



PCT PLEDGE

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MAY 15th MUST BE OUR DAY

By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld

There are some things that PCT members must do for themselves. Seeing to it that the school budget in Plainview-Old Bethpage is passed is one of them. You must join the effort that is being organized by your SRC Representatives to see to it that the thousands of phone calls we make in support of our budget get passed.

You can work from home. You can work from the PCT Office, but you have to work with your colleagues to ensure that we have a budget we can live with for next year. Should we fall down on this important job, should we fail to pass the budget, we would only get one more chance to pass it, probably a lesser budget than the one before the public now. Should that effort fail, the law mandates that we run the schools on the 2011-12 budget. That would be nothing short of a disaster.

Asked what two budget failures would mean at a recent Board of Education meeting, Deputy Superintendent Art Jonas estimated that as many as 28 teaching jobs would be lost. You have to do your part to make sure that doesn't happen.

You also must vote to support the budget and pro-education candidates in your home district. On May 15, 16 Long Island districts will put up budgets that pierce the 2 percent property tax cap. **The politically brave boards of education who put these budgets up must be supported!** Should they fail, how will we get the POB Board to put up such a budget as will be absolutely necessary in the not too distant future.

To not vote in your home district to support your community's schools is simply unacceptable. Our union solidarity must be more than rhetorical. We must vote in support of all our public schools and we must do what we can to encourage friends and relatives to do the same.

Mark your calendars now. Make sure you act to keep public schools strong, where you work and where you live.

NYSUT TACKS ON TESTING

At last week's NYSUT convention, the delegates unanimously voted for a shift in the focus of our state organization's policy. With anger over the state's testing system at its peak owing to several notorious failures of the exams, with teachers growing ever more professionally concerned about test preparation replacing authentic education, their representatives decided that enough was enough. They voted to demand an end to the current testing system in New York State.

The following is taken from the NYSUT press release on this policy shift. It is reproduced here so that members can be heartened by the strong position on testing staked out. They should also be encouraged by the commitment also contained in the resolution that passed to "...work with advocacy groups and parents to form a coalition..." to end the madness of seeing one test result as the measure of the work of students and teachers.

"New York's testing system is broken. Teachers know it. Parents know it. And students know it," said NYSUT President Richard C. Iannuzzi. "The State Education Department is not doing its job. Students and teachers deserve tests that are fair, valid and reliable, and are appropriate measures of what's happening in classrooms in every corner of the state. Enough is enough."

Even before the dust had settled on the latest testing debacle — which includes a math question with two correct answers; another math question with no correct answer; and a widely ridiculed reading passage about a talking pineapple that confounded even the all-time Jeopardy champion — teachers from across the state were sharing poignant stories of New York's testing system run amok. Among them:

Teachers reported students breaking out in tears, becoming restless over the excessive length of the tests, and expressing frustration over consecutive days spent on testing. Teachers questioned the scheduling of the English language arts test so soon after the April recess, especially after warnings it would create unneeded anxiety.

Many special education teachers expressed angst over their students being required to sit through 90 minutes of grade-level tests beyond their ability and the goals of their own Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). One teacher said she could only tell her student with special needs to "do your best" as he struggled with a seventh-grade math test, even

though his education goal for the year was to master fifth-grade math skills.

Teachers said too many administrators, concerned about the ramifications of lower-than-expected scores, are stressing “test prep” at the expense of real learning. Teachers report three to four weeks of quality instruction are being lost to the “drill and kill” of test prep and increased pressure to “teach to the test.”

Teachers told NYSUT leaders that the state’s over-reliance on testing is undermining parental support. More and more parents, teachers said, are questioning why their children must sit through hours upon hours of test prep and testing, just to affirm what they believe they already know about teachers, schools and their own children.

Teachers detailed to NYSUT their concerns about factors beyond the control of public schools, such as poverty, hunger, student attendance, parental involvement and the lack of community resources for schools.

Many noted that New York state has now spent more than \$32 million of taxpayers’ dollars on commercially produced, flawed standardized tests, and that these funds could be invested in programs to help children. They said the money is being diverted to testing companies that are profiting off the explosion of standardized testing and the use of data to measure student, teacher, principal and school performance.

“What teachers are saying — and what we are increasingly hearing from parents — can be summed up in just a few words: Children are more than test scores,” NYSUT Vice President Maria Neira said. “Teachers have repeatedly told the State Education Department about problems with this “one-size-fits-all” approach, and raised concerns about test length, scheduling, content and more. The State Education Department chooses not to listen.” She further noted that, contrary to some reports, teachers have no approval role in the state’s selection of standardized tests.

NYSUT said ending the current testing system in favor of more accurate, fair and appropriate assessments would strengthen New York’s new teacher/principal evaluation law by bolstering confidence in the way the State Education Department measures performance. Such tests would include performance-based assessments, student portfolios and other assessments that would allow students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have mastered throughout the year, and which could also be used to more reliably evaluate teacher and principal effectiveness.

On June 5, 2012, NYSUT leaders from all over Long Island will be meeting to begin the process of organizing a campaign to end the debilitating effect of standardized tests on the children in our schools.

PCT ELECTIONS

Only one candidate having filed for each officer position to be elected, PCT Secretary Judi Alexanderson, pursuant to the PCT Constitution, will cast one ballot for each candidate at the May 9, 2012 meeting of the PCT Executive Board.

Elected to serve 2 year terms are the following officers:

PCT Officers

President – Morty Rosenfeld
Elementary VP – Nina Melzer
M.S. VP – Edward Hanlon
H.S. VP – Cindy Feldman
Treasurer – Kevin Dugan
Secretary – Judith Alexanderson

CUPCT Officers

President – Special election necessary
Vice President – Ronni Pearce
Treasurer – Jeannette Abrameto
Secretary – Nellie Hirshman

SUPCT Officers

Chairperson – Eileen Vein
Secretary/Treasurer – Marcia Goldberg
Alternate – Margaret Brent

The special election for CUPCT President is necessitated by the notification received from President Dorothy Griesbach that personal reasons prevent her from running for re-election. Dorothy was unaware of this problem until after nominating petitions were due.

PCT BUDGET

A first draft of the PCT budget for the 2012-13 fiscal year beginning September 1, 2012 has been discussed with the Head SRC Reps. The budget will come before the PCT Executive Board for discussion at its meeting on Wednesday, May 9. It will be adopted at the June meeting of the Board.

Noteworthy in the budget, is a 9 dollar increase in the dues the PCT pays to NYSUT and an approximately 2 dollar increase in NEA dues. These higher than usual increases are due to the loss of membership in both our state and national organizations as a result of the thousands of teacher and educational support professional layoffs across the state and nation.

The PCT budget calls for the increases to be paid from the union’s reserves.