

District 75 News



David Doorga

To my District 75 family,

The 2018–2019 school year is off to a terrific start! As I travel around the district, I never cease to be amazed by the innovative thinking, teaching and learning happening throughout this citywide program. I have often said it takes a very unique person to serve the students of District 75, and I believe we have the most dedicated professionals in the world in our ranks. None of you hear it often enough, but please allow me to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the incredible work you do on a daily basis.

Speaking of remarkably dedicated people, this year marks the 50th anniversary of paraprofessionals joining the United Federation of Teachers. I'm very proud to say I began my own career as a paraprofessional.

Paraprofessionals are truly the backbone of District 75, and we should all take a moment to acknowledge the important contributions they make every day. If you are a paraprofessional, always remember that you are a critical part of the UFT's "Union of Professionals." My district office will be celebrating paraprofessionals throughout the city this fall, and I hope I have the chance to thank every single one of you personally.

There is an old saying, "every cloud has a silver lining," and I believe the pro-union enthusiasm I've observed across the city is the silver lining of the Janus decision. I think we all realized just how important our union membership is to ourselves and our families when we saw how easily it could be lost. We all need to raise our voices and let everyone know that New York is a union town! Sign up for [text messaging](#) and use [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) to let people know you support the UFT.

Stay strong. Stay united. We are One. E pluribus unum! As always, I am very honored to serve as your district representative.

Yours in solidarity,

David Doorga
District 75 Representative

New District 75 members get to know the UFT



Jessica Marra (front, right) of P811 at PS 136 in St. Albans, Queens, asks a question at the District 75 open house at UFT headquarters on Aug. 28, which drew new hires who work with students with disabilities, including speech teachers, occupational and physical therapists, paraprofessionals and others.

New hires were welcomed during the final week of August at “Get Ready to Launch” open house events at UFT borough offices throughout the city in preparation for the 2018–19 school year. The UFT offered a special open house for staff who work with special needs students, where I had the pleasure of meeting some of you.

For Baby Boomers and Gen Xers: Those Who Aspire to Retire

Whether you are a month from retirement, a year from retirement, or even a few decades from retirement, I believe sound planning advice benefits everyone, which is why I include the below suggestions below in my newsletter. As UFT members, we're in the rare position of having access to many resources to help us achieve a dignified retirement. The key is to plan in advance. Remember one of my favorite sayings: "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail!" With respect to the financial tips, keep in mind that everyone's finances are unique, so be sure to consult with your accountant or financial planner.

1. Maximize TDA contributions as soon as possible. Start with three percent and increase gradually until you reach the maximum amount that works for you.

2. Organize your home. Have a place for everything, then make sure that everything is in place. When you can't find something, this leads to unnecessary trips to the store to replace it.
3. Shop, cook and freeze meals, instead of constantly ordering takeout. Your health and wallet will thank you.
4. Make a point, at least once a year, to compare car insurance and cell phone plans to find what best suits your current needs. Are you still paying for features you don't use?
5. Use your hard-won UFT benefits. Far too many members are still paying extra for vision, dental and hearing care instead of seeking out providers who accept UFT plans in entirety or for the majority of their fees. Talk to coworkers and get recommendations for the best UFT providers, and don't neglect these important components of your overall health.
6. Do you still have habits you really should have overcome by now? Working in District 75 is by definition a stressful occupation, but how we choose to cope with that stress is a matter of choice. Sadly, many people still smoke, drink excessively or overeat to cope with stress. There are many resources to help you overcome smoking and drinking issues, and it is never too late to start incorporating better food choices into your meals. You only get one body, so start cherishing it!
7. Take vacations to places where you might want to move to after you retire. The quiet sanctuary island you visit in August may become an overcrowded mob scene from November to March.
8. If you plan on staying in your current home for the foreseeable future, make necessary repairs and updates now. You will be receiving a lump sum payment in October of 25% of the money you are owed according to the 2014 UFT-DOE contract. Updating and repairing your home is an excellent investment, and this is a great opportunity to make that money count.
9. Speaking of the 25% lump sum payment, work hard on reducing and eliminating any debt you may have accumulated. If you have credit card or car debt, consider using this payment to help pay off the debt with the highest interest rate. Check any TDA or pension loans you may have to be sure they will be paid off well before your anticipated retirement date.
10. Set up a [pension consultation](#) with a UFT borough office when you are in the middle of your career and again in your final three to five years. Tip: Use the [online Teacher Retirement System TDA calculator](#) to get an estimate. The information is invaluable, and it will open your eyes to your individual situation — and the many blessings of union membership!

