



PCT PLEDGE

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YEAR'S END

By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld

There has been much to be proud of this year, both educationally and from a union perspective.

The work our union has done to raise the academic standards of our district has clearly begun to demonstrate the wisdom of that undertaking. Math and ELA scores are up for a second year in a row, an ever increasing number of PCT members are actively involved in our middle school reform effort and high school self-selection has been tightened up so that honors classes and college level courses are coming increasingly closer to what they were intended originally to be. That's not to say our work is finished - far from it. It is, however, an attempt to pause and reflect on what our members can accomplish when they decide to take charge of their professional work and administration decides to help them rather than get in their way.

Speaking of administration, I would be remiss if I didn't say a public word about the contribution of Assistant Superintendent Linda Bruno to our efforts to improve the quality of our academic program.

I like to think that longevity as President of the PCT gives me a perspective that few share. I've worked with many administrators in my years of union work. Most knew little about educating children and even less about leadership. A few were even crazy. A very few understood that all serious and lasting reform has to ultimately come from the grassroots, that the function of administration is to promote people taking charge of their work and creating the environment in which they can succeed.

Where others might resist a union led reform effort, Bruno quickly saw it as an unusual opportunity to get things done. Where most would not sit at union committee meetings to provide expertise and administrative perspective, Bruno welcomed the opportunity to build consensus and had a strong enough ego to allow a union committee to often set the direction of the district's efforts. While some may see these words as the beginning of my own decline, I'm proud to say I've enjoyed working with her very much and will miss her greatly.

That said, our work to improve our district academically began before Linda Bruno's arrival and must continue after her departure. There is still so much to do. This summer, some of our colleagues will be writing the second part of the new ELA curriculum. In the fall, we will begin a year of study of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years program to see if it provides us with the structure we seek for our middle school reform effort. That study will be facilitated with two IB

Teacher Coordinators that we convinced the Board of Education will be essential to the year of study.

Politically, we worked through NYSUT and the NEA and AFT to win passage of the Federal Stimulus Legislation without which we would have been looking at layoffs and severe cuts to the academic program. When all was said and done, our district wound up with a little more money in aid than it had last year - all through a massive political action effort. We beat back a property tax cap and fought off creation of a tier 5 in our pension systems, efforts that we will undoubtedly need to make again in the fall.

Locally, the budgets of our school district and public library passed handily, thanks in large part to our support of the budget through political efforts. Board of Education member Evy Rothman was successfully returned to office, and a last minute effort to defeat a write-in candidacy for the Plainview Library Board by the former director fell short by only four votes.

What we have not as yet been able to accomplish is gaining new contracts for our school district bargaining units. I trust that by the time for school in the fall, the Board of Education will come to understand the connection between good contracts, arrived at in timely fashion, and the continuing academic progress of the district. I'll have more to say about this subject at our General Membership Meeting on June 15th.

In all, given the difficult times, we had a very good year. I've been very proud to work with you to make it happen.

Before closing with best wishes for a wonderful summer, I need to say at least a few words about CUPCT President Lillian Feigenbaum who will be retiring this summer. Throughout the years I've done union work with her, hardly a day has passed without Lillian calling to stay in touch with an event, or to raise an issue of concern to PCT members - teachers or clericals. The welfare of our members was always on her mind. Where others would seek to find excuses to miss meetings, Lil was always there, in recent times often after great physical exertion. I'm proud to have worked with her in our great cause but prouder still to call her my friend.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MONDAY, JUNE 15

Members are reminded of the general membership meeting of the Teacher, Clerical and Substitute Units of the PCT at 4:00 P.M. on June 15, 2009 in the LGI of the Kennedy High School.

The purpose of this meeting is to hear a report on the status of negotiations for new contracts to replace those which expire at the close of business on June 30th.

While it is a very busy time of the year, members are urged to make every effort to attend this very important meeting.

Members who have expressed some concern about holding our meeting in a school that appears to have had an outbreak of flu will be comforted to know that the attendance of both students and staff have returned to normal levels.

2009 RETIREES

Each June we say goodbye to our members who elect to retire. This year is no exception. We wish our 2009 retirees good health and a rewarding retirement. We trust that they will become members of our Retiree Chapter and thereby continue to embrace us in solidarity. This year's retirees are:

Sally Antman-Gleicher (Mattlin)
Barbara Bregman (POB Middle)
Denise Cavadias (Kennedy Spec. Ed.)
Mark Colleluori (Kennedy Phys. Ed.)
Lillian Feigenbaum (CUPCT President)
Sue Rachell (Kennedy Business Ed.)
Arlene Rubenstein (Kennedy Guidance)
Tom Syrett (Kennedy)

PARENT PORTAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

This winter it became apparent that the District intended to launch a new Infinite Campus module in 2009-10. The so-called "Parent Portal" would permit parents to access data lodged in the District's information system from their homes. This development raised important questions: what kinds of information should be posted and which Infinite Campus portal options should be activated by the District?

The PCT Executive Board appointed a committee with representatives from every building to consider which portal options and features would be sensible and which features might have unintended consequences. The committee met four times and researched trends in other districts, canvassed the Plainview staff and evaluated technical issues related to the portal. They also reflected on the advantages and disadvantages of different kinds of data sharing.

The committee determined that several Parent Portal options should be activated as soon as possible. Student attendance data, progress reports, report card documents, and student schedules should be available to parents through the portal, committee members found. The committee also concluded that a feature that permits teachers to post online announcements for parents also warrants implementation.

Some options, however, were rejected by the committee. Grade book entries, for example, were deemed to be unsuited for posting on a portal. While it is certainly important for every stakeholder to be knowledgeable about grades and student progress,

traditional forms of communication are better suited to the task than impersonal web postings.

In the course of their discussions, some committee members were surprised to learn that many teachers, generally in the high school, are forced to share computer work stations during their prep periods and are often denied access to the network. The District must address this problem if it expects its technology initiatives to boost productivity.

PCT Treasurer Kevin Dugan who chaired the committee will be sharing its findings with Assistant Superintendent Arthur Jonas.

TRACT TEACHER CENTER FALL COURSES ANNOUNCED

Responding to teacher requests, TRACT will be offering two Smartboard courses beginning in October, beginner and intermediate respectively. Members may take the class for either in-service credit or as part of your professional development hours. Go to www.nassautract.org for the course catalogue. Questions? Email bmartinelli@pob.k12.ny.us

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The Staff Development Committee wishes to inform members that they will be able to register for 2009-10 staff development courses on Monday, June 15. The PCT and the District agreed that it was technically impossible to meet the contractual June 1 registration time.

IN MEMORIAM

On Friday, June 5, 2009, PCT members and other District staff gathered at St. Pius X church to bid farewell to Stratford Road SRP and former CUPCT officer Diane Guy who was taken from us. Universally liked for her caring ways, appreciated for amazing competence, looked up to as a leader of her union, remembered for her wry sense of humor, Diane's memory will stay with us.

SUMMER HOURS

During the months of July and August the PCT and Welfare Fund Offices are open from 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., Monday through Thursday.