



PCT PLEDGE

**Plainview-Old Bethpage
Congress of Teachers
303 Sunnyside Boulevard - Suite 90
Plainview, New York 11803
(516) 349-1310**

On the Web at:
<http://pobct.org>



Volume XXXV, No. 7

February 26, 2008

GETTING EXCITED

by PCT President Morty Rosenfeld

I've been concerned about how we ought to proceed with our union drive to improve our middle school program. That concern has centered around several questions. How does a union spur its members on to improve a program without being seen to be criticizing the very people whose energies are required for the improvement? How do we lead people who have grown cynical about the possibilities of meaningful change having been through so many other middle school reform efforts only to see them all founder due to insufficient funding, change of administrative leadership or just plain inertia? I sensed from the first meeting of our committee the greatest barrier to our goal of two middle schools with well defined, rich curricula, high expectations and standards was the belief in too many that the goal is unattainable. I'm beginning to be less concerned.

After a recent presentation by an extraordinary presenter representing International Baccalaureate (IB) on their middle school program, it's clear to me that the members of our committee want to believe that they can improve the quality of our program and that IB may turn out to be the vehicle for doing so. Committee members were taken by the approach of the program that seeks to train students to be creative thinkers by requiring them to consider the interrelatedness of all knowledge. They were also moved by the IB goal of encouraging ethical behavior, training students to be "citizens of the world." Perhaps more than anything, we were all fascinated by the fact that IB is a teacher driven program in which teachers are the central decision makers in how the program is implemented.

Sensing the real excitement about what they had seen, I asked our committee if they wished to move forward to implementing an IB middle school program. Still appropriately cautious, they have asked me to talk to the District about undertaking a year of study of the IB middle school program complete with visits with staff in other schools where it is being taught. They do not, however, wish to leave our current program unaddressed while we do that study. They are calling for curriculum work to begin as soon as practicable so everyone will know what students are expected to know by the end of each grade. They additionally want to begin to work with administration to curtail the many interruptions in the academic program in our middle schools. Interestingly, much of this work would need to be done anyway if we choose to go the IB route.

I believe that central administration and the Board of Education will want to work with us on our proposal. I believe they, too, have begun to be excited at the possibilities.

The committee's next step will be to lay the predicate for a middle school-wide discussion of IB. I've challenged the members of the committee to share their excitement with the remainder of the middle school staff.

PCT ELECTION REMINDER

PCT members are reminded that Nominating Petitions must be filed by all candidates for PCT office by 5:00 P.M. on March 12, 2008. Petition forms are available at the PCT Office. Balloting will take place on May 5, 2008. All PCT officer positions in all bargaining units will be up for election at that time.

VOTE/COPE DRIVE ENDS

VOTE/COPE, NYSUT's political action fund, depends on voluntary contributions. Neither the PCT nor NYSUT uses dues dollars to finance its political action work. Once again, PCT members have recognized the importance of political action to the union movement. This year's VOTE/COPE drive collected \$13,868. That was \$791 more than last year's successful drive.

While all of our schools worked hard on collecting political action dollars, the Kindergarten Center took the collection honors this year, bringing in an average of \$34.46 per member. Close second was the Stratford Road School with an average contribution of \$33.20. Heroes of the effort are all of the SRC Reps who stuck to the difficult job of collecting money until the job was done.

POBLA ROLLS CONTRACT OVER

Having just settled a contentious hourly pay issue on very favorable terms, the officers of the PCT's public library unit (Plainview-Old Bethpage Library Association) were getting ready to begin negotiations for a new contract to replace the one set to expire in June when the Plainview Public Library's Board very wisely approached the leaders of POBLA with a proposal to roll the existing contract over for a three year period. POBLA leaders Linda Prussein and Marilyn Stolove worked with PCT officers Morty Rosenfeld and Cindy Feldman to fashion a response to the Board's offer.

In the end, an agreement was reached to extend the contract for three years at \$4000 per full-time member in year one followed by four percent in each of the next two years. Additionally, POBLA was able to improve the part-time sick leave benefit and gain an increase to the Welfare Fund of \$20 per member, the same increase due to the Teacher and Clerical Units of the PCT next year.

This latest round of collective bargaining continues a series of significant contractual improvements since the affiliation of POBLA with the PCT. The latest agreements further indicate a very palpable improvement in the labor/management relationship. Commenting on the contract roll-over PCT President Morty Rosenfeld said, "There's no question. The atmosphere in the library has been immeasurably improved. There's one final step that needs to be taken, however - the organizing of all the workers in the library into our union."

WELFARE FUND REPORT

The PFT Welfare Fund hired a new administrator for its dental insurance program in January. **Nothing about the benefits under the plan has changed.** The only difference is that a new company, Guardian, is evaluating the claims and cutting the benefit checks.

As with any change, however, there are always a few "bugs" that must be worked out of the system. Members are advised that the Fund believes most of them have been worked out so that any delays in settling dental claims should begin to clear up immediately.

Members are also reminded that the Welfare Fund is no longer accepting dental claims for services performed prior to January 1, 2008.

PCT CHILDCARE PROVIDER

The PCT has long recognized our members need for reliable, affordable childcare. That recognition has caused us to explore possibilities ranging from setting up our own childcare facility to establishing a relationship with a quality, convenient provider who would give our members a discount. To date, Shalom, located in the Jamaica Avenue School, is the best option we have been able to find for our members.

PCT members who enroll their children in Shalom are entitled to a 10% discount on the tuition. Our union has had this relationship with Shalom since it opened. Throughout these years, we have never had a complaint about the quality of the care given to our members' children by the excellent staff.

Shalom informs us that they are registering children for September now. Interested PCT members need only call Shalom at 433-0038 and arrange an appointment. Be sure to identify yourself as a PCT member to obtain your discount.

IN MEMORIAM

In recent days the PCT lost two of its longtime members. We were saddened to learn of the passing of Hercules (Rocky) Kriaris, a social studies teacher at POB and Kennedy High Schools. Rocky was also for many years an athletic coach. In everything he did, he sought to maintain the highest standards.

Ruth Perrone, a former Elementary Vice-President of the PCT came to work at the Pasadena School in 1960. The history of her career in POB is the story of teachers rising from conditions tantamount to serfdom to earners of respectable salaries and decent working conditions. In a piece written for a journal distributed at her funeral, PCT President said, "All who worked with her know that she was a powerful advocate for teachers. What I'm not sure is known as well is the ongoing contributions she made to the strategic and tactical thinking of the PCT. Whether at contract negotiation sessions, meetings with the management of the school district or among the officers of the union, Ruth, I would learn, would be one of the keenest listeners among us. Never quick to speak, when she chose to, however, it was often to challenge us to look at things a different way or to consider something she felt we had overlooked." Her work remains a part of the living history of our union.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The Board of Education has agreed to provide the necessary investment vehicle to enable those who retire to shelter more of their sick leave buyout than they otherwise would be able to. There is still work to be done to put this program in place. There will be many more details to follow.

CREDITS FOR SALE

CW Post credits Contact Sharon Lasher 631-553-9025.

4.5 Hofstra Credits. Contact Maureen Egglinger at Parkway 349-4778.

One Adelphi University credit. Contact Debra Saffran at 631-539-9133.