

Why do Fellows Stick Around?

An Inquiry into the Retention of New York City Teaching Fellows

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Abstract

Turnover rates for public school teachers in New York City are high. They are lower for teachers trained through the city's main alternative certification program, the New York City Teaching Fellows (NYCTF). The authors administered a survey to their cohort of Fellows at Pace University to determine retention. Asking Fellows to indicate their future plans, the survey found that 70% of respondents expected to remain teaching in the city's public schools. The main factors contributing to the decision to stay were strong commitment to students, belief in effectiveness, and good working relationships with colleagues. 30% of those surveyed intended to resign, either to teach elsewhere or to seek another career. Those who left cited dissatisfaction with "the System," lack of professionalism among colleagues, and inability to meet student needs as the main reasons for their decision. The authors suggest that retention of Fellows could be improved by providing training on adapting to the New York City Department of Education, increasing the cost of tuition or length of service for each Fellow, grouping Fellows in schools, permitting Fellows to transfer, and targeting those with more employment experience as candidates for NYCTF.

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Introduction

New York City, like the rest of the country, has trouble holding onto teachers. Nationwide, 40% of public school teachers plan to quit within five years (Feller, 2005, p. A1). The New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE), however, estimates that 40% of its teachers will quit within three years (“Staff Report,” 2004). To address the consequential staffing shortage, the NYC DOE has put in place a program to train capable individuals without education experience to teach in its schools. This program, the New York City Teaching Fellows (NYCTF), is now a significant source of the city’s public school teachers. The NYC DOE hopes that Fellows will make teaching in New York City’s public schools their long-term career. Many Fellows do seem to be making this choice, as indicated by lower-than-average attrition rates. This paper presents the results from a survey of a group of Fellows completing their two-year training. They were asked to state whether or not they planned to stay teaching, and to indicate the reasons for their decision. The authors examine these Fellows’ responses, compile the data, present analysis, and offer suggestions to improve NYCTF’s retention rate.

New York City’s Educator Crisis

The nation’s largest city suffers from a commensurately large turnover of teachers. A 2004 report by the City Council began with this ominous statement:

New York City faces a “brain drain” in our City’s schools; a staffing crisis looms on the horizon as public school teachers leave the system at alarming rates... over 80% of the most experienced NYC public school teachers are likely to retire in the next two years, while more than 25% of mid-career teachers and nearly 30% of newer teachers say it is likely that they will leave the system within the next three years – potentially creating as many 30,000 vacancies in the City’s classrooms in that time (“Staff Report,” 2004).

The report cited as a key finding that teachers are most dissatisfied with their salary and benefits, as well as school safety and discipline. It also noted that new teachers were unsatisfied with their class sizes, and the availability (or rather lack) of instructional materials and supplies (“Staff Report,” 2004).

Teacher turnover is not new to the NYC DOE. It has attempted to solve this problem through a variety of means. The NYC DOE has plugged staffing holes with uncertified teachers (in the 1999-2000 school year, “60% of all new hires lacked certification”), (“Alternate Routes,” 2004, p. 41), a measure which stricter policies have since precluded. It has raised starting salaries by over 20% in order to stem the flow of certified teachers to better paying suburban districts. It has “thought outside the box” and looked abroad for qualified teachers, recruiting from as far away as Austria and Guyana. It has also sought to raise public school teachers’ profile and stature. In 2004, as part of what the mayor and the schools chancellor termed “the most ambitious and comprehensive teacher recruitment campaign in the city’s history,” (“4/14/04 Press Release,” 2004), New York launched an advertising campaign to give teachers co-billing with its heroes,

New York's Finest and New York's Bravest: The city's public school teachers are now known as "New York's Brightest" ("4/14/04 Press Release," 2004). One of the NYC DOE's more interesting recruitment efforts has been to recruit those with no teaching experience to run classrooms.

New York City Teaching Fellows

In 2000, in response to what it called "the most severe teacher shortage in New York's public school system in decades," (New York City Teaching Fellows [NYCTF], 2005), the NYC DOE created the New York City Teaching Fellows. This program trains "mid-career professionals, recent college graduates, and even retirees" – with no background in education – "to teach in underperforming schools" (NYCTF, 2005). Over the course of five years, it has developed into a significant source of classroom teachers for New York City. There now are over 6,100 Fellows in the city's public schools (NYCTF, 2005).

