

PENSION CONCERNS

The financial crisis gripping the country has caused many members to call the PCT office with questions concerning the stability of the New York State Teachers and Employees Retirement Systems.

The good news is that both pension funds are, unlike those of many other states, completely funded. That is, they have the financial resources to meet their projected pension obligations. The funds are well diversified and are designed to withstand financial downturns like the current one. Neither fund depends entirely on the earnings of its investments to meet its obligations. The contributions of public employers are adjusted each year in accordance with financial conditions to ensure that the fund can continue to be actuarially sound. Thus, we would expect employers to be required to contribute a greater percentage of their payrolls for next year in light of the decreased value of the pension funds portfolios.

The other good news for members already retired is that the Constitution of New York expressly prohibits the reduction of any retiree's pension. That's as good a guarantee as one gets in this world.

On a bleaker note, public employee pensions have been under attack for some time. The gradual disappearance of defined benefit pensions in the private sector and the inveighing unscrupulous politicians against government and those who work for it have left us with too many Americans believing that having enough money to live in dignity in retirement is a luxury our society can no longer afford. Financial crises tend to feed this sort of stupidity.

That said, there will undoubtedly be some moves in Albany to create a Tier 5 in our pension systems. We must all remember that it was a financial crisis in New York City and State in the 70s that led directly to Tiers 3 and 4. Surely, our union political work in Albany is bound to change from seeing improvements in Tiers 3 and 4 to working hard to prevent a further erosion of pension benefits in our state.

DENTAL BENEFIT ADJUSTED

The Trustees of the PFT Welfare Fund have announced that effective January 1, 2009 the yearly maximum dental benefit will increase from the current \$1900 to \$2000. This will not change any payroll deductions for family or couples dental coverage.

Periodically, the Fund adjusts the yearly maximum to account for the inflations in the cost of dental care.

IB TRAINING

This year the PCT Middle School Committee is investigating the possibility of introducing the International Baccalaureate (IB) program to our middle schools. Members of the committee have already made some visitations to middle schools doing the program and volunteered to attend IB training programs during the course of the year.

A recent trip to the Buffalo Honors Middle School

was a lesson on the importance of having teachers talk with other teachers who are actually working with the IB Program. Middle School teachers Chris Bianco and David Gestwick went to their Buffalo visit and IB conference not comfortable that they understood the thrust of the program. As they reported to the PCT Executive Board, several hours of talking with people involved with the program have given them a much clearer understanding of the program and what it may be able to do for our two middle schools.

Middle school teachers interested in attending an IB training in their discipline should inform the PCT Office of their interest.

ELA CURRICULUA

K-8 PCT members will shortly be receiving the draft of the new ELA curricula written by their colleagues this summer. Members are asked to read the document carefully before the Election Day conferences.

At that time, writers of the documents will lead discussions aimed at making whatever changes members deem to be in order. The goal is to have broad agreement on a core of skills that will then be taught across the grades in the district.

This ELA project is part of the PCT agenda to raise the academic standards of our district and is part of our union's effort to bolster public support for the quality of our academic program.

TRACT CENTER OPEN

The TRACT Center is open on Tuesdays from 2:30-5:30, but equipment can be picked up by appointment as well. Please email Blaise Martinelli at bmartinelli@pob.k12.ny.us if you plan to come in. Time is running out to register for classes for in-service credit or professional development hours. Go to nassautract.org and click on course catalog for a list of offerings. Saturday courses may not count toward professional development hours.

DATA CORRECTION FORMS

Each PCT member will shortly receive 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.**