

From: Chris Treiber

Sent: Monday, October 22, 2018 2:42 PM

To: 'editor@citylimits.org' <editor@citylimits.org>

Subject: NYC's Special Education System Feels the Impact of Teacher Shortages

Good Afternoon,

My name is Christopher Treiber and I am the Associate Executive Director of Children's Services for The Interagency Council of Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc. The (IAC) was formed in 1977 as a not-for-profit membership organization. Comprised of voluntary service providers supporting children and adults with developmental disabilities in the greater metro-New York area, IAC currently represents over 160 member agencies and organizations helping more than 100,000 individuals and their families in New York City, Nassau, Suffolk, Westchester, Rockland, Putnam and Orange counties. The IAC membership includes 45 preschool special education providers and more than 30 school-age 853 providers many of them provide services throughout the five boroughs. - www.iacny.org

I am writing to you about the article that appeared in the City Limits on Friday October 19, 2018 entitled "**NYC's Special Education System Feels the Impact of Teacher Shortages**" - By **Patrick Donachie**

The article was very well written and you did an excellent job covering the issue of teacher shortages in District 75. There was one issue about shortages of special education teacher however, that was not included in the article which I believe is even more critical to New York City's children and families. Children with developmental disabilities who have the highest levels of need in New York City are educated in preschool special education programs (4410) and state approved non-public schools (853) schools. These schools are facing a teacher staffing crisis that far exceeds the public schools or District 75. The children who attend these education programs are public school children. Many of these children have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy or other developmental disabilities. They are placed in these education programs only after a determination has been made by a local Committee on Preschool Special Education or the Committee on Special Education that there is no other appropriate educational setting available in a local public school. Therefore, there is no other educational option for these students.

The 4410 and 853 programs serve many of New York City's most vulnerable children, yet these schools have not been provided with funding necessary to meet this challenge. They have suffered for many years without any tuition increases and only in the last few years have they received very small increases. The impact of the growth freeze, and the limited tuition increases have left these programs unable to recruit and retain certified special education teachers and certified assistant teachers. Based on data from the New York State Education Department we know that NYC DOE can pay their teacher between \$25,000 and \$30,00 dollars more than our preschool and school age programs are able to. The NYC DOE is aggressively recruiting any experienced teachers who are left in our 4410 and 853 schools and the result is

that children with the highest levels of special education needs in NYC are being educated by new and inexperienced special education teachers.

In the first week in June of 2018 we conducted a survey of our education providers. The purpose of the survey was to provide us with a current up-to-date status report on the teaching staff in our schools. I am including a breakdown of the results of the survey that highlights the significant staff turnover and vacancy rates in our members special education programs. Here are some key findings from the analysis of data:

School-Age 853 program

Vacancy Rates

64% of 853 schools reported having certified teacher vacancies and 86% of the schools reported having certified teacher assistant vacant positions.

The vacancy rates in our 853 programs have increased dramatically from 2016 from 16% to 28% for certified teacher positions. This represents a 75% increase from the previous year and a half. Certified Teacher Assistant vacancy rates increased even more from 18% in 2016 to 35% in 2018 a 94% increase.

School-Age 853 program

Turnover Rates

- Certified Teacher Turnover Rate increased to 31%
- Four 853 schools had teacher turnover rates above 40%
- Certified Teacher Assistant Turnover Rate was 25%
- One - 853 school lost 11 of their 14 teacher assistants in less than one year.

Preschool Special Education 4410 Programs

Vacancy Rates

86% of 4410 preschools reported having certified teacher vacancies and 77% of the preschools reported having certified teacher assistant vacant positions.

The vacancy rates in our 4410 programs have also increased dramatically from 2016 from 17% to 28% for certified teacher positions. This represents a 65% increase from the previous year and a half. Certified Teacher Assistant vacancy rates increased even more from 18% in 2016 to 32% in 2018 a 78% increase.

Preschool Special Education – 4410 Programs

Turnover Rates

- Certified Teacher Turnover Rate was 26%
- Three - 4410 programs had turnover rates over 50%. All three programs lost half their teachers in less than one year.

- Certified Teacher Assistant Turnover rate was 23%
- Three - 4410 programs had a teacher assistant turnover rate above 40%. One preschool program lost 17 of their 28 teacher assistants in less than one year.

We are becoming increasingly concerned about the significant increases in the teacher and teacher assistant vacancy rates in our schools. It is very clear that our education providers are no longer able to recruit certified special education teachers and certified teacher assistants. In fact, many education directors have reported that they have gotten few to no applicants for any of their vacant positions. Vacancy rates that range between 28-35% at the end of school year are even more alarming because they reflect the low point in the year because the schools have worked all year to fill their vacant positions. We know that our schools lose the majority of their teaching staff in the six weeks between the middle of August until the end of September. It is during this time-period that local school districts are most active in their recruitment campaigns to ensure that they have certified teachers for the start of the school year. If our schools continue to lose, additional teaching staff and they are unable to recruit new certified teachers and teacher assistants they will be forced to close classrooms and may be forced to close their education programs.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the teacher crisis facing the 4410 and 853 schools and the impact it is having on the children and families who depend on these important services.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like additional information. I can be reached at 212-645- 6360. My email is chris@iacny.org

Sincerely,
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