



## **PCT PLEDGE**

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## **WHAT HAPPENED TO DISCIPLINE?**

**By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld**

It is almost unheard of these days for me to visit a school without some members of the staff wishing to talk to me about their perception of a lack of student discipline in that building. More and more PCT members are telling me that a significant piece of the PCT's agenda to raise standards and expectations for our students requires that we dedicate ourselves, district-wide, to uniform standards of student conduct. Too many in the school community appear to have forgotten that good school discipline is directly related to academic performance.

In my discussion of discipline with teachers, I've discovered that some very curious ideas surround the subject. There clearly are numbers of our colleagues, how many I don't exactly know, who feel completely powerless to establish discipline in their classrooms. They tell me that they fear parent complaints about their attempts to discipline their students. They fear too that someone in administration is always poised to second guess the methods that they use to bring order. They tell me they have been told that they may not restrain even the most out of control student. Some even report that they have themselves been chastised for raising their voices to their students and making them feel bad. I was even told of a child in the district who when she became lost in an uncontrollable tantrum, the teacher was told to take the whole class out of the room, leaving others to deal with the tantrum child. Imagine empowering a child to completely stop a class any time she chose too. Like many of our notions about student behavior, this one is simply preposterous.

My discussions also reveal a belief held by many that any attempt at discipline that makes students feel badly, that causes a diminishment of their self-esteem, is to be avoided at all cost. The pernicious concept of self-esteem carried to this extreme is tantamount to saying that it is wrong to ever discipline a child. After all, I never knew anyone who felt good about being told he had done something wrong.

If my work with adolescents has taught me anything it is that children need boundaries drawn for them by adults. They need to clearly know what is expected of them and what their place in their world is. They are often frightened by their inability to control their behavior and furious at adults that make no attempt to help them,

construing their failure to control them as at best indifference. I can't tell you how many times I've counseled angry, troubled kids who have been deeply disturbed by the failure of the adults in their lives to help them gain control of themselves.

If we care about raising the academic standards of our district, student discipline requires our thought and attention. If we truly care about children, we will recreate orderly learning environments for them, environments in which students expect to feel bad when they misbehave.

## **ALTERNATIVE EVALUATION**

Teacher PCT members in several of our schools have been experimenting with their principals on alternatives to the traditional observation report. Common to most of these alternatives is an attempt to have teachers learn more about some aspect of their work that is important to them.

At the October meeting of the PCT Executive Board, the officers led the board in a free-wheeling discussion of these proposals. The officers were prompted to agenda this discussion because of their belief that whatever the system of teacher evaluation is going to be, it should be reasonably uniform throughout the district and predicated on criteria that are universally understood.

PCT president Morty Rosenfeld reported that he held a discussion with Interim Superintendent Dempsey on the problems of having buildings going in different directions. Both Rosenfeld and Dempsey have agreed to discuss the subject in more detail in the not too distant future. Rosenfeld said he was looking for the views of the members on the subject before he discussed the issue with the Superintendent.

SRCs will be raising this issue in each of our schools. Members are strongly encouraged to weigh in.

## **DATA CORRECTION FORMS**

Each PCT member should have received by now a Data Correction Form. The PCT Office sends these out once each year to keep its data base up to date with the latest information on each member. This information is essential for the management of member benefits, both union and Welfare Fund.

If any detail of your Data Correction Sheet is incorrect, simply correct it in red ink and return it to the PCT office. **Correct sheets do not have to be returned.**

## **STENO COURSE TO BEGIN**

CUPCT members who registered for the PCT transcription course designed to help clerical members to qualify for higher Civil Service job titles are reminded that the first of the nine two hour sessions will be held on **Wednesday, November 14 at 4:00 P.M.** in the Staff Room of the Parkway School.

Only registered members are eligible to attend.

## VOTE/COPE DRIVE

November 1<sup>st</sup>, the PCT will launch it's annual VOTE/COPE fund-raising drive. VOTE/COPE is the political action fund of New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), the PCT's state affiliate. The suggested contribution for this year is \$40.

It is through the voluntary VOTE/COPE contributions that all of the political activities of NYSUT and the PCT are financed. **Members' dues dollars are not used to support political efforts.**

This is going to be a difficult year for education in Albany. Reduced state revenues will undoubtedly make the yearly scramble for education dollars even more difficult. Several scary bills before both houses of the legislature, bills supported by Governor Spitzer, would install tuition tax credits, thereby diverting money from the public schools to private schools. Locally, there is the need to advance the PCT's agenda and to take an active part in Board of Education and budget elections. All of these activities cost money. That money can only come from the voluntary contributions of members like you.

Collecting money is one of the most difficult jobs SRC Reps have. Members are asked to make this easier for our union representatives by contributing generously and making their contributions early. Many schools will be launching their VOTE/COPE drives at the first SRC meeting in November. Building leaders will be asking members to bring their checkbooks to that meeting and make their contribution then.

In merging with NYSUT last year, we joined with colleagues on Long Island who have a tradition of raising more political action money than any other section of the state. There are neighboring locals which through payroll deduction raise as much as \$150 per member per year. Our officers believe that we need to become a part of that tradition.

## RETIREMENT WORKSHOP SET

Last year the PCT conducted a retirement workshop that was very well received. Members have asked that our union make it part of our regular program of services.

This year's workshop will be held on Thursday, February 7, 2008 at 4:00 P.M. The location will be determined by the number of members who register to attend.

The workshop will cover the retirement benefits of both the Teacher and Employee Retirement Systems, the contractual sick buy-out benefits and health insurance in retirement.

Members wishing to attend should send a note or email to the PCT Office ([office@pobct.org](mailto:office@pobct.org)).

## IN MEMORIAM



This month, the PCT lost one of its most committed brothers. For almost 50 years, Irwin Penzel was a PCT activist, from his participation in the first teacher strike on Long Island in Plainview in 1966 to his service on the PCT Executive Board representing retirees, Irwin always held the PCT close to his heart. Literally days from death, his mind was on us, asking his wife, retiree member Harriet Penzel, to let the union know he was gravely ill.

Irwin always answered the call. Whether it was his country calling him to serve in World War II, his union asking him to go on strike, or the retirees of Nassau County having their interests represented, there was no job, union or otherwise, too big or too small for him to do. If his union asked him, he was there, whether it be to be a picket captain, serve on a militancy committee or build some book shelves for the union office. Irwin was always aware that even the smallest job contributed to the strength of the organization. His spirit serves as an example to us all.

## FEEDING THE HUNGRY

One of our members, Tom Syrett, is starting a food pantry for needy Hicksville-Plainview residents at the Hicksville United Methodist church. If you would like to donate a tax deductible donation or food, please contact Tom at 822-2471. Donations can be made out to the "Food Pantry at the Hicksville Methodist Church."

## CREDITS FOR SALE

1.5 CW Post credits. Contact Christine McCarthy 455-8821.

1.5 Dowling credits. Contact Jennifer Passante 937-6404.