

the OAKES newsletter

An Independent Monthly Dedicated To Improving Public Education
Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

September 21, 1978

SCHOOL SYSTEM IMPAIRED BY MAYOR, BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT

As the 1978-79 school year begins, the old problems remain unsolved and new ones have been added. Voluntary school desegregation has been postponed for several months due to a lack of funds. The September 6 teachers' contract settlement is a disaster for students. It gives the teachers' union more than was required to secure an agreement. It extracts little or nothing in exchange from the teachers who were prepared to make concessions this time. For the first half of the school year, it provides for increased class size, hundreds of temporarily assigned teachers, and the use of substitutes to cover many classes. As of this writing, the budget remains out of balance and no one knows whether this will be remedied with financial wizardry or further cuts in people or things.

In spite of all this, Mayor Rizzo, Schools Superintendent Michael Marcuse and Arthur Thomas, President of the Board of Education were enormously pleased with the settlement. For their purposes, which appear to be totally dissociated from the interests of students, all that was important was the speedy opening of school. They ignore the fact that conditions facing students and staffs as they return to many schools are so bad that a portion of the money spent on the educational program from now until February 1 will be wasted and many students will just be putting in time. They appear

to be oblivious to the unreasonably high cost of the two year contract.

The position of the Board of Education from early spring until late August was that it had no money to offer the teachers and it wanted the existing teachers' contract torn up so that all authority to make decisions and form policy would revert back to the Board and the superintendent. This would have deprived teachers of the protection of an agreement that had been developed over eleven years and spelled out in minute detail their rights and the limits to their obligations and responsibilities. There was to be no salary increase in the first year. More than 2000 jobs were to be cut which translated into an increase in maximum class size and a decrease in preparation time — two issues over which teachers struck in 1972-73. Clearly, if there truly was no money and drastic cuts had to be made, the School District could not simultaneously demand the surrender by employees of the contract agreement. It appeared to be an unreasonable, inequitable offer. As the summer progressed, the city settled with the police, firemen and city workers, giving each group raises so that the offer to the teachers seemed even more unfair.

Seasoned negotiators for each side bargained hard with no results. A fact finder was brought in and made his recommendations,

but they didn't lead to a settlement. The contract expired August 31 and the teachers went on strike, throwing up picket lines that demonstrated their anger and frustration.

Suddenly, everything changed. The School District's professional negotiators were withdrawn. With them went the needed skill and knowledge. The high officials of the city and School District who took over were novices pitted against seasoned, experienced union negotiators. Predictably, the union was handed a pot of gold and almost nothing was extracted in exchange. The final settlement was so one-sided that it could have been secured months ago which at least would have meant a systematic, orderly preparation for the opening of school.

The settlement ignores the interests of the students and the financial stability of the district. The union and the School District agreed to do without the services of about 1700 teachers laid off in June for the first five months of this year. Maximum class size will rise from 33 to the vigorously opposed 37 for this period of time. As a result, classes will be too big and students will receive less individual attention than they need and deserve. This will be particularly hard on first graders just learning to read and students in all grades who are having difficulty with their work. Another consequence of the layoff of teachers is the use of per diem substitute teachers to fill in two periods a week when elementary and some junior high and middle school teachers have two of their preparation periods. In many cases, these substitutes will offer neither continuity nor the quality program that regularly appointed teachers could.

Still another result of the September through January layoff of the teachers is the reassigning

of 2300 teachers now and an even larger number in February. For this first five month period then, 20% of the district's teachers will have temporary assignments. This will lead to a lessening of efficiency, commitment and performance. When the giant reshuffle of 3500 teachers occurs in February, thousands of students will have different teachers and classmates which will create a multitude of adjustment problems. Teacher morale will sink lower and principals will have to reorganize their schools. All of this adds up to an incredibly botched school year and an indefensible way to save money.

The 1700 teachers laid off will draw unemployment compensation supplemented by up to \$60 weekly from the union's Health and Welfare Fund. With the unemployment compensation portion of this money tax free, laid off teachers will have almost as much money to spend as if they were earning a beginning teacher's salary. But in exchange for all of this taxpayers' money, the students get nothing from the teachers.

The contract's financial impact is very great. Contract provisions for the first year have been estimated by the School District at \$17 million with an additional cost of almost \$40 million coming in the second year. Teachers will get three raises next year (7/1/79, 2/1/80, 5/1/80), 3% each time if they are in their first five years of teaching, 5% if they have been in the system longer. This contract will impact additionally during 1980-81, because it will take an additional \$26 million that year to fund for a full year the salary increases that were paid for only part of 1979-80. Also, of course, the contract expires before the 1980-81 year begins.

The School District's financial troubles are much more serious now than they were before the

settlement. Mayor Rizzo, the Board and Superintendent Marcuse do not seem to have learned that decisions which cause budget increases must be matched with others that produce real revenue increases or spending cuts. To date, they are using nebulous cuts and phantom revenue increases. Neither will balance a budget.

Obviously, the contract settlement was designed only to end the strike quickly and postpone as many costs as possible into the second year and as late into that year as could be managed. Clearly, providing a sound educational climate or gaining concessions from the union were not primary goals.

REASSIGNMENT OF TEACHERS

The School District reassigned 2300 teachers at the end of the summer. Because the reassignments have caused great dissatisfaction and frustration, it is important to know why they happened. There are three reasons. So many errors were made in last year's last minute, late summer reassignment of teachers that it had to be redone. Class size and prep time changes reduced the number of teachers in each school and required reassignments as well as layoffs. Lastly, the School District had to reassign teachers to become eligible for Federal funds for which it had applied.

Last spring, the School District applied for a grant under the Federal Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) to use in its student desegregation effort. The District was found to be ineligible for funding because a review of its staffing patterns showed that "black teachers are assigned to identifiably black schools in disproportionately high percentages and to identifiably white schools in disproportionately low percentages, when compared with their district-wide representation." The Department of Health, Education

and Welfare concluded that the statistics show that "the assignment of teachers to the district's schools identified schools as intended for students of a particular race" in violation of the regulations under the Act.

To become eligible for funding, the School District was required to reassign teachers by the opening of school. Refusal to comply would have meant the loss of up to \$6 million in ESAA funds, but it would also have jeopardized the more than \$100 million in other Federal funds that come to Philadelphia schools each year.

It was not until August 21, 1978 that the Board of Education passed a resolution adopting the guidelines insisted upon by the Office of Civil Rights of HEW. "The proportion of black classroom teachers in each school" had to be "between 75% and 125% of the proportion of black classroom teachers in the district as a whole at each level." Since the percentage of black teachers in elementary, junior and middle schools is about 40%, the range in these schools may be from about 30% to 50% (75% and 125% of 40). In senior high schools and vocational schools, the percentage of black teachers is less and the allowable range, therefore, is only from 18% to 30%.

The timing of the necessity to meet the guidelines is unfortunate, but the School District should have acted years ago. In 1966, at the insistence of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, the School District and the teachers' union wrote a section into the contract which said, "The Board has fixed as its objectives for racial balance in faculties that the faculty in each school shall at the elementary school level consist of teachers of at least 20% of the race in the minority in that school and at the secondary level of at least 10% of such race. These objectives are hereinafter

referred to as 'racial balance in faculties'." Unfortunately, those "objectives" were never modified. Had they been increased a little at a time, the process could have been a gradual one over a period of years.

STUDENT DESEGREGATION

Commonwealth Court expected the School District to initiate its desegregation plan this September. If by February 1980, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission determines that the plan is not achieving desegregation as required by the law, then the Court might require that an involuntary plan be adopted.

As schools open in September 1978, very little has been accomplished. The schools that were to open as desegregated magnets this fall are still on the drawing board, because they relied on the ESAA funds which were delayed by the staff racial balance question.

Consequently, the February 1980 deadline comes closer while precious time needed to adequately prepare for the court ordered desegregation is wasted.

* * * * *

I regret that this Newsletter portrays such a negative view of existing conditions in the schools. Unfortunately, it is a fact that the health and strength of our public school system is in jeopardy. The teachers' contract settlement pushes the schools further down the same old road which leads to budget cuts, layoffs, insecurity, instability, justified criticism from legislators at all levels and a severe lack of public confidence and support. The superintendent and the Board have abandoned their responsibilities and are serving instead as city hall puppets. The rest of us are spectators, collectively permitting this weakening of public education.

