

Council on Children & Families

A Research Brief on the Status of Adults 50 Years and Older in New York State

Eliot Spitzer
Governor

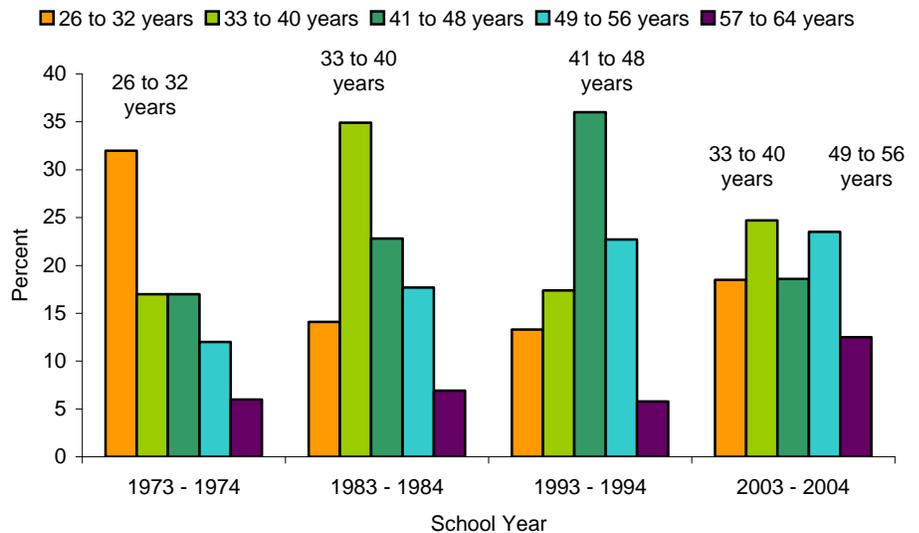
Deborah Benson
Acting Chief Executive Officer

The Graying of New York's Teachers

Aging Workforce

During the 2003-2004 school year, teachers age 50 years and older accounted for 37 percent of the teacher workforce in New York state, a sizeable increase from 1973 when about 19 percent of teachers were in this age group. Furthermore, the percent of teachers in the 49 to 56 years age category were twice that seen in 1973. The graying of teachers, as depicted in Figure 1, highlights the increasing proportion of older teachers across three decades. For example, in 1973 the major portion of teachers was between the ages of 26 and 33 years while teachers in 1993 tended to be between the ages of 49 to 56 years.

Figure 1. Shifting Age Distribution of Public School Teachers



Source: Data from the New York State Education Department Basic Educational Data System (BEDS)

In 2004, about one-third (37%) of New York State teachers were 50 years or older.

Author

Mary E. DeMasi, Ph.D.

New York State Council on Children & Families

Teachers at Retirement

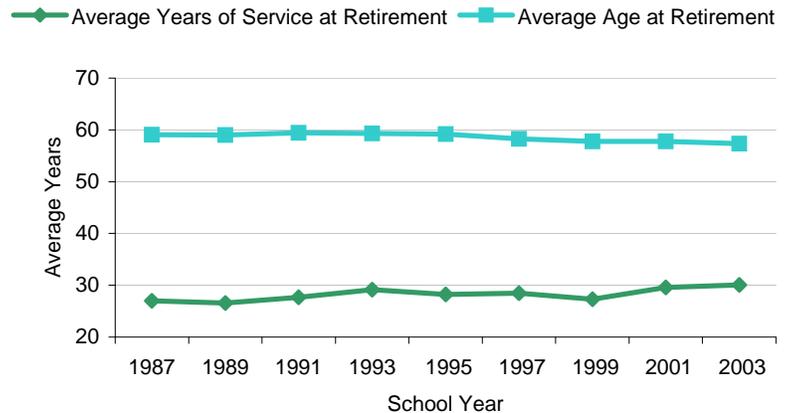
Teachers retiring in 2003, tended to have about 30 years of service, be 57 years of age, earned approximately \$70,000, and received retirement benefits estimated at 61 percent of their salary.

The age at which teachers retire has remained stable over the last two decades, varying moderately between 57 and 59 years of age (Figure 2). In 2004, approximately one in four teachers (24%) was between the ages of 49 and 56—a point in their careers when they are preparing for retirement.

Though the age of retirement has remained stable over time, the years of service at retirement have increased. Service longevity, coupled with retirement incentives, has resulted in teachers retiring with a higher percent of their salaries as part of their retirement benefits (Figure 3).