NYCTF, the nation's largest alternative certification program, is selective. In its first year, 2,500 people applied for 350 vacancies; in 2004, 1,760 Fellows emerged from almost ten times that number of applicants (NYCTF, 2005). The program seeks as applicants "people like you – accountants, nurses, recent graduates, chief executives, police officers, secretaries, artists, journalists, and retirees – who have decided to change their lives and teach in the schools that need teachers most" (NYCTF, 2005). NYCTF's advertising campaign, seen on ads in subway cars, especially targets those whose current jobs have lost their luster: "No one goes back 20 years later to thank a middle manager" and "How many lives did your last spreadsheet change?" are such appeals.

NYCTF promotes itself as a means for people to make a career of teaching, and it explicitly encourages Fellows to make a long-term commitment to the city's students and schools (NYCTF, 2005). The NYC DOE, of which NYCTF is a program, makes a large financial investment in Fellows. It subsidizes their master's degrees (paying \$8,000 of the \$12,000 tuition), ("Alternate Routes," 2004, p. 41), gives them living stipends for their initial summer training, and pays Fellows the same salary as regular NYC DOE teachers.

In the five years since its inception, NYCTF has become an important mechanism for staffing the city's schools. In the 2004-05 school year, one out of every 15 teachers in the NYC DOE was a Fellow (NYCTF, 2005). Fellows represented "a quarter of all new hires in New York City public schools, and a staggering half of all new hires in math and special education" (Apsel, 2005). But, given the profession's tendency toward turnover, particularly in the urban context, how does the program fare at training teachers who stay on the job?

Do Fellows Stay or Leave?

The authors are graduates of this program. In June of 2002, we joined NYCTF, leaving behind careers in the field of management consulting. Three months later we were 6th grade teachers at the same middle school in Bushwick, Brooklyn. Like every other Fellow we met, we were committed to the program's mission of putting capable teachers in underperforming, "hard-to-staff" schools.

And, like every other Fellow we met, we found our new jobs superlatively challenging. Our school was exactly what the program had promised us. Less than 20% of students met statewide standards in math and language arts; almost all were eligible for federally-funded free lunches (“2003-2004 Annual School Report,” 2004). The building itself was old, and supplies were scarce. Indiscipline was rife among the students, many of whom roamed the halls during class time. And the school was indeed hard to staff – about 1/3 of the faculty left each year.

Our school could have been better, but it also could have been worse. We would meet with other Fellows in our night classes and share our experiences. Some of their stories made us envious. Others made us realize how relatively fortunate our situations were. Over the course of our two years, we would learn of Fellows who had dropped out, or who were trying to transfer to new schools, or who intended to quit when their two years were up. We would also talk to many Fellows who were planning to stay on in the schools where they’d been assigned.

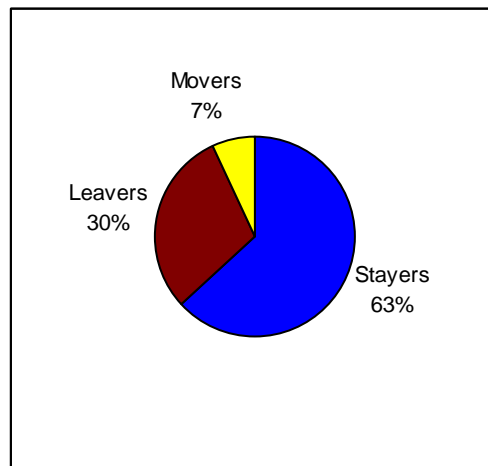
Learning of our colleagues’ decisions to stay on or to leave made us curious about how well NYCTF was working. It was, after all, created with the purpose of placing qualified teachers in high needs public schools. Were the teachers in whom NYCTF invested so much time and money staying in those schools? If so, why? And if they were leaving, what were their reasons? To get a better idea, we conducted a brief survey of our own cohort of Fellows. While modest in scope, and far from comprehensive, this survey sought to illuminate their decisions to stay or leave, as well as the motivating factors behind those decisions.