9/17/78

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An Independent Monthly Dedicated To Improving Public Education
Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

Vol.X, No.2

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

October 25, 1978

SCHOOL STAFFS IN CHAOS — SUPERINTENDENT RESPONSIBLE

In September, the School District announced it had reached a contract settlement with the teachers. From the outside, it appeared that the crisis was over. Within the schools, however, this was not the case at all. The contract settlement* created enormous obstacles to good education and the very badly managed reassignment of more than 2000 teachers created additional ones.

"Chaotic" is the word many principals use to describe their personnel situation. Many staff members are frustrated, insecure and depressed. Morale is at an all time low. Conditions are so inexcusably bad that one can only conclude that Superintendent Michael Marcase should be replaced at once. He has proved that he cannot provide leadership to this School District in these difficult times.

School opened only 1½ days after the contract was ratified. Hundreds of teacher assignments had not been completed and principals had not been properly briefed by the Superintendent on the provisions of the new contract. Since it was impossible to get enough substitute teachers, principals had to improvise. One told me that for a period of time, he frequently had several classes meeting in the auditorium, because

that was the only way that he could provide supervision for classes that had no teacher. Those students must have felt that the School District attached very little value to their education.

Now five weeks into the school year, thousands of students are still being subjected to "educational abuse". Many still have substitutes for teachers and many of these are able to provide little meaningful instruction. In many classrooms the students have had a series of substitutes by now. Students can't learn when they have a different teacher every few days.

While some classrooms are staffed with substitutes, many others have reassigned teachers who lack the special training and experience that their predecessors had. In the transfer process, many kindergarten teachers experienced with five year olds have been replaced by teachers who had spent their entire teaching careers in the upper grades. Open classroom teachers who had passed special examinations and were committed to this particular way of teaching had their places taken by traditionally trained teachers who have passed no exam and know nothing of open classrooms. Specially trained teachers of children with learning disabilities are gone, their places falling too often to those who are skilled and proficient in some other area of special educa-

* See The Oakes Newsletter, Vol.X, No.1, September 21, 1978.

tion. Although all of the stand-ins have the necessary certification and no law is being broken, this widespread mismatch of jobs and skills seriously affects educational quality. Children are unnecessarily deprived of teachers with special training and/or experience and the School District, with wholesale abandon, throws away money that it has invested in developing special skills and abilities.

The contract settlement with the teachers provides for the use of substitutes twice a week for five months when teachers in elementary and some secondary schools have their preparation periods. It's a way to reduce spending, but in the process both quality and continuity of instruction are sacrificed. In too many cases students are provided with "sitters" not "teachers".

Why do Philadelphia school children face these circumstances in October of 1978? There are three major reasons. First, the methods used by the Superintendent to achieve staff desegregation were extremely poor ones and produced disastrous results. Second, the Superintendent led the Board of Education into an unthinkable settlement with the Teachers' Union. Third, the Superintendent, joined by board members and city officials, acted as if a contract settlement just before the scheduled opening of school was an appropriate deadline. It was not, because lead time is required to implement personnel and/or schedule changes.

LAYOFFS AND TRANSFERS

How and why the staffing problem became so serious cannot be briefly explained, but I'd like to take you through it step by step so you can understand the sequence of events and the Superintendent's role. Also, since massive transfers are scheduled to occur again

in February, it is very important that the whole process be clearly understood and drastically changed.

The Superintendent decided last spring to attempt to save \$30 million by increasing class size and reducing teacher preparation time for elementary and junior high school teachers. This set two separate procedures in motion — 1700 teachers had to be laid off and each school had to eliminate some teaching positions. How to accomplish the former is prescribed by state law. The Pennsylvania Public School Code, in the section on tenure, specifies that suspensions must be determined on the basis of "efficiency rank determined by ratings" and by seniority where there is no difference in ratings. In Philadelphia's case, teachers are rated only satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Therefore, ratings were the determining factor in only the few cases where teachers had been rated unsatisfactory and were the first to be laid off. Otherwise, the layoffs were based on length of service in the Philadelphia school system. Schools that had many new young teachers were hard hit. Schools with few were less affected.

Each school had to eliminate positions to match class size and preparation time changes. A school entitled to 25 teachers last year would have only 21 authorized positions this year. If none of their teachers had been laid off, four teachers would have to be transferred out on the basis of school seniority. They would be guaranteed jobs, but they would have to go elsewhere.

Next came staff desegregation required by the Federal government as a precondition to funding.* Schools that had either too few or too many blacks to meet the re-

* See The Oakes Newsletter, Vol.X, No.1, September 21, 1978.

quired percentage had some of their staff members transferred out to create openings for teachers of the race they needed. Some schools lost as many as one-third of their staff members. The Superintendent's personnel department, without consulting with administrators in the field, decreed that school seniority alone was to determine who was to leave. The Superintendent should have foreseen the devastating consequences this policy would have as it ruined programs and wrecked departments. Sole reliance on who came to a school last proved to be an incredibly poor method for selecting those who were to leave. It resulted in the English department in a black high school becoming overwhelmingly white, a backward step which violated the spirit and purpose of the staff desegregation requirement. It led to the formation of a pool of 30 black mathematics teachers who for weeks were not transferred to new schools, because all the mathematics vacancies required white teachers. There were incredible mismatches between positions that desperately needed teachers and teachers in the pool who needed assignments.

Compounding the problems of staff members being transferred out was the method used to "assign" teachers to their new jobs. Surprisingly, in most cases, teachers selected positions rather than being assigned by the personnel department. Teachers, called in order of school system seniority, could pick any unfilled position for which they had the correct certification and were the required color. A white teacher of the severely and profoundly impaired (SPI) who is now teaching children with learning disabilities probably picked such a class for one of two reasons. Either there were no positions open for white teachers of the severely and profoundly impaired, or the teacher in question didn't want to

teach in or travel to the schools where there were openings for SPI teachers. Both circumstances occurred often in many teaching areas. Consider the tragic waste. In the example cited, SPI youngsters lost a skilled, trained teacher and the School District lost all the time and money previously invested in that teacher. The special education department must now attempt to train both the replacement and the teacher who has switched to working with learning disabled children even though no one knows where either teacher will be after February 1. In addition, individual teachers have invested their own time and money increasing their knowledge and skills. In the course of these transfers, instead of rewarding such teachers for their commitment, the system has most often slapped them into some other job where they have no use for their hard won skills. It is demoralizing for the teacher and sad for the students.

As parents, principals and teachers complained and bitterly criticized the reassignment process and its results, they were told that the School District was required by the School Code and the tenure laws to proceed as has been described. That was not true. The School Code speaks to job loss and reinstatement only. It says nothing about transfers and reassignments.

The reassignments could have been done differently and must be in February. Present plans call for repeating this process then when the 1700 laid off teachers are to be reinstated. I would suggest incorporating the following changes. Although school seniority should be the major determinant for transfers out of each school, there should be exceptions to prevent devastation of departments, programs, or school activities, and the loss of irreplaceable people. In addition, if a

careful review of the designated transferees shows that there will not be appropriate teaching positions for all (as in the case of the black mathematics teachers), modifications should be made.

A committee, representing the personnel department, principals and teachers, should sit down together immediately to develop exactly what exceptions to seniority should be permitted and under what circumstances. Criteria should be established and strictly adhered to so that the exceptions can be made in a fair and equitable way.

When it comes time for teachers to choose from openings, their options should be limited so that, to the maximum extent possible, every position will be filled by a teacher trained and experienced in that job. To accomplish this, a teacher of the learning disabled, for example, would have to transfer to another such class and the personnel department would have to be sure that such a position was open. With the huge number of transfers to be made, it is essential to minimize their negative effects on children.

It is Dr. Marcase who is re-

sponsible for the existing miserable state of the schools. The reassignment process was carried out with no regard for its affect on individual schools and teachers. Five weeks into the school year, school staffs are still incomplete and subject to change with little or no notice. Many positions are filled by substitutes. Many, perhaps hundreds, of teachers are in positions, new to them, for which they lack the special training and experience of those who were there last year. Thousands of students are receiving instruction which is grossly inferior to what it could and should be. There was no way to avoid extensive personnel changes, but if the process had been carefully considered and thoroughly discussed this summer when there was time, the disruption and turmoil which are still continuing could have been avoided.

