



PCT PLEDGE

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PROUD TO SERVE THEM!

By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld

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Being a local union leader, one often spends his days with endless workplace problems, from the trivial to the very serious. The work is tedious and often frustrating, particularly when one is called upon to defend the indefensible. Most of the people we represent do their jobs day in and out, coping with difficult circumstances on their own, giving their employer many times more effort than they are contractually obliged to provide. To meet the majority of the membership requires dropping in on their lunch periods and attending their building union meetings a few times a year. At other times, they are always working. Given one's distance from most of the membership most of the time, one can easily forget just how wonderful they are and how proud we should be to represent them.

I was reminded of this last evening as I took some twenty of them to meet with our Board of Education. I wanted the Board to hear from the people, in the trenches, the very serious problems they are experiencing with the implementation of the Common Core State Standards. My goal was to disabuse the Board of the idea they had been given by an administration arranged presentation that all is going swimmingly – that our students were enthusiastically responding to the demand of higher order work and increased rigor.

I'll admit to being a little nervous before the meeting. By and large, I had no idea who was coming or what they were going to say, our building representatives having recruited the participants. I made no attempt to script them in that I wanted the Board to hear about things as they are in the lives of the people to do the essential work of the schools. I knew from meetings I had attended that the Common Core and the tests aligned with it were troubling their professional consciences – which many of them feel that they are inflicting undue pressure on children ill-equipped to cope with it. I knew too that they are feeling the joy of teaching ebbing away as less and less of what they do is in their personal control. But would they have the nerve to speak their minds to the Board and the central office administrators?

I need not have worried. They were eloquently upfront in presenting a picture for the Board of the profound changes that the epidemic of high stakes tests and the Common Core have wrought on their classrooms. With almost no prompting, they took turns talking, punctuating their remarks with anecdotes drawn from their daily work with their students. As one of them put it, "60 percent of the children are doing fine, responding very well to the higher demands we're putting on them, but what about the other 40 percent? What are we doing to them? We are teaching children to hate school and learning." I'm only sorry I don't have a video of their presentation. I would love for the community to see the deep concern they have for the welfare of our town's children. It's been almost 24 hours since I left them, but I'm still thinking about how proud I am to represent them.

LAST CHANCE FOR RETIREMENT SEMINAR

The PCT will hold its annual retirement seminar on Thursday, March 13, 2014 at 4:15 in Room 192 of the Kennedy High School.

The seminar will cover retirement from both the Teacher and Employee Retirement Systems, the payout for unused sick leave in both the teacher and clerical units and the possibility of sheltering the payout. Health insurance and Welfare Fund benefits in retirement will also be discussed.

If you are planning to attend, please call the PCT Office if you haven't already done so. We want to be sure we have enough materials printed for all attendees.

NYSUT ELECTIONS

With the big cities from New York to Buffalo having come out in support of the ReviveNYSUT slate, it appears that the incumbent NYSUT officers are headed for defeat at the upcoming convention in April.

The PCT Executive Board acting on the recommendation of the officers also voted to support the opposition slate. Writing the ReviveNYSUT candidates to inform them of our endorsement, PCT President Morty Rosenfeld said: *I am proud to inform you that the Executive Board of the Plainview-Old Bethpage Congress of Teachers (PCT) has voted to endorse the ReviveNYSUT slate.*

Our officers and members have grown increasingly concerned by the inability of NYSUT to nimbly respond to the challenges of the corporate school reform movement. By the time the current leadership caught on to the threat posed by high stakes testing, we were playing catch up. Their acceptance, without a vote of any governing body, of the tying of student test scores to teacher

evaluations has seriously diminished the academic program of our schools, rendering more and more of it test prep, not what we consider education. Their initial blanket support of the Common Core State Standards made them late to recognize how the Standards our members experience in their classrooms differ markedly from the abstract Standards they embraced. Their unwillingness until recently to challenge Commissioner King and Chancellor Tisch has not befitted a union of some 600,000 members.

We believe Karen Magee and the ReviveNYSUT slate understand our desperate need to cast a critical eye on our state union. We believe them to be willing to challenge a NYSUT culture that has become bureaucratic and unwelcoming of new ideas. We wholeheartedly agree with their goal of reconnecting our members to their state organization and believe they have an achievable plan for doing that. Finally, they offer us the hope of an organized, more militant union, defending public education and our professions.

In solidarity,

Morton Rosenfeld, President

Plainview-Old Bethpage Congress of Teachers

2015-16 CALENDAR

The school calendar for the 2015-16 school year presents unique difficulties owing to the fact that Labor Day is later and Easter and Passover do not overlap the way they usually do. Given the need to provide the other religious holidays that must be accommodated, it is impossible to build a calendar with the accustomed February break.

Members of the PCT Executive Board considered numerous options at both their January and February meetings without being able to come to agreement on an alternative to the Superintendent's suggested calendar. In fact a proposal from the Kennedy High School SRC was debated in January and reconsidered in February without obtaining a majority. In the end, the Executive Board saw the Superintendent's calendar, now adopted by the Board of Education, as the least objectionable. PCT President Morty Rosenfeld commented on the calendar, "Sometimes there are simply no good alternatives. Everyone, labor, management and the parents would prefer to have a February break. There's just no good way to make that happen in 2015-16."

WEINKRANTZ ELECTED

Pursuant to the PCT Constitution, PCT Secretary Judi Alexanderson cast one ballot at the February PCT Executive Board meeting for Jane Weinkrantz, an English teacher at Kennedy High School, to fill the unexpired term of Lori Stitt as Treasurer of the PCT. Weinkrantz's term ends June 30, 2014.

PCT PUPIL PERSONNEL COMMITTEE RECONVENED

Bombarded by complaints from members in the Pupil Personnel Department, the Officers of the PCT have asked Vice-President Nina Melzer to reconvene our Pupil Personnel Committee. Melzer will be in contact with the members who volunteered to serve.

The charge of the committee is to gather and investigate these complaints and arrange to discuss them with the Superintendent and Board of Education.

PCT members still interested in working with our members of the Pupil Personnel Department to improve working conditions should be in touch with Nina Melzer at nmelzer@pobct.org.

PRESENTATION ON MEDICARE RIGHTS

The Retiree Chapter of the PCT has arranged a presentation on Medicare to be held at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 10, 2014 at the Plainview-Old Bethpage Public Library. All PCT members are welcome but please RSVP to the PCT Office at (516) 349-1310.

The featured speaker will be Mr. Richard Levine of the Medicare Rights Center. The center "is a national, nonprofit consumer service organization that works to ensure access to affordable health care for older adults and people with disabilities through counseling and advocacy, educational programs and public policy initiatives."

PROPOSED PCT ELECTION CALENDAR

The PCT Executive Board will be asked to adopt the following calendar for PCT elections this spring.

Friday, April 11, 2014 – Petitions due.

Friday, May 9, 2014 – 100 words for Election Pledge.

Friday, May 16, 2014 – Mail Pledge and ballots to retirees.

Monday, May 19, 2014 – Absentee ballots available in PCT.

Wednesday, June 4, 2014 – Vote in building.