Survey Overview

We administered this survey (see Appendix) to the group of 130 Fellows with whom we took classes at Pace University. Because it was the fifth NYCTF cohort to matriculate at Pace since the program's inception, the group was known as Pace Cohort 5 (PA 5). 77 of the PA 5 Fellows, 59% of the total, completed and returned the survey. The survey was administered at the end of PA 5 Fellows' second year of teaching, when they had fulfilled their two-year obligation and had to make one of three decisions:

- 1) Stay: to keep teaching in their original placement (presumably, an underserved school)
- 2) Move: to transfer to another NYC DOE school (underserved or otherwise) to teach
- 3) Leave: to quit the NYC DOE altogether (to teach elsewhere, or to pursue another career)

In the survey, we asked our colleagues to complete a one-page questionnaire and identify themselves in one of three categories: a "Stayer," "Mover," or "Leaver." Within their chosen category, they responded to a list of corresponding statements using a Likert Scale to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement. For example, respondents would indicate, using a scale of 1 to 5, whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement "I have sufficient resources for teaching." (3 indicated that a statement was not applicable.) We also asked for volunteers to share more extensive information about their decision in individual follow-up interviews. About a quarter of surveyed Fellows agreed to provide the additional feedback. In addition to offering data, the survey also indicated common themes and shared experiences among the responses.

Breakdown of PA 5 Fellows Surveyed

The survey results showed that out of every ten Fellows in PA 5, seven planned to continue to teach in a New York City public school, whereas three intended to quit the NYC DOE altogether.

- 63% expected to stay at their current school
- 7% opted to move to another school within the NYC DOE
- 30% wanted to leave the NYC DOE

Who stays?

The overwhelming majority of Stayers shared three characteristics: commitment to their students, belief in their effectiveness as teachers, and good working relationships with their colleagues.

Stayers were unanimous and emphatic in their expressions of commitment to their students. In follow up interviews, declarations of personal and professional dedication constantly emerged. A typical statement was, “I am in love with teaching, and I am fully committed to working with this population of children” (Interviewee #3, personal communication, November 20, 2004). Many Fellows affirmed their strong commitment despite the challenges of the job. “I knew what I was getting into... I wasn’t romanticized” (Interviewee #5, personal communication, November 9, 2004). Another explained, “I work with a tough population, but I want to. I notice the overlooked kids – they need good teachers, too” (Interviewee #6, personal communication, November 9, 2004). One Stayer felt obliged to remain at her school precisely because of high turnover: “I feel the need to stay – the kids will be losing a lot of teachers” (Interviewee #9, personal communication, June 2004).

Second, Stayers believed that they were effective teachers. 94% felt successful, a belief that came from a variety of sources. Some felt that they had found their calling by becoming educators: “Teaching is the first career that I’ve had that I really feel fits me,” confided one (Interviewee #1, personal communication, November 20, 2005). Others cited the program’s successful training: “I found [NYCTF] to be a pretty exceptional way to enter the teaching profession... I learned a great deal at my [graduate] school that helped me become a better teacher” (Interviewee #2, personal communication, November 14, 2004). One explained that her previous career had prepared her well for the rigors of the classroom: “I came... from working in a law firm, where I learned to develop my assertiveness... this has served me well in teaching” (Interviewee #6, personal communication, November 9, 2004).

Stayers also consistently reported positive professional relationships with other teachers. Nine out of ten Stayers pointed to collegial support in comments such as “The staff is caring and cordial, and is given professional latitude to do their job,” (Interviewee #4, personal communication, November 9, 2004), and “The work environment is the key – there are a lot of like minded teachers, which has a positive effect” (Interviewee #5, personal communication, November 9, 2004). Many cited other Fellows as a major contributor to their success. One said, “the Fellows had each other, and we all made it together” (Interviewee #11, personal communication, March 7, 2005). Another concluded, “[w]ithout the support of other Fellows, it might have been impossible” (Interviewee #8, personal communication, November 19, 2004). These sentiments resonated greatly with our own personal experiences. We were among seven Fellows who joined the staff of our struggling middle school in autumn of 2002. Throughout our time there, we depended on each other for support and encouragement through the frequent low points of each school year. We entered the profession together, took night classes together, and worked in the same building. These common experiences formed a strong bond between us, one that greatly contributed to our ability to teach effectively and fulfill our two-year commitment.

In addition, the survey pointed to other factors that contributed to Fellows’ decision to stay at their schools. Three in five Stayers said they had sufficient resources for teaching, and three in five felt supported by their school’s administration.

However, Stayers also reported significant obstacles. Only 1/2 of the Stayers liked the atmosphere at their schools, and 1/2 did not feel involved in the decision making process at their schools. Moreover, two in five said financial reasons were a factor in their decision to stay.