Dr. Marcase accepted contract terms and a reassignment process that were enormously destructive of educational quality. On top of all the problems the schools have faced recently, this unnecessary additional stress is intolerable. The Superintendent has demonstrated his incompetence and should be replaced at once.

10/21/78

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An Independent Monthly Dedicated To Improving Public Education
Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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THE VOLUNTARY DESEGREGATION PLAN

Children who were in 1st grade when the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission asked Philadelphia to develop a desegregation plan are in 12th grade now. During all this time, the School District resisted desegregation. Now, under court order, it is preparing to take its first tentative steps to implement a voluntary desegregation plan. This seems like an appropriate time to review why school desegregation is important, why Philadelphia is under a court order, what the plan for the Philadelphia schools is, and how it is being carried out.

Schools should be desegregated for many reasons. Desegregation is an antidote for racism. Racism raises large, ugly and unnecessary obstacles to opportunity and achievement for black people. It infects whites with the poisons of prejudice, hatred and fear which are damaging to their psychological and emotional well-being. Racism is the underlying cause of some of the violence and crime that diminishes everyone's freedom and right to the pursuit of happiness. Racism splits us apart and keeps us from working together to solve society's problems.

Segregated schools provide no opportunity to overcome the racial misunderstandings, fears, hostility or prejudice that many children absorb from those around them and then grow up with. Segregated schools make a mockery of our

claimed devotion to democratic values. Setting children apart cannot be reconciled with our beliefs that all men are created equal and each person has worth and dignity and is entitled to an equal opportunity.

Desegregated schools provide young people from different ethnic backgrounds with opportunities to study and play together. Students need chances to share experiences in the classroom or science lab, on the basketball court, in the yearbook office, on stage or in the orchestra pit. When children go to school together they can come to know, respect and understand one another. Carried out in a proper setting, supported by skilled and understanding adults, desegregation can lead to a future in which all ethnic groups live comfortably together and work together, making our society a better one for all of us.

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Act, as interpreted by the courts, requires the public school systems in the state to be desegregated. In keeping with the law, the Human Relations Commission asked the Philadelphia School District in 1968 to develop a plan to desegregate its schools. After endless legal maneuvers, the submission of many unacceptable plans, and the passage of many years, the School District submitted a voluntary plan to the courts in July 1976. On July 1, 1977, the Court

ordered the School District to "proceed with the detailed development and implementation of the July 1976 School District of Philadelphia Desegregation Plan, to be initiated in September of 1978." That gave the School District better than 1 year to flesh out its still sketchy plan and then 1½ years to implement it in the schools.

Months and months went by and then in April 1978, the staff presented a more specific plan to the Board of Education. It named 33 schools that were to be desegregated in September 1978, and gave the number of students needed to desegregate each one, and the method that was to be used to accomplish that purpose. On May 10, the superintendent sent the Board members a document that estimated the cost of implementing the plan for the 33 schools. It counted on the Federal government to supply almost 60% of the funds needed.

PLAN CHANGED

What happened to the plan after that is very difficult to determine. Information has come only in bits and pieces. The public learned that implementation of the plan was delayed because the School District was found to be ineligible for the Federal funds it had relied on. When the teaching staffs were desegregated, enabling the School District to qualify for the funds, it gradually became apparent that the delay was to extend until February 1, 1979. The public still has no inkling that the plan has been changed. No announcement of modifications has been made and the Board of Education has not been asked to approve revisions. However, amazing as it might seem, last spring's plan is almost unrecognizable. Instead of 33 schools, the real number is 15 and some of those were not among the

original 33.

It appears that sometime, somewhere, the decision was made to make desegregation dependent on the receipt of Federal funds. This was very unwise, because the Court order stands whether outside funds are secured or not. The School District applied for Federal funds and apparently was denied a major portion which caused the number of schools in the plan to be revised downward.

The revised plan is based primarily on the premise that extra offerings can attract students. Existing schools are being beefed up with additional staff and programs in the expectation that they will then attract children from other areas. Eleven schools are to get Instructional Enrichment Centers. Each Center will receive 3 teachers, one each in mathematics, language skills and science, and six aides, two to work with each of the three teachers. These Centers will enable schools to place additional emphasis on basic skills, offer science taught by a specialist and offer an enriched program in the three areas of mathematics, language skills and science. They will enable schools to better meet the needs of all students, be they floundering, average or advanced.

A twelfth school will have a Basic Skills/Unified Arts program which will provide remedial assistance to students who need it and will add art, dance, drama and music. Another school will be a Career Education Center for junior high students. There will also be two new alternative schools established for middle years students. Beyond this number, the School District is making some effort to encourage parents and students to make the decision to travel to schools with existing quality programs in order to desegregate them.

The whole concept of attract-

ing students with specially developed programs is flawed from the outset. It is costly, results in gross inequalities between schools, and tends to put the extra resources in schools where they are least needed. For example, each of the Instructional Enrichment Centers will have \$100,000 in extra teachers, aides, equipment, materials, supplies, trips and staff development which will make the instructional program in these schools a superior one. Seven of the eleven schools receiving these Centers have standardized achievement test scores very close to, at, or above, the national average. Their students are predominantly white with fewer than 20% from low income families. For the most part, these Centers will not be placed in low income, segregated black schools. So while high achieving schools are receiving substantial additional resources, other schools, suffering particularly now from budget cuts, struggle along with needs that go unmet.

In addition to the 15 schools already described, the School District lists 19 schools with Academic Resource Centers as part of their desegregation plan for February 1979. However, these are remedial centers and cannot logically be expected to attract black students to predominantly white schools or white students to predominantly black schools. Each Academic Resource Center will be staffed by one teacher and an aide who will work with grades 4-6 students who require additional help in basic skills. The Centers lengthen the School District's list of schools in the desegregation plan, but for the most part they will not increase the number of black and white children going to school together. In terms of meeting the Court order, the number of schools involved in desegregation is 15, not the sum of 15 and 19.

POSITIVE STEPS

Although the School District's meager plans are disappointing, there have been some encouraging signs recently for those who deeply believe that Philadelphia should desegregate its schools. The superintendent has taken the responsibility for desegregation from a committee and given it to one person who is trusted by the community and viewed as being committed to integration. The School District has established desegregation resource teams in the schools and in each district and many of these teams met more than once last spring and are resuming meetings now. These teams provide a mechanism for exchanging ideas and for information to go out to the community and back to central administration. Properly utilized they will give parents, students, community representatives and school people a chance to come to know and trust each other. This will be helpful in working out the desegregation proposals, making each school successful, and in preparing for the more extensive desegregation of the future which may or may not be voluntary. The Office of Integration and Intergroup Education has been working diligently to train staff members in the schools to work effectively in a desegregated situation. Everyone on a school staff is being included in the training, e.g. administrators, custodians, secretaries and teachers. All of these steps are constructive and in the right direction. That is to be applauded.

Unfortunately, there is reason to be discouraged too. There is a great lack of effective leadership at the top levels of the city and School District. The mayor who could make a giant contribution to desegregation and the quality of life in this city by offering his leadership and support to the vol-

untary plan has not done so to date. In a speech just prior to the election, Mayor Rizzo said what he has often said in other places, "The people say yes when I say they should be able to send their children to neighborhood schools and not have them bused across the city." Such statements make it more difficult for the community to accept and participate in voluntary desegregation. Board of Education members have, as in the past, given little or no leadership to the effort. They do not make public statements advocating school integration and explaining why this would make the schools and the city a better place to live.

Philadelphia is under Court order to desegregate its schools. In early 1980 the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission will evaluate the plan, determining whether the plan is "accomplishing desegregation as required by Pennsylvania law." If not, the Court has said it will take "such further action as it then deems appropriate." This could mean a

sweeping, mandatory plan which would probably be mechanical and impersonal and take little or no cognizance of special programs and circumstances that may deserve preservation. With this as a possibility, the Board and the superintendent assume an enormous risk when they do not vigorously promote voluntary desegregation but depend instead on a hope that the Court will accept more excuses.

I do not believe that a voluntary plan can desegregate the whole system because parents are unlikely to volunteer to send their children in large enough numbers to enough different sites to accomplish the task. Still, a voluntary plan is the only one available now. It should be supported, because it can be a beginning. It gives parents an opportunity to choose a program, experience, or school that meets their view of their child's needs. It is free of coercion. It would seem to be in everyone's interest at this time to expand, promote and support voluntary desegregation.

