



PCT PLEDGE

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PLAINVIEW'S SLANT ON PERFORMANCE PAY

By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld

Scores on state assessments are up. The curriculum is being strengthened. Plans are in the works to overhaul middle school education to link the program more seamlessly to elementary and high schools. Across the district teachers are raising their expectations, and their students are responding. Plainview-Old Bethpage has been on the move to regain its former luster.

On September 3, I attended and spoke at the district's orientation program for staff new to the district. Superintendent Dempsey was clearly proud to talk about how unusual a place our district is, committed as it is in recent years to self-criticism and self-improvement. He talked about how unusual it was in his experience as a central office administrator to work in a place that was focused on education.

That focus on education, that renewal of pride in serious academic accomplishments, that good feeling that comes with knowing in our bones that we are making real improvements, that was all started by the members of this local union. It was not so long ago that at a meeting with the Board of Education, one of its former members chastised me for even suggesting that we did not have high academic standards. She was even so bold as to suggest that in saying so I was speaking against the membership of our union.

When we began this endeavor to raise the bar for ourselves and our students, we often had to work clandestinely as many of our bosses from the top on down did not believe in our cause. We even had an assistant superintendent who when asked by a parent why her fifth grader couldn't add, subtract, multiply and divide said, "People don't have to know how to do that anymore. They have calculators." It was this union that exhorted its membership to close their doors and teach the children what they needed to know, even in buildings in which doing so was seen as an act of

insubordination.

Now when it comes time to renew our contract, all of that good stuff we've done-stuff that's being done nowhere else I know of- now we are asked to settle for less than others around us are settling for.

No doubt attempts will be made to depict us as greedy pigs looking to feed on more than our share at the public trough. Some may even choose to believe that lie.

You and I know this. This union has recognized before we even started negotiations that this was not a time to score the improvements we deserve. We're not stupid. We know that our nation is in the throes of severe economic problems. Our goal from the very beginning was to quickly do an agreement that would not put us any further behind than the districts we like to compare ourselves to and to ensure that our Welfare Fund remained financially sound. We have been trying since early in the year to get that done so that we might refocus our energies on the educational challenges that remain to be addressed.

For the moment that does not appear to be possible. I will continue to hope and work for a solution to our current dispute with the Board, but for that to happen it will take people talking to one another just as they did when they were working to raise our standards. Surely, those who have worked the hardest to raise the standards of our district are entitled to have that happen.

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, 2009. 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.

403b & 457 CHANGES

The start of a new school year is always a good time to think about changes you may want to make to either your 403b or 457 accounts. Members are reminded that they can take care of those changes online at Omni403b.com or at the webpage of the New York State Deferred Compensation Plan (Google the New York State Deferred Compensation Plan. It's a very long URL).

NAME/ADDRESS CHANGES

If your family status changed over the summer, or if you have moved or changed your email address or phone number, please make sure you give the PCT Office your updated information immediately. During this difficult period it is essential that the PCT be able to communicate with our membership.

NEW MEMBER MEETING

Teachers and clericals new to our district have been invited to attend a benefits workshop on Monday, September 21, 2009 at 4:00 P.M. in the PCT Office. PCT members are asked to impress upon new staff the importance of attending this meeting to put their benefit package in place.

A SAVVY PARENT'S ADVICE FOR BACK TO SCHOOL NIGHTS

A friendly parent pointed us to a column in a recent edition of the *Washington Post* in which Valerie Strauss gives teachers some advice from an educated parent's point of view about how to conduct a back to school night program. We thought the suggestions worth bringing to the attention of our membership. Here is what Ms. Strauss had to say:

"Each teacher should have key information about their class written out on paper that is given out to parents: Overview of the curriculum. Homework: How much kids should do; if and how much the parents should get involved and when. Discipline expectations. Contact information.

And when a parent asks something they shouldn't, tell them nicely you won't answer it and be done with it.

Certainly it takes a strong personality to face some of the parents, especially in areas (like the greater Washington D.C. region) where many parents are more highly educated than their kids' teachers. But keep a stiff backbone anyway.

Parents, even if you have many more degrees than the teacher, assume they know more than you do that night about the class they are going to teach. Don't ask personal or smug questions.

And, please, shut off your cellphones!

(I'll shut off mine.)"

Sounds like the suburbs of Washington DC are very much like POB.

SAVE THE DATE

October 22 is the date of the 2009 PCT party to welcome our newest members and honor those who retired last year. Our party will once again be held at the Four Food Studio in Melville where for several years we have had an extraordinary time with good company, good food and great wine.

Watch your letterbox for instructions on how to sign up.

NOVEMBER AND VOTE/ COPE

As we have done since we merged into the NYSUT family, we will conduct our annual VOTE/COPE drive in November. VOTE/COPE is the political action fund of NYSUT through which all of our state union's political activities are funded. **Dues dollars are not used for political activities.**

It was our voluntary contributions that were significant in bringing the federal stimulus dollars to Plainview. It is our political efforts that held back the drive to create a Tier 5 in both the teacher and employee retirement systems. It will be those voluntarily contributed dollars that will continue that battle this year when again a vast array of influential people and groups will attempt to push a Tier 5 through the legislature again. There will almost certainly be a battle for education dollars this year that will require our VOTE/COPE dollars to protect our interests in Albany.

The PCT Executive Board will be asked to establish a suggested voluntary contribution at their September meeting. It's not too early for each PCT member to start thinking about giving at least a little more than last year.

A LABOR THOUGHT FOR THE TIMES

Solidarity is not a matter of sentiment but a fact, cold and impassive as the granite foundations of a skyscraper. If the basic elements, identity of interest, clarity of vision, honesty of intent, and oneness of purpose, or any of these is lacking, all sentimental pleas for solidarity, and all other efforts to achieve it will be barren of results.

Eugene V. Debs