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# UFT *ParaScope* Paraprofessionals

## CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Dear ,

It is my pleasure to once again serve as your chapter leader this year, and I am excited to share our fall newsletter. We've had a number of updates to tell you about including welcoming our new lead teacher assistants. We are delighted to have them on board, and we are looking forward to providing more opportunities for paraprofessionals in the future.



This upcoming year is very important for us and for our nation. As President Michael Mulgrew has said in his communications, the presidential election results have left many of us shell-shocked. Many of us are also worried about what the future holds for our families and our nation as we see the impact of the seismic political shift in our nation begin to unfold.

We cannot shy away in fear when we are confronted with obstacles and policy changes that may threaten our rights, our benefits and our livelihood. Now is the time for us to stand together and mobilize. We must reach out to one another to offer hope and support. Our strength is in our numbers and our unity.

We do not know what the future holds, but in times like these, we have to hold fast to our core beliefs: that public education is critical to the future of this country; that all communities within our school communities deserve respect and dignity; and that workers have a right to unionize and be treated fairly.

I encourage you to stay strong. Remember to stay active in our chapter and the union. In addition, if you are involved in your community, now is the time to speak up! Make your voice heard and talk about the issues that we are all facing together and those that are of the most importance to you. As your chapter leader, I will stand with you in spirit and in solidarity.

There are a number of news items and issues below that you need to know about. Please take a moment to read them carefully and reach out to Reggie Colvin at [rcolvin@uft.org](mailto:rcolvin@uft.org) if you have any questions.

I hope you have a safe and happy holiday season, and remember to keep in touch!

Sincerely,

Shelvy Young-Abrams  
Paraprofessionals Chapter Leader

## Understanding the paraprofessional's role

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questions about the rights and responsibilities of paraprofessionals. Here is what paras need to know.

School administrations cannot ask paraprofessionals to supervise the lunchroom. Special Circular 6R established that lunchroom supervision may not be assigned to paras. Schools have other school-based personnel, including school aides and supervising school aides, who can be assigned this responsibility.

Paraprofessionals, including one-on-one paras, are entitled to a duty-free lunch period. A child's Individualized Education Program can mandate paraprofessional coverage at lunch for that child, but the IEP cannot, and does not, specify a specific person to perform that role. If a para is asked to be with a child during the child's lunch, that para must still have a duty-free lunch period at some other point in the day. (If a para is unsure about the requirements on a child's IEP, he or she should ask to see the IEP. State law requires that paraprofessionals have access to the IEPs of students in their care.)

If a supervisor asks a para to supervise the lunchroom or does not provide a duty-free lunch period for a para, the para should inform the school's chapter leader. The chapter leader will speak with the administration to try to resolve the issue. If the situation is not rectified, the paraprofessional should ask the chapter leader to file a grievance on his or her behalf.

Paraprofessionals must not be left alone in a classroom without a teacher, when the teacher is called away for a meeting or is absent for the day. The only exception to the rule is the Lead Teacher Assistant, the new career ladder position for paraprofessionals.

[See paraprofessionals' responsibilities on UFT.org »](#)

## Save the date for our Paraprofessional Awards Luncheon

Make sure to mark your calendar for our 37th annual Paraprofessional Festival and Awards Luncheon on Saturday, March 18, 2017 from 7:45 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the New York Hilton Hotel, 1335 Avenue of the Americas.

The day will include an awards luncheon, workshops and other activities. We hope that you join us.

## Our Lead Teacher Assistant Meet-and-Greet



Gathering at the meet-and-greet are (from left) Alexandria Headley of PS 294 in the Bronx; Gregory Costiglio of P 63 in Queens; Josehone Amadiz of PS 176 in the Bronx; Adrienne Gilyard of the DOE; Gubrar Mansour of PS 503 in Brooklyn; Melissa Calderon of PS 531 in the Bronx; and Evens Boiguen of P 721 in Queens.

More than 30 new lead teacher assistants attended a meet-and-greet on Nov. 4 at the union's headquarters in Manhattan where they were welcomed by UFT President Michael Mulgrew and Teacher Center Co-Director Rita Danis. The gathering marked the launch of a professional learning series jointly organized by the UFT and the Department of Education.

[See more photos in the gallery »](#)

[Read the story in the \*New York Teacher\* »](#)

## Lead Teacher Assistant Q&A

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This new position is a true assistant to a teacher. Paraprofessionals who apply for and are accepted into the new role support all aspects of instruction in either a general education or special education classroom. If you are interested in the role, lead teacher assistant positions will be posted each spring and prospective candidates will be required to apply each year.

