

# the OAKES newsletter

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

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

September 4, 1974

## THE SUPERINTENDENT VERSUS THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

On the surface, the outlook for public education in Philadelphia would seem to be bright. In contrast to the last several years, when the fiscal year began July 1, the School District knew that it had enough money to meet its minimum needs and run the required number of days in 1974-75. Labor peace seems assured because the Teachers' Contract has two years to run. At first glance, it would appear to be a period when Dr. Matthew W. Costanzo, Superintendent of Schools, could concentrate on providing educational leadership to improve significantly the way in which the system meets the educational needs of its students. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

It is frustrating that there is a roadblock to progress and sad that this obstacle is the Board of Education. It is infuriating that many of those serving on this Board have been, and are, undermining the system and the Superintendent's ability and authority to lead it. While the members' motives can only be conjectured, the validity of this charge can be demonstrated.

Last March, a majority of Board members tried to subvert the Superintendent's budget which called for substantially increased funds to enable the School District to hold the line in most areas and make modest advances in others. Had the Board been successful, the result would have been

disaster in the form of a shortened school year or drastic cuts in programs and personnel that had already been cut to the bone in previous years.

The budget for 1974-75, submitted by the Superintendent to the Board in March was out of balance by \$42.5 million. This was not unexpected since the increases mandated by the Teachers' Contract came to \$23 million and millions more were needed to cover such items as salary increases for other employees and inflation.

The Board of Education called a special meeting for March 28, 1974. It became known before the meeting that the Board was going to reject the Superintendent's budget and adopt a balanced budget requiring no new taxes. It didn't take a mathematical genius to figure out that simply maintaining the status quo in the schools required a very substantial increase in the size of the budget. Therefore, if the Board requested no new funds, devastating cuts had to follow. The public turned out in numbers for the meeting and in one voice asked the Board to endorse the Superintendent's budget and request the additional necessary funds from City Council.

When it came time to vote, there were three votes for the Superintendent's budget and five against. (One member was absent.) Finally, the pressure of the number of people present and the weight

of their arguments swept over the Board members. They accepted a suggestion from the floor to adopt the Superintendent's budget, adding a stipulation that the need for the additional funds had to be proved by April 29. The amended resolution then passed 7 to 1.

The Board called another meeting four days later to consider reversing the action it had taken on the budget. Again, people came in large numbers. The Board was compelled to let the matter stand. The people forced the Board to take the action that would permit the system to get the money that it had to have to run. The public, by dint of great effort, stopped the Board of Education from dealing the system a vicious body blow.

Why did five Board members who should be acting as advocates for students vote against a budget that would maintain services to children? In the absence of any sound reasons put forth by Board members at the time, the only logical explanation is that they were attempting to assist the Mayor of Philadelphia to keep his pledge, constantly reiterated over the last three years, not to increase taxes. (Part of that \$42.5 million budget imbalance had to be covered by an increase in City taxes.)

The Board's fight with the Superintendent and the community over the budget is one significant example of its efforts to take action which would be ruinous to the school system. Less dramatic but equally destructive over the long term is the Board's interference in the selection of management personnel.

#### SELECTING TOP ADMINISTRATORS

Apparently believing they have a right to actively participate in the choice of top level administrators, members of the Board of Education have on several occasions rejected candidates recommended by the Superintendent for

administrative positions. Sometimes one or more Board members have supported some other candidate for the position. On other occasions, members have refused to approve a candidate because they challenged his credentials or wanted more information about him.

There are obvious dangers implicit in the participation by members of any Board of Education in selection of administrative personnel. First, it infringes on a superintendent's authority to select for positions of responsibility, people in whom he has confidence, with whom he can work successfully, and on whom he must depend. No superintendent can administer a large school system without being given the freedom to choose his own team. Second, participation of Board members in the selection of particular candidates can be a direct route to corruption. It can lead to the distribution of jobs on a basis other than excellence of performance. There is power in having jobs to distribute and some Board members want to get such power.

There are two sections of The Educational Home Rule Charter that pertain to appointments to top administrative posts. One section exempts the posts from the requirement, applicable to all other jobs, that merit principles and scientific methods be used. This permits great flexibility in the methods used to select people for these jobs. The other section bases the Board's authority to appoint on the Superintendent making a recommendation, thereby making it clear that an individual filling one of the posts is to be the choice of the Superintendent.

Board members are required by the State School Code to vote on appointments. The question becomes — How can Board members exercise their responsibility properly as it relates to high administrative positions? I believe that Board members should concern

themselves solely with the development of the selection process. It is appropriate for them to participate in deciding such matters as what kind of professionals and non-professionals should be on a screening committee or what prerequisites should be required of the candidates for a particular position. However, they should not become involved in the actual selection of the individual for a particular position. An exception would be the highly unusual situation when a Board member has knowledge that the Superintendent lacks (e.g. the candidate has stolen money) that would preclude an individual from getting the job. Otherwise, the choice and responsibility belong to the Superintendent.

Dr. Costanzo should be able to have these recommendations for his top level administrators approved without the argument and harassment that he frequently encounters in the private conference sessions at which they are first presented to the Board. If they are rejected in this session, they are removed from the agenda and are not made public. Many serious repercussions flow from the obstruction of these appointments. The Superintendent's effort to put his team together is frustrated. The school system is exposed to the danger of patronage. In addition, the establishment of a credible process for promotion is placed in jeopardy and the delay in filling important positions increases the difficulty of solving the system's problems.

#### TITLE I DECISION

Another example of a destructive act was a decision made in secret session by the Board of Education to appeal the ruling of a court-appointed panel relative to spending on