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January 25, 1979

TEACHERS' CONTRACT TERMS HARM THE SCHOOLS

It had taken several years for the principal to develop school pride and create an atmosphere for learning. The teaching staff was working cooperatively with him to attain joint goals. Students were learning and knew what was expected of them. Test scores were beginning to improve. The school's orchestra and chorus, laboriously developed, were sounding great. The school was moving ahead. So it was in June of 1978. But when school reopened in September, everything had changed. A number of the teachers had been laid off and many others had been transferred. The music department was almost totally wiped out, devastating the music program. For a while, the school was short so many teachers that the principal had to bring classes into the auditorium to provide them with adult supervision. Later, there were substitutes to send to the classrooms, but many of them couldn't even maintain an orderly atmosphere. Teaching positions that should have been filled in September remained vacant for weeks that dragged into months. In some cases, students had several different substitutes as the principal struggled to secure someone competent. Many students didn't learn. Staff and student morale as well as school pride plummeted. For the principal who worked so hard, it was a discouraging, demoralizing experience.

* * * * *

Suddenly, in the middle of a morning, the teacher received a message that he was to report at once to Personnel downtown for reassignment to another school. He replied that he couldn't just walk away from his students who were in the middle of several different projects. Two hours later, there was another phone call which commanded him to appear right away or be stricken from the payroll. The teacher was distraught. He cared about his work with the students. He was sickened at having to break away from them without warning. When he arrived downtown, he encountered a personnel officer who had absolutely no understanding of his distress. The officer kept saying, "What difference does it make where you teach? They're all the same. Just pick another school."

* * * * *

The principal got the call at 10:30 on a dark, rainy October morning. Six of his teachers were to report at once for reassignment. At once! Where was she to get six substitutes in a matter of minutes? Was no one in central administration concerned about the continuity of her instructional program and the feelings of her students? She lost the teachers and substitutes replaced them. Tension in her school rose another notch and the staff's ability to function at an optimum level was dealt another blow.

* * * * *

Each of the instances cited is typical of what has been happening in Philadelphia public schools this year. It has been a bad period for education, a time when teachers and principals have been drained physically and emotionally as they've been forced to put forth enormous effort just to keep from sliding backward. In many schools, they have had to run in order to stand still, but in others the running has been to no avail, because they have lost ground anyway.

The schools have been dealt many serious blows. First, there were hundreds of vacancies in the schools when they opened and the number decreased only very slowly over a period of about three months. Perhaps it was gross inefficiency, or maybe it was a policy decision to use low cost substitutes for as long as possible before using higher cost teachers brought back from layoff. Whether it was one or the other, the result in the classrooms was the same. Sadly, for days, weeks or months, students' learning was hindered. In some cases, instruction was so badly disrupted by a succession of substitute teachers that it was impossible to give students their grades at the end of the first marking period.

Second, staff members were shifted and reshuffled as if they were pawns on a chess board. This threw many teachers into turmoil. Also, students were upset when their teachers left them abruptly for reasons that they couldn't understand.

Third, in many schools a substantial percentage of the staff members were assigned on a temporary basis from September until February 1. Under such conditions it was difficult for the principal to weld the staff into a team, or to establish high standards for instruction and maintenance of discipline. All kinds of staff

development activities had to be postponed or modified because so many teachers were just passing through. These transient teachers couldn't afford to make a heavy personal investment in the school and couldn't make long range plans with or for their students.

More disruptions and changes are on the horizon for February when there will be another giant reshuffling of staffs. More than 4000 teachers are involved. Schools that received many new staff members in September will face the same situation in February. Tens of thousands of students will experience their teachers leaving them to go elsewhere. For many, this will not be the first time this year that they've had to make this difficult adjustment. In a school system that has, in the recent past, faced the turmoil accompanying teachers' strikes and the uncertainty and despair that come with budget cuts, this year's staffing problems have placed an intolerable additional burden on students, staff and parents.

CAUSE OF STAFFING PROBLEMS

A major cause of these staffing problems is the new contract with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. Its terms have impacted very negatively on staff stability and the quality of instruction. One clause permitted the School District to reduce its payroll for half a year. The temporary layoffs of 1700 teachers meant that the School District, could, at least in theory, save enough in salaries the first half of the year to bring everyone back to work the second half and still balance its budget. However, this "solution" to the dollar problem cut a swath of destruction through the schools.

Many detrimental circumstances flowed from this temporary layoff arrangement. First, teachers have

been reassigned twice this year. 2300 teachers had to be reassigned in September because of the reduction in positions, an arbitration decision, and the Federal requirement for staff desegregation. Those same teachers, plus those returning to work, have just made new choices of schools and will begin new assignments February 1. This enormous upheaval of one-third of the teaching force cannot fail to have a devastating effect on everyone concerned.

Second, while the work force was reduced, substitutes were used in elementary, middle and junior high schools to cover classes twice a week for teachers on their preparation time. At its worst, this has caused pandemonium in the classroom and increased demands on the principal's time. At its best, with only a few exceptions, it has meant that little has been learned during these two periods.

Third, the need for about 300 substitutes to cover the two periods of preparation time, plus those needed for normal staff absences, plus those required to cover sabbatical leaves, created a critical shortage of substitutes beginning with the first day of school. This could - and should - have been foreseen and prevented. The shortage of substitutes has led to great difficulty in getting qualified people, or just someone, to cover classes when a teacher is absent. It accounted for the uncovered classes when the schools opened in September, and the uncovered or poorly covered preparation periods ever since.

The contract settlement has wreaked havoc in the classrooms already, but it will have a similar effect on the next two school budgets. There will be three 5% salary increases next school year, one in September, one in February and another in May. These will contribute to a budget crisis for 1979-80 and another the following

year when the increases delayed until February and May will have their full impact.

JOB SECURITY CLAUSE

The contract created several other important new problems. A new job security clause largely removes even budgetary decisions from the school board's hands. It guarantees jobs from February 1979 through the 1979-80 school year to everyone represented by the Federation of Teachers who was employed last school year by the School District. On February 1, everyone will be brought back from layoff - needed or not.

It is startling to learn that the School District is actually going to bring back 200 to 400 teachers that it doesn't need and for whom it will have to create jobs. In some cases eliminated positions will be restored. For example, although driver education was eliminated from the budget last year, one returning employee is not qualified to teach anything else so one school will have a driver education teacher. In other cases, schools and district offices will have extra teachers assigned to them to be used in various ways. It is maddeningly frustrating that the School District signed a contract which saved dollars by devastating its instructional program, while at the same time it agreed to spend dollars, without regard to need, to rehire employees for whom there would be no jobs. The job guarantee clause puts the School District into a strait jacket in terms of managing its budget. It makes guaranteed employment, not quality of instruction, the top priority of the School District.

Another provision of the contract calls for increased spending to lengthen the high school day. It will put extra dollars in teachers' pockets, but probably very little additional learning in

students' heads. For years the State has demanded that Philadelphia lengthen its high school day to meet the requirement for 990 hours of instruction per year. The School District should have accomplished this by getting the union to agree to lengthen each period by about 2 minutes for a total of about 14 minutes a day with no additional compensation going to the teachers. However, the School District settled with the union by agreeing to add extra courses for students at the end of the day and to pay teachers who volunteer to teach them the extra-curricular rate of \$14.67 per hour. Unfortunately, attendance is expected to be very poor and another half million dollars will be thrown away.

It is hard to imagine a contract with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers that could have been worse for students and the system. The agreement has translated into staffing chaos leading to poor instruction and little learning for thousands, wasteful spending, severely lowered morale, and a further deterioration in the school administration's ability to make independent decisions and act in the best interests of students.

Both the School District and the Federation should have placed a high priority on providing stability and a climate for progress in the schools, because a healthy forward moving educational system is in their interests and is essential to the economic, social and political survival of the city. However, that didn't happen. Instead, the mayor's representatives joined the talks at the end and the School District's professional negotiators were withdrawn. Then the School District gave the teachers' union salary increases and job security, extracting nothing for the schools in exchange.

Responsibility for this enormously destructive contract must be shared by Superintendent Marcuse and the Board of Education. The superintendent is particularly culpable because as an educator he best understood, or should have, what devastating consequences lay ahead. Whether the superintendent and the school board were pressured by the mayor or not, they should never have allowed such a package to be seriously considered. They had an obligation to protect public education from harm and they failed to do so.