The Plan Book

September brings us back-to-school sales, and the wise teacher takes advantage of the opportunity to stock up and save on supplies. Spend a little time signing up for rewards programs and apps, and keep an eye out for any coupons arriving in the mail. Go through your lesson plans for the year, and note any special supplies that may be needed, like Ziploc bags or cornstarch. Try to buy school supplies separately, so you can keep the receipts for Teacher's Choice or your taxes. In addition, don't allow your classroom supplies to take over your house. Set aside a special cabinet or even a large plastic tub in a closet. Keep in mind that basic classroom supplies and personal protective equipment must be supplied by your principal. If your principal is not supplying these basics, alert your chapter leader immediately.

The UFT initiated Teacher's Choice more than 25 years ago! This year, teachers are allotted \$250 ([see the amounts for other titles](#)) to purchase classroom-related supplies and expenses between Aug. 1,

2018, and Jan. 14, 2019. Of course, you must remember to save your receipts as proof of purchase. These receipts must accompany an [accountability form](#) on the DOE website (note: you'll have to log in), which you should submit to your school's principal by Jan.18, 2019.

Making Strides against Breast Cancer Walk

The UFT will again participate in the annual Making Strides against Breast Cancer fundraising walks on Sunday, Oct. 14, in Manhattan and Sunday, Oct. 21, in all other boroughs and on Long Island. Last year, along with NYSUT members, UFT members helped raise more than \$1 million for the American Cancer Society to combat the disease with research, information and services. [Register online](#) to sign up for a walk. We'll be using **#StridesUFT** as our Twitter hashtag that day.

Nominate a colleague for the 2018 paraprofessional awards

Paraprofessionals are core members of every school community, and this year is the kickoff of the 50th anniversary of the UFT's paraprofessional chapter. To recognize our paras and this special event, members are encouraged to honor a paraprofessional who has made outstanding contributions to their school, community and union. These activities can include community involvement in church, youth groups, volunteer work or any union-related activities such as phone banks, rallies or political action. Any member can submit a nomination; however, paraprofessionals cannot nominate themselves. The nomination deadline is Thursday, Nov. 15. Use the [online form](#) to submit a nomination.

LEAP to Teacher program for paraprofessionals

The CUNY School of Labor and Urban Studies invites paraprofessionals to an open house to learn about the LEAP to Teacher program for paraprofessionals who wish to become a teacher or complete a degree program in any field. LEAP to Teacher support services include admission advice, test prep, writing help, financial aid information and more. You may [register online](#) on the CUNY website for an open house. You may also contact Keenya Browne, CUNY's LEAP to Teacher program assistant, at 212-857-1964 or at keenya.browne@cuny.edu.

Important health benefits dates

The DOE open enrollment for city health plans for in-service members takes place during the month of October. If you request a change, the new health plan takes effect on Jan. 1, 2019. UFT-represented employees may request to switch dental plans through Oct. 15. If a change is requested, the new dental plan takes effect on Nov. 1. For more information, please call the UFT Welfare Fund during office hours at 212-539-0500. The UFT Welfare Fund Health Benefits Checkup special pullout section will run in the Oct. 4 issue of the *New York Teacher*. This publication has tips on how to access and maximize UFT-negotiated health benefits.

In the event you are arrested

If you are arrested for any reason, even for civil disobedience and even if it happens out of state, you must immediately contact the Office of Personnel Investigations: call 718-935-2666 or email OPArrestnotification@schools.nyc.gov. You also must notify your principal. If you are arrested on school property and/or for anything related to your job, please immediately contact your district representative.

Paraprofessionals gained several new protections in 2016 as a result of the UFTs union-initiated grievance that challenged the unfairness of automatic suspensions for paraprofessionals who have been arrested. Under a Department of Education policy issued on March 22, 2016, paraprofessionals arrested on the job or on their own time, now have a new review procedure to determine if a suspension without pay is warranted. For more details about the policy, [read the New York Teacher article](#).

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.

Be sure to visit our [District 75 UFT Facebook](#) group! You can tell us about the great things happening in your District 75 school community.

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](#).



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