For more details on the application process, see the Lead Teacher Assistant Q&A on the UFT website.

NOTE: Current lead teacher assistants can also access important information in the above Q&A. If they have further questions, they can contact Amy Arundell, the UFT director of personnel, at [aarundell@uft.org](mailto:aarundell@uft.org).

## UFT procedures for diapering/toileting paras

In response to requests from members regarding proper practice for diapering and toileting protocols for students in New York City schools, the UFT Safety and Health Department developed the following guidelines in order to protect the safety of both students and staff and to ensure that proper facilities are used for these activities.

Due to the wide range of disabilities, both physical and mental, and the various ages and physical sizes of students in the New York City school system who require these services, these procedures should be tailored to each individual student's specific needs.

See the UFT's diapering and toileting guidelines »

If you have any questions about these procedures, please contact Junior Linton at [jlinton@uft.org](mailto:jlinton@uft.org).

## What you need to know about school trips

We are aware that there are a number of concerns regarding whether paraprofessionals have to pay when they go on school trips.

The answer is simple: If your school wants you to accompany a teacher and a class on a school trip, then the school is responsible for your transportation, admission fees and any expenses incurred as a result of the excursion.

Furthermore, in accordance with Article 4-B of the paraprofessional contract, paraprofessionals are entitled to a duty-free lunch period every day—even if you're on a school trip. If you don't take time away from the children to eat your lunch, then you are entitled to take the time upon arriving back at the school.

If you arrive back to the school too late to take the time, then you should see your school's chapter leader, who should meet with your supervisor or principal to arrange compensatory time or per session pay.

## Bronx paras create clubs to enhance student learning



Paraprofessionals Judy Cruz (left) and Lanaya Bellamy in their newly created STEAM room after meeting with students from the robotics, coding and stock market clubs on Nov. 28 at PS 314 in the Bronx.

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some students, Trotman is more interested in stocks.

This year, he said, he added Macy's to his diversified portfolio because he thought the spike in holiday shopping would raise profits, a perception he developed participating in the club.

Trotman is one of the students who learn about the stock exchange in a club created by paraprofessionals Judy Cruz and Lanaya Bellamy. As a team, Cruz and Bellamy have developed a variety of clubs focused on math, engineering and technology to help English language learners and students with disabilities at PS 314.

Thanks to more than \$40,000 in donations from DonorsChoose, an educational charity that connects teachers in high-need schools with donors, the paras created their own science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM) room this year.

Bellamy said the stock market club members excel, and even compete with middle and high school students. They placed first and second in regional competition in 2015-16. This year, a few student teams rank among the top 10 in the region.

In the robotics club, students learn mechanics and problem solving in order to build towering structures like the Eiffel Tower and roller coasters using Legos and other engineering toys. Cruz believes the possibilities are endless when paraprofessionals are willing to embrace new opportunities.

"If you have an idea, I think you should definitely try to implement it," Cruz said.

While she was happy helping students one-on-one, she said, "I knew I could do so much more."

## Reminder: Change in certification process for Level III paras

1. Registration – All Level III paraprofessionals must have 100 hours of professional development, now called Continuing Teacher and Leader Education (CTLE) hours. The DOE is introducing a new, staggered registration process that will ensure everyone enters the new five-year cycle efficiently. The registration period will run from July 2016 until July 2017 and all paraprofessionals need to register in their birth month. If you were hired prior to 2004 and you do not hold a Level III teaching assistant certificate, you do not need to participate in this registration process.
2. Your new five-year professional development cycle begins the month in which you complete your registration, i.e. your birth month.
3. Login to your TEACH account to register – Login to your TEACH account on the [New York State Education Department website](#) and enter your username and password.

Follow the directions to complete the registration process.

If you have any questions about this new process, you can call 212-420-1830 or your educational liaison at your UFT borough office. You can also contact Nanette Rosario-Sanchez, the UFT special representative for certification and licensing, by email at [nrosario@uft.org](mailto:nrosario@uft.org).

[Read a Q&A about the new requirements »](#)

[See our easy-to-read chart »](#) Questions?

[Contact an educational liaison in your UFT borough office »](#)

## Help for paras to become teachers

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If you are a para who is interested in a teaching career, the DOE will now provide a limited number of paid 40-day leaves of absence so you can complete student-teaching requirements.