1/20/79

For further information on the contract and the reassignment of teachers, see The Oakes Newsletter, Vol.X, Nos. 1 & 2, Sept. 1978 and Oct. 1978.

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the OAKES newsletter

An Independent Monthly Dedicated To Improving Public Education
Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

Vol.X, No.5

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

February 23, 1979

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION SHOULD BE SKILLS TRAINING PLUS ACADEMICS

Vocational education in Philadelphia is taught in three different kinds of schools. Students can prepare for an occupation in a skills center, or in their local comprehensive high school if it offers the course they want, or in a vocational-technical school. There are very great differences between the three in the quality and diversity of the academics offered to vocational students and in the time devoted to skills training and academic course work.

Let us look first at the vocational training offered in the Philadelphia schools and then at the inadequacy of the academics offered to most vocational education students.

Philadelphia has two skills centers, both opened in the last few years. Randolph is located in East Falls in a refurbished industrial plant. Swenson is a new building located way up in the northeast, almost at the city limits. Both draw students from many different public, parochial and private schools, some many miles away. Their students spend every other week at the centers learning vocational skills.

The centers are organized into clusters of occupations such as construction, health services and power mechanics. Trades that are related, such as electrician, carpenter, plumber and mason, are grouped into clusters and housed in large open spaces so that stu-

dents working in one trade area can be aware of what students in another are doing and gain some familiarity with other jobs in their field of interest. In the construction cluster in one skills center, the students worked together to construct the framework of a house complete with fireplace, wiring and rough plumbing. The house will be auctioned off in the spring. It will then be knocked down into pieces, moved, reassembled and completed. A visitor can imagine the satisfaction of the students as they use their skills to produce something that is to be the basis for someone's home.

As part of the cluster concept, students are also taught certain skills common to all or many trades in the cluster. For example, in the construction cluster, students learn measuring, reading blueprints, safety procedures and how to use hand and power tools. Once they have mastered these basic skills common to a variety of jobs in the broad occupational area of building, they are better prepared for the job changes that may be forced on them in the future.

Each skill that a student must master is broken down into a series of tasks which are in turn broken down into steps. Students, working at their own speed, begin with the simplest tasks and with mastery move on to more difficult ones. Teaching tools include

written instructions and audio-visual materials which show and tell the student exactly what to do. The teacher's role is to explain anything the student doesn't understand, demonstrate, teach the theory, motivate and encourage. At designated intervals, students are given a list of the competencies they have achieved. It indicates their progress and gives them a record which they may use to let potential employers know exactly what they can do.

Because of their individualized instructional program, the skills centers can accept students into the various clusters all during the year and are able to work simultaneously with students at all stages of interest and development. Their enrollment procedures are not geared to selecting the highest achieving students but to accepting as many as possible of those who want to come.

VOCATIONAL SHOPS

A visitor touring the shops in vocational-technical schools and comprehensive high schools will see much that is like the skills centers. However, there are more walls separating one shop from another. Students are grouped more for instruction and there is less audio-visual equipment available to learn from.

I was impressed by the cosmetology students in their uniforms who had "live" customers in their beauty shop getting their hair done. I sampled delicious cookies produced by bakery students as I admired a large, beautifully decorated cake and a tray of cinnamon buns. I saw students working on faculty cars, diagnosing and repairing all kinds of malfunctions. I talked to a student who was repairing his family's outboard motor. Clearly, learning becomes more meaningful when students can perform real jobs and services.

While many of these schools

offer students a quality vocational skills program, sadly only the four vocational-technical schools offer proper and sufficient academic course work to accompany the skills training. It is startling and very discouraging to learn that the two modern skills centers have been so structured that it is next to impossible for their students to get a high quality science, mathematics and English background. A major obstacle is the fact that skills center students are in their home schools alternate weeks and, since they are the only ones on such a schedule, they are grouped together for instruction. This can bring into a single class students from more than one grade who may be studying occupations as different as baking and electronics. They may also have very different aspirations, needs, motivations and abilities. Under these circumstances, all too often, the teacher gears to the lower achieving students in the group and neglects to stimulate, inspire or prod the other students who could and should learn more. A second obstacle is the short, high school day which makes it difficult and/or costly to provide these students with more than the minimum number of academic courses needed to meet State requirements. Therefore, there is no time for the needed science and mathematics.

One comprehensive high school that sends 300 students to a skills center does not have any students studying geometry or algebra 2 or chemistry or physics. This means that none of the 300 will be prepared to go to college should they wish to do so. Just as important, lacking the background and understanding needed for their chosen occupations, many will be denied jobs, or will be ineligible for promotion, or will be unable to adapt to new jobs as present ones become obsolete.

Take the example of a bright youngster, turned off by school,

who goes to a skills center to study auto mechanics and loves it. He should be encouraged to get a foundation in mathematics and science. He should be counseled to see that it would enable him to understand such things as how fuel is converted into the energy which propels a car and why antifreeze keeps the radiator from freezing. Instead, however, he is locked into a program in his home school that affords him no opportunity to study the physics and mathematics that he needs. No one offers them to him, encourages or enables him to take them.

Many students preparing for jobs or apprenticeship programs need a strong, fundamental academic education. If they don't get it, they won't get jobs as sheet metal workers, for example, because they won't have the physics background to do well on the written test. They will never get into the apprenticeship program in which the successful applicants must have studied algebra, geometry, trigonometry and physics. They won't be hired by many companies because, although they have the skills for entry level jobs, they don't have the knowledge needed to be eligible for promotion. For many students this is their last chance to get the academics they need, because their educations are terminated when they leave high school.

Students attending a vocational-technical school get in depth skills training and a strong academic education simultaneously. Students spend three or four periods daily in the job skills area and they take three or four academic major subjects. Students may, and for some trades must, study the subjects that fulfill college entrance requirements. Less demanding courses are offered too, but they still give students the basic understandings and skills that they need.

In contrast, students wishing to take vocational courses in their local high schools must choose one of two evils. They may take an inadequate one or two periods daily in their skills training, in order to get the academics they need. Their alternative is to take three periods of skills training and be limited in their academics to meeting the minimum State requirements for graduation of three years of English, two of social studies and one each of science and mathematics in grades 10-12. This limitation to seven academic subjects in the three years precludes the study of the basic subjects needed for many trades and prevents admission to most colleges which require more academic preparation.

Ways must be found to offer all skills center and comprehensive high school students the academics many need to accompany their skills training. In the case of the skills centers, this could be accomplished in several ways. First, students could go to skills centers half days so that they could take their academics each day with everyone else at their home school. This was rejected originally because of the transportation time involved and the cost of the buses. It should be reexamined because the alternate week schedule has failed completely. Second, skills centers could close down some of their shops, convert the space to classrooms, and become vocational-technical schools. Third, the home schools could put all of their own vocational students on alternate week schedules which would greatly increase the pool of students enrolled in alternate week academic classes and permit teachers to have classes of students with more similar needs and interests. Coupled with any one of these methods must be a decision to give all vocational students a school day long enough to permit three or

four academic periods and the same number of job skills training periods. The present five periods per day for both in the comprehensive high schools is totally inadequate. Lastly, it must be clearly understood by all that students learning a trade have the same needs for, and right to, an academic education as everyone else.

To be of value, vocational education must combine job preparation skills training with reading, writing, mathematics and science. Unfortunately, except for the vocational-technical schools, acknowledgment of this interdependence of academic subjects and job skills seems to be missing from the Philadelphia schools. The vocational educators continue to

carry out the narrow assignment of providing the best skills training possible. Those responsible for the academics, lacking clear direction from the superintendent, have failed to analyze or meet the needs of their vocational students. As a result, students are short-changed and so are the taxpayers. The schools have not responded to the fact that jobs for those at the bottom of the academic ladder are steadily decreasing, nor have they recognized that the demand today is for workers skilled in using their minds as well as their hands. Philadelphia continues, at great expense, to turn out large numbers of students who do not have the academic skills needed to fill today's manpower requirements.

IN MEMORY OF FLOYD LOGAN

When Floyd L. Logan died on February 10, 1979 at age 78, Philadelphia lost a man who gave more than forty-five years of his life to the fight to end discrimination and segregation in the Philadelphia public schools and elsewhere. As a result of his efforts, black men and women were appointed to serve in all capacities at all levels of the system and black students came closer to achieving equality of educational opportunity.

Floyd Logan was a man worthy of our deepest respect for his integrity, singleness of purpose, refusal to be turned from his course and sacrifice for a cause.

