

### LETTER FROM THE CHAPTER LEADER: MINDY KARTEN BORNEMANN

#### Message from Mindy



The school year is flying by. It's been great to meet with so many of you at our new teacher trainings with the Department of Education, at district meetings and at our boroughwide UFT meetings.

We now have nearly 3,000 speech chapter members across the five boroughs, including in high schools and District 75. With such a big and growing chapter, it can be a challenge for me to negotiate all of our needs, but with

the help of our awesome executive board and liaisons it is much more manageable.

Our speech hotline number is 1-212-598-7774. Kathy Lewis and Brenda Caquais do a wonderful job answering your calls and letting me know which calls need my input. We are also very fortunate to have Lisa Arian to help answer the huge amount of emails that I receive and to teach the speech survival classes in Queens and Manhattan.

We have been meeting with DOE officials and District 75 administrators to work on issues related to our chapter. In addition, I am on the Central Paperwork Committee, which has had meetings throughout the summer and this fall. It is a busy but exciting time, and we have kept speech services at the center of these conversations.

We all want to get things done, so we must be willing to implement our contract. No one can do it for us. Let's continue to stand together and support each other. Try not to be afraid to do the right things for kids and for yourself. Union staff and representatives are here to support you, so call us if you need help. In the new spirit of collegiality, let's work with the DOE to see that our students get the services they need and that we work under the conditions we deserve.

Fraternally,  
Mindy Karten Bornemann

#### NEW DOE INITIATIVES

The chancellor has acknowledged our expertise by implementing some innovative programs. Seventy-five schools will be training our speech teachers in early literacy programs for pre-school and kindergarten. Participating members will have reduced caseloads and will get training, support and materials. Due to our pressure, the DOE is now meeting with us on the implementation of the chancellor's new initiative. More information will follow shortly. Many of the schools are also getting preschool programs. If there is room in your caseload, you can serve pre-K students in the building. Lastly, there is a new evaluation unit which helps schools to do initial evaluations during the school day.

Although we are pleased about these programs and supports, we are disappointed that they were not all developed with our chapter's input. In the future, we hope that we can make more recommendations about programs that members have used and help identify areas which speech providers are ready to implement without special training.

#### SIGN UP FOR EMAIL

Communication is essential, and I hope that all of you have been receiving our chapter emails about upcoming meetings, paperwork reduction and SESIS.

If you are not receiving emails from our chapter or the UFT, please sign

up right away on the UFT website. On the home page, click the Sign up link at the top of the page.

In addition, if you have moved or changed email addresses, please contact the membership department at 1-212-598-6855 or

[membership@uft.org](mailto:membership@uft.org).

Also, please be aware that sometimes UFT emails end up in spam folders. Make sure you adjust your email settings so that messages from the UFT are sorted into your primary inbox.



## **OBSERVATIONS, PLANS AND RATINGS — RUBRICS ARE OUT**

In October, speech supervisors received training on observations and lesson plans from the Office of Labor Relations (OLR). At that training we discussed the process by which speech supervisors evaluate us.

The training may have resulted from the UFT speech chapter's concerns involving the use of rubrics to evaluate and rate speech providers. We had raised the issue that several speech supervisors created their own rubrics and added "administrative information," including SESIS encounter attendance and other paperwork items, in their observations. These items had nothing to do with the actual intervention plan or the lesson that they were observing. OLR advised speech supervisors not to use these checklists or rubrics because they have not been negotiated with the UFT.

We continue to fall under the old system for teachers using Article 8J "teaching for the 21st century" language in the contract. Our evaluation system only uses S or U ratings for observations and year-end ratings. It had been reported to us that some supervisors have created new categories of ratings and our chapter brought this to the grievance department, which addressed this with OLR.

According to our contract, observations should include a pre- and post-observation conference. This allows speech teachers to discuss and modify their lessons as needed and to get feedback. A pre-observation conference is an important teaching tool and should be done well before the actual observation, not moments before it. Speech teachers should request an individual pre-observation conference for all observations, in writing.

The actual lesson with students is crucial and it — not the intervention or lesson plan — should be the primary focus of the observation. All too often, we hear of supervisors rating a plan instead of reviewing the lesson itself. Sometimes their expectation of teaching every goal at every session is unrealistic. Our recent lesson plan arbitration win clearly states that the plan is for the teacher's use and may not be prescribed. Lesson plans are an important tool in the planning process and should be developed daily for your speech students. Collection of the lesson plans cannot be ritualized or mechanical, but lesson plans can be viewed by any administrator. Some of you have asked for suggested formats, and our chapter has put a few of our favorites on our chapter website at [www.uft.org/chapters/speech-improvement](http://www.uft.org/chapters/speech-improvement). As a professional, you can modify the formats or change them in any way you feel is appropriate.

