



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)**

Volume L No. 1

September 2, 2013



ANOTHER YEAR

While the public rails at our long vacations, after last year, I'm sure I speak for most of the membership when I observe that this summer respite was not nearly long enough. It can't possibly be time to return to school.

But here we are, and in a few short hours, it will seem as though we never left. The first thing on the minds of our teacher members will be their composite APPR scores. As I write this, the District is struggling to make good its promise to have the scores available electronically for the start of school with a hard copy to follow within a couple of weeks. It's a monumental clerical task that may take a little extra time.

As I wrote to our teacher members over the summer, it is already clear that the overwhelming number of our teachers will be rated effective or better. Let's remember that that was the goal of our negotiated plan. More importantly, let's try to remember that at least 40 points of the APPR process, especially those points tied to the state exams, makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. These scores only have meaning to the incompetents in charge of New York's education policy.

Once we observe the absurdity of these so-called growth scores, it really doesn't matter what our scores are, so long as we are not ineffective or developing. They are just numbers, and just as we maintain that our students are more than a number, so are we infinitely more. Let's try to remind ourselves of this when we receive our score. To do otherwise is lend credence to the education quantifiers who use numbers to further their political agenda - to discredit and destroy public education.

Let's put our energies towards more profitable endeavors. High on our agenda this year will be working to build the political coalitions necessary to end the menace of high stakes testing. I've made no secret of my deeply held belief that the opt-out movement sweeping the country is an effort that the teacher union must support, starting with opting-our own children out of a system that

we believe to be inimical to their welfare, both academically and emotionally.

Toward that end, I have invited Jeanette Detuermann, leader of the Long Island Opt-Out organization, to the first meeting of the PCT Executive Board. We will also be hosting a meeting of Long Island teacher union leaders, seeking to build support for this movement.

The leaders of our PTA are very much with us on this testing issue. Last year, we co-sponsored a legislative breakfast at which parents and staff from the Plainview and Syosset districts pounded our elected representatives with the demand to change the testing regime of the state. We will continue these efforts this year.

On another note, I spent part of this morning participating in a training session for our new Peer Mentors, PCT members selected by our union to become experts in the APPR process and providers of colleague to colleague assistance for new members of the staff, teachers who require Teacher Improvement Plans (TIPs) and/or any member needing assistance with some aspect of their job. PCT members now have available to them the opportunity to seek assistance without having to admit to a supervisor that they are experiencing a problem. The program is completely confidential.

Our Peer Mentors are :

Jane Weinkrantz - JFKHS
Eileen Annino - POBMS
Lori Courtesis - Mattlin MS
Terry Powell - Stratford Road
Michele LaLima - K-Center
Arda Victor - Pasadena
Brianna Hamrah - Parkway
Jaci Morrison - Old Bethpage

Surveys of teacher union members indicate that our newer members want professional assistance from their union. Our Peer Assistance and Mentoring program is our latest effort to serve the needs of our members. I'm proud to have had a hand in making it part of our contract. I'm proud, too, of our Peer Mentors whom I know will make this program a huge success.

While I have much more to catch up with you about, I'll end here with my sincere hope that this will be a professionally rewarding year for you, and that working together we can take some significant steps towards ending the scourge of high stakes testing and its cheapening of our profession.

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 the Personnel Office before September 10, 2013. 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. **Remember that while there is a salary freeze in effect for this year, lane changes are NOT frozen!**

WELFARE FUND IMPROVEMENTS

The Welfare Fund has announced the following improvements to our benefit package.

Effective September 1, 2013 a new 2 year optical benefit period will begin, running until August 31, 2015. Additionally, the benefit has been increased from \$125 to \$175 for each member and eligible members of their family. The benefit is still obtainable in one of two ways. Members can receive a voucher to a General Vision Services store at which they can receive an eye examination, glasses or contact lenses valued at \$450, or they can go to an optician of their choice, present a receipt to the Welfare Fund and receive reimbursement for up to \$175. There are other improvements to our Optical Plan that will be covered in a flyer that will be sent to you shortly.

Effective January 1, 2013, the Welfare Fund also increased the yearly maximum of our dental plan from \$2000 to \$2200. All other facets of our dental plan remain the same. Members can either go to a member of the Guardian Preferred Panel (accessible from the PCT webpage pobct.org), or go to any dentist and be reimbursed up to \$2200 after meeting their \$75 deductible according to our fee schedule.

Members having any questions about these improvements need only contact the Welfare Fund Office at 349-1312.

PUBLIC LIBRARY NEGOTIATIONS

Negotiations have been underway for some months for a new contract at the Plainview-Old Bethpage Public Library. The PCT represents the professional staff in that facility.

While the Library has been seeking to roll over the existing agreement, our members there are insisting that various staffing issues be addressed. A retirement incentive negotiated last year while successful for those who retired has yielded a burden on those who remained in that there have not be replacements job for job.

The Plainview-Old Bethpage Library Association (POBLA) has been pressing the Library to provide the necessary staff to preserve their working conditions. At a negotiating session held just prior to publication of the *Pledge*, it appeared as though progress had begun to be made.

This is the first time in several rounds of negotiations that a successor agreement was not reached before the expiration of the old contract.

HEALTH BUY-BACK SUITS

Last year the PCT filed two lawsuits seeking to challenge New York State's right to end the health insurance buy-back in our contract for those whose spouses are insured by the Empire Plan elsewhere.

We were pleased towards the end of last school year to learn that the New York State Public Employee Relations Board ruled in our favor, declaring that health insurance is a mandatory subject of collective bargaining - meaning that they can be bargained away but not just taken away.

We have also sued the State in the Supreme Court in Albany claiming there too that the State exceeded its authority when it issued its regulation on health buy-backs. While the State claimed that our lawsuit was not filed in a timely fashion and sought to have it dismissed, the judge has sided with us and demanded that the State answer our charge. Watch the *Pledge* for developments.

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.**

NEW CONTRACTS BEING PREPARED

The PCT and the District are at work preparing the manuscripts for a new printing of each of our bargaining unit contracts. Due to a series of what have been essentially role-over contracts, there have not been new contract booklets since 2009.

The new booklets will include all of the changes made since 2009. While it is hard to know exactly when they will be ready, it should not be too long before they are available to the members.