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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March 31, 1979

SPECIAL EDUCATION - GREATER COMMITMENT NEEDED

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, Public Law 94-142, had several major purposes. One was to secure educational services for all handicapped children — those previously denied service and those, such as the learning disabled, for whom there had been no specialized services to meet their needs. Congress realized that, with an appropriate public education, many handicapped people could become less dependent, others could become more productive citizens and most could lead better, happier lives. Another purpose was to provide procedural safeguards to make sure that children would be properly identified and evaluated so that they would not be incorrectly labeled or improperly placed. Other objectives were to be sure that schools consulted parents and secured their approval in advance of a proposed placement for a youngster, and that every child received "appropriate" services. Finally, the Act sought to give parents a way to fight for what they consider to be in their child's best interest by mandating a formal due process hearing if the parents and the school cannot agree on what is best. The law gave school districts almost three years to make plans, develop programs, and gear up to serve all handicapped children.

P.L. 94-142 forced the School District of Philadelphia to develop a new process for deciding on

placement of students into special education and also for the reevaluation of each child every two years. Although the process is complex and time consuming, it is necessary because of the importance of the decisions involved.

When a student is believed, either by parents or the school, to have a problem and to need some special education service, a referral is made. Local school personnel gather available data indicating the student's achievement levels, his adjustment to school, and what measures have already been taken to give him help. The principal reviews this information and has three options — he may utilize regular education choices, such as placing the student in a different reading group or changing his class; he can ask members of his Child Study Evaluation Team (CSET) to observe the student and gather more information about him; or lastly, he can refer the case to his CSET for pre-evaluation review.

The Child Study Evaluation Team brings the background and resources of a team of people to bear on a student's problem. It often includes the principal, the counselor, the nurse, a psychologist and an educational evaluator. They also have three options — a regular education option; informal team member intervention, such as an interview with the parents, or assistance to the teacher in terms

of modifying the curriculum, materials or teaching strategies; and, lastly, the approval of formal evaluation.

Formal evaluation requires parental permission. Parents are notified as to why the school wants the evaluation, what types of tests or procedures are planned, and when. When the testing is completed, the CSET invites the parents to join them for a meeting in order to arrive at recommendations for programs and services appropriate to the needs of the student. A written report of this meeting is forwarded to the local district office for review and approval by its Child Study Review Committee.

The next step is the development of the individualized education program (IEP). The school makes a concerted effort to involve parents in this because, knowing the child best, they can make a significant contribution. Also, it is important that they understand what the school is striving to accomplish.

Next, the principal gives the parents a Notice of Recommended Assignment specifying the school and the program in which the child is to be placed. The parents may approve or disapprove the recommendation. If they disapprove and the principal can't work things out with the parents, both parties are required to hold a "pre-hearing conference" to attempt resolution. If they fail, a formal due process hearing may be requested. A hearing officer is assigned by the State Department of Education and he renders his decision within twenty days. That too can be appealed.

In making its recommendations, the Child Study Evaluation Team must have a range of placement options open to it. By law, students must be placed where they can have the most contact with non-handicapped students and still have their needs met. Looking at what

is best for a student with a learning disability, for example, the Team must be able to recommend a classroom where the student can be in a small group special education setting with one teacher all or part of the day; or a regular classroom where the teacher receives assistance in ways to help the student from a consultant; or a resource room where the student can get academic assistance part of the day and be in a regular classroom the rest of the time.

RESOURCE ROOMS

Resource rooms are facilities staffed by people trained to work intensively with individuals or small groups of children to overcome learning handicaps. Instruction is based on an analysis of the student's problems and prescriptive lessons designed to overcome them. Resource rooms serve students with mild handicaps who can be helped on a part-time basis. Therein lies a problem. The School District still has a backlog of students with severe problems that have been waiting to be evaluated for a long time. Not many of the mildly affected students have been identified so many of the resource rooms are seriously underutilized. Considering the overwhelming need for the services these teachers have to offer, this waste of time and talent is intolerable. Ways must be found to drastically speed up identification and placement of students who can be properly served by the resource rooms.

The Child Study Evaluation Team effort has repercussions for other students in the school. The time required of principals and counselors is very great. Meetings must be arranged and attended, reports written, and the necessary papers processed. Counselors are left with little or no time to help regular children with their problems. Principals have much less time than before for their

regular duties.

There are serious inequities inherent in the fact that some schools have no special education classes, some have one, and some many more. Obviously, as the number of classes increases, the demands on the counselor and the principal increase. At some designated point, the schools should be given extra help in the form of a second full or part-time counselor and assistance for the principal.

LEARNING DISABLED

Although elaborate procedures have been established to further the rights and interests of special education children, much still goes wrong. Lawyers who filed suit five years ago on behalf of children with learning disabilities went before a judge last October. They asked that the School District be held in contempt of court because so many learning disabled students had not been evaluated and placed, or had been improperly placed. One affidavit they filed tells the story of a boy, identified as learning disabled in 1976, who was inappropriately placed in a class for retarded children. Although his parents repeatedly requested that he be moved, he still had not been placed in a class for the learning disabled as late as October 1978. Other affidavits tell of long, long waits for proper placement while students fall further and further behind.

In a Federal court suit brought against the School District on behalf of the retarded, the judge considered recent complaints so serious that he created a special committee to attempt to deal with the problems. This committee of lay and professional people reports to the judge monthly.

I attended a recent hearing of this committee and was appalled and troubled by the testimony that

was given. An aide who worked with retarded, emotionally disturbed teenage boys was required to accompany them on a mile walk to the main building every day. One of the boys faints occasionally, another is subject to seizures. Both boys had been so stricken on the walk. The aide told of being unable to keep the boys together. They ran off down side streets, shouted obscenities, accosted and frightened passers-by. The aide feared for the safety of the students and worried about the community members who were scared by them. Having long since despaired of getting action through her principal, she came to the committee to request a mini-bus so that the boys could be transported safely.

Several parents voiced their distress to the committee over buses that often arrive late, or not at all, and the constantly changing bus drivers who never get to know the routes or the children. They were upset because serious incidents have occurred on buses because there was no adult supervision other than the driver. They had complained again and again to school officials but to no avail.

The emotions of one mother touched most people in the room. Most wept with her as she described her frustration in trying to get officials to provide therapists to teach her daughter how to get up from the floor and how to communicate with hand signs. The mother believed that therapy of this kind would give her daughter more independence and an ability to communicate and this would reduce her daughter's great frustration.

Listening to these tortured parents, it was depressing to realize that in addition to all these problems, special education children have been particularly affected this year by the chaotic staffing situation resulting from

the destructive teachers' contract settlement. Many special education teachers were caught in the reassignment web. Many were demoralized and psychologically harmed as concern for their students was forced to give way to a new assignment two or three times. For the students, there was the trauma connected with losing teachers, difficult for any child, but especially devastating for a child with physical, emotional or learning problems who has come to relate to a particular teacher and is making progress.

Why, even with a Federal law to back them up, have the pleas of the parents of handicapped children been ignored so often by the School District? Most people that I talked with do not believe that the cause is a dollar shortage, but rather a lack of commitment.

This lack is clearly illustrated by the School District's negligence in the preparation of staff and students to receive handicapped students. To comply with P.L. 94-142, handicapped students, to the maximum extent appropriate, must be educated with those who are not. It is very im-

portant that they be warmly welcomed and made to feel that they belong. It was clear that this would not just happen because the handicapped have historically been isolated from society, so they are not understood. Consequently, they are often feared and the targets of prejudice. Obviously, it was necessary to take steps to change attitudes, but the School District did nothing.

Finally, a Federal judge ordered the School District to develop a system-wide sensitivity and awareness of handicapped children program. It will involve the entire staff this spring. The program will be expanded to students next fall and will continue all through next year. Its effectiveness will depend on how carefully it is thought out, developed and implemented.

The School District should be making every effort to achieve all of the purposes of P.L. 94-142. The handicapped and all those concerned for their welfare have a right to demand that the School District should consistently demonstrate dedication, sincere effort, and a strong will to succeed in this endeavor.

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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April 30, 1979

MISMANAGEMENT, WRONG DECISIONS AND THE BUDGET GAP

Once again it is time to consider the budget of the School District of Philadelphia. Like so many times before, the proposed budget is out of balance and will require either increased funding or cuts in spending.

