



## **PCT PLEDGE**

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## **THE MOVEMENT GROWS**

By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld

The coalition of educators and parents formed to stop the epidemic of high stakes testing and the glaring foolishness of some of the expectations of the Common Core Standards is gaining ground daily while the supporters of these so-called reforms are beginning their retreat.

The citizens of the state are waking up to the fact that their system of public education has been placed in the hands of arrogant incompetents. Neither John King not Merryl Tisch have any qualifications to lead one of the nation's largest systems. Their almost pitiful defense of the corporate school reforms brought to our state under Race to the Top isn't gaining any traction. In fact, the more the public gets to hear them, the more they lose confidence in the management of our schools.

Parents are leading the way in the movement that I suspect will shortly sweep the Tisches and Kings from the scene. King will go first, as the pressures for his resignation mount and our elected leaders in Albany begin to realize that large numbers of citizens are going to vote on issues of testing and the Common Core. Notice how they are racing to sponsor forums for their constituents to ask questions and express concerns. The more forums, the more outrage of parents and teachers at what the reformers are doing to public education in our state.

This time next year, we will be voting for members of the legislature and governor. By that time parents will have made their initial vote when thousands of them opt their children out of the state examinations this spring. As that happens, and as a very significant numbers of union members opt their children out, we will see our state and national union leaders retreat from their total embrace of the Common Core and accountability based on high stakes testing, even if that means alienating Bill Gates and the money his foundation has poured in to both the NEA and AFT in supports of the Common Core and test based accountability.

Many members have been surprised at my criticism of Common Core given my championing of higher standards for many years. I don't take back much that I have written about higher

standards over the years. I'm still for higher standards, but standards appropriate to the age and abilities of the students we teach. I'm for standards developed by teachers, experienced teachers, not for the dictates of corporate backed reformers who don't have the slightest idea of how reforms like the Common Core are playing out in classrooms across the country. Even teacher created standards should be tested for their efficacy before they are inflicted on the nation's children, not just literally dumped on local districts without benefit of curricula, materials or teachers understanding what they are about.

I've been taking a very active part in the testing/Common Core debate, trying to build support for the kind of reforms that will help our members. If you haven't been a reader of my blog, *A Teachable Moment*, I've been writing almost every day and would value your thoughts on what I have to say.

## **THE CHARITY FLAP**

Contrary to what some mischievous individuals are attempting to stir up, neither PCT President Morty Rosenfeld or any union officer interfered with the fund-raising of any club or member supported organization in the District. The PCT has no interest in any of these activities or any official position as to the worthiness of any of these charities.

What we do have is an interest in protecting every member of our union from management coercion of any kind. Thus when it was brought to the PCT's attention that the brochure for Superintendent's Conference Day contained the statement "Please consider making a donation to this year's selected charities - SNAP and Brick 26 - See building for details," and when emails from administration asking building administration to remind the members of these charities came to the union's attention, there was no choice but to act to stop this inherently coercive action. It is simple inappropriate for one's boss to solicit contributions for anything. Implicit in any such solicitation is, "I'd like to know who contributed and who didn't," thereby making the employee wonder if there will be consequences to not giving. No union can allow that to happen.

Any questions that have been raised by the Superintendent about the ramifications of the PCT's actions to protect its members, are just that - questions raised by the Superintendent about other fund-raising activities in the District. They are not questions raised by the PCT.

## **LET'S NOT TAKE SCORES SERIOUSLY**

It appears to be the case that some members who did not attain a highly effective are taking

those ratings seriously and are grouching about their scores. Remember, the goal of our APPR negotiations was simple. Get everybody to be effective, and that we did. We successfully protected our membership from a stupid system of teacher evaluation tied to the state's high stakes tests, tests that were not designed for that purpose.

To take those ratings seriously is to buy into a system promoted by Bill Gates and other corporate school reformers who neither know nor care about the work that we do. It helps to legitimize a fraudulent process. This year's highly effective teacher may well not be next year if experience in other states is duplicated here.

The parents in our community seem to agree that these scores are unimportant. The PTA has done a wonderful job discouraging the parents from seeking teachers' composite scores. No one is asking for them. So let's not let them become a divisive issue in our ranks. Let's unite and work politically to end this stupidity once and for all.

### **VOTE/COPE**

The VOTE/COPE collection is underway in each building. Members are reminded that VOTE/COPE is the way our state organization and the PCT finance the political work that they do on behalf of the membership. Members' dues money is not used for the political activity of our union.

It is not possible for every member to agree with every political position either NYSUT or the PCT takes. Unions like the PCT and NYSUT are big tents, held together in our case by a deep conviction in the importance of public education to our society. Every VOTE/COPE dollar spent goes to a pro-public education candidate or activity.

Our collections last year were down, owing to the aftermath of the terrible storm and, if we are honest, because some members were angry with the position of NYSUT on APPR. In speeches that PCT President Morty Rosenfeld has made in all of our school buildings, he has warned the members, "Unless we change the tax cap law or convince our community to support higher budgets with super-majorities, there is no future for public education in Plainview-Old Bethpage as we know it. If we are to have a future as good as our past we are going to have to win the political battle against the corporate interests that want to privatize our vocation, and to do that takes money and the power of our numbers."

The Officers of the PCT are committed to making this year our best VOTE/COPE drive yet. That will happen if members put aside their differences and remind themselves that we support Democrats; we support Republicans; we support people and causes

that support public education.

Please support our union's efforts by giving generously to VOTE/COPE.

### **TRAVELERS DON'T FORGET MILEAGE**

With so many PCT members traveling between schools because of a budget process that overlooked the fact that there is a collective bargaining agreement that has to be observed, members are reminded that they are reimbursed for their travel at the IRS rate which for 2013 is 56.5 cents per mile. Forms for reimbursement are available through the Business Office.

### **MIDDLE SCHOOL COMMITTEE PREPARES TO MEET**

As this edition of the *Pledge* goes to press, PCT representatives will be meeting with their counterparts from building administration and PTA to seek a solution to an issue that has riled parents of and on for ever - the differences in the program, especially in music, between Mattlin and POB Middle which has a zero period used for clubs and music programs.

The PCT along with the PTA called for the creation of this committee. From the PCT's perspective, we would like to satisfy the parents without jeopardizing either the quality or size of our extraordinarily fine middle school music program. While there is no perfect solution that is economically feasible, the PCT does believe ways can be found to improve upon the existing situation.

### **EVALUATION OF CO-TEACHERS**

At the last two meetings of the PCT Executive Board, members brought up what they consider to be the inconsistency of the way in which teachers working in the co-teaching model are observed and evaluated.

Before the officers talk to administration about this, they would like to hear directly from teachers working this model. Please email, President Morty Rosenfeld at [mrosenfeld@pobct.org](mailto:mrosenfeld@pobct.org) answering the following question: If you were designing the evaluation regime for people working in the co-teaching model, what would it look like?