If you have a question about an observation that you have received, feel free to send it to us for discussion. We as a chapter must honor our own contractual language that we fought so hard to get. Questioning and discussing evaluations is your contractual right. By signing the observation, you acknowledge that you received it, but not that you agreed with it. This information is under our contract, Article 21A-5. If you want to respond to an observation, call us and we will guide you through the process.

If you are a tenured speech teacher, you may want to look into alternate performance options in lieu of your traditional observation under teaching for the 21st century. Many of you present to your peers during the year. This may be used as one of your formal observations with your speech supervisor's agreement. You can also submit it to our Better

Speech and Hearing Month competition. Untenured speech teachers who choose to present may use the presentation for their portfolios.

## **UPDATE ON PAPERWORK REDUCTION LANGUAGE**

The paperwork reduction agreement provides initial standards to educators and related service providers. It states: "employees (including those in functional chapters) who believe that they have been assigned unnecessary paperwork should first seek to resolve their concerns at the school level." If you are given additional or redundant paperwork, first bring the issue to your school chapter leader. If issues are not resolved at the school level, you may request that I raise school-specific issues (whether paperwork or electronic) before your respective district committees. This process has already proved effective in Districts 9, 15 and 75.

UFT Vice President Carmen Alvarez and I are also currently working with Director Helen Kaufman and District 75 regarding their administrative agenda and tasks related to paperwork. Several items, including the mandate modification form and Excel spreadsheet speech schedule, are no longer required. The administrative agenda will no longer be signed yearly by speech teachers. It was also agreed that the District 75 speech supervisors could not use any signed copies this year against any speech teacher. We continue to meet with the District 75 administration on clarification of excessive and redundant paperwork issues.

We also continue to meet with the DOE about the progress reports we create in the IEP as part of the annual review. The same information, including the present level of performance, current and past goals and mandates, are already

in the IEP. Let us know, using a non-DOE email, why you believe this is redundant by emailing me at

[Mbornemann@uft.org](mailto:Mbornemann@uft.org). The more of you who raise the issue, the more likely we can get it resolved.

### WE WON THE TRACHTENBERG AWARD

On Nov. 6, our speech chapter won the union's Trachtenberg Award at Teacher Union Day. Three tables of speech chapter members and our executive board attended the ceremony at the Hilton Hotel.

The following executive board members and liaisons attended the ceremony and supported our chapter: Virginia Hill, Kathy Lewis, Brenda Caquais, Ava Geddis, Charlene Tuff, Ed Sweeney, Lisa Arian, Sandy Robinson, Jennifer Knight, Ladesha Gill Bey, Lorina Allert, Mayra Santos-Torres, Maria DeCandia, Linda Albert Heller, Danita Susi, Cleo Lucas, Lynn Chamberlin, Kima Johnson and Khadejar Dinson. Bronx chapter members John Wahl and Evelyn Palumbo also attended our celebration.

You can see more photos from Teacher Union Day at [www.uft.org/photos](http://www.uft.org/photos).

Many of you have asked how to support the chapter and its work. Please come to a meeting or event like Teacher Union Day — that's a real service to our chapter.



### SESIS TIME ISSUE IN THE PRINCIPAL'S WEEKLY

All speech teachers in elementary schools should be receiving 155 minutes per week or its equivalent for doing encounter attendance and work related to IEPs. The DOE decided to use this newly negotiated professional development and parent engagement time for entering SESIS. Our chapter does not agree with how the time was allocated and we continue to

press for more and different time in the future. In the middle and high schools the equivalent time is still at least 155 minutes a week and often is the administrative time in the schools. The same amount of time applies to District 75 for these duties.

The paperwork agreement states that "the DOE will continue to engage UFT to prioritize how to

streamline and enhance SESIS functionality to increase usability. The system enhancements will commence on a rolling basis as identified." Speech teachers are reminded to do SESIS work only during the school day with the exception of lunch time, which is duty-free. You should not be doing SESIS work before or after your workday. If you have a large case-load or many IEPs due at the same time, let your school administration know that you need additional time or ask that they help you prioritize tasks. Principals may also have the ability to offer per session if there is a need in your school. Make sure that you have computer access in your school to complete SESIS and get the support you need to complete your tasks on time. If you do not have sufficient computer access or bandwidth to complete your SESIS-related tasks, please email me.