To the casual observer, it may appear that the crises of the past two years have been overcome and that the schools haven't been hurt in the process. This simply isn't so. Many important services have been reduced or eliminated. The staff has suffered enormously as various services have been subjected to drastic cuts, sometimes followed by partial or full restorations. In the process, some staff members have been buffeted so badly that they are demoralized. Take, for example, a counselor who was laid off in June 1977. Rehired in the fall, he was assigned to three different schools during the next year. In June 1978, his school dropped a counseling position and he went through a second summer not knowing where he would be working in the fall, or even if he would have a job. So far this year, he has been in two more schools. Because counseling is based on getting to know staff and students and building relationships and trust, a counselor who is moved around frequently cannot do his job effectively. This is frustrating to the individual and exacts an enormous toll, but it also detracts greatly from the quality of service that can be

rendered.

Two years ago, in May 1977, the Board of Education had to reduce its budget by \$173 million to bring it into balance. Ten thousand employees were laid off and went through a long summer of uncertainty. Finally, at the end of August, a combination of additional revenue and \$80 million in loans enabled the School District to restore \$124 million. About 7500 people were reemployed and the positions of the other 2500 were eliminated.

A year later, in May 1978, the Board of Education adopted a balanced budget of \$629 million. It had been reduced by tens of millions from what would have been required to maintain the status quo. The School District, deep into negotiations with the teachers' union, based its spending plan on increasing the ratio of pupils to teachers and eliminating preparation time for teachers below the high school level. That translated into a necessity to lay off 1700 teachers at a saving of \$30 million. There were other cuts to reduce spending still further. When contract negotiations with the teachers ended there were very substantial costs connected with the settlement, but most of them were postponed until after the first year of the contract. Meanwhile, estimates of revenue available for spending in 1978-79 had changed for the better and there

was another \$28 million available. Still, the budget had to be balanced. That was accomplished by continuing the layoff of the 1700 teachers until February 1. Maximum class size was increased to 37 during the first half of the year and substitutes were used to cover classes two periods a week during teachers' preparation periods. This saved dollars, but together with reassignment for staff desegregation, it had a disastrously negative effect in the classrooms. Countless staff changes meant that many students had a series of different teachers. This resulted in a huge loss in continuity of instruction and unnecessary upheaval and trauma for staff members who were assigned and reassigned as if they were inanimate chess pieces.

THE 1979-80 BUDGET

The new budget for 1979-80, now under consideration, calls for \$25 million in new dollars. This poses a dilemma to all who are concerned for public education. Past decisions by the present superintendent and the Board of Education have contributed in a major way to the imbalance in the budget, and to support their request for increased funding is to overlook mismanagement, distorted priorities, improper spending and wrong decisions. At the same time, if it does not get the requested \$25 million, the system cannot withstand the cuts that would follow — particularly as the superintendent and school board would make them.

The Board of Education, and the superintendent it selected, are responsible for the present sad state of affairs. They agreed to the latest contract with the teachers which improperly adds costs over and above salary increases. They have also permitted the contract to continue to require that staff meetings and development sessions take place during the regular school day unless teachers receive additional

compensation which results in students losing a substantial amount of instructional time. They continue to spend on items, cited again and again, which should be reduced or eliminated. By contrast, and simultaneously, they have eliminated essential services and reduced the system's ability to provide a good climate for learning.

The 1978-80 contract with the Federation of Teachers, ignores the School District's financial plight, gives teachers job security, 9% to 15% higher salaries, extra income and greater fringe benefits. Adding insult to injury, it extracts almost nothing in return. The School District agreed to a no-layoff clause in the contract. The District agreed to bring back, by February 1, 1979, everyone who had been laid off in June and to employ them, as well as all others, continuously for the balance of the two-year contract. This resulted in an employee surplus. There were more people than jobs! This may reoccur next September when, because of a drop in enrollment, the decreased need for teachers may not be matched by resignations from the system. How dreadful to squander funds when so many needs go unmet!

Under the contract, teachers are being paid extra to provide two more periods per week for high school students so that Philadelphia can extend its too short high school day to meet State standards. Teachers get \$14.67 per hour for this. The classes are not well attended because they come after the regular school day ends, and students get no credit and no grades for the extra periods. As a result, students gain very little, while teachers add to their incomes — \$1.3 million worth next year.

The contract added a new fringe benefit! A legal fund was established into which the School

District annually pays \$100 for each employee. This fund provides personal legal services to employees, their spouses, or dependents. It is incomprehensible how the School District could have agreed to add a new benefit for teachers at a time of financial crisis.

The contract's salary schedule for psychologists is outrageously high. Psychologists working on a calendar year (12 months) basis begin at \$21,000 and, at the end of only four years, reach the top of the salary schedule — \$34,700. This is for a 35 hour week with 22 vacation days and 16 other holidays. This is \$5,000 to \$10,000 more than psychologists receive for comparable work in Philadelphia. If the salaries were brought into line with other institutions, the savings would be at least \$400,000 next year.

Lastly, the salaries required by the contract for Get Set Day Care staff members are so high that Philadelphia's program is the most expensive in the nation. The cost of care in the Philadelphia school system is one-third higher than in other agencies in the city offering similar services. It is situations like this, and the psychologists' salaries, which have prompted the state and Federal government to refuse to give Philadelphia the funds it needs to cover these excessively high costs which continue to rise.

The contract clause which says that employees shall not be required to attend meetings outside of their regularly assigned hours unless they receive extra compensation should have been removed. Salaries are high enough to expect teachers to consider teaching a full time job, and to expect that professional non-teaching duties will be attended to after the end of the day for students. 60% of the teaching staff is now at the top of the salary schedule, receiving from \$20,500 to \$27,000

depending on the degree held, for a ten month job that starts at 8:40 A.M. and ends between 2:30 and 3:30. Quite often, students are dismissed early so that teachers can hold staff meetings, receive staff development training, or get ready for achievement testing. This causes great resentment in parents who think their children are being cheated of instructional time by professionals who are highly paid but appear to be unwilling to give a fair measure in return.

IMPROPER SPENDING

Economy and austerity are lacking in areas other than the contract. Board members have kept their private secretaries and most still retain cars and chauffeurs. The number of people involved in planning for and administering the School District's program for new construction and the maintenance of existing buildings has not decreased in proportion to the shrinking spending for both. \$250,000 in scholarships is still being given annually, without regard for financial need. This is paid directly to the college which often subtracts the amount of the award from its own grant to the student. The result is that the School District subsidizes higher education with money needed to meet its own needs. Latin for elementary schools will cost more than \$800,000 next year. It should be taught, but should be treated like science or art, as a subject offered to students during teachers' preparation time. It should not be a separately funded extra expense.

Against this backdrop of improper and wasteful spending, let's look at some of the cuts made by the superintendent and the Board. There was a reduction in the number of counselors, but an increase in the need for their services to special education stu-

dents. The result is that regular students are neglected. Many of those with academic or adjustment problems that could be cleared up if a counselor had time to listen and offer support go without help and create greater problems for both themselves and the school. Principals lost vice principals and administrative assistants so that they have had to give more time to such responsibilities as student discipline, orderly lunch-rooms and all the minutiae required to run a school. Under these circumstances, the time available to provide educational leadership, or to closely monitor the instructional program, is greatly diminished. Great numbers of people who cleaned and maintained school buildings were laid off. Whether those remaining should be able to do the job is hard to determine, but there is absolutely no question that they are not getting it done. Many buildings are dirty. Roofs are left to leak for months or years. Broken windows remain that way. Plumbing goes unrepaired. In many schools, the setting for the educational program is a poor one. There has been a reduction in the number of non-teaching assistants who, among other things, keep intruders out of school buildings and the halls free of wandering

students. Many schools are now a little less safe and less able to maintain discipline. This adversely affects the climate for learning.

* * * * *

It is important to remember that the entire citizenry is responsible for the major problems inherent in the school budget and also, for that matter, the city budget. In both, there is waste, mismanagement and skewed priorities. Savings could be made that would reduce the necessity to cut essential services or increase taxes. The voters of Philadelphia, those with children in public school or non-public school and those without children or school age ones, elected the incumbent mayor twice. During his terms in office, he has either appointed or reappointed every one of the present school board members. That means the voters of Philadelphia share responsibility for the existence of this very difficult funding problem. Every effort should be made to force the Board of Education to reorder its priorities and to rectify its errors. If this proves fruitless, and/or if a gap remains, it should be filled with additional funds. No more cuts in essential services are tolerable.