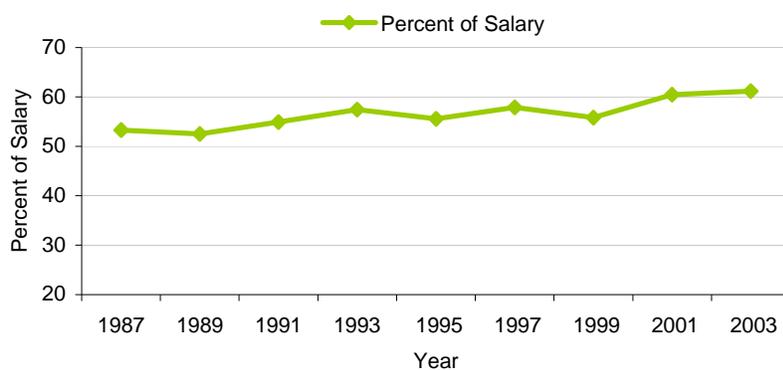
Although the number of teachers preparing for retirement is increasing, the number of school age children will remain relatively the same. It is estimated that the number of school age children will decrease approximately one percent between 2004 and 2015.

Figure 2. Age and Years of Experience at Retirement



Source: Comprehensive Annual Financial Report; New York State Teachers Retirement System

Figure 3. Percent of Salary Earned As Retirement Benefit



Source: Comprehensive Annual Financial Report; New York State Teachers Retirement System

Teachers retiring in 2003 had approximately 30 years of service and received 61 percent of their salary—a positive gain compared to teachers retiring in 1987 with 27 years of service receiving 53 percent of their salary.

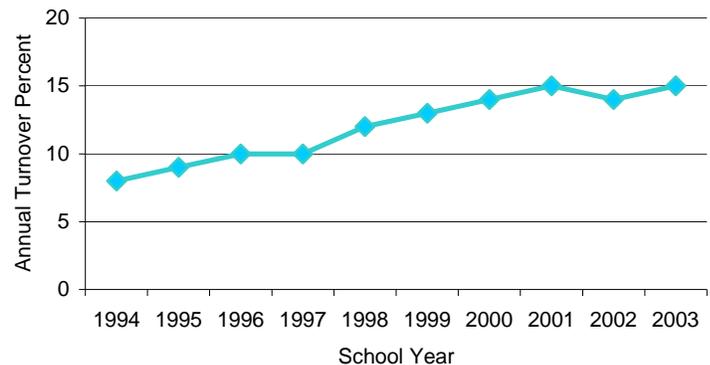
Policy Implications

The stable demand for teachers coupled with steadily increasing turnover rates (Figure 4) and the previously observed retirement patterns pose significant challenges for school administrators since these changes can result in a less experienced teaching workforce with fewer teachers certified in high demand areas (e.g., fewer math and science teachers). Efforts to retain experienced teachers may be unproductive since teachers ready for retirement tend to have considerable years of experience and are eligible for generous retirement benefits (Figures 2 & 3). Furthermore, additional years of service will not substantially increase their salaries or retirement benefits since salary increases at the career level (i.e., top of the salary scale) are minimal compared to increases at other levels of the salary scale. Continuing to teach with little monetary benefit may have implications for teacher satisfaction and

morale. Given that salary increases are not within the control of administrators, it may be more constructive for school administrators to direct retention efforts toward younger teachers.

The turnover rates depicted in Figure 4 reflect teacher attrition resulting from retirement but also include new teachers who decide to leave the classroom after a limited number of years in the field. These teachers are valuable resources since they often are certified in areas of high demand (Math, science, elementary special education) and tend to have higher ability, as measured on SAT and teacher licensure exams (1, 2, 3). It has been shown that new teachers who participated in mentoring programs were more likely to remain in teaching compared to those without such supports (5). This strategy for retention is important since it increases the likelihood of keeping capable teachers in the classroom and identifies a prominent role for more experienced teachers prior to their retirement.

Figure 4. Annual Teacher Turnover For New York State Public Schools



Source: Data from the New York State Education Department Basic Educational Data System (BEDS)

References

- 1) Henke, R., Zahn, L. & Carroll, D. (2001) *Attrition of new teachers among recent college graduates*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- 2) Schlecty, P. & Vance, V. (1981) Do academically able teachers leave education? The North Carolina case. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 64, 105-112.
- 3) Stinebrickner, T.R. (2001) A dynamic model of teacher labor supply. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 19(1), 196-230.

- 4) Ingersoll, R. (2003) Is there a shortage among mathematics and science teachers? *Science Educator*, 12 (1), 1-9.
- 5) Smith, T. & Ingersoll, R. (April, 2003) *Reducing teacher turnover: What are the components of effective induction?* Paper presented at Annual Meeting of AERA.