

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 160907)

RESOLUTION

Authorizing the Committee on Education to conduct hearings concerning the factors affecting teacher recruitment and retention in the School District of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, The United States is facing a crisis due to a shortage of certified teachers, with recent reports from the Learning Policy Institute identifying the problem as being most acute in high-poverty schools with concentrations of students of color, and disproportionately affecting key disciplines including special education, math and science, bilingual and ESOL instruction; and

WHEREAS, The teacher shortage reflects a breakdown in the recruitment and retention of teachers of color, who make up a decreasing proportion of the teacher workforce, despite growth in the numbers of students of color; and

WHEREAS, Teacher vacancies result in a loss of vital instructional time for students and also a disruption of the entire school community and reduction in the quality of instruction when teachers abruptly come or leave in the middle of the school year; and

WHEREAS, Teacher attrition rates and significant drops in enrollment and graduation from teacher-preparation programs are both central causes of the current and projected teacher shortages; and

WHEREAS, These shortages have been driven by increased teacher dissatisfaction, linked to sustained budget cuts that affect both teacher compensation and the resources available in classrooms as well as increased pressures from high-stakes testing regimes and politicized attacks on the teaching profession; and

WHEREAS, The national teacher shortage crisis is acutely reflected in Pennsylvania, where the number of teaching certificates awarded has plummeted over 60% in recent years, from 18,590 certificates in 2013 to only 7,180 in 2015; and

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WHEREAS, Philadelphia has seen persistent teacher vacancies, with hundreds of vacancies over the past several years that resulted in thousands of students denied a certified teacher for significant portions of the school year, split grades and significant overcrowding, as well as unfulfilled curricular mandates in violation of the state code; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's teacher vacancies resulted in students in at least ten schools and possibly many more being denied crucial special education services, with the Pennsylvania Department of Education recently ruling that those students must be given compensatory education; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's high teacher attrition rate compounds the challenge of teacher recruitment, and resulted in the need for the School District to hire over 800 new teachers for the 2016-17 school year, nonetheless leaving positions still vacant despite the aggressive hiring effort; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's high teacher attrition rate contributes to a dramatic increase in inexperienced teachers, particularly impacting the schools already struggling with resources and supports; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's high teacher attrition rate impairs the District's ability to adequately predict staffing needs of schools, contributing to chaos and confusion during schools openings and through the mid-fall leveling process, which is itself a disruptive means of solving staffing vacancies; and

WHEREAS, Members of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers have been without a contract for three years, since the teachers' contract expired in 2013 and then was unilaterally cancelled by vote of the School Reform Commission in 2014; and

WHEREAS, The absence of a contract for Philadelphia teachers has resulted in hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost wages for Philadelphia's teachers and has had severe negative impact on individual and household incomes; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia teachers routinely spend significant amounts of personal income to provide basic supplies and necessities that otherwise would be absent from classrooms, ranging from tissues and toilet paper to copy paper and fans, further reducing their effective take-home pay; and

WHEREAS, Staffing in the School District's talent office, responsible for teacher recruitment and retention, was slashed by one-third during the budget crisis that hit the District in 2011 and only a fraction of those central office positions have been restored; and

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WHEREAS, Without examination of the root causes of the teacher shortage, and particularly the reduced numbers of teachers of color, there is likely to be an increase in the number of vacancies resulting in curricular deficiencies and special education violations; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Authorizes hearings to be conducted concerning the factors affecting teacher recruitment and retention in the School District of Philadelphia.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the thirteenth of October, 2016.

Darrell L. Clarke
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Michael A. Decker
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmembers Gym, Blackwell, Council President Clarke, Reynolds Brown, Squilla, Parker, Johnson, Henon and Quiñones Sánchez

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Gym, Blackwell, Council President Clarke, Reynolds Brown, Squilla, Parker, Johnson, Henon and Quiñones Sánchez