



## **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](http://pobct.org)**

Volume XXXXVI, No. 1

September 3, 2008



## **THE YEAR AHEAD**

**by PCT President Morty Rosenfeld**

Welcome back! Welcome back teachers to your classrooms. Welcome back CUPCT members from the wonderful days of having the teachers and most of the administrators on vacation.

Welcome back to what will surely be a challenging year. There will be so much to do.

Last year we took a giant step toward raising the academic standards of our district with the wonderful work our members did to revamp our districts math program. Not only did our scores on the state assessments improve very significantly, our members report that their students are doing much better at the instantaneous recall of basic math facts. This year, with the introduction of a new math series, we should be doing even better.

This summer, PCT members were busy seeking to do for English Language Arts what was accomplished for math. Teachers K-8 will return this year to find new ELA curricula that have been written with the component skills of quality English instruction in mind. Parents will shortly be receiving booklets based on the curricula, letting them know what their children will be expected to learn in each grade. The new curricula will not infringe on any teachers academic freedom. They will, however, ensure that children throughout our district will be taught the same skills, **sometimes through different readings, often through a different classroom approach**, but in the end all of our students will be given the opportunity to develop the same reading, thinking, speaking, listening and presentation skills.

This year will also see a continuing focus on middle school, with an intensive year of study of the Middle Years International Baccalaureate program (IB). As soon as the first week in October, members of the PCT Middle School Committee will be traveling upstate to see some Middle Years programs in operation. There will be opportunities for middle school teachers to attend IB training sessions. To my mind the central question for us will be, can the IB Middle Years program help us to elevate the academic standards of our middle schools? We should be able to decide by the end of this academic year.

Political work is always on the PCT's agenda. This fall, however, it should have an even more special place in our lives. If we care about public education, universal health care, the health of the environment, our relationship to the rest of the civilized world or our very freedom as citizens, we will work vigorously to elect Barack Obama President of the United States. Like many of you, he was not my original Democratic candidate. However, neither you nor I can permit the fact that our candidate didn't prevail in the primaries to weaken our resolve to meaningfully change the direction of our country. The Bush years have empowered the enemies of public education. We are challenged to elect an administration that believes public schools are essential to a democratic society, an administration that believes in investing significant public treasure to see that this vital institution is strengthened. Start thinking about the time you will volunteer to make the thousands of phone calls that we will have to make to bring this administration to power.

At the state level, tax caps have been stalled, but they haven't gone away. At the moment each house of the legislature has a bill - the senate has passed a tax cap, and the assembly has passed a property tax circuit breaker tying an individual's property tax liability to their income. Will there be a political compromise? Will one idea prevail in the end? Much will depend on the political work we do, both as members of the PCT and working through NYSUT.

It will also depend, as it always does in the U.S., on the amount of political action money we raise. Once again, November will be VOTE/COPE month. While we raised almost \$14,000 last year (40% of which came back to the PCT for local political work), we need to realize that locals our size on Long Island raise much more per member than we do. The issues we are confronting this year should encourage us all to give more than we gave last year.

Finally, this is the last year of our contracts with the District. At our first PCT Executive Board meeting, I intend to ask for authority to explore the possibility of an extension of our current agreement. Should that not be possible, we will shortly begin to prepare ourselves for a full round of negotiations.

Our plate is full, to be sure. As always, with your efforts and continuing support, we will succeed as we always do. The alternative has never been part of the PCT vocabulary.

I wish you all a wonderfully satisfying year.

## **MIDDLE SCHOOL VP OPENING**

The *Pledge* is informed that PCT Middle School Vice-President Vicki Ahlsen has submitted her resignation for personal reasons. The PCT Executive Board will act on her resignation at their first meeting of the year on September 9, 2008. The PCT Constitution provides that the Executive Board appoint an interim VP to serve for 30 days at which time there will have to be an election to fill Ahlsen's unexpired term which ends June 30, 2010. The election has been tentatively scheduled for October 27, 2008. All middle school members are eligible to run. Nominating petitions are available from the PCT Office.

## **403b CHANGES 457 PLAN STARTING**

PCT members wishing to start a 403b account or change their contributions to existing accounts (tax sheltered annuities) are reminded that they have until Sept. 15, 2008. The next contractual deadline for changes is January 15, 2009.

The PCT is working with the District to develop a process for informing members of the new 457 Plan benefits available to them. Very similar to a 403b, the New York State administered 457 Plan will be of interest to members who are currently maxing out their 403bs. The new plan essentially permits them to shelter the same amount that they can currently put into their 403b. During the fall, a representative of the plan will be visiting each building to familiarize members with it. Watch the *Pledge* for a schedule of visits.

## **LANE CHANGES**

PCT members are reminded that if they completed sufficient course work over the summer to advance a lane or more on the salary schedule, they need to inform Arthur Jonas' office before September 10, 2008. So long as this notification is made, payment on the new lane is assured as soon as the official university transcript is received by the district.

## **FLEX BENEFITS CHANGES IN NOVEMBER**

Changes in flex benefits deductions are made through the Business Office in November for the year beginning January 1, 2009. It is not too soon, therefore, for members to start thinking of changes they may wish to make. Now is a good time to review medical expenses not covered by insurance which could be paid for with pre-tax dollars from one's flexible medical spending account.

## **PCT PARTY**

Each year the PCT holds a party to welcome its newest members and to say farewell to those who retired last year. This year's party will be held on October 23 at the restaurant Four in Melville.

From 4:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. there will be an open wine, beer and soft drink bar plus a wild assortment of finger foods and hot dishes. For \$20 dollars, it's a great chance to meet our new members, see colleagues from across the District and salute those who have given so much to the District and the PCT. Watch for the party flyer.

## **IN MEMORIAM**

We were saddened this summer by the loss of three PCT members, two active and one retired.

### **ROBERT KRAPP**

Retiree member Bob Krapp was one of the early members of the PCT. An elementary teacher at the Old Bethpage School, Bob became an SRC Rep and an outspoken representative of the members he served. Those who worked with him recall him as going out of his way to resolve issues peacefully. We will remember Bob and his service to the PCT.

### **MAURA SCHULTHEIS**

CUPCT member Maura Schultheis was for eight years the attendance clerk at the Kindergarten Center. Her colleagues knew her as a highly efficient member of their school team who often helped them with technology issues at which she was very adept. We share her loss with her unionist husband and their children.

### **INGRID GURZYNSKI**

No one who met Ingrid Gurzynski could escape being struck by her grace and courage in the face of adversity. For the long period of time battling the illness that would finally conquer her, Ingrid never looked for pity, never railed against her fate, never did anything but make the people she came in contact with feel comfortable with her situation and glad that they had the good fortune to know her. An outstanding teacher, a spirited SRC rep and member of the PCT Executive Board, Ingrid was one of the finest people any of us has known. We will think of her often, especially when we need to take courage.