



PCT PLEDGE

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AND WE'RE OFF

by PCT President Morty Rosenfeld

In recent times, each new school year seems to begin in less favorable circumstances. This year is hardly an exception. The world of public education grows ever more opaque and unpredictable.

Nationally, the lunatics are in charge of the asylum. At a time when our economy is suffering from a profound lack of demand, our government has been talking about almost nothing else than how to cut expenditures. The Republicans who would be president, outdo each other daily in what appears to be an Olympic battle for the title of Most Ignorant Buffoon. Their debates to date reveal people who abjure science, believing that ideas like evolution and global warming to be hoaxes concocted by scientists to obtain government grants. One even went so far as to suggest that the recent hurricane was a message from God to cut back on spending. They oppose equal rights for GBLT people and women, and while professing an aversion to big government are completely comfortable opposing reproductive freedom for women. My favorite in this pack of enemies of working people is Rick Perry, a cross between Elmer Gantry and Jethro Clamptett, who in a recent book proclaimed Social Security to be a Ponzi scheme.

In New York State, between 8 to 10,000 teachers will not be back in their classrooms this September, owing to the reduction in state aid and shrunken local school budgets. While a Democratic governor in thrall to the real estate and hedge fund tycoons councils austerity, the rich get state tax breaks on top of those they receive from the so-call Bush tax cuts. State Ed has no money, but the new commissioner can hire a bunch of advisors at over \$180,000 per year.

One bright note was the recent NYSUT victory in its law suit against State Ed seeking to undo recently promulgated APPR regulations that encouraged using state assessments to calculate 40 percent of a teachers APPR.

Here at home, our contract having expired in June, we face the start of the school year without a new contract. Unlike past years, the Negotiating Committee has decided to open school uneventfully, hoping that now that vacations are behind us, labor and management can concentrate on fashioning an agreement that is fair to both sides. The PCT has said from the outset of the process that we understand this to be a difficult time for districts. Difficult times, however, must not be used as a pretext for unfair demands and proposals that seek to pit one group of members against another. Anyone who just thinks for a moment about the PCT's history of 50 years would know that seeking to divide us is not a wise thing to attempt.

While the year ahead will certainly be challenging, I am, as always, confident that the 50 years of union solidarity that we have built will see us through even these dark days. I know, too, that the most trying of times often offers opportunities for progress. I wish you all a successful and professionally rewarding school year.

OT/PT's CHOOSE PCT

The District's Occupational and Physical Therapists have chosen to be represented by the PCT and have become our newest members. In a recent job threatening problem with Nassau County Civil Service, they reached out to us for help, and we didn't let them down. The Board of Education has recognized the PCT Teacher Unit as their bargaining agent, thereby allowing us to avoid the time consuming and somewhat costly process of holding an election conducted by the New York State Public Employees Relations Board (PERB).

Work is underway to formulate a set of demands for the negotiation of their first contract.

Give the OT/PTs a warm welcome to our union when you meet them.

APPR

An important part of the teacher negotiations, is seeking agreement on the 80 percent of the legislatively mandated annual professional performance review process that must be negotiated between school districts and the local unions. A sub committee of the PCT Negotiating Committee made up of President Morty Rosenfeld, Vice-President Nina Melzer and Secretary Judi Alexanderson have been at work with Central Office since the law was passed at the end of the 2009-10 school year.

While we had the foresight to begin working on this piece immediately upon passage of the law, and while there has been broad cooperation from Central Office, it has been very frustrating for both sides in that the rules of the game change regularly, rules promulgated by a State Ed department that grows more scarily incompetent daily. The latest change of direction came upon NYSUT's successful legal challenge to some of the regulations. If the state Supreme Court's decision stands (The State apparently plans to file an appeal to the Appellate Division.), we will be back to what we originally thought, that 20 percent of a teacher's APPR will be based on state tests, 20 percent on local bargained measures of student performance and 60 percent on a teacher performance rubric, again bargained locally. At this point in the process, only the teacher performance rubric is complete.

Still to be determined are the local measures of student performance to be used, the appeals process, the form and procedures for teacher improvement plans. Additionally, the PCT has linked its demand for a peer assistance/mentoring process for teachers new to the profession and those whose performance at whatever time in their career is judged to be "developing" or "ineffective."

Hopefully, the court's decision stands and the regulations remain clear and constant. But given the history of this ludicrous law, it's anybody's guess when and if we will have a clear and final understanding of it. When we do, the brain trust in Albany will undoubtedly have something new for us to waste our time, energy and resources on.

ATTENTION NEW EMPLOYEES

The PCT and PFT Welfare Fund will hold a meeting for new teachers and clerical employees on Tuesday, September 6, 2011 at 3:30 P.M. in our office at 303 Sunnyside Blvd., Suite 90.

If you are new to our district, be sure to attend this meeting where you will be able to join our union and put in place a very valuable package of benefits that has been negotiated for you.

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, 2011. 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.

GRADUATE COURSES GRIEVANCE

Grievance Chair Judi Alexanderson informs us that a grievance alleging that the Superintendent of Schools has arbitrarily denied graduate credit to a number of teachers will be formally filed this week.

Repeated attempts to negotiate a solution to this issue have been tried and failed. The District's position appears to be that if the university granting the graduate credit for a course will not accept the credit towards matriculation in one of their degree programs, the District will accept it for in-service credit but not graduate.

There is every expectation that this grievance will ultimately go to arbitration, a process in which a neutral arbitrator, paid for equally by the PCT and the District will decide the issue. Unfortunately, this process will probably take months finish.

If you have been denied graduate credit or permission to take a graduate course **and you have not informed the PCT, please send a note to Judi Alexanderson giving the name of the course, the school offering the credit and any correspondence you have had with the District on this issue.** Also, if you have taken any graduate course that has subsequently not been approved and you still have the course outline and requirements, please forward those with your note to Judi as well.

NEED 3 C.W. POST GRADUATE CREDITS?

3 graduate credits at either the Brentwood or Riverhead campuses have been donated anonymously to the PCT.

If you are interested in these **free** credits, send an e-mail to pobctorg@pobct.org by 5:00 P.M. on Wednesday, September 7, 2011 indicating your interest. Names will be placed in a bowl and the winner randomly picked. The winner of the credits will be notified by email.

INFORMATION CHANGES

If you have changed your home address, family status, e-mail address, phone number etc. over the summer, please let the PCT Office know immediately. **This information is vital to processing your Welfare Fund claims and keeping you informed of union activities.**

DO WE FEEL A PARTY COMING ON?

With the 50th anniversary of the PCT behind us, on or about October 20, we will return to our annual event at which we pay tribute to those who retired in June and formally welcome into the PCT our newest members who were hired to replace them. Plans are just starting to be made with the Four restaurant in Melville, the desired location. Watch the *Pledge* for details.