If you are given any other duties during the time dedicated for SESIS, speak to your chapter leader, principal and speech supervisor to ensure that they know your specific needs for time at your school. If it is not resolved or you want additional information, please contact us.

### WE GET ISSUES RESOLVED

Only you can ensure that these important rights are adhered to. If we as a chapter do not question when a supervisor or administrator is giving additional paperwork or computer work, the work will continue to grow.

Recently a speech teacher was told by her principal to print out her weekly SESIS work. She contacted her chapter leader and speech supervisor, but they could not end this practice. The issue was brought to the superintendent of District 9 and with the help of

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UFT District Representative Carol Harrison and the central DOE, it has now been resolved. In another school, all related service providers were told to print out SESIS attendance. With the help of UFT District 15 Representative Pat Atia, this stopped immediately.

## COMPLIANCE WOES AND FIRST ATTENDS

Early this summer UFT Vice President Carmen Alvarez, the special education council, Elizabeth Truly and I met with the DOE about their proposal to discontinue IVR. They wanted to institute a program for related service providers to enter first attends in SESIS. When it was proposed, I as your chapter leader strongly opposed this new system. I stated that it should be piloted first because it may put additional stress on SESIS and there could be compliance issues with IEP mandates. The DOE administration assured us that if the system wasn't ready, it wouldn't be rolled out.

Months later, the very issues we raised are causing schools to try to fix group sizes and duration of service by giving us incomplete and inaccurate information on the compliance issues. One issue is that some speech teachers see students for longer than the time on the IEP because of school programming and period length. According to the state, when they are being seen longer than specified in the IEP, they are not being served. This was an issue in CAP and SEC also. Some members are calling us and reporting that schools and supervisors are telling them to be inaccurate in reporting first attends in SESIS so that compliance will be improved.

We strongly advise you to call us if you are being told to be less than accurate in SESIS for compliance issues. Remember your signature attests that

you are seeing students as specified on the IEP. This includes the frequency, group size and duration of service as well as the location of services. The DOE is working to rectify this new glitch in the SESIS system.

## THE IEP IS THE LAW

All too often, when I meet with members, I hear that they are following the guidelines laid out by principals and other administrators rather than the actual IEP. Although principals may believe that services should always be provided in the classroom, location of services is based on the needs of the student as determined by the IEP team. Providing services in class when the IEP says that they should be provided in the therapy room violates the IEP and may not be in the student's best interest. Students working to generalize skills and students who have been in therapy for many years may benefit from services delivered in the classroom. You and the team, which includes the parent, should decide where services are provided. Administrative directives and school policies requiring classroom-based services for all students are not appropriate. If you receive such a directive verbally, we suggest that you take the following steps:

- Gather the information and data that supports the location-of-service recommendation.
- Review the recommendation and supporting data with the administration and supervisor.
- If the administrator insists that the services be provided in a location other than the one specified in the IEP, confirm this directive in writing to that administrator. Politely remind them that they are telling you to violate the IEP and that this will be documented as you enter information in SESIS.

- Call us to decide on your next steps which may require a UFT follow-up or special education complaint.

Lastly, if you violate the IEP, you, the speech provider, will be cited as out of compliance. Please do not think about covering up the IEP violation by entering inaccurate information in SESIS.

## EXECUTIVE BOARD AND LIAISONS — HOW TO IMPROVE OUR COMMUNICATION

Our chapter has about 20 elected executive board members throughout all of the boroughs, in District 75 and in high schools. They do a great service for the chapter, serve on committees and keep in constant contact with the chapter leader. There will be new elections in the spring to fill some of these vacancies. In addition to these elected members, our chapter has volunteer liaisons. They often attend our chapter meetings, make announcements at their district meetings and let me know when you are having a meeting with your speech supervisor. A liaison can be a troubleshooter and call with questions or issues in a specific district. We expect our liaisons and executive board members to be in good standing and have excellent reputations.

Districts 1, 2, 4, 9, 11, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29; high schools in Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island; and District 75 in all of the boroughs do not have an active volunteer liaison or could use an additional one. Consider becoming a liaison or running for chapter election in the spring. You can also become a delegate to the delegate assembly. We have a great team — be a part of it.