

New Action/UFT

...a caucus of the United Federation of Teachers
PO Box 180574 North Richmond Hill, NY 11418
<http://newaction.org> new.action.uft@gmail.com

April 2014

Cuomo dumps on de Blasio and on NYC public school students

This winter, when Mayor de Blasio approved most, but not all, planned co-locations, including several charter schools, he thought he had found compromise with the hedge fund billionaires, Moskowitz, and Cuomo. He was mistaken.

After weeks of unrelenting attacks in the media, Cuomo stood at the side of charter advocates in Albany and declared war on the Mayor and the public school students of NYC. He, with the State Senate, orchestrated a budget that robs NYC public schools to pay privately run charters. Former Mayor Bloomberg set the stage for this confrontation by destroying scores of public schools and turning over their buildings to charters.

Charters (privately managed schools that live off public money) operate on an uneven playing field. They select their own students, limit special education students, limit English Language learners, throw students out at will, and receive preferential treatment for co-locations.

According to Diane Ravitch's recent post "New York Schools: The Roar of the Charters:"

On the same day that de Blasio organized a rally in Albany on behalf of raising taxes on the rich to pay for UPK, she (Moskowitz) closed her schools and bused thousands of students and parents to Albany for a pro-charter school rally. Governor Andrew Cuomo stood by her side, pledging "to save" charter schools and to protect them from paying rent; his ardent devotion to the charter cause may have been abetted by the \$800,000 in campaign contributions he received from charter advocates in the financial industry.

This chapter is not yet closed. This Thursday, April 10, 4pm, parents, teachers, students and others will rally in front of the New York Public Library at 5th Avenue and 41st Street. They will protest awful provisions in last week's State budget, including Albany forcing New York City to offer valuable public school space for free to all new charters. New Action urges our union to support this effort and calls on all staff and friends of public education to attend.

The Cost of Lowering Class Size?

Lower class size is often at the top of the list when members are asked what changes could improve schools. There is more than one way to get this done, but we often think of doing it contractually, since there already are class size limits in our Contract. Article 7M caps kindergarten at 25, elementary at 32, junior high school at 33, and high school at 34, with larger classes allowed in Phys Ed and required Music, but with several (often frustrating) exceptions allowed.

We have been warned that lowering class size limits contractually would require a trade off in money. That's as far as that conversation usually goes. But how much money? It turns out, reducing the class size limits by one student would cost about 1%. Now that would lead to interesting conversations in schools – if we tried to lower class size contractually, would members forego 1% for a decrease of one? 2% for two? 3% for three? 4% for four? or prefer to maximize raises and seek to lower class sizes through some other route?

