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# District 75 News



David Doorga

## To my District 75 family,

2019 has already been a whirlwind of a year, and every day I'm amazed by how all of you continue to give your very best to our students. Even when forced to take buses and subways in sub-zero conditions, or to drive — literally for hours — to get to school, I'm inspired by your ability to summon your inner strength and arrive every day with a smile, a joke, a cheerful face and a helping hand to lend to our children.

This is just one of the reasons why I want every District 75 member to join me in honoring our hard-won collective bargaining agreement. When a staff member violates the contract at the request of an administrator, we all lose.

"Just being nice" has serious repercussions for every other staff member in that school and, by extension, our students. Keep careful records and remember

that you are your own best advocate! Report violations to your chapter leader and support each other. Don't be afraid to let co-workers know when you notice a violation. When you stay quiet, you are helping to create an atmosphere that weakens our contract. Remember, as I've been saying for years, that our working conditions are our students' learning conditions.

Enjoy your raises and savor every cozy moment of our midwinter recess!

Stay strong, stay united, we are one.

As always, I am honored to serve as your district representative.

In unity,

David Doorga

District 75 Representative

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## The importance of self-care

The challenges of working in District 75 transform every part of our days. At work, we're immensely busy; in the evenings, we precariously balance planning for our students and caring for our families; at night, many of us lose sleep worrying about how best to help our students. As I've often said, working in District 75 isn't a job; it's a vocation.

Unfortunately, we tend to put ourselves last on the priority list. Take a moment to quickly jot down items that need to be attended to, but somehow get lost in the bustle of our busy days. Are you taking advantage of the UFT's vision and dental benefits? If not, contact your chapter leader and make those appointments. Our new contract gives us a raise on Feb. 14 — why not boost your contribution to the COPE fund or your TDA? Do yourself a favor and make sure that the number of days in your CAR is accurate and be sure that all your eligible dependents are properly listed by name on your health plan. Now's a great time to take care of these things so that any difficulties that arise can be sorted out by June.

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At this time of year, the long, cold winter can really start to get to us. Even though the days are getting longer and rising temperatures offer us occasional previews of spring, we’re still dealing with bleak weather and the constant challenges posed by our work, homes and families. One way to cope with the lingering winter is to create personal “choice-time activities.” Just as we reward our students with fun activities, so too should we reward ourselves. Make a list of fun, simple activities you can do at work and home to stay motivated and keep your spirits lifted. For example, when you get home after a hard day, make a point of taking 10 minutes to enjoy a hot drink and a healthy snack. At work, pack your lunch so you can look forward to enjoying it rather than picking whatever leftovers are in the fridge that the kids wouldn’t touch. Set up a playlist that inspires and motivates you. Something as simple as caring for a flowering plant can make a huge difference. I’m continually inspired by the dedication with which our District 75 members give the best of themselves to their students. Just make sure you’re treating yourself to a little personal “choice time” as well — you deserve it!

### Come to a mixer for District 75 paraprofessionals

Throughout the month of March, the UFT will hold a series of five mixers for District 75 paraprofessionals, one in each borough:

- Wednesday, March 13 at Community House at 101-19 Rockaway Beach Blvd. in Queens. [Directions »](#)
- Thursday, March 21 at Jimmy's Grand Cafe at 1001 Castle Hill Ave. in the Bronx. [Directions »](#)
- Monday, March 25 at Miller's Ale House at 2883 Richmond Ave. in Staten Island. [Directions »](#)
- Tuesday, March 26 at Clemente's Maryland Crab House at 3939 Emmons Ave. in Brooklyn. [Directions »](#)
- Thursday, March 28 at 809 NYC Restaurant Bar & Grill at 112 Dyckman St. in Manhattan. [Directions »](#)

RSVP online now »

Paraprofessionals are welcome to attend any of the mixers, regardless of which borough they live or work in. Space is limited, so please register if you plan to attend.

### 38th Annual Paraprofessional and Awards Luncheon

The UFT’s 38th annual Paraprofessional Festival and Awards Luncheon will be held on Saturday, March 23 from 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the New York Hilton Midtown at 1335 6th Ave. This year’s theme is Uplifting Hearts and Minds: Pathways to Social Emotional Learning. Velma Hill, one of the founders of the Paraprofessionals Chapter, will be the keynote speaker. The registration fee is \$25. CTLE credits are available. [Directions »](#)

RSVP online now »

### Space for related service providers

I spoke with Superintendent Ketler Louissant about the ongoing struggle to find space in our District 75 schools for related service providers to perform their critically important work with our students. Often this requires specialized equipment and materials. We discussed how, in co-located schools, General Education schools are reluctant to give up space even as our District 75 schools expand. I am committed to working with Superintendent Louissant to provide our related service providers with the space and support they need to provide our students with these crucial services.

Fortunately, our new contract provides us with tools to resolve disputes over space for our functional chapters. Functional chapter members should contact the chapter leader at their worksite so they can raise the issue with the principal. The member can also contact the UFT functional chapter leader to alert that person to the issue. If you are not assigned to a specific worksite, or if the issue is not a school-based one, contact your functional chapter leader, who will attempt to resolve it with the appropriate supervisor. If the problem isn’t resolved within five days, the issue will be escalated to the district level or the central committee, whichever is appropriate. If you have any questions, contact your UFT district representative or contact Debbie Poulos, the UFT’s director of contract empowerment, at [dpoulos@uft.org](mailto:dpoulos@uft.org).

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I have received reports from chapter leaders that some schools are still not compensating staff for missed professional periods. This is a violation of our collective bargaining agreement. Please keep a careful record of every incident, including date, class coverage, etc., and share it with your chapter leader.