Who Leaves?

The survey also revealed that many Fellows – three in ten of those surveyed – had already made the decision to quit when their two years were up. 42% of Leavers were departing the NYC DOE to teach in private schools, charter schools, or in public school districts outside the city. 33% were leaving teaching altogether, and 25% were uncertain of their future plans.

Leavers voiced several reasons for their choice, and many of those – lack of support and influence, poor student behavior and performance – are cited by resigning teachers elsewhere in America (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 16). The main reason behind these Fellows' decisions to leave, however, was specific to the nation's largest collection of students (1,100,000), schools (1,200), and teachers (80,000): "the System." Nine out of ten Leavers cited "the System" as a reason for quitting. This broad term could refer to not only to the NYC DOE's policies, but the general culture of that enormous entity as well. Given the nature of the schools in which Fellows were placed, some concluded that the NYC DOE did not have a culture that fostered success. One Fellow chose to leave because of this, despite her conviction that she was an effective teacher:

"[A]lmost nobody who taught in the schools for more than a couple of years seemed to still believe that the public schools could actually educate children... I had to assume that the job made them this way – that teaching in New York City [public schools] makes teachers bad... The whole system needs to be torn down and rebuilt from the ground up; hiring a few thousand as-yet-unjaded teachers is not a long-term solution, because the longer they stay, the more most of them will tend to be poisoned by the environment they were meant to improve"

(Interviewee #14, personal communication, March 9, 2005).

Dissatisfaction also arose from the “culture clash” that developed when Fellows, many of whom arrived at the NYC DOE from the private sector, struggled to adjust to the traditional, hierarchical management structure of schools. “Coming from the corporate world,” one said, “I was appalled by the lack of professionalism in my school” (Interviewee #10, personal communication, November 16, 2004). This absence could manifest itself in colleagues who cared little for their own jobs and did not work cooperatively, or in principals who did not encourage input from their teachers. Some Fellows withered in such an environment. One Fellow, explaining her decision to leave, said:

“The administration at my school, and the way the school was run, really turned me off teaching. I didn’t find the sense of courtesy or respect that is deserved by everyone in any professional environment. That was the primary factor”

(Interviewee #13, personal communication, June 29, 2004).

The way a school is run is highly dependent on the personality of its principal, who may range from collaborative and capable to dictatorial and incompetent. A principal’s management style, in turn, sets the tone for staff interactions within school walls. Whereas 50% of Stayers did not feel involved in the decision making process at their schools, 70% of Leavers did not.

Four out of five Leavers said that their educational philosophy clashed with that of their school’s administration. Some differences were specific: “There was too much emphasis on standardized tests” (Interviewee #16, personal communication, March 7, 2005); some were general:

The students at my school were treated like animals by the staff and the administration. The school looked and, especially, sounded like a prison... I felt

that I couldn't in good conscience tell parents to send their children to my school (Interviewee #15, personal communication, March 10, 2005).

Given that NYCTF overtly appeals to the applicant's idealism in its recruitment efforts, it is perhaps inevitable that some who undertake the mission to teach in the neediest schools become disillusioned by realities that prevail inside the buildings. That same Leaver concluded:

I left the DOE because I felt that the tremendous effort I was putting into the job professionally and psychologically was taking a negative toll on my ability to teach and to be happy. My school was such a complete mess that I began to feel myself becoming cynical and somehow complicit in the alienation of an entire neighborhood's children (Interviewee #15, personal communication, March 10, 2005).

For many Leavers, their decision was influenced not only by "the System" or their own school administration, but by the pressures from below: the students. 2/3 of Leavers agreed with the statement, "It is not possible for me to meet the pressing needs of my students." Many were worn down by the daily demands of students, whose academic needs were so great, but who could be, especially when gathered in classes of thirty, enormously difficult to teach. Classroom management – getting students to sit in their seats and follow directions – is traditionally a challenge for any new teacher, and is a prerequisite for effective instruction. For many Fellows, it was a challenge they could not surmount. One Leaver lamented, "The kids were unruly, and had far too many issues for me to effectively address" (Interviewee #16, personal communication, March 7, 2005).