The DOE will also reimburse you for the cost of your teaching certification application and certification exam as well as the cost of up to 12 graduate credits (and a further 12 credits if you pursue a bilingual teaching program).

Please note: Although the DOE will pay for the costs outlined above for those who seek to become teachers, the DOE will no longer reimburse paras for college-level courses taken for any other reason than toward teaching certification.

## Para comes through for students in bus crash



**Paraprofessional Ursula Simmons, who sprang into action to support her students after a school bus accident, with the students' teacher, Sankung Susso.**

The only thing Ursula Simmons could think about was taking care of her students. The only thing they could think about was lunch, a testament to the paraprofessional's calming influence.

On Oct. 5, Simmons and five special-needs students from PS 811 in the Bronx were returning from the Staples store in Co-op City where they go three times a week to learn about being in the workforce.

Simmons heard screeching tires behind their school bus just before a car hit them and the bus began to spin, doing a few 360s. When she heard the girls yelling, Simmons said she "tried to stay calm, to keep my body as stiff as I could, because if they saw me freaking out, they would freak out."

When the bus landed on its side on the Bruckner Expressway, Simmons said the students were eager to get off. "Miss Ursula, we're not going to make it to school to eat," they told her.

"I found that so amazing; they are so resilient," said Simmons, who also serves as a U.S. Air Force Reserve medic.

Suzie Perez-Gonzales, the UFT's Bronx environmental health and safety liaison who met them at Jacobi Medical Center, said the same about Simmons. "It was amazing how she worked with the kids; the smiles on their faces as she spoke to them."

Simmons was an honoree at Teacher Union Day on Nov. 6 at the Hilton New York Midtown where she was one of the recipients of the Audrey Chasen Award, given to educators who prove themselves dedicated to their students and schools.

[Read the full \*New York Teacher\* story »](#)

## Know the rules on release time

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Paraprofessionals must complete a total of at least five semester hours or credits during that same semester of undergraduate study to be eligible for release time. All eligible paraprofessionals must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Release time taken during a college's first summer session must be completed by June 30.
- Release time will not be granted during the months of July and August.
- Release time cannot be used to attend classes during the scheduled workday unless agreed upon by the school principal or the principal's designee.
- Release time does not apply to substitute paraprofessionals.
- Release time cannot be rescheduled.

Remember to submit all course documentation within one month following completion of the semester. Each participating paraprofessional is responsible for submitting to the principal or designee a copy of the transcript, grade report or other substantiating documentation indicating completion of the courses for which release time was granted.

## Check your inbox regularly for emails

It is important that you check the DOE website and your schools.nyc.gov email address for information related to your role. You should also check your personal email address for chapter updates and important union news. Please note that we will only send UFT emails to your personal, non-DOE email address.

To update your information, you can download and fill out the UFT [Personal Information Change Form](#). Send to Membership Department at UFT, 52 Broadway, NY, NY 10004. You can also contact the UFT Membership Department by phone at 212-598-6855 or by email at [membership@uft.org](mailto:membership@uft.org).

If you are currently signed up as a union member on the website, you can update your information online on the [UFT website](#).

## Sign up for text messages

The UFT is now sending text messages to members' mobile phones to get you information you need fast. This includes updates on weather emergencies, reminders about rallies and other union actions; and updates on vital news. We promise not to inundate you. We'll still send most of our messages via email.

[Sign up to receive UFT text messages »](#)

## Honor roll

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(Please note on the honor roll, each entry consists of your name, the school you work at, the type of degree you received, i.e. associate of arts, associate of science, or bachelor's degree and the college you attended.)

Hector Hernandez	Q177	BS	York College
Conrad Johnson	K401	MPA	John Jay College of Criminal Justice
Isaac Kantor	R460	BA	College of Staten Island
Carol LaMacchia	K238	BS	Touro College
Simone McDonald	K141	MS	Mercy College
Eduarda Nikoloski	M218	BS	Mercy College
Karen O'Brien	R721	BS	Touro College
Andrea Ragdale	K171	BS	Boricua College
Haydee Rodriguez	M146	BS	Touro College
Wiliemae Sanders	K625	BS	Empire College
Marilyn Thomas	R44	BA	Empire College
Monique Torres	M64	MSW	Long Island University
Krystal Woodly	Q4	BA	Touro College

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