

New Action/UFT

...a caucus of the United Federation of Teachers
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New Action/UFT is one of several caucuses (political parties) in the United Federation of Teachers. There are differences between the caucuses.

New Action has a 30-year record of accomplishments as the alternative to Unity caucus.

- *In 1995 New Action led the historic fight against the infamous “Zero, Zero” contract – Result: it was the only contract to be defeated by the members.*
- *In 2002 and 2003 New Action organized informational picketing in over 100 schools – Result: salary parity became the number one union issue*
- *New Action has argued that many chapter leaders need assistance and chapters need rebuilding – Result: Creation of the bipartisan Organizing Committee which sends retiree activists into schools to help chapter leaders.*

We work with our leadership, yet remain independent and critical of the leadership when warranted. To that end, we have worked with Michael Mulgrew and Unity Caucus in a bipartisan relationship that we believe benefits the membership. New Action chairs Michael Shulman and Jonathan Halabi, and eight additional New Action supporters, give voice to members’ concerns on the UFT Executive Board.

Some Urgent issues for today

Probationary teachers

Probation is a training period. Principals, APs and mentors work with beginning teachers. But during the probationary period, teachers can be discontinued at any time.

Under Bloomberg weak principals, abusive principals and incompetent principals used probationers as scapegoats. They did not try to improve their teaching. And when things were going badly, they unfairly terminated new teachers.

September 2 New Action organized a press conference for discontinued probationers who had been offered positions by other principals, but who were ineligible to work. This situation is wrong. New Action calls upon our Union to press Fariña to reexamine cases where the principal’s judgment is suspect. Let’s support our most vulnerable members.

Teacher Evaluation

New Action has opposed the Teacher Evaluation System since its inception.

Rating teachers based on the Danielson model looks like the “checklist” we used to decry. Tying evaluation to student test scores is inherently arbitrary and unfair.

Yet this is the system in place. What should we do?

The union worked with Fariña to creating additional observation options. The new contract reduced the number of items we are rated on. These are positive changes.

But we need more. State law linking ratings to student test scores should be amended. “Developing” ratings have consequences – including getting passed over for transfers. We need the right to appeal D’s. And we need a process for questioning the principal’s judgment BEFORE the final rating.

Funding

Which costs more: hiring a brand new teacher, or placing a teacher whose salary is already being paid? Clearly, it is cheaper for the City to place the teacher whose salary is already being paid.

Fair Student Funding (FSF), though, perversely “charges” the principal pretend money, and leads most to avoid placing the teacher who is already on payroll!

Fair Student Funding leads to discrimination against experienced teachers, and costs the City more money!

Excessed teachers in the ATR pool will not be part of this calculation – but principals have become used to avoiding them and will continue to discriminate.

This can be easily fixed: School budgets should be charged the Citywide average teacher salary for each teacher, not school average.