

## A Guide to your UFT Chapter

**Chapter Leader:** The official leadership of the union at the school level. The chapter leader has a considerable amount of power in the school. They are required to sign off on the school's Comprehensive Education Plan. They are entitled to consultation over the school budget, the hiring of new administrators, and many other issues of school organization. They also represent members in disciplinary hearings. Chapter leaders are elected every three years by the staff.

**Delegate:** The delegate is the official “number 2” in the school when it comes to the union. The delegate's main role is to represent the staff to the union by attending the UFT delegate assembly once a month. Unfortunately, a minority of delegates actually attend the DA.

**Consultation Committee:** This is the heart of your union chapter. The consultation committee is a committee convened by the chapter leader that the principal is contractually required to attend once a month. The consultation committee is typically where you will find the most active members of your union chapter. This is a good place to begin to get involved with the UFT.

**Tenure:** Tenure ensures due process rights for UFT members. Teachers do not receive tenure until it is granted after four years by the superintendent.

**Grievance:** The formal process by which a member objects to a violation of their contract rights. The chapter leader assists members with grievances and represents them in grievance hearings with the principal.

### Do I have a strong union chapter?

Did your chapter leader hold a meeting for your staff within the first week or so of school? How many people on the staff attended? Did the staff engage in conversations with each other at the meeting or did the chapter leader just present information?

Do members speak well of the chapter leader? Do your co-workers feel that they can go to the union to have their issues addressed?

Do people on your staff trust the chapter leader?

### I'm brand new, what should I do to get active in the union?

In your early career, your main task is to get good at your job and get tenure. Without tenure, it is difficult to be a union activist since you are an “at will” employee that can be fired easily. You will probably have to go along with what your administration wants and stay “off the radar” as a union activist until you are tenured.

Get to know your chapter leader and consultation committee members. Try to figure out their relationship with the rest of the staff and their relationship with the principal.

It's a good idea to spend most of your time in your building listening to your co-workers and learning about their issues. Members are often willing to talk about what they like and don't like about their workplace. You should listen and try to understand. You should also get a copy of the contract and try to learn the basic rights of union members.

Depending on the situation in your school and the dynamic of the administration, you may be able to get involved in the consultation committee before you get tenure. This will probably make more sense after you have established yourself in your building and gotten to know your co-workers. It is difficult to be an effective chapter leader before you have tenure, as it marks you as a union activist and a potential troublemaker.