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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SOME OF THE BRIGHT SPOTS

These are troubled times for the schools of Philadelphia. Much has been written which has been justifiably critical of the system. Still, there are bright spots. In this 88th issue of the newsletter, the last for this school year, I'd like to describe a few of the many excellent and unusual programs of which the schools can be justly proud.

Let's go to Edison High School first. Edison's sad history began in 1957 when Northeast High School moved to a new site and took with it the school's name, two-thirds of its staff, its trophies, traditions and sports records. The dilapidated building, now seventy-six years old, was renamed Edison and began a struggle to regain status and a positive image. This has been especially difficult, because public perception of the school is based more on prejudice than fact. I want to describe two of Edison's newer programs because of their merit, but I hope at the same time this helps to add dimension and stature to the public's view of the school.

Edison is the only Philadelphia school with a program to rehabilitate abandoned housing. Students learn the building construction trades in a real, instead of simulated, setting. Directly across the street from Edison is a block of forty, brick-front, row homes. Most are owner-occupied but several had been abandoned.

Edison's staff acquired five of these houses for their students to renovate. Three journeymen construction workers joined the regular teachers to provide training and supervision for the students. The students' efforts include installing new electrical wiring and new plumbing pipes and fixtures, rebuilding stairs, mounting cabinets, adding storage space, and applying fresh plaster and paint. Imagine the incentive to learn these trades and do your best when you are working on a house that will soon be purchased and lived in. Imagine the students' sense of accomplishment and the increase in their self-respect as they see an ugly shell gradually change into an attractive, comfortable home ready for occupancy. Picture the uplift that this project gives the community.

For the staff at Edison, this is a more complex way of teaching construction skills. It involves handling the legal and financial aspects of acquiring and selling houses. It requires the purchase of materials, the coordination and planning involved in home renovation, and the necessity to provide security while the houses are being restored. It calls for many hours of paper work and causes lots of headaches. But, for the staff members who are dedicated to giving the students this unique experience, it is all worth it.

Edison has another very unusu-

al program which was developed by the Affective Education Office. This one offers adults, thirty and over, who have not earned their high school diplomas, an opportunity to return to school to get them. Philadelphia has always offered evening courses leading to a diploma, but this is the first time that such an opportunity has been offered in the daytime and in classes with regular students. This puts a diploma within the reach of adults who work at night and those who have to be at home when their own children are not in school. For many, getting this piece of paper means heightened self-esteem, wider and better job opportunities, a fuller life, and greater competency in dealing with the responsibilities of citizenship.

While this is a time of acute financial difficulty for the School District, it makes sense to add adults to the day school population. If the adults are spread among classes that have room for a few more students, there is little cost involved. By their very presence, the adults bring a very important message to regular students — that other members of the community place a great value on a high school education. In addition, the adults set a tone in the classrooms. They are there to learn by choice and their seriousness of purpose is obvious to the other students. This can lead to an improved climate for learning in the classroom. One adult told me that she had been upset in her social studies class by a disruptive student. She spoke out because she felt that he was depriving her of an opportunity to gain from the class. The next day he apologized to her and his conduct has been better ever since.

SAUL HIGH SCHOOL

Although an urban high school located within the city limits, Saul High School of Agricultural

Sciences has the nation's largest chapter of Future Farmers of America. It is the only vocational school in the country devoted exclusively to agricultural specialties. It has the highest attendance rate of any public high school in the state — 96% last year.

Saul students study agricultural subjects all through high school. These courses, plus a strong academic program, enable students to prepare for college or some other post high school education or for immediate employment in the agricultural industry. There are many good jobs to be had, many of them in cities, in such areas as the care of plants and animals, agricultural machinery sales and service, and the management of golf courses and public land.

A visitor to Saul's agricultural classes cannot help but be impressed with their diversity and the range and depth of experiences provided. Students studying meat cutting work in a laboratory where they prepare orders of beef and veal just as they would in a butcher shop or a chain store. They are taught how to inspect, buy, cut, package, and merchandise meat. Students learning how turf is produced have the opportunity to actually grow and maintain it. Students learning to manage a dairy herd work with the school's own. Those learning to maintain and repair agricultural equipment work on the many pieces that the school owns and uses to care for its 100-acre site. Saul has a reputation for giving its students thorough preparation and training so that employers are anxious to hire them for part-time jobs while they are in school and full time ones when they graduate.

Saul High School gives its students an opportunity to come to know and appreciate plants and animals and to develop an under-

standing of the interdependence of all living things. In this crucial period when pollution of all kinds is such a problem, it is good to know that Philadelphia is producing a group of students who will be more caring of the environment because of their school background.

MASTERY LEARNING

About 100 teachers are being trained by the Office of Affective Education, in collaboration with the Offices of Mathematics and Social Studies, to use "mastery learning." This theory of teaching holds that most students will achieve mastery of a subject if they are given sufficient time and a clear definition of what is to be mastered, and if the approach to instruction is systematic and sensitive to each student's needs. Teachers may develop their own definition of what qualifies as mastery, but roughly, it approaches what would be required to get an "A" in other classes.

The teacher in planning his lesson decides precisely what concepts and facts he wants the students to learn. He does the teaching and gives a practice test. The practice tests are not graded from A to E. They are not used to determine whether students have passed or failed, but serve instead to determine for the teacher and the student how much has been learned and how much more needs to be learned to achieve mastery. The teacher then provides some other way of learning the material for the students that need it. He might group students so that they could help each other or he might give them workbooks or different textbooks to learn from. Later a second test is given.

While this may sound similar to what happens in the ordinary classroom, the whole thrust is different. The mental set for the teacher and the students is that

everyone can learn the material. Gone is the common presumption that some will do well, some will do badly and most will be midway between.

I spoke with some of the teachers who had just begun to work with mastery learning. Most found value in it. One teacher said it helped him to plan his teaching more thoroughly since, before presenting lessons, he had to clearly define what he wanted the students to learn and draft at least two tests. Another reported that students are more open about what they do not understand since their questions are taken in the context of closing a learning gap, rather than revealing ignorance. The teachers were encouraged by this new method. Already some had found that it had served to make students more highly motivated, harder working, and more successful.

ART AND MUSIC MAGNETS

Overbrook High school established its art and music magnet programs twelve years ago. Originally intended as desegregation tools, they have failed to attract white students but have been very successful in every other way. They have drawn talented students and have been high quality programs which have enabled the students to fully develop their ability. One measure of their quality is the number of Board of Education scholarships won by the magnet students last year. In competing against students from all the other high schools, Overbrook students won five of the twenty art and six of the twenty music scholarships.

These magnet programs are designed for students who plan to attend college and continue with their art or music. The students take four major college preparatory subjects each year in addition to spending two periods in their

specialty every day.

As juniors and seniors, the art magnet students work with an outstanding teacher, who has very high standards and makes heavy demands on them. Students learn that it requires time, concentration and hard work to produce a quality piece of artwork. Their portfolios reflect the development of their talent, contain work that is very advanced, and display a level of excellence seldom achieved by high school students. Most of these graduates go on to study art, some at the nation's best known schools e.g., Philadelphia College of Art, Pratt Institute in New York City, and Tyler School of Art.

In addition to their academic courses, music magnet students take a music course and spend a period daily participating in either instrumental or vocal activities. They are also required to take individual lessons from a private teacher or the school.

Overbrook High School has the largest music faculty of any school in the city and as a result has the music curriculum with the greatest breadth. Overbrook has many performing groups — a fifty piece orchestra, stage band, ninety-four piece concert band,

eighty-four voice concert choir, and several small vocal and instrumental ensembles. The best performers, about thirty-five this year, participate with the city's finest musical talents in the All City Public and Diocesan High School Orchestra, Band or Choir. Some of the country's finest schools for music come to Overbrook to audition students. At present, there are music magnet graduates studying at Carnegie-Mellon University, Eastman School of Music, and Temple University.

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Exemplary programs, such as those just described, owe their success to people. There are principals who provide excellent leadership, educators who have developed new and imaginative programs, and other professionals and non-professionals who have much to give and do so generously. This newsletter was written to express appreciation to all of the talented and creative people in the public schools of Philadelphia who work hard to meet the needs of students and help them to achieve. It is my hope that this newsletter will also provide readers with a measure of encouragement and hope for the future of the schools.

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