Department of Education
Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

FAQs

Q. Why did the DOE and the UFT enter into this agreement?

A. The reason both the union and the DOE wanted an agreement was to encourage principals to consider hiring qualified centrally-funded excessed teachers, guidance counselors, social workers, lab assistants, school psychologists, school secretaries, and speech teachers from the Absent Teacher Reserve (ATRs) to fill vacancies in order to reduce the overall cost to the school system and permit more funds currently spent on central excessed staff to be available to schools. (Excessed paraprofessionals will continue to be placed in vacancies.)

Q. Does the agreement mandate that principals hire or interview ATRs?

A. No. Principals continue to have final say over all teacher hiring decisions and are not mandated to interview excessed teachers prior to selecting candidates. However, because there are likely qualified candidates for many vacancies in the ATR pool, it is the clear preference of the Chancellor that these teachers be considered by principals to fill vacancies in their schools before external candidates are hired.

Q. Does the agreement provide any financial incentives for principals who do hire ATRs to fill vacancies in their schools?

A. Yes. In any school that hires a centrally-funded ATR on or after November 1 of the calendar year they were placed in excess (other than the school from which they were excessed), central DOE will pay the difference between the actual salary of the teacher and a starting teacher salary, and then in subsequent years central DOE will continue to pay the difference between the actual salary and the subsequent steps on the salary scale (for example, in the second year central DOE will pay the difference between the teacher's actual salary and step 2a on the salary scale). This central subsidy will only terminate after the excessed employee has been in the position for 8 years or sooner if the staff member leaves your school.

Q. Are there any other financial incentives?

A. Yes. Until November 15, 2010, central DOE will also credit the hiring school budget with one-half of the starting teacher's salary that would otherwise be paid by the school as set forth above. As a result, schools hiring centrally-funded ATRs to fill vacancies on or after November 1 of the calendar year they were excessed (other than the school from which they were excessed) will pay only half a starting teacher's salary for that teacher until November 15, 2010, at which time the school will begin paying the salary of the teacher that would apply if s/he were a new hire when selected by the school. For example, let's assume School A hires a centrally-funded excessed teacher on December 1, 2008 to fill a vacancy and that the teacher was excessed by School B in June of 2007 and has been in the ATR pool since that

time. The excessed teacher's actual salary is $83,412 (8b+20 year longevity). School A will be charged $22,765 (half of the $45,530 starting teacher's salary) until November 15, 2010, at which point the additional subsidy will expire. The teacher's actual salary at that time will have increased to $88,258 (8b+22 year longevity), but School A will be charged only $48,835 (step 3a on the teacher salary scale).

Q. Do ATRs hired with the incentive bring their seniority with them?

A. Yes. These teachers would have the same seniority rights (for example as to excessing) as any other appointed teachers, unless they are hired provisionally as set forth below.

Q. What if a school wants to try out an ATR for a period of time before deciding if they want the ATR to be a regularly appointed teacher in the school?

A. The agreement also provides that a school can hire a centrally-funded ATR on the school budget provisionally after November 1st for the balance of the school year. At the end of that year the school can place the ATR in excess again, without regard to seniority, and they will again become a centrally-funded ATR. The ATR may also opt to be placed in excess at the end of the school year and again become an ATR. If neither the school nor the ATR acts to place the ATR back in excess, the ATR will become a regularly appointed teacher at that school.

Q. If a school hires an ATR provisionally do they get to take advantage of the financial incentive?

A. No, not while the teacher is serving provisionally. However if the ATR becomes a regularly appointed teacher in the school the following year, then the school will get the incentive detailed above.

Q. Is there any provision in the agreement allowing ATRs the chance to apply to transfer to other schools to work as ATRs?

A. For schools determined to be able to use an ATR or additional ATRs (based on a formula of one ATR per 500 students) where the principal agrees to accept an ATR or an additional ATR, the school would become available for ATRs to apply to transfer to serve as an ATR. If more than one ATR applies to a designated school, the ATR with the greatest citywide seniority would be awarded the right to transfer to the school to work as an ATR.

Q. If a principal agreed to take an ATR or additional ATR in their school, and then decided to hire the ATR to be a regularly appointed teacher in their school, would the principal receive the incentive?

A. Yes.

Q. When will the ATRs be able to apply to those schools that have agreed to accept an additional ATR?

A. The Division of Human Resources and the Integrated Service Centers are working on the timing of this transfer mechanism and will notify the field shortly.

Q. If a school does not agree to take an additional ATR, does that mean no ATRs can be assigned to that school?

A. No. ATRs will continue to be assigned to schools where the number of teacher absences creates a need for a full-time substitute. The ability of ATRs to transfer is limited to a number of schools after ATR assignments have been made.

Q. Does the agreement specify what ATRs should be doing in schools while they are serving as ATRs?

A. ATRs should be used for push-in, pull-out, intervention, remediation, day-to-day coverage, coverage for long term teacher absences, to reduce class size and such other appropriate teaching assignments. For middle and high schools and eight period elementary schools, ATRs should be programmed for a professional activity like all other teachers in the school.