



# Update

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From The Desk of Rosanne Mamo

## If You See Something, Say Something

Usually this expression is meant for bags left unattended or actions deemed suspicious; but I'd like for you to think of the phrase in another context, as it relates to our contract.

### **"If You Know Something, Say Something"**

All too often, members of your SFT Executive Board hear the phrase, "... and the Union didn't do anything about it." Admittedly, there are occasions when the complaint, on its face, hold water – but we must all take some responsibility in understanding how this can be.

- First, the issue may not have been something that your Union Rep could have done something about. Not every issue is contractual.
- Second, in cases where the issue has been addressed and the result not clearly expressed to the affected member, communication between the Rep and member must be improved. However, in many cases the issue is still "in progress" with an outcome not reached. Again, clear communication between Rep and member is vital; and that is always a two-way street.
- Third, as I have witnessed all too often, your Union Rep is not make aware of a potential issue until after the fact. Unfortunately, "after the fact" is often too late. There are time lines to our grievance procedure that are contractual.

Now, you may be thinking, "How come the Union didn't know this issue?" Actually, it's quite simple. There are 700 SFT members and only 22 Executive Board members spread throughout our five buildings. It should not be assumed that your Union Reps know about every problem or contract violation. Brothers and sisters, each of you has the duty to uphold and protect our contract. You have a responsibility to "say something" when you know or even suspect that something isn't right. Your Reps can't address problems of which they have no knowledge. Only when you make them aware can they act – For everyone's benefit.

If a Union Rep approaches you with knowledge of a potential issue, please do not tell them, "I don't want to make waves" or "I don't want administration to know" or "It's not really a problem." You must discuss the issue with your Rep. Approaching administration on your behalf is the only way the SFT can correct a problem. If we don't "make a few waves" and inform administration of the issues, our contract is weakened; ultimately every member suffers. Together, we have 700 pairs of eyes and ears protecting our contract; and more importantly, 700 mouths to notify our Union Reps.

I will say it again, **"If You Know Something, Say Something"**

In Unity,

*R*

## KNOW YOUR CONTRACT – KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Did you know you have the right to a Union Rep at any meeting with administration that may be disciplinary?

*page 13 J. Disciplinary Action: When a principal has reason to believe that a conference with a teacher will result in a written record, the Federation is to be informed of the conference and the teacher is to be informed of his/her rights to have a representative by the Federation. The above shall not apply to the routine conference which follows individual observations unless such a conference will result in disciplinary action.*

Don't waive that right! Should you find yourself in a disciplinary meeting, stop the meeting and ask to reschedule at a later time so your Building Rep can be with you.

Why would you do that, you ask? Quite simply, to protect yourself.

A disciplinary meeting with an administrator can make you nervous, angry, upset, and leave you confused. It is not in your best interest to handle it alone.

- you may not fully "hear" what is being said.
- you may say things that aren't in your best interest just to end the meeting.
- you may be asked to sign a letter of counsel - would you on your own, ask for further understanding of the implications of that letter in your file?
- a disciplinary meeting could become a "he said – she said" debate.

Having a Building Rep with you will keep the meeting on course. Your Rep will be your ears, your Rep will be your spokesman, and your Rep will ask the questions that need to be asked. Your Rep will guide you and will counsel you before, during and after the meeting. Do not waive your right to representation. Protect yourself by allowing your Union Reps to direct and help you. If, an administrator denies you this right, you must respectfully end the meeting and seek your Building Rep at once. If you let your rights be taken away, we will all in time, lose them as well.

And, did you know? You also have the right to have your written response attached to any item placed in your file, provided that the response is submitted within 45 calendar days, excluding summer, from the date the material was given to you.

Know your contract, know your rights and most importantly; protect them!

### Officers:

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**SEW:** Mary Anne Contarino (x9639), John Reagan (x2680)

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