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## City teachers contract

### It's a good deal for schools, kids

October 5, 2005

From the looks of that grin on Mayor Michael Bloomberg's face, he didn't seem too worried at Monday morning's news conference about how New York City will pay for all of a tentative contract agreement with city teachers. Not to detract from a long-overdue settlement that would translate into more instruction time for kids, but shouldn't taxpayers know what they're getting themselves into?

First, though, let us be among those who congratulate Bloomberg and the United Federation of Teachers for negotiating a retroactive deal that pays teachers closer to something they deserve and frees principals to staff schools as they see fit, regardless of teacher seniority. The 14.25 percent pay increase over four years, to a minimum of \$42,512, will mean two extra days of teaching per year and an extra 50 minutes of instruction a week. It will move starting teachers much closer to the pay scales of their suburban peers. In Merrick, on Long Island, for instance, starting teachers get \$46,563; in Seaford, \$42,577.

Even the New York Citizens Budget Commission finds some merit in the compromise, until it gets to the lack of productivity gains by the contract's last year, starting in October of next year. It's unclear how the later salary increases will be funded. This fiscal year's additional \$350 million for retroactive pay will be covered by concessions and budget reserves.

But "with a fiscal year 2007 budget gap already at \$4.5 billion," the CBC said in a statement, "it is not clear how the mayor who takes office on Jan. 1 will pay for the significant added cost of this contract." Fair question.

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