

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

June 2015

Congratulations to Reelected and Newly Elected Chapter Leaders!

What a big responsibility! Chapter Leaders are the backbone of our union. Take a deep breath, recharge over the summer, and let's work together to build a stronger union and a better school system next year!

Resolution on Academic, Comprehensive, and CTE High Schools

On June 1, 2015, New Action introduced a resolution (on the reverse of this leaflet) to consider the circumstances of campus high schools. In the last 15 years many of large high schools have been replaced with campuses of mini-schools, with swarms of administrators.

In swaths of the City, large high schools are gone. Middle schools, 6 – 12 schools, and even elementary schools share space with high schools. Science labs and music rooms are converted to classrooms in one school, while other schools teach chorus in regular rooms and science without labs rooms.

In many campuses there is little interaction between the staffs of mini-schools. School spirit often did not translate well to the campus. Some mini-schools have few tenured teachers – many chapters are weaker, many members do not know their rights, or are afraid of exercising them. Yet there are positive exceptions.

The resolution called for the UFT to create a committee to look into these circumstances. How can cooperation between schools on a campus be increased? How can a greater sense of community be developed? How can some of our large academic, comprehensive high schools and CTE schools be reconstituted? The resolution also called for the committee to make recommendations to strengthen chapters and support chapter leaders in campus schools. The resolution was tabled by Unity Caucus.

Discontinued Probationers

This year New Action/UFT members have been meeting with discontinued probationers, UFT officials, and representatives of Chancellor Farina to discuss unfairly discontinued probationers. We made some progress: under Klein, these teachers could apply to work under another license or in another district, but when a principal offered them a position, the DoE would start a lengthy investigation – most schools hired someone else. These investigations now take a day or two; some probationers get new positions.

But there is a much larger problem – abusive and incompetent administrators. New Action/UFT has been in the forefront of this fight. Where a principal has repeatedly shown questionable judgment, it is in our mutual interest, the DoE and the UFT to challenge that judgment. This is not happening.

When an administrator is abusive – and there are too many abusive principals and APs out there – part of that behavior included bullying new teachers. We need to have the offenders' behavior corrected, or need to have the offenders removed. Reviving the "PINI" – Principals In Need of Improvement campaign would be a good first step. Unfortunately, there has not been progress on this front.

A long 2014 – 2015

This was Year 2 of the new evaluation system. In December Merryl Tisch recommended horrible changes – Cuomo took them, and tried to force them through the State budget. We tried to stop some, but he got his way on too much. We will see more changes to the evaluation system coming soon.

This year the opt-out movement became a union issue in New York State. NYSUT took a strong stance. The Delegate Assembly rejected a strong resolution, but eventually adopted an opt-out stance.

Year Two of the de Blasio and Fariña administration continued to produce friendliness at the top, but without positive change reaching the schools. We need to let them know we expect better for 2015 – 2016.

new.action.uft@gmail.com / Michael (Bklyn) (646) 286-3288 / Jon (Bx) (917) 856-6595 / Greg (SI) (718) 757-4552

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