

ICE Update

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UFT Contract Expires Extremely Quietly

by James Eterno

Nov. 1

Having an on-time contract used to matter. The deadline for when our contract expired used to mean something to the UFT back in its early years. I will concede that the UFT worked beyond the expiration date of the contract twice in the nineties and then again in 2000 and 2003.

However, as recently as after the disastrous 2005 giveback filled contract in, then UFT President Randi Weingarten talked about us returning to a no contract/no work policy. Those days seem like long ago as the contract expired on Halloween and the UFT didn't seem to even take notice.

I just looked at the current UFT Chapter Leader Update. There is not a word about the contract ending on October 31, 2009. We don't even get lip service any longer.

Of course the old contract continues in full force until we have a new agreement due to the Triborough Amendment of the Taylor Law. However, to not even note the expiration of a contract and have some kind of mobilization ready to put pressure on the city and the DOE for a new one shows just how weak the UFT is.

James Eterno is running for president of the UFT on the ICE/TJC slate.

New Action, once an opposition group, will be running in the election. An arrangement with Unity, in which New Action supported Weingarten in two successive UFT elections, has given them 8 seats on the Executive Board, all cross endorsed by Unity, despite the fact NA got almost half the votes ICE/TJC received in the 2007 election. New Action also received some union staff positions.

Dear Unity Caucus/UFT Leadership!

Thanks for four more years of BloomKlein!

- Mayoral Control and all its fringe benefits!
- Silence on fraudulent statistics!
- Teachers being measured by data testing!
- ATRs in career limbo!
- Throngs of innocent teachers in the Rubber Room!
- Complicity in the invasion of public schools by charters!
- Weakening the security of the teaching profession!
- Leading us astray instead of listening to us!

The UFT/Unity Caucus leadership has been consistent in its support for placing the control of the entire school system in the hands of one person, in the guise of the mayor. This type of governance system is of the highest priority for those whose goal is to privatize public school systems. Union complicity removes the organization most capable of throwing roadblocks in the way of the schemes of the education deformers.

What is it that makes our Unity leadership so prone to wrong moves at every turn? Their failures result from a core Unity philosophy that changes the traditional role unions are supposed to play in defense of their members, opting instead for a partnership with management in exchange for a false sense of insider status. Thus, their main battle becomes trying to win a seat at the table for themselves, while shutting out the concerns of the rank and file. This is no mere tactic but a transformation of the nature of the concept of unionism, wherein the major concern becomes selling so-called "reform" programs to a victimized membership: bonuses based on testing, rating teachers based on test scores, closing schools, open market system, support for charter schools at the expense of public schools, etc. This partnership is a losing proposition for the membership — a strategy of always playing defense, not with a goal of winning better working conditions, but of trying to minimize the losses. This debilitating strategy is an adherence to a core philosophy that is often called "New Unionism." ICE believes that

NEW UNIONISM = NO UNIONISM

The STRATEGIES of the UFT/Unity Leadership = SELL OUT

ICE (Independent Community of Educators) believes that only a democratic union that is led bottom-up can address all the myriad issues in the complex workings of our union and the public school system. This spring there will be a UFT election. ICE and Teachers for a Just Contract (TJC) are running.

Vote for progressive change! Vote ICE/TJC!

Election Commentary from ICE

The election results demonstrate the moral and political bankruptcy of the Unity Caucus, and particularly Randi Weingarten.

She was in many ways the chief enabler of Bloomberg's weak victory. Had she fought the overriding of term limits, had she exposed the fraud of Bloomberg's and Klein's educational regime, had she endorsed Thompson (admittedly, far from a perfect candidate), the entire political climate in the city might be perched on the edge of movement and change, and the axe might be a little further from teacher's necks. Instead, she took the craven route of sucking up to power.

Well, movement and change is going to happen regardless. Bloomberg's popularity and political support has been shown to be a Potemkin Village. If there is any validity to the Third Term Curse, then he is likely to soon become the most hated man in NYC. It couldn't happen to a nicer guy.

Michael Fiorillo, ICE

*Certainly, Thompson was not all we wanted, but at least we would have had a shot of having a more compassionate school system, kinder to kids and teachers. The media declared Thompson a loser a long time ago which seriously affected his ability to attract money and volunteers. If only our union... **Loretta Prisco, ICE***

Support us in the election campaign:

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Blog: www.ICEUFTBlog.blogspot.com

Website: www.ice-uft.org

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<http://www.ice-uft.org/membership-application-web.PDF>

Follow upcoming UFT elections on the new ICE blog:
<http://uftelections2010.blogspot.com/>

Queens ICE Chapter Leaders in NY Post: Nov. 1, 2009

James Eterno is running for UFT President and Arthur Goldstein will be running for a UFT Executive Board position on the ICE/TJC slate in the upcoming UFT elections. (excerpts)

[Francis Lewis HS] an A-rated school was forced to add a 13th period to its schedule this year, and has 73 classes with more than the 34-student maximum set by the teachers' contract, UFT rep and teacher Arthur Goldstein said.

"We're busting at the seams," he said. "We can't sustain this. Eventually, the kids will suffer."

The Department of Education is trying to help the school — it is not sending any No Child Left Behind transfers there for the next year and is aggressively verifying the addresses of students in the zoned program. It has also pledged to build new schools, adding 10,000 seats to Queens to curb overcrowding at many borough high schools.

But Goldstein and others believe there's another solution that no one is talking about.

"I absolutely believe that they can make the other schools in the area better," said Goldstein. "It's their job to make the other schools better. Better options would spread students out, and everyone would be better off."

A perfect example is Jamaica High School, a large school located less than three miles south of Francis Lewis. It received a C on its progress report, has attendance rates in the low 70 percentile and a grad rate of only 47%, stats show.

Francis Lewis received almost 13,000 applications — the most in the city — from students eager to go there. Jamaica received 1,580 applications, eight times fewer.

Meanwhile, with 1,416 kids, Jamaica is 700 students under capacity.

"I understand the DOE wants to give parents and students what they want," said Goldstein. "But they should be focused on getting kids interested in Jamaica so they want to go there. That should be the goal."

Jamaica social studies teacher and UFT rep James Eterno said his school "has the dedicated staff and programs" to be successful, but needs a helping hand to become more attractive to students.

"We have the space right now to lower class sizes," he said. "If we could offer really low class sizes, personal attention, parents would send their kids here. That's something Francis Lewis can't offer."

DOE spokesman Will Havemann said class size is not just tied to space, but also to the number of teachers at the school.

"Principals are free to hire new teachers to reduce their class sizes, but given the city's financial circumstances, significantly reducing class sized may be prohibitively expensive," he said.

Eterno called this "a frustrating cycle," saying the school's budget was cut because the number of students has declined.

"So we have less to work with to begin with," he said.

Goldstein said "They keep saying yes, yes, yes to kids who want to come here, and no, no, no to things that could help Jamaica," said Goldstein. "At some point, that has to change."