



TEACHERS FOR A
JUST CONTRACT

Not just an opposition, an alternative.

November - December 2011

www.TeachersforaJustContract.org

JustContractUFT@aol.com

P.O.B. 545, New York, N.Y. 10028

(212) 831 3408

The UFT Must Mobilize Against New DOE Observation and Rating Rules!

In spring 2010, the UFT made a major concession by allowing part of our annual rating to be based on our students' standardized test scores. Now, if we don't pressure the union to fight back, even more of our rights will be lost.

In spring 2010, the UFT agreed not to fight sweeping changes in State Education law so New York could compete for federal Race to the Top funds. New York got the money. But the new law requires that all future teachers' contracts include a new rating system, with 40% based on student performance, and the remaining 60% based on supervisory and administrative evaluations. According to this law, many specifics, such as the appeals procedure, must be negotiated. Significantly, the union may reach an agreement with DOE on these matters, implement them, and only put them in a contract that we can vote on after the fact.

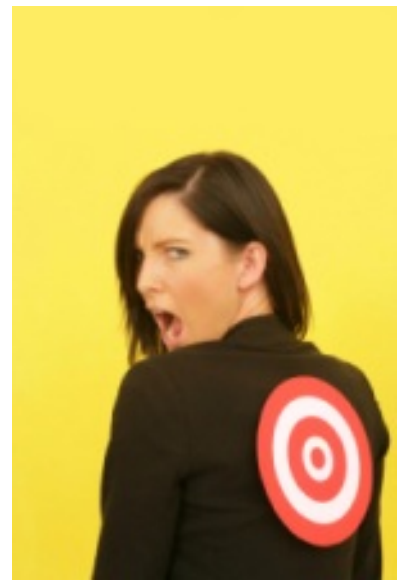
The unfairness of basing teacher evaluations on student performance that we cannot control, has been widely discussed. However, there's been little scrutiny of the remaining 60%. The roll out of the new evaluation system is already underway in more than thirty schools designated "Transformation" or "Restart" schools. Teachers in those schools received a 36-page DOE "reference guide," entitled "Teacher Effectiveness in Transformation and Restart Schools, 2011 - 2, Part I."

It warns teachers that "the bar for earning an 'Effective' rating will be far higher than the current bar for earning a 'Satisfactory' rating. As a result, not every teacher who receives a 'Satisfactory' rating . . . will receive a rating of 'Effective' under this new model."

This is unacceptable. It is based on the slanderous assumption that teachers are to blame for the problems in New York City education. Teachers who have always been rated "Satisfactory" should not suffer the insult of a rating of "Developing," let alone have their employment jeopardized with a rating of "Ineffective."

Second, there must be no further weakening of the appeals procedure for an "Ineffective" rating. The existing 3020a process already lacks adequate protections of fair due process.

Third, the preobservation conference requirement must be clarified and strengthened. It



Actual New York City
Teacher Under New
Observation Rules

must be one on one, it must be specific, and the observation must be conducted within a reasonable amount of time later, to actually contribute to professional growth.

Fourth, observation reports should be confined to instruction. The “reference guide” tells supervisors that “all interactions with your teachers that are relevant to their instructional practice may contribute to their performance evaluations. These interactions may include, but are not limited to . . . progress checks, planning meetings, inquiry team meetings, and student data review meetings . . .” Teachers will constantly be subject to scrutiny that can impact their annual rating. Not only is this a questionable measure of teaching, it will greatly heighten stress.

Fifth, we must retain the privacy protected by the rules surrounding the personnel file. The DOE’s reference guide also states that “Principals and A.P.s must enter evidence and ratings for all observations” in ARIS Learn. They also may use ARIS “for sharing feedback with teachers.” This is also unacceptable. Observation reports must continue to be limited in access to one form and in one place only: a hard copy in a single personnel file. Nothing in the personnel file should be online, and management should not have the power to require that teachers access reports online, or be forced to respond to observation reports to prove “professional growth.”

There is also unacceptable extra work for teachers built into this model. According to the reference guide, “teachers should invest some time to deeply understand” the Danielson framework, teachers should “prepare for three annual review conferences by reviewing feedback from prior evaluations and student outcome data, conduct two self-assessments before the mid-year and end of year conferences, each 15 - 30 minutes.” Supervisors are told to “encourage your staff to check their DOE email accounts regularly” for “important information, including newsletters, and links to surveys . . .” It then states, “this new model will not impose a large burden” for teachers.

Not only has the UFT failed to protect us, it is actively defending these changes in the Transformation and Restart schools. Our first job has to be to tell the UFT, loud and clear, that these changes are unacceptable! To successfully pressure the union, we need many more UFT members to join and work with groups like Teachers for a Just Contract and other union reformers. The union leadership itself must be forced to do this. Unlike the members, it is not their working conditions and job security that are at stake.

To win these demands from the City and the DOE, it will take mobilizations of the entire union, with escalating tactics that put real pressure on the employer. This is a challenge because the union leadership has allowed years to pass since any such mobilization. The membership feels hopeless, and alienated from the union.

The UFT must step up and protect us! The young protestors of Occupy Wall Street have made the idea of street protests popular again. The relentless anti-union climate of the recent past is showing some signs of change. Now is the time to force our union to take advantage of this improved political climate and defend our rights, before it is too late.

Teachers for a Just Contract has worked to make the UFT a stronger and more democratic union for almost 20 years. Since 2004, TJC has run in UFT elections against the entrenched, do-nothing Weingarten and Mulgrew leaderships. For more information, go to our website www.TeachersforaJustContract.org. Contact us at JustContractUFT@aol.com, or 212 831 3408

