



PCT PLEDGE

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THE WORK BEGINS

By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld

*“Better is the end of a thing than its beginning.”
Ecclesiastes 7:8*

At our last PCT Executive Board meeting, I asked the SRC Reps to form a committee on academic standards in each of our school buildings.

While the PCT will be doing much this year to put some flesh on the bones of our agenda to elevate the academic standards of our district, I have a deeply held conviction that much of what we seek to accomplish will not come from programmatic changes we get the district to make but rather from the daily efforts of staff who begin to think about their work in a standards- raising context.

If the questions that we ask, if assignments that we give, if the level of behavior we demand, if the grades we award, if the curricula we write, if the teaching discussions we have around the lunch tables are all informed by some reflection on how they contribute to students learning more and better, our district will be focused on learning again, and that focus will, I deeply believe, have a profound impact on the academic accomplishments of our students.

To help that happen, I’m asking each school to create a standards committee to begin the process of looking at school issues through the lens of higher expectations and standards. **Colleagues, we have undertaken an experiment to see if an education union can be in the vanguard of changing the direction of a public school district. What began with math last year must now include other subject areas too.**

I know the changes we seek will not be immediate. I know too that the beginning of this enterprise is unsettling to some. Yet, I know that in the end we will be grateful that we made this effort, when there are no longer any doubts that we offer a solid academic program, when we demonstrate that our students are capable of more than we have been encouraged to expect of them, when high standards are again the norm in Plainview-Old Bethpage, when the acquisition of knowledge and skills is again the focus of all we do.

K-CENTER & MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMITTEES FORMING

The PCT Executive Board has called for the

formation of PCT Kindergarten and Middle School committees. In calling for the formation of these committees, the officers of the PCT are attempting to develop more concretely the academic standards agenda of our union. They are also seeking to duplicate the approach taken last year aimed at revising our math program that seems to have worked so well. These committees, like the one last year, will be responsible to making policy recommendations to the officers and Executive Board of our union. Once policy positions are taken by the PCT Executive Board, the officers have a clear, member-determined direction to take with the administration and Board of Education.

Among the issues the Kindergarten committee will address are the cut-off dates for student attendance, class size and the use of aides or teaching assistants to address the changing needs of the current student population. Central to the work of the committee will be a careful examination of the existing K-Center curriculum and an open exploration of whether some adjustments to it might give today’s student a better start in school.

PCT members wishing to volunteer for our Kindergarten Committee are asked to send a note to that effect to Elementary Vice-President Nina Melzer at the PCT Office. Volunteers should indicate in their note the easiest day of the week for them to attend meetings.

The majority of the membership of the Kindergarten Committee will be from volunteers from the K-Center staff, but our union is ideally looking for members who teach first and second grade too.

The Middle School Committee will be charged with the difficult task of making recommendations to address a question that has been left unanswered in POB for too long. While we know that there is a national trend for the academic performance of students to decline from elementary school to middle school, why is that happening in POB to a greater extent than has historically been the case?

Some may wonder why we are forming this committee on the heels of a district-wide committee which worked on middle school last year. Many of the teachers and parents who served on the district-wide committee were frustrated by administration efforts to steer the committee’s focus towards scheduling changes and other peripheral issues rather than asking the hard questions of what do we want middle school students to know and are they learning that currently?

Members wishing to serve on this committee should contact PCT Middle School Vice-President Vicki Ahlsen at the PCT office indicating a preference for meeting days.

KINDERGARTEN STUDY UNDERWAY

For some time the staff at the Kindergarten Center has been drawing the attention of the administration and union leadership to the increasing neediness of the students they have been meeting. Classroom demands have reached the point in many cases where teachers have become convinced that they need classroom assistance. Last year, at a meeting attended by Superintendent Martin Brooks and PCT President Morty Rosenfeld, the staff very eloquently made the case that class sizes are too large for the numbers of needy children in their rooms.

At the suggestion of Elementary Vice-President Nina Melzer, the PCT is conducting a survey of other districts on Long Island to determine their class sizes and whether or not they provide assistance to kindergarten classroom teachers. Watch the *Pledge* for the results of this survey.

PCT HOSTS NEW STAFF

On Monday, September 17, the PCT hosted all of the new teachers and clericals to our district. The afternoon began with an overview of the work of the PCT by President Morty Rosenfeld and presentations by Welfare Fund Assistant Julie McCoy on the fund's benefit package and Celeste Russutto on our contractual health insurance benefit.

The PCT runs this workshop at the beginning of each school year. It has been a very effective method to introduce the benefits of union membership.

THE BEST PCT PARTY YET Wednesday, OCT. 24 4-7 P.M. SIGN UP NOW

Flyers are in the schools announcing the annual PCT party to honor those who retired in June and to welcome those who are new to our ranks.

This year's party is being held at the Four Food Salon, a hot and trendy eating establishment in Melville, ten minutes from our schools. There will be wonderful food, drink and music, but, most of all, there will be an opportunity to relax and have some fun.

Signing up for the party is as easy as giving a check for \$20 made out to PCT to your SRC Reps today.

CONTRACT SURVEYS

By now each PCT member should have received a Contract Survey Form. This form is an instrument used by our Grievance Chair Judi Alexanderson to test the compliance of the District with major sections of our contracts.

While the beginning of the school year is a very busy time, and while there appears to be an endless amount of paper work to be completed, the

Contract Survey Form is vitally important to the work of our union.

If you haven't already done so, please complete your Contract Survey Form today and return it to one of your SRC Reps.

NOVEMBER=VOTE/COPE

It won't be long before the PCT launches its second NYSUT VOTE/COPE drive during the month of November. VOTE/COPE is the political action fund of our state organization which has an unrivaled political presence in Albany where much of what happens in education is determined. Neither NYSUT nor the PCT uses member dues dollars to fund our political activities. This vital union work is completely funded through the voluntary contributions of our members.

Last year we conducted our first VOTE/COPE campaign. The \$13,077 (about \$22 per member) collected, while a good first effort, fell far short of what similar locals on Long Island raise, locals in which \$50 per member is not at all uncommon.

PCT members are reminded that this is the only political action collection that our union does during the school year. We no longer collect PCT/PAC contributions in that now that we belong to NYSUT, forty percent of the VOTE/COPE dollars we collect come back to the PCT to finance our considerable local political action efforts. Last spring's PCT sophisticated budget and board of education campaign was totally financed from VOTE/COPE dollars collected during our fall fundraising drive.

Start thinking now of giving generously in November.

CREDITS WANTED

Call Amy Pultzer at 937-6404 if you are selling Hofstra credits.

FLORIDA RENTAL

Highland Beach. Sleeps 4. Call Toby Epstein 454-6719.