

'Worst Teachers in the System' Set to Join Struggling Schools, Principal Says

We've probably all heard some type of rumor about "[rubber rooms](#)" before. They're the hangout of those in the Absent Teacher Reserve pool, a group of New York teachers who haven't been assigned to an official position in a classroom, and instead remain in a paid, "on-call" type of status.

This status originally came about when New York tried to get rid of teachers who were ineffective, under disciplinary action, or simply not needed anymore. However, due to the influence of teacher unions, it became quite difficult to dispose of them. Thus, the Absent Teacher Reserve pool became a creative type of holding tank in which these teachers were paid for a job they never had to do.

Not long ago, the continual twiddling of thumbs in teacher purgatory became [too much](#) for one teacher, who decided to sue New York City in order to be allowed to work for his salary. Now, however, it appears that these rubber rooms are becoming too much for the city as well. The *New York Times* [explains](#):

[S]aying the city cannot afford expenditures like the [\\$150 million](#) it spent on salaries and benefits for those in the reserve in the last school year, the education department plans to place roughly 400 teachers in classrooms full time, possibly permanently. They will be placed in schools that still have jobs unfilled by mid-October. Principals will have little, if any, say in the placements. Neither will the teachers.

... Of the 822 teachers in the reserve at the end of the last

school year, 25 percent had also been in it five years earlier. Nearly half had been in it at the end of the 2014-15 school year. The average salary was \$94,000 a year, \$10,000 more than the average salary of teachers across the school system.

But while some might rejoice that this fiscal waste is experiencing drastic trimming, it appears to come at a tragic cost for the child in the classroom:

The principal of a high school in Manhattan, who did not want to be named out of fear of reprisal from supervisors in the department, was blunt about the effect: "You're going to force the worst teachers in the system into the schools that are struggling the most."

A number of years ago, Steve Jobs [made a statement](#) which seems highly fitting for the situation that's unfolding in the New York school system. He said:

"The unions are the worst thing that ever happened to education, because it's not a meritocracy. It turns into a bureaucracy, which is exactly what's happened. And teachers can't teach and administrators run the place and nobody can be fired. It's terrible."

Shocking numbers like those mentioned above should cause us to sit back and evaluate the education system. Would our children receive a far better education – and possibly at a lower cost – if instead of sitting back and allowing teacher unions to dictate the type of teachers a school can hire, fire, or put on reserve, we allowed individual, local schools to choose the teachers which work best for their students?