



## District 75 News



**David Doorga**

### To my District 75 family,

I would like to take this opportunity to join you in commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This year, more so than in many years past, we need to spend the day in serious contemplation of the cause Dr. King stood for — equality for *all* people in the United States.

I like to think that here at District 75, we are making Dr. King's dream a reality on levels which would astonish and delight him. Not only are all New York City public schools more diverse and more successful than ever before, but our District 75 members are teaching and protecting the civil rights of the most vulnerable population in society — children challenged by severe disabilities.

The Civil Rights Act was called for by President John F. Kennedy, then signed into law in 1964, after Dr. King led landmark peaceful protests such as the Birmingham Campaign, which sought to desegregate public spaces, including public schools. Always remember that labor unions were the staunchest supporters of the civil rights movement, because unions are the natural enemy of oppression, whether that oppression is based on color, creed or economic class. In keeping with the ideals of social justice, Public Law 94-142, which guarantees *all* children in the United States the right to a free, appropriate public education, was only passed into federal law in 1975. Today, the strongest advocate for the educational rights of *all* children remains the UFT. As always, we put the children first.

Once again, I must remind everyone that we are facing a serious challenge to our students and families. Did you know that in ancient Roman times, Janus was a two-faced god, with one face looking forward and the other looking back? That's where we get the name of the current month, January. I think that the Janus case, scheduled to come before the Supreme Court this year, is very aptly named. The Supreme Court will either uphold the rights of American unions, and the civil rights of our students and teachers will continue to progress. Or, the Supreme Court will rule against the unions, and we will move backward and lose the civil rights progress that Dr. King worked so hard to achieve.

We who work in District 75 are continuing to fight peacefully for social justice for *all* people simply by bringing our professional best to our students every day. Every IEP plan reinforces the concept that every child is a valuable part of society with inherent dignity and rights. Every time we reach out and support a fellow UFT member, whether it be through sharing a complex lesson plan or simply an encouraging smile, we are carrying out Dr. King's legacy.

I have always said that working in District 75 is more of a vocation than simply a career. I like to think that in these troubling times, we can look at our students and take comfort in the fact that we are, like Dr. King, creating a better world one classroom at a time. I know how hard you work, and I know how thankless it can seem sometimes. But please remember that I have been there with you, and I thank you all sincerely for your efforts. I truly believe Dr. King would also thank you. **Stay strong, stay united, e pluribus unum...we are the UFT!**

In Solidarity,

David Doorga  
District 75 Representative

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## Breast and prostate screening reminder

I want to remind you about the policy for breast and prostate screening. Department of Education employees are eligible for an excused leave for breast cancer screening, prostate cancer screening and blood donation. Thanks to the urging of the UFT and its state affiliate, NYSUT, the New York State Legislature passed the laws which grant UFT members these benefits in 2008.

You can request up to four hours of paid time off annually for the purpose of getting a breast cancer or prostate cancer screening, and up to three hours of unpaid time off annually to donate blood. The request should be made in advance and in writing to your principal, and if it is determined that there is not a major disruption to the school, the time will be granted. [Learn more about the policy](#) by viewing Personnel Memorandum No. 5, 2008-09.

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## The UFT says: Stop lesson-plan abuse

[A joint letter](#) from UFT President Michael Mulgrew and former Schools Chancellor Carmen Fariña, reaffirming language in our contract, states lesson plans are a teacher's professional responsibility and are by and for the use of the teacher.

Teachers have the discretion to decide whether to write their lesson plans on paper or in digital form. They cannot be required to keep their lesson plans in a particular place or maintain a readily accessible *second* copy for the convenience of administrators. If your principal makes these demands, teachers can place a copy of the joint letter alongside the lesson plan in the designated location. This will let the administration know that you know your rights.

If your principal continues to insist, let your chapter leader know, and your chapter leader will bring it forward to resolve quickly (and please copy me so I am in the loop). Members should not refuse a direct order by a supervisor while the UFT works to resolve the issue in any school.

Should you have any questions about lesson plan requirements, please email me at [ddoorga@uft.org](mailto:ddoorga@uft.org).

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## New graduation option for students with disabilities

The state Board of Regents is encouraging public comment on the new state regulations to create a new graduation option for students with disabilities. While the regulation on [the new “superintendent determination” option](#) took effect immediately “on an emergency basis” in December, the 45-day period where the Regents seek public comment has begun. Special education teachers and related service providers are encouraged to comment on this option before it is adopted as a permanent rule. Students with disabilities who passed their ELA and math Regents-level coursework but were unable to earn a minimum score of 55 on the ELA and/or math Regents exams — or did not exercise their right to appeal a score between 52 and 54 — may still earn a local diploma under this new “superintendent determination” option if they can otherwise demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge, skills and abilities in ELA and math.

To be eligible for the new graduation option, students must meet the requirements for the [state Career Development and Occupational Studies \(CDOS\) Commencement Credential](#). But recognizing that many students have not had the opportunity to earn the credential, the Regents permitted school districts to award the CDOS Commencement Credential to students who have not fully met all of the requirements for the 2017-18 and 2018-19 school years. Starting in the 2019-20 school year, they will need a CDOS Commencement Credential. Submit your comments, which may include any relevant data, views or arguments, to Christopher Suriano from the New York State Education Department at [spedpubliccomment@nysed.gov](mailto:spedpubliccomment@nysed.gov).

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## **Wear red on Feb. 14 to show you are Union Proud**

On Feb. 14, Valentine's Day, we are asking that ALL District 75 members show their love and solidarity towards our union by wearing red. Please submit your photos from the day to [MBOphoto10@gmail.com](mailto:MBOphoto10@gmail.com) and [uftphotos@gmail.com](mailto:uftphotos@gmail.com).

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## **Send me your feedback about this newsletter**

As your district representative, I hope to communicate with you often about topics that are of help and interest to you. Please [fill out this online form](#) to let me know what you found most valuable in this newsletter and how I can improve it.

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## **Stay in touch!**

For news alerts and important information about your rights and benefits as a UFT member, [sign up on the UFT website](#), opt in for [text messaging](#), "like" the [UFT on Facebook](#), follow the [UFT on Twitter](#) and read the [New York Teacher](#).