Failure to manage a classroom is often driven by the absence of an effective school-wide structure to deal with misbehaving students, such as a detention system. When a struggling school lacks a working discipline system, it suggests greater internal dysfunction. It is not surprising that that same Leaver also said, “I didn’t get much in the way of resources – partly because I didn’t even know what was available, and when I did, it wasn’t clear to me how to get it” (Interviewee #16, personal communication, March 7, 2005). In an environment where one has to fend for oneself, the prospect of staying beyond the two-year commitment becomes much less attractive. One Fellow offered this summary:

I feel like I do not have the patience to deal with the demands of the system and students at the same time. By demands of the system, I am speaking primarily of the constant struggle to scrounge up supplies and materials, the lack of time to meet all of my students’ needs, and the lack of professionalism and dedication on the part of my colleagues (Anonymous personal communication, June, 2004).

Another factor to consider is how the transfer process influences a Fellow’s decision to quit. Transferring, or moving from one NYC DOE school to another, is not an easy thing to do. It is a complex process, regulated by the city’s teachers union, and vacancies in other schools are usually filled on the basis of seniority. Obviously, first- or second-year Fellows have little seniority, and moreover, the principal must approve a transfer request by ‘releasing’ the teacher. In hard-to-staff schools, principals are unlikely to do so. There is a short period each spring in which teachers, through a union-supervised process, can apply to transfer without a principal’s permission, but this can be a chaotic and uncertain experience. Consequently, the choice can

become a stark one for an unhappy teacher: stay or quit the NYC DOE. While 57% of Leavers said that the issue of transferring was not applicable to their decisions, it is worth noting that one in three Leavers believed it was too difficult to transfer.

Relatively few – 17% – blamed NYCTF for their decisions to leave. They believed that the crash summer training and graduate classes did not sufficiently prepare them for their jobs. “I felt completely overwhelmed – so much is thrown at you at once,” said one (Interviewee #16, personal communication, March 7, 2004). Some cited a disconnect between their training, with its emphasis on educational theory, and a teacher’s need for practical advice for working successfully with principals, colleagues, and students.

Why do Fellows Move?

Movers, only five of the 77 surveyed, echoed much of the same sentiments as Leavers. Like many Leavers, they expressed dismay at the ways they were treated, not by the students but by other adults in their schools – namely their supervisors. Almost all pointed to a non-negotiable clash in educational philosophy as well as the need for greater opportunities for effectiveness and professional growth in the classroom. Movers opted to brave the daunting transfer process in hope of finding supportive administrators, more teaching resources and greater participation in decision making. One Fellow, who was ultimately successful in transferring, said that the experience “was frustrating and if I was unable to change schools I may have left education for a short period of time” (Interviewee #7, personal communication, July 7, 2004). In other words, if he could not have transferred, he would have quit teaching rather than remain at his school.

How did survey responses compare to reality?

Responses from the survey proved to be a fairly accurate predictor of retention. According to figures supplied by Pace University, 78% of PA 5 Fellows decided to remain in the NYC DOE beyond their two-year commitment, 8% more than indicated by the survey results (S. Fine, personal communication, March 16, 2005).

Suggestions for Improving Retention

Survey responses indicate that Fellows face common challenges, which, if NYCTF were to address, could improve the program's effectiveness and reduce attrition. Factors most frequently cited by Leavers are paired below with suggestions for their amelioration.

First, the vast majority of Leavers expressed dissatisfaction with "the System." While it is understood that NYCTF has limited capability to effect change in this regard, it may wish to explicitly deal with "the System" in its training of Fellows. Much of the program's training focuses on theoretical aspects of education like childhood development, curriculum design, assessment, etc. If some of this time were re-allocated to orient incoming Fellows on the structure and culture of the NYC DOE, this might ease their adjustment process. Since Stayers and Movers frequently mentioned difficulties with other teachers and superiors, devoting part of the initial summer training to understanding the differences between the professional culture of the private sector (or the university) and that of the NYC DOE could facilitate new Fellows' successful transition.

