



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)**

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A FEW THINGS

By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld

NEGOTIATIONS

The PCT has had three meetings with the District's negotiating team since the beginning of the school year. The District obdurately maintains that they have no money to give us raises, that we should have, like many others, taken the increment (step) money and divided it among the members and called that raises. That boils down to taking money that those who make the least had a right to expect and giving it to those who in some cases make twice as much.

Clearly, the Board of Education is unprepared to bargain seriously at this time. One would have thought that with a new superintendent to be hired for July 1, they would have approached the PCT more reasonably and recognized the wisdom of starting a new school leader with a multi-year contract in place. We have made it very clear to them that our aspirations in the current economic climate are limited but that raises in recent years haven't even kept pace with the increase of inflation in the area.

The officers of the PCT are rapidly coming to the conclusion that they have to begin to plan for activities to demonstrate our unhappiness with the status of negotiations. The January meeting of the PCT Executive Board will be asked to explore ways in which we might energize the negotiations process.

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH

While we have no money to help PCT members deal with the erosion of the buying power of their salaries, we do have money to hire a consulting firm to help us find a new superintendent, Mr. Dempsey having announced his retirement at the end of the school year. While I don't as yet know how much this enterprise will cost the taxpayers, I do recall the last time such a firm was hired. After thousands of dollars were spent, after all

constituent groups spent time with the consultant and the candidates he found, the Board of Education rejected all of the candidates, demanded to look through all of the applications that had been submitted, picked some different ones to interview and hired Anthony P. Cavanna as our superintendent. Let's hope we have a better experience for our money this time.

PCT COMMUNICATIONS

Given all of the difficult issues the PCT is facing, we need to be sure our communications are up to the tasks at hand. More and more, we have been relying on email to bring members information and to request their assistance in political activities. I want to take this opportunity to urge members to check their email daily for communications from the PCT. If you have not been receiving regular emails from the PCT, we probably don't have a working private email address for you. Simply send us an email at pobctorg@pobct.org.

While we're talking about communications, a reminder that the PCT has a well read webpage at pobct.org. If you haven't visited it recently, you will find that I have been writing an almost daily blog on education issues both local and national. The blog is a little edgier than my *TeacherTalk* column. Give it a try. Let me know how you like it.

Finally, we have been developing a Facebook presence which brings to the attention of members and others, information of interest to the world of public education. Our Facebook page gets about 1000 visits a week to date. If we could get all of our fans to share the pieces we put there, our exposure could reach over 30,000 people. That's the numbers of friends and fans our current visitors have. How powerful would that be for broadcasting our message?

Let me take this opportunity, to wish all of you a wonderful holiday season.

CUPCT MEMBERSHIP

MEETING HELD

On Tuesday, November 30, members of the CUPCT, the clerical bargaining unit of the PCT, met at Kennedy High School. While the agenda for the meeting included a negotiations update, information on a unit grievance and other issues, the focus was on a troubling action by the District which upon the retirement of a middle school attendance clerk has opted to combine the two attendance desks into one position split between both schools. This consolidation has had a ripple effect on other desks as the districts struggle to have the same work done with one person less. This staff cutting decision comes on top of the recent cuts to school library clerical staff, all of

which begin to demonstrate both a lack of management understanding of the work to be done and a lack of concern for the members of the unit who are put in positions of not being able to do their work properly.

PCT and CUPCT officers warned the group that attempts to try to make up for the missing staff would probably only embolden the employer to cut more - that it was not for the employees of the district to subsidize the operation. If the district wishes to cut staff, that is its legal right. However, it must pay for those cuts in reduced services.

PRINCIPALS LETTER ENDORSED BY EXEC. BD.

More and more, the education community is awakening to the fact that the recently enacted teacher and principal annual professional performance review legislation tying student scores on state tests to teacher evaluations will bring about a bureaucratic monstrosity with a huge potential to hurt hard working, competent teachers and principals while doing serious educational harm to students whose school experience will degenerate further into what will become an essentially test prep curriculum. How else to explain the surging interest of teachers and principals in signing on to a protest letter written by the Long Island Principals Association which has morphed into a statewide protest.

While the PCT is well represented on this document, members who have not as yet signed on to the document are encouraged by the PCT Executive Board to do so. It only takes a minute to lend your name to this effort. Simply point your computer to <http://www.newyorkprincipals.org/appr-paper>.

TRACT CENTER

The TRACT center had no funding last year, and has minimal funding this year. Our facilitator, Blaise Martinelli, has been working (unpaid last year) to maintain equipment and has managed to offer two in-service classes that were well attended. You have also received emails for upcoming conferences in December and January. PCT members are asked to understand that many of the services they are accustomed to receiving from the center will not be available until such time as teacher center funding is fully restored. We shouldn't expect teacher center facilitators to subsidize the operation.

VOTE/COPE DRIVE

SRC Reps are attempting to wind up this year's VOTE/COPE drive. VOTE/COPE is the political action fund of NYSUT, our state organization. All of NYSUT's political activities are funded through the voluntary contributions of its members. None of your dues dollars that the PCT sends to them each month goes towards political activity.

With the New York State legislature about to return to Albany, with the battle over education funding already starting to heat up, with various political forces committed to the continued vilification of teachers and other public employees - their salaries, benefits and pensions under almost constant attack, political action dollars will be crucial to further our union agenda in Albany.

Remember too, that there is local political action by the PCT financed by the 40 percent of your VOTE/COPE dollars that are returned to our local by NYSUT for these activities. When we support our local school budget or a candidate for the Board of Education, that work is financed from your VOTE/COPE dollars.

If you haven't made your contribution yet, please do so today. The recommended contribution is \$40. Feel free to give more if you can. If \$40 is too steep for you this year, give something. Union political action is the responsibility of all members. We all need to be a part of this vital activity.

HARBINGER OF THINGS TO COME

We learned this week that groups of unionists, businesspeople and parents are organizing in California to put a ballot initiative up which would raise taxes and provide funding for desperately needed public services which have been starved for resources since the passage of Proposition 13, the California version of the property tax cap. Under their cap, one of the nation's finest systems of public education has been steadily reduced to one of the worst. School districts here in New York are starting to talk about the cuts they will have to make in districts which either can't or won't attempt to gain super majorities for budgets over 2 percent. We will be hearing more about the difficulty of funding public schools in New York after the New Year when school districts begin their public discussions of their budgets.

PCT/FUND HOURS

Monday, 12/26 - Closed

Tuesday, 12/27 - 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Wed.-Friday, 12/28-12/30 - 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.