staff writer for Schools K–12, providing free, in–depth reports on all U.S. public and private K–12 schools. For more information on Detroit schools visit

<http://www.schoolsk-12.com/michigan/detroit/index.html>



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