Second, while Fellows do leave the NYC DOE at a lower rate than other teachers, the rate is still significant. National estimates of the financial and educational cost of teacher turnover range from \$12,500 to \$50,000 per teacher (“Tapping the Potential,” 2005, p. 7). For the NYC DOE, added to this cost is the money invested in the training and graduate education it provides each Fellow. The departure rate for Fellows has decreased steadily since the start of NYCTF. This is certainly attributable to improvements in selection, training, and support. However, some of this reduction is probably also due to the fact that NYCTF now requires Fellows to pay for part of their master’s degree. (During its first three years, the program fully paid Fellows’ tuition.) By making Fellows responsible for part of the tuition, NYCTF has required Fellows – literally – to buy into the program. Since NYCTF receives many more applications than it has vacancies – only one in eight applicants becomes a Fellow (NYCTF, 2005) – the program has the latitude to tighten up its terms. By doing this, perhaps NYCTF could continue to reduce the departure rate. For example, NYCTF might extend the length of the Fellows’ obligation. Or, it could offer tuition reimbursements as an incentive for those who stay teaching for an extended period. In each case, leaving would become a more expensive proposition for a Fellow, and thus the departure rate would probably continue to decrease.

Third, in light of the degree to which the cohort model was cited as a positive factor in retention, NYCTF may wish to take measures to ensure, or at least encourage, that Fellows teach in the same schools.

Fourth, NYCTF should also consider addressing the issue of transferring. The surveys revealed that the factors influencing Movers were essentially the same as those cited by Leavers. 1/3 of

Leavers said it was too difficult to transfer to another school, and the number of Movers was very small – only 6% of those surveyed. If the program could make it easier for unhappy or unsuccessful Fellows to transfer to another school, perhaps it could further reduce the attrition rate. One possibility could be to permit Fellows a one-time transfer opportunity during their obligated service, in order to make Movers out of those who might otherwise be Leavers.

Another issue to examine in terms of retention is that of age and experience. Of the PA 5 respondents, the Stayers are older and have more employment experience than Leavers. The average age of Stayers was 31; for Leavers, it was 28. NYCTF provided the first post-college career for only one in five Stayers, but did so for one in three Leavers. Given that people in their twenties are more prone to switching jobs, and less likely than older people to settle immediately on a career, they may represent a less safe investment for a program like NYCTF. For example, the prospect of a subsidized master's degree, full salary, and the challenge and responsibility of teaching one's own class can be very appealing to someone graduating college, especially in a tight job market. Moreover, in such a situation, NYCTF could appear, like the Peace Corps, to be a worthy (if more remunerative) two-year job, or a means to try out a career, as opposed to a long-term career decision. While recent college graduates are a valuable source of successful Fellows, NYCTF may want to consider targeting the recruitment of those with more employment experience than recent graduates, in the interest of reducing the departure rate.

Strengths of NYCTF

This survey indicates that Fellows who stay teaching in New York's public schools are committed to their students, they believe in their effectiveness, and they work well together with their colleagues. These traits are directly related to the achievements of NYCTF, some of which are highlighted below.

The program's first success is that teachers who are Fellows stay on the job longer than teachers who are not. 42% of all NYC DOE teachers leave within three years ("Staff Report," 2004). 67% of Fellows who started teaching in 2002 were still teaching three years later (C. McGown, personal communication, October 13, 2005). Given the hemorrhage of public school teachers in New York City, this is no mean feat.

Second, NYCTF has proved very able at introducing skilled and talented individuals to the profession. NYCTF's selective process has turned out a highly competitive pool of professionals: The average GPA of a Fellow is 3.25, and one in five has an advanced degree (NYCTF, 2005). The very first cohort of Fellows included "a Viacom vice-president, one of Mayor Rudy Giuliani's speechwriters, a 'Dateline NBC' producer, and a technology executive from Chicago with both a JD and an MBA" (NYCTF, 2005). In our middle school in Brooklyn, Fellows included graduates from Ivy League schools, consultants, an engineer, an actor, an executive, and a carpenter. Without a Fellows program, it is unlikely that these individuals would have found themselves teaching in this school. Insideschools, reflecting on NYCTF's first five years, reports:

Administrators and fellows overwhelmingly agree that the program has succeeded in bringing ambitious, motivated and talented people, who might otherwise never considered teaching, into the public schools (Apsel, 2005).

Third, it is important to note that 1/3 of applicants to the program hail from outside New York State (NYCTF, 2005). Clearly, NYCTF has made teaching in the city's needy schools a desirable choice not just for New Yorkers, but for Americans everywhere.

