

NEW ACTION/UFT ... a caucus of the United Federation of Teachers

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Mayor Mike Bloomberg this past week declared that if he had his way he'd dump half of NYC's teachers and raise class size. He stated that he would "weed out all the bad ones." This attitude filters down and resonates with hundreds of administrators. New Action/UFT believes there are hundreds of administrators who adhere to Bloomberg's credo.

While we have stated that there are many collaborative, supportive administrators working in our schools, there are too many who rule by intimidation and fear. They are disrespectful of staff and our contract and are contemptuous of parents.

These are the administrators who need to be replaced or have their behavior modified. While the union's successful PINI campaign is designed to deal with the most abusive principals (see "A primer on school change") The New Action plan outlined below is intended for abusive administrators who do not rise to the level of qualifying for a full-blown PINI campaign.

14 STEPS TO GET RID OF AN ABUSIVE ADMINISTRATOR*

- 1- Chapter Leader, District Rep, Chapter Committee meet to lay out complaints
- 2- Chapter reps meet with PTA/parents to discuss problems (if feasible)
- 3- Chapter reps meet with elected officials
- 4- An anonymous letter to survey staff (look at Learning Environment Survey questions)
- 5- Show school solidarity by wearing colors on same day (eg. Blue Monday)
- 6- Use Chapter Newsletter
- 7- Have every staff member walk around with a folder with principal's name documenting administrative harassment
- 8- Secret vote of no confidence
- 9- Letters to local papers by staff and parents
- 10-Filing grievances en masse
- 11-Use state law or Chancellor's Regs
- 12-Staff could sign a letter of censure
- 13-Article in New York Teacher
- 14-Picketing by staff (include parents)

• *CL's involve their District Representative. Actions should be discussed and decided on before campaign begins. The CL should be sure to have support from staff. No plan can be successful without staff solidarity (degree should be assessed by CL and chapter Committee). Assess your support from parents. Secure support of union leadership.*

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By Cara Metz

A primer on school change

Union's Principals in Need of Improvement campaign can help

When a principal gravely mismanages a school and this is hard on the staff, it tends to happen in the shadows. We all know the telltale signs: a tyrannical principal who threatens and intimidates staff, squashes teacher autonomy, rules by fear, and divides and conquers. But what to do about it?

Don't just complain to friends and family or make a dartboard to vent your frustrations - unions are all about collective action, and that's what is called for.

The UFT's Principals in Need of Improvement (PINI) campaign was born from the need to tackle the behavior of recalcitrant principals head-on and change the school's culture in the process. It has already made a difference in a number of schools.

"As a chapter leader who dealt with these issues, it would have been great to have this program," said UFT President Michael Mulgrew. "What the public should know is that when a staff gets to this point of frustration, it is because they know what is happening is hurting children."

School safety and respect are essential in every building, and "gone are the days of suffering in silence," said UFT Director of Staff Leroy Barr, who has coordinated the campaign. "When members are willing to stand up, speak out and fight back, we are always there to help."

If your school has a principal in need of improvement, here are five key steps to turn the situation around.

1. Talk with your chapter leader and colleagues. Get together with school staff to discuss the situation. Identify what the issues are. Which are schoolwide, which are department-wide and which affect only one person?
2. Involve your union leadership. That means calling your district and borough representatives to start with, and they can ask for additional assistance from UFT headquarters as needed.
3. Solidarity = strength. This is such a truism that it is the basis of most union work. When members stand together and speak with one voice, great things can be achieved.
4. Take action. First, try to resolve the issue through consultation, using the school-based consultation committee. If this doesn't help, depending on the situation, your next action can involve wearing buttons, handing out leaflets and petitions, calling rallies in front of your school, and getting an article in the New York Teacher and outside media to highlight your situation, as well as using other means to publicize the situation.
5. Reach out for community support. You can bolster your strength by involving parents and community organizations where appropriate.

For the rest of the article see A Primer on School Change at on the UFT website at <http://www.uft.org/news-stories/primer-school-change>.