



Pathways to Graduation



Dear Christopher,

This school year is flying by. I can hardly believe that we are in December already. Many Pathways to Graduation sites had wonderful Thanksgiving festivities including turkey and all the trimmings. Many also featured traditions brought to the feasts by students. The diversity and sense of community is another example of why our program is so wonderful. I know this generous spirit will continue for us all.

As unionists, we should be proud of our hard work and resilience this year. We should take the time to celebrate our success defeating the constitutional convention, which would have been impossible without our combined efforts. As we embark on 2018, we still have a lot of work to do but I believe that if we work together, we can prevail.

Looking ahead, the UFT is working on important [campaigns](#) including demonstrating that we are Union Proud and fighting for paid parental leave for UFT members. This year, with so much at stake as the [Supreme Court prepares to hear Janus v. AFSCME](#), it is vital that we come together in solidarity to prepare for what lies ahead.

For those who celebrate, merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah and happy Kwanzaa. Have a great winter vacation and a happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Michael Friedman
Pathways to Graduation UFT Chapter Leader

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A better curriculum for our students

Many of you have questions about using the Rubicon Atlas curriculum. It was a major topic of discussion at the consultative council. You do not have to use the exact words of the objectives; you can modify the words to suit your students' needs as long as the intent remains the same.

You also do not have to use every lesson in a unit or every unit if you do not believe it is advantageous to your students. We are expected to use the Rubicon Atlas curriculum, but you can also make adjustments to help your students with promotions, learn English or prepare for the TASC test.

We also discussed whether reading, writing and discussion should be a component in every lesson. As this remains unresolved, ask your supervisor for guidance.

I am a big supporter of this curriculum, which many of our colleagues took a great deal of time and effort to write. I believe, generally speaking, it is wise to include reading, writing and discussion components in every lesson. However, that said, each lesson is only 50 minutes. Students who have read a passage and are in the midst of a rich discussion should probably be allowed to finish that conversation rather than cut it off for a writing portion. That writing practice can be accomplished in the next lesson.

I have taught in District 79 since 1992. I always thought it was a weakness of our district that we lacked a curriculum relating to our specific work. This curriculum does just that. However, we should not be rigid about this. With so much creativity in our program, we must take advantage of it.

It is also important that you provide feedback on the curriculum to Brooklyn Borough Principal Michelle Robinson, who is coordinating the program for Pathways to Graduation in her role as master principal. She acknowledges that the current curriculum is research based but she wants to see how it works in our reality.

We have a variety of students. In the best case scenario, it might work for all our students. However, we might find that it works for some of our students and needs to be modified for others. We were told that Rubicon Atlas will be amended, as it was this year, as needed. That is why your input is so important. Please contact me at michaeloes@att.net to let me know how you feel it is going.

Knocking on doors, ringing those bells

At the end of October, UFT members were hired by the union to take on a great task: to visit every UFT member in their homes. I signed up for this duty. Armed with an iPhone filled with union information, I knocked on many doors and rang many doorbells.

My typical visit: After I introduced myself as a representative of the union, I began each visit listening to the members tell me about themselves, their work and their workplace environment. I visited UFT members of all types: teachers, counselors, secretaries, paraprofessionals, clinicians and child care providers. In the case that they had a work issue and wanted help, I put them in touch with the appropriate union staff.

Last, but certainly not least on my agenda, was [Janus v. AFSCME](#), a case which the Supreme Court has agreed to hear. The plaintiffs in the case charge that the fair-share fees collected by unions from non-members are unconstitutional. The case is funded by the same anti-union interests that brought us *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association* a few years ago with the same intent: to defund public employee unions. We need to show solidarity with the union more than ever, and I urged those I visited to participate in their chapter and union events, speak up on behalf of unions and remain dues-paying members.

It was truly a remarkable experience to meet so many of my union colleagues. I learned a great deal from them and hope they learned from me why the union is important.

YouthBuild students at City Hall

YouthBuild students and instructors recently travelled to City Hall for the [YouthBuild NYC Collaborative](#) awards ceremony on Nov. 7. This was a great experience for our students. The Harlem site presented an award to City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito. The Bronx site gave an award to City Councilwoman Julissa Ferreras-Copeland. The DREAMS

YouthBuild program in Brooklyn, which teaches its students to be D-edicated, R-esponsible, E-ducated, A-ccountable, M-otivated and S-elf sufficient, presented an award to City Councilman Mathieu Eugene.



YouthBuild students gathered at City Hall for the YouthBuild NYC Collaborative awards ceremony on Nov. 7.

Fighting for parental leave

UFT members spend their days nurturing and supporting children, yet the city's current parental leave policy forces members to choose between their own children and their profession. It's time for the city to give UFT members the paid parental leave they deserve. But we need your help to get it done. Studies have shown time and again that babies benefit from being home with their parents in their first and most vulnerable weeks. Do you know how bad the current parental leave policy is? [Get the facts.](#)

The UFT has continued to try to negotiate a fair and reasonable paid parental leave policy with the city ever since Mayor Bill de Blasio in December 2015 imposed a paid parental leave program on the city's nonunion, managerial employees. That program included givebacks from the managerial employees that we won't accept for our members.

We want any new parental leave policy to cover both adoption and foster care. It's time for a public campaign. A UFT member, Emily James, put it eloquently at a recent union meeting: "We dedicate our lives to taking care of other people's children and we become their second mothers. And when we have our own, the system seems to have forgotten us." We hope you'll join our fight. [Join the campaign »](#)

A big victory against a state constitutional convention

In addition to making more than 500,000 phone calls and distributing more than 400,000 lawn signs, car magnets and pieces of literature to [defeat the constitutional convention](#), UFT members enthusiastically knocked on doors and worked the streets to defeat the constitutional convention. The union will always fight for the middle class. Protecting our hard-earned pensions and health benefits is just part of the battle and why we belong to a union!

Linden Learning Center holds pop-up "boutique"

On Nov. 27, students at the Linden Learning Center in Brooklyn had the opportunity to "shop" in a Learning Center "boutique." Students could select donated items as they browsed through the "store." While some students shopped, other students minded the store. This was all part of Linden's Thanksgiving celebration. As you can see from this photo, students had a wonderful time.



Pathways to Graduation students "shop" for donated items at the Linden Learning Center's boutique in Brooklyn on Nov. 27.

Delegate Assembly Resolutions

The Delegate Assembly unanimously passed two resolutions at the Oct. 18 meeting:

1. To salute the UFT's founders who went on strike on Nov. 7, 1960, for the right to belong to a union.
2. To support the reporters and editors of DNAinfo and Gothamist who voted to join the Writers Guild East labor union only to have the billionaire owner of the web publications shut them down.