



PCT PLEDGE

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LET US TEACH

By Lori Stitt - Lori is a 3rd grade teacher at the Parkway School and a former Vice-President of the PCT for Elementary Schools.

Well, I must say after reading "Children's Play" by Jane Brody, "For Math Students, Self Esteem Might Not Equal High Scores" by J. Matthews, and of course, Morty Rosenfeld's article in TeacherTalk - "Grouping Students Appropriately," I've come to realize that there is a much bigger problem. The problem? Parents should be reading these articles. They need to understand how to become more productive partners in the education of their children by becoming more supportive of the efforts of teachers.

Not only are teachers faced with constant curriculum changes mandated by the state, but we are also faced with countless demands that the district places on us. And as if that isn't enough, we are increasingly also being forced to defend, explain, and justify ourselves to parents. I wish I could say that what I am about to describe surprised me, but instead, I can honestly say "nothing" surprises me anymore, and that's after only 12 years in this district.

Recently, while on hall duty, where I'm responsible for more than 100 third and fourth grade students, I asked two fourth grade girls, who were walking passed me, where they were going. When they told me, I then asked them which adult gave them permission to leave the hallway. Their response was that they did not ask anyone. I explained to both of them that they needed to ask permission to leave the hallway area so that an adult would know where they were for safety reasons.

To me, this was all in a days work. So I thought, until the next day when I received a lengthy, typed letter, from the disgruntled parent of one of the girls I had talked to the day before. This parent's letter stated how I should not have "confronted" her daughter, nor should I have "yelled" at her. Mind you, this child is not even one of my students. In her letter, the parent suggested I call her to "discuss" this matter further.

While I certainly didn't need to work yet another parent phone call into my day, especially about a student not in my class, I gave the angry parent a call! Nothing was accomplished with this phone call... No surprise there! The parent implied that she was doing me a favor writing me rather than going to the principal - a clear threat. At no time during our conversation could she acknowledge

that a well run school needs to keep track of where kids are and discipline children when they fail to follow the rules that make that task possible.

How are educators supposed to teach and gain respect from their students when parents increasingly question the routine student management things good teachers do? Parents should be helping their children develop the social skills that will help them deal with, and cope with the world around them by reinforcing school discipline rather than teaching their children to expect the world to change for them. If we can't get many parents to accept teachers questioning their children's movements in a school, how can anyone expect them to accept their children being put into homogeneous math groups, or self contained classes. "Oh no! Not my child!"

For some reason, parents don't want their children to experience frustration, losing, defeat or rejection. We truly are raising a generation of whimps - no more "dodgeball"... it's a form of bullying - playgrounds that don't allow risk taking - parents who don't allow feuding children to work things out between themselves. Everything must make children feel good, even though we know the real world doesn't work that way.

How are we, educators, supposed to make a difference in the classroom when we know that parents are just waiting to question our authority, our decision making, and our teaching techniques? And I can bet that many conversations between parents about teachers are not done "after" the children go to bed, and are fast asleep dreaming of sugar plum fairies, and unicorns, but rather take place right in front of their children. How can we possibly expect our students to respect us when their parents don't?

Parents need to learn to help their children become responsible members of society, to respect adults, and to adjust to the world around them. Perhaps the PTA and the district should invest in guest speakers coming to our district for "parent education" meetings/classes. We can't continue swimming up stream against all of these obstacles. Many of us, not even close to retirement, are really getting tired! The only thing we want to do is teach! Just let us!!!!!!

MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE APPOINTED

Acting on a recommendation of the PCT officers, the Executive Board has established a middle school committee with the following membership:

Bob Barca	Dave Gestwick
Kathy Abbene	Paula Jasser
Darlene Curran	Barbara Nizewitz

PCT President Morty Rosenfeld, Secretary Judi Alexanderson, Vice-President Vicki Ahlsen and Treasurer Kevin Dugan will sit as *ex officio* members of the committee.

The charge of the committee is to examine our middle school program and to make recommendations for its improvement. PCT members are encouraged to discuss their views on

this subject with the members of the committee.

LITERACY COMMITTEE FORMING

The PCT has announced the formation of a union literacy committee, to be made up of volunteers from across the elementary and middle school grades, Literacy Collaborative coordinators, reading specialists and special ed teachers to develop an agenda for the PCT aimed at improving the academic outcomes of the students in our schools.

The officers of the PCT are aware that central office is undertaking their own review of our literacy program. They know too that the Board of Education has had discussions on the subject and will be looking from recommendations from the administration. That's why PCT President Morty Rosenfeld said to the Executive Board, "We need a broad based committee to begin work immediately to develop a position on literacy for our union. If we don't do so, the agenda of others will carry the day. We must do what we did last year for math, only better. Literacy will be a much more difficult issue to handle."

Members interested in serving should let their SRC Reps know immediately.

VOTE/COPE DRIVE IN HIGH GEAR

SRC Reps are actively engaged in the PCT 2007 VOTE/COPE fundraising drive. Last year's drive produced over \$13,000 with \$5,200 coming back to the PCT to finance our extraordinarily successful local political activities. The officers of the PCT have announced their determination to do an even better job this year.

This year SRC Reps are going to work extra hard to reach the minority of PCT members who didn't contribute last year. They will be trying to help those members understand that like everything else in our union, each member has to do her share. Central to their message is that contributing union political action money **cannot** fairly be tied to whom NYSUT or the PCT supports in a particular election. It the last state election cycle, NYSUT supported an assortment of Democrats and Republicans, **all of whom had records supportive of public education.**

Pensions, tenure, the Taylor Law, tuition tax credits, private school vouchers, **these are the issues on which every person working in public schools needs representation in Albany.** These are the issues VOTE/COPE dollars are used to work on. All of these issues are dealt with through the voluntary contributions of union members like you.

PCT AND CAS MEET

Representatives of the PCT and the Council of Administrators and Supervisors (CAS), the union

representing the Districts's building level administrators, held a meeting at the beginning of the month. The meeting was called at the suggestion of the PCT to ascertain the extent to which CAS and the PCT could work together on our union's academic standards agenda as well as other issues of mutual interest.

While both unions have had their differences in recent times, there have been many times when the two organizations have been able to work together for the benefit of both groups and the District. The November meeting was characterized by a cordial though frank exchange of views.

The leadership of the PCT is looking forward to a continuation of these talks. Reporting on the meeting to the PCT Executive Board, PCT President Morty Rosenfeld said, "If we are to succeed at our mission of raising the academic standards of our district and the expectations we have for our students, it would be extraordinarily helpful to have the building administrators working with us."

WELFARE FUND NOTICES

The Welfare Fund wishes to remind members that all dental claims must be filed directly with the Welfare Fund Office.

While the Welfare Fund engages Fitzharris & Co. to do its claims processing, the Fund office must authorize Fitzharris to make a payment on any claim. **Sending dental claims to Fitzharris, therefore, will delay payment of a claim significantly.**

The Fund also wishes to remind members that a benefit workshop can be arranged at any of our school buildings. Let your SRC know that you wish such a meeting.

TRACT CENTER

TRACT Teacher Center Facilitator Blaise Martinelli has informed us that the center is located in Room 150 of JFK HS and is open on Tuesdays from 2:30 to 5:30 P.M. The laminator is now housed in the Kennedy Library and is available at all times. Members wishing to contact Blaise can direct their emails to BMartinelli@pob.k12.ny.us.