

Spending a \$100 Million a Year to Pay Teachers to Do Nothing

The *New York Post* ran [a story](#) Sunday about a man who was suing New York City. He wasn't after money (he's making \$94,000 a year). He was suing to be allowed to earn his money.

David Suker, 48, is one of hundreds of teachers in the Absent Teacher Reserve. He gets paid to show up.

"I come to work every day, sit down and do nothing," Suker told the *Post*.

I'd heard of such instances before, but I was unaware just how large the program is. The *Post* says there are currently 1,304 people in the ATR. It costs an estimated—get this—\$100 million annually.

The program was initially designed for "excessed" educators who lost positions during downsizing, but it appears to have become a dumping ground for unwanted teachers, more in line with the [infamous "rubber rooms"](#) the city previously used to house teachers accused of misconduct.

Teachers will occasionally be assigned sub work or grunt duties, but mostly they just sit idle, Suker and other said. I can think of few things more corrosive to the human spirit.

This is what happens when cities sign collectively bargained contracts [like this](#), which make it almost impossible to dismiss teachers. Meanwhile, New York City faces a [nearly \\$4 billion budget gap](#).

This sounds like something out of a Joseph Heller novel, no?

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