UFT Representative Report, September 2010

Hello, and welcome to another school year!  I’m thrilled to be part of the debut of [inclusions.org](http://inclusions.org/" \t "_blank), and I want to thank the Children’s School PTA for their years-long support of a UFT column in Inclusions.

In my 16 years at The Children’s School, I have seen many school-system crises come and go.  Yet our school always seems to be fine.  I chalk that up to the wise, skillful, and caring leadership of Artie Mattia (and Lorraine Boyhan before him), and to effective advocacy by Children’s School families.  But while we celebrate our continued successes at P.S. 372, we also need to look beyond the walls of 512 Carroll Street and 300 Adelphi Street to our school system as a whole, our City, and our nation.  The situation is dire.

Teachers are under constant attack in the media and from politicians.  The latest assault is Waiting for Superman, a documentary by the director of An Inconvenient Truth, that purports to show how to fix our schools (more testing, of course), and who’s to blame for blocking progress (teacher’s unions, of course).  See [http://www.uft.org/node/16773](http://www.uft.org/node/16773" \t "_blank) and [http://www.waitingforsupermantruth.org/](http://www.waitingforsupermantruth.org/" \t "_blank) for more information.

Fortunately, there are bright spots in the alternative press.  If you haven’t picked up the Back-to-School issue of the Indypendent, check it out online at [http://www.indypendent.org/?pagename=issue&issue=9-8-10](http://www.indypendent.org/?pagename=issue&issue=9-8-10" \t "_blank) .  With articles like “Why Teacher Unions Matter” by Lois Weiner, and “Looking Beyond Mayoral Control,” “A Parent’s Guide to School Involvement,” and “Schooling the World” by John Tarleton, it is not to be missed.

In the meantime, here on the home front, the struggle continues.  New York City public schools have 19,000 more students now than in the 2009/2010 school year…and 2,000 fewer teachers.  In recent years, the City has taken millions in State funds earmarked for class-size reduction, while presiding over an increase in class size at every grade level.  The UFT has taken repeated legal action against the City’s irresponsibility towards our students; the latest lawsuit is detailed at [http://www.uft.org/press-releases/uft-sues-chancellor-klein-ensure-lower-class-size-queens-hs](http://www.uft.org/press-releases/uft-sues-chancellor-klein-ensure-lower-class-size-queens-hs" \t "_blank) .  Go to [http://www.classsizematters.org/](http://www.classsizematters.org/" \t "_blank) to join the battle to lower class size.

While general education class sizes skyrocket, the State is moving forward with “mandate relief,” a scheme to save money on the backs of children with special needs.  The UFT and parent advocacy organizations have been at the forefront of the fight to forestall cuts to the services to which our students are entitled.  See [http://www.uft.org/campaigns/save-services-students-disabilities](http://www.uft.org/campaigns/save-services-students-disabilities" \t "_blank) .

And finally, there’s the OneNation movement.  The UFT, along with our many partners in the labor movement and among citizens’ groups, are demanding the change we voted for.  We are rejecting the Fox News/Tea Party campaign to pit the middle class against the working class, and the working class against the poor.  While 1% of Americans earn 24% of all wages, that number is 34% in the state of New York…and 46% in New York City!  The very people who crashed our economy in 2008 are the people seeing substantial increases in their income, recession or no recession, and it is they who are calling the shots in the media, at City Hall, in the State House, and in Washington.  A group of us from the Children’s School will travel to Washington on October 2 for the mass OneNation mobilization.  We need to all pull together to make sure that October 2 is the start of something even bigger.  See [http://action.onenationworkingtogether.org/content/main](http://action.onenationworkingtogether.org/content/main" \t "_blank) for details.

Steve Quester