



PCT PLEDGE

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TURNAROUND TIME

By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld

Public education has gone through a series of very bad years. Testing instead of teaching, training instead of educating, judgements about us made on the basis of high stakes test results, the Common Core fiasco - more malignly intended change in the last few years than in my 40 years in public education. The so-called reformers have deformed a system of public schools that have served this nation well. But some signs this summer point to the beginnings of a turnaround.

At the National Education Association Representative Assembly in Denver, it was invigorating to see the normally very conservative delegates vote to demand the resignation of U.S. Education Commissioner Arne Duncan. That essentially same new business item had failed at several previous conventions. Passage this time indicated an awakening membership. That was confirmed by other resolutions and new business items on the Common Core Standards and other matters that revealed a growing body of state and local leaders who are fed up with the status quo and who demand change that is meaningfully linked to the experience of classroom teachers and school related professionals.

For me the outstanding moments of the American Federation of Teachers Convention (AFT) was when President Randi Weingarten suggested at the outset that she was looking for a better relationship with the NEA. Then when incoming NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia spoke to the AFT delegates, selecting as her theme how she often does

what people least expect her to do, the message was clear. The leaders of NEA and AFT finally seem to recognize that the forces arrayed against us require that we come together to fight back.

Speaking of Eskelsen Garcia, in an interview she gave shortly after the conventions, she called upon members to refuse to do stupid things that have become “required” by the reform agenda.

While my side lost the debate on Common Core at the AFT meeting, the Chicago Teachers Union and their dynamic leader Karen Lewis revealed themselves as the wave of the future. It was the CTU that led the fight to withdraw AFT support for the Common Core Standards. To my embarrassment, Karen Magee, the newly elected President of NYSUT whom the PCT supported, joined Michael Mulgrew of the New York City union to defend the standards. But both Mulgrew and Magee are on the wrong side of history.

Polls released this summer point to ever declining support for the Common Core both by parents and teachers. Slowly, but ineluctably, the standards are coming to be seen for what they are, a part of the corporate reform agenda to undermine the public’s confidence in its public schools so that they may be privatized.

Also this summer, the federal administration began its retreat from its disastrous policies, allowing states to pause in their evaluation of teachers based on student test scores. Too little too late for sure, but a retreat nevertheless, a retreat caused by the growing outrage of parents and teachers working together.

Here in New York, while our state organization failed to endorse pro-public education candidate Zephyr Teachout in the Democratic primary on September 9, I’ve been encouraged by the number of local teacher union leaders who are getting behind the Teachout/Wu ticket. While I realistically don’t expect Teachout to win, I believe we can send our Democrat representatives in this state a message - that we expect them to act like Democrats and to wholeheartedly support public schools and

the people who work tirelessly in them - that we're fed up with a governor who is a leader in the corporate attack on us. As I write this, I have sent an email ballot to the members of the PCT Executive Board asking them to endorse the Teachout/Wu ticket in the September 9th Democratic primary.

Locally, this is going to be a negotiating year. The economy has improved substantially since our last contract. The Board and Superintendent has repeatedly lauded us for our moderation in the last round. We trust that they will understand that while we met the financial challenges posed by the financial crisis, it is now time for them to accept the challenge of treating us fairly with a contract that respects the fine work that we do. I'm encouraged to believe that they will. Your SRC Reps will begin the process of getting the schools organized for negotiations early in the school year, building to a general membership meeting in January. Watch the *Pledge* for further details.

When I look at the year ahead, I see enormous opportunities. While there are still many battles to be won, for the first time in many years there is an emerging energy in our education labor movement, the same kind of energy that originally brought us respectable salaries and working conditions and a real voice in how we do the work of educating the nation's children. It's the energy that grows as we get better organized.

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, 2014. 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.

TEACHER CONTRACTS

The Teacher Unit contract is being printed by an outside printer. It should be available for distribution shortly. Members

will receive a copy in their buildings.

HEALTH BUYBACK

Although the PCT has prevailed in its legal challenge of the state's decision to attempt to usurp our right to negotiate a health insurance buyback, we are still unable to collect this benefit owing to an appeal the State of New York has filed with the Appellate Division. As of this writing, the State has yet to submit its papers to the court. That means it will probably be a few months before we can reasonably expect a decision. Should we win, and we expect to, the money owed to members participating in the contractual buyout program will be returned retroactively.

MIDDLE SCHOOL VP OPENING

PCT Middle School Vice-President Ed Hanlon has been transferred to the high school for most of his day. He has asked to be relieved of his Vice President's duties. At the September 9th meeting of the PCT Executive Board, a replacement for Ed will be selected from the Middle School Reps to serve temporarily. PCT Secretary Judi Alexanderson will propose an election schedule to fill the position for the remainder of Ed's term.

MOVED? CHANGED STATUS? LET THE PCT KNOW

If you have changed your home address, family status, e-mail address, phone number (cell or landline), 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.**

MOVED?

You also need to change your voter registration. Political action is a vital part of the work of union, and the PCT makes an extra effort in that regard. The most important political action is voting. If you are not registered, you can't vote. Voter registration forms are available at http://www.nassaucountyny.gov/agencies/boe/documents/VoterRegistrationFormEnglish_001.pdf.