Fourth, Insideschools states, “[P]rincipals at schools we visited told us that Fellows have invigorated their teaching staffs and have brought great enthusiasm and energy to their schools” (Apsel, 2005). Much of Fellows’ enthusiasm, as well as aforementioned commitment, can be attributed to the nature of the program itself. In addition to selectively admitting motivated, capable candidates, all of whom have answered the call to teach in New York City’s struggling schools, NYCTF puts them together for their training and graduate classes. These Fellows, grouped in cohorts, see each other on a daily basis during the initial summer training, and then regularly thereafter during their night classes. The strength of this cohort model – particularly as a factor in retention – should not be underestimated. Fellows overwhelmingly cited collegial support (frequently that of other Fellows) as a factor in their decision to stay.

Finally, this survey shows that NYCTF has succeeded in creating a program that is well worth participating in. 83% of all PA 5 Fellows surveyed said that they would do NYCTF again. This endorsement, regardless of decision to stay or leave, makes clear that Fellows regard their experience as a valuable one. Moreover, the fact that only 9% of respondents agreed with the

statement “I should not have become a teacher,” speaks to the skill of the program in identifying promising candidates.

Over the course of the past five years, NYCTF has become a vital means to staff New York City’s public schools with good teachers. With continued improvement and expansion, it can be hoped that all of the city’s principals will find themselves in the same situation as Aramina Ferrer, the principal of a Bronx elementary school:

As a result of this program, I had the rare experience of walking into a hiring hall last fall with more than enough qualified candidates to fill my positions. I turned down candidates with advanced degrees. I had the luxury of selecting between graduates of some of the best universities in the country. I had choice (“White House Conference,” 2002).

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Appendix

Pace Cohort 5 Retention Survey

In September 2004, I will: (circle one, and go to the corresponding section)

- 1) be staying at my current school
- 2) be moving to a new school within the NYC Department of Education
- 3) have left the NYC Department of Education

1) Staying at my current school

I am planning on staying at my current school: (circle one)					
A) for the next year only B) for the next 1-3 years C) beyond 3 years					
I am staying at my school because: (please circle your level of agreement)					
1. I have administrative support	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
2. I am an effective teacher	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
3. I am committed to the students	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
4. I am involved in decision making in the school	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
5. I have sufficient resources for teaching	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
6. I have a good working relationship with colleagues	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
7. I like the school atmosphere	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
8. I am staying for financial reasons	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
9. Other (please explain)					

2) Moving to a new school within the NYC Department of Education

I am planning on moving to a new school within the NYC DoE: (circle one)					
A) for the next year only B) for the next 1-3 years C) beyond 3 years					
I am moving to a new school within the NYC DoE because: (please circle your level of agreement)					
1. I want more administrative support	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
2. I want more resources for teaching	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
3. I want more independence/opportunity for effectiveness	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
4. I want more involvement in decision making in my school	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
5. my educational philosophy clashes with that of the administration	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree

6. I want better student behavior/performance	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
7. I want a better working relationship with my colleagues	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree

8. Other (please explain)

3) Leaving the NYC Department of Education

1) I am:	Leaving teaching	Moving to a public school outside the NYC DoE	Moving to a private school	Leaving involuntarily (health reasons, family obligations, dismissal, etc.)
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I am leaving the NYC Department of Education because: (please circle your level of agreement)

2. I am dissatisfied with the NYCTF program	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
3. I am dissatisfied with the NYC DoE (or “the System”)	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
4. it is too difficult to transfer to another DoE school	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
5. my overall expectations have not been met	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
6. my training did not sufficiently prepare me	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
7. it is not possible for me to meet the pressing needs of my students	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
8. I lack involvement in decision making	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
9. lack of discipline prevents me from doing my job	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
10. my educational philosophy clashes with that of the administration	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
11. I lack administrative support	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
12. I am leaving for financial reasons	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree
13. I should not have become a teacher	1 strongly disagree	2 somewhat disagree	3 not applicable	4 somewhat agree	5 strongly agree

14. Other (please explain)

Biographical Information

- A) Gender B) Age C) Ethnicity D) Highest degree earned PRIOR to joining NYCTF:
- E) Was teaching your first career after finishing college?
- F) If teaching was not your first career, how many careers have you had prior to teaching?
- G) If teaching was not your first career, did you take a pay cut to become a teacher?
- H) If you could go back, would you do NYCTF again?

If you are willing to participate in a 30-minute panel discussion regarding your decision to stay/move/leave, please put your name, phone number, and e-mail address below. Thank you!

Name:

Phone:

E-mail:

Author Note

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