



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)**

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IT'S POLITICS....

By PCT President Morty Rosenfeld

I know morale is low. I know there is anxiety over the lack of movement in our negotiations with the school district. I know it seems as though everyone is against us. **But that can't become an excuse for each of us to withdraw and make for ourselves a separate peace.** I assure you, there is no separate peace. The only choice we have is to fight back against our enemies, just as we always have!

A major part of that fight has got to be political action. If our eyes are open, we are reminded of that each day. Take the APPR mess. The PCT has been working with the district on this for over a year. Now we find our governor threatening to wipe out that law before it has even had a chance to work and substitute his version of teacher evaluation. Does anyone think his will be an improvement?

I'm addressing this subject as candidly as I can because of some disturbing trends that must be reversed. At a time when we should have easily raised the most VOTE/COPE money ever, our collections were down this year. I've heard all the excuses. To me, however, none of them is satisfactory. We're going into an election year. So much depends on who wins the state and national elections. Here's the message in the starkest terms. How many teaching, clerical and library jobs we have is directly related to the results of the upcoming elections.

Periodically, we call upon the members to write to their elected leaders to advocate for a union position on some issue. Here too, in recent days, members have not answered the call as robustly as we have been accustomed to expect. If the PCT is to remain a potent political force, members must watch their letterboxes and their email daily. When there is an urgent political action request, they must act on it, and act on it quickly. Most of the things members are asked to do take only a few minutes. We can't afford to say we don't have the time.

Want to stay abreast of political issues facing public education, for some months now I have been writing an almost daily blog, *A Teachable*

Moment, in which I draw attention to local, state and national education issues. I think you'll find it edgy and thought provoking. You're welcome to comment on anything I say. Look for me at pobct.org/ATM.

The PCT also has a Facebook page that we are trying to use to draw important issues to the attention of the members. Not a Facebook subscriber? Get a colleague familiar with the service to show you how you can participate without compromising your privacy on the web. Find us at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Plainview-Old-Bethpage-Congress-of-Teachers>.

Salaries, pensions, benefits -they're all under attack. If we remain united; if we work with our brothers and sisters in our state and national organizations; if we remain informed and we speak with one voice on the issues before us, I am confident that in the end we can win.

STRATFORD IS FEELING LOW

Through no fault of their own, the staff of our Stratford Road finds themselves working in a school that owing provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act has been declared a school in need of improvement because it failed to make the annual yearly progress expected by the law. While those in the know realize that they have been branded with this label solely because they house all of our self-contained elementary special education students, they daily face the fact that many in our community do not share this understanding and think that there is something wrong with the school and them. On a recent visit to the staff, PCT President Morty Rosenfeld was told by several teachers who live in the area that parents stop and ask them things like, "Why is my child attending a slum school?" It's pretty hard to go to work every day when you think that the people you serve see you this way.

The PCT is attempting to work with the administration on a public relations response to this situation. It doesn't do our membership any good to have citizens thinking about one of our schools this way. We will be discussing this subject with the Board of Education when the officers of our union meet with them next month.

PCT PPS COMMITTEE RESUMES ITS EFFORT

Last year in response to deep concerns from our members in the PPS Department about their working conditions, the PCT formed a committee to meet with the Superintendent to discuss our members' concerns and seek solutions. The work that the committee did led to what most people reported as an improvement in conditions, people feeling that they began to be treated in a more professional manner.

On January, 11, the Committee, chaired by PCT Vice-President Nina Melzer, resumed its

meetings with the Superintendent. One of the urgent issues raised was the concerns of a number of members that they were being asked to use tests that they were ill prepared to administer and score and were not being offered appropriate training. An understanding was reached that members who feel themselves in need of training to administer any test, need only ask their supervisor for training and it will be provided. Should members continue to have problems in this regard, they are asked to be in touch with Nina either by phone through the PCT Office or email at nmelzer@pobct.org.

APPR RUBRIC REJECTED

The 60 point teacher performance rubric that the PCT and the District have been working on for over a year has been rejected by the State Education department. In their rejection letter, State Ed cites what they consider to be some deficiencies in our rubric. Curiously, the things they criticize in ours are parts of commercial rubrics that have been approved.

Discussions are to take place with the District to see if we are to attempt to overcome the state's criticism or simply to accept an approved rubric. The backup favored by our membership is the Pearson rubric, an instrument more clearly focused on teaching than most of the others.

Watch the *Pledge* for developments.

SUPERINTENDENT SEARCH

The search firm hired by the Board of Education having completed its survey of the District's constituent groups (Their report and survey results are on the District's webpage.), have begun to advertise the position in commonly read professional publications.

Although members have been asking the officers how we will be participating in the process, the PCT has no word yet about how we are to be involved. Watch the *Pledge* and your email for further information.

PCT ELECTIONS

At the February 7, 2012 meeting of the PCT Executive Board, PCT Secretary Judi Alexanderson will be presenting a calendar for PCT elections to be held this spring. All PCT officer positions in all units will be up for election for terms of office to begin July 1, 2012. Once the Executive Board approves the calendar, the official announcement of the election will be distributed to the membership.

SPRING DEFENSIVE DRIVING COURSE

As it does at least once a year, the PCT is

sponsoring a defensive driving course on March 20 and 21 from 4:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. in the Kennedy High School Library. The course is being given in conjunction with the AAA. Satisfactory completion of the course entitles participants to a 10% reduction in their automobile collision and liability premiums. They may also be enabled to get as many as 4 points off their licenses.

Members wishing to attend the course should send a check made payable to PCT for \$25.00. The AAA limits the size of the class to 40 members, so it will be first come first served. Act today if you are interested.

PCT PAUL RUBIN SCHOLARSHIP

The publicity process for the PCT Paul Rubin Memorial Scholarship, a \$2000 award made to a graduating Kennedy High School senior, has begun. The award is presented at the annual Awards Assembly to a student whose social conscience is manifest by working to help others.

A letter has gone out to the parents of graduating seniors asking them to encourage their children to apply. Shortly, through senior English classes, students will be notified directly of the application process.

PCT members working at Kennedy High School are asked to encourage students to apply whom they know to be engaged in activities aimed at helping others.

NEGOTIATIONS

The PCT Negotiating Committee is issuing all bulletins on the status of negotiations via email. Members need to check their email regularly to stay informed. Negotiations Bulletin #4 was emailed to the members of all bargaining units on Wednesday, January 25, 2012. If you did not receive it, it means we don't have a working email address for you. Please get us one.

LANE CHANGES

Members who are completing either graduate or in-service credits and who will have accumulated enough credits to move a lane on the salary schedule are reminded that they have until February 10 to inform the Personnel Office even if official transcripts are not yet available. Informing the Personnel Office entitles members to receive their increase upon the district receiving the official transcript.