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## Bereavement

Please be advised that, if you miss work due to the death of a loved one, you are not required to provide proof of loss to your principal. Fill out the required form, OP-201, and keep a copy for your personal records. As always, remember to alert your chapter leader if your principal is not honoring your collective bargaining agreement — principals cannot pick and choose what parts of the contract they wish to honor.

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## Calling all Career Training Program (CTP) alumni!

As many of you know, I began my career in District 75 working as a paraprofessional. As part of the celebration of the 50 Year Golden Anniversary of the CTP program, we would love to hear from anyone in District 75 who also began their career as a paraprofessional and have become a teacher, secretary, principal, assistant principal, or a related service provider. Please share your story so that you can be part of the Golden Anniversary celebration.

If you missed it, please read the recent *New York Teacher* story, "[Climbing the career ladder](#)," which celebrated this program that has allowed paras to unlock their potential.

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## 2% pay increase took effect on Feb. 14

The salaries of UFT-represented employees covered by ratified DOE-UFT contracts increased by 2 percent Feb. 14. Pedagogues and paraprofessionals on the Q Bank payroll will see the higher rate of pay for the full pay period in their Feb. 28 paychecks. They were paid two days at the higher rate in the Feb. 15 paychecks. UFT-represented employees on the H Bank payroll will see the higher rate of pay for the full pay period in their March 8 paychecks after having received a partial increase in their Feb. 22 paychecks. Q Bank Feb. 15 and H Bank Feb. 22 checks were calculated in full at the higher rate and then show a deduction of the difference between the higher and lower rate for Feb. 1-13 (Q Bank) and for Feb. 3-13 (H Bank). These deductions were accurate. All pedagogues who work per diem or per session will see the 2 percent pay rate in the March 12 paycheck for any time worked on Feb. 14 and Feb. 15. Paras working per session and para substitutes will see their increase based on the new salary rate in their regular semimonthly paychecks dated Feb. 28. All new longevities and increases to existing longevities also took effect on Feb. 14. [Read the full article](#) on the UFT website. See the [new salary schedules](#). If you have any questions, please contact a salary rep in your UFT borough office.

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## Mulgrew calls for \$2.2 billion in additional school aid at state hearing

UFT President Michael Mulgrew on Feb. 6 called for a \$2.2 billion increase in state school aid in testimony in Albany before the state Senate and Assembly Committees on Finance, Ways & Means and Education on the proposed executive budget for the upcoming fiscal year. He advocated driving much of that additional funding to schools with the highest numbers of students in need to begin to create a level playing field for all schools. Mulgrew asked lawmakers to restore funding for Teacher Centers statewide to the 2008-09 level of \$40 million and to provide \$5 million for the UFT's Community Learning Schools Initiative. Mulgrew also requested \$1.5 million to expand the Positive Learning Collaborative program to up to 15 more schools in New York City. To pay for these and other important initiatives, Mulgrew called for the continuation and expansion of the state millionaire's tax, which ensures that the highest earners pay their fair share of taxes. "We've got 63 percent more millionaires than we did when we passed the so-called millionaire's tax in 2009. And New York City is home to 103 billionaires, more than any city in the world," he said. You can read the full budget testimony on the UFT website.

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Eligible teachers who want to study to enhance teaching skills have until Tuesday, March 19, to submit an application on SOLAS for a study sabbatical for the 2019-20 school year. Tuesday, March 26, is the deadline for a principal's recommendation to the superintendent. Coursework must be rigorous and related to one's teaching assignment. All teachers are eligible for a one-year study sabbatical after 14 years of service. Junior high or high school classroom teachers with seven years on the job can also apply for a six-month study sabbatical for the spring semester only. Teachers earn 70 percent of their salary during a full-year sabbatical and 60 percent of their salary during a six-month sabbatical. Members can read guidelines and eligibility requirements in the Sabbatical Leave of Absence page on the DOE website.

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## UFT dues can only be deducted from state taxes

Under the 2018 federal tax law, union dues and other miscellaneous itemized deductions are no longer permitted. But as a result of legislation passed in April 2017, thanks to union lobbying, union members in New York State may deduct their union dues from their state income taxes if they itemize deductions on their state taxes. Find out what you paid in UFT dues in 2018. If you are an eligible educator, you may still deduct from your federal income taxes up to \$250 of any unreimbursed expenses in 2018 for books, supplies, computer equipment (including related software and services), other equipment and supplementary materials you use in the classroom, according to the IRS. If you are married, filing jointly and both spouses are educators, you can deduct up to \$500, but not more than \$250 each. For courses in health and physical education, expenses for supplies are qualified expenses only if they are related to athletics. The educator expense is an "adjustment to gross income" so use it if you use the standard deduction or itemize on your tax return. In the past, teachers also were permitted to deduct more than the \$250 by deducting unreimbursed employee expenses on Schedule A — the amount that exceeds 2 percent of your adjusted gross income. In addition to union dues, those expenses could also include travel and anything related to the job paid out of pocket and not reimbursed by the school. President Trump's tax overhaul eliminated those miscellaneous deductions as well. You should keep documentation, such as receipts or canceled checks, for any deduction you take. For all income tax questions, see IRS Publication 529 for miscellaneous deductions and IRS Publication 17.

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## 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 [OPIarrestnotifications@schools.nyc.gov](mailto:OPIarrestnotifications@schools.nyc.gov). You must also 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 UFT's 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](#).

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## Send me your feedback about this newsletter

Thank you for all your feedback about our newsletters. I have enjoyed reading your thoughts and suggestions, and I will be addressing topics of interest from time to time in this and future newsletters. So keep reading and continue sending your feedback.

As your representative, I hope to communicate with you often about topics that are of help and interest to you. If you haven't already, please fill out this online form to let me know what you found most valuable in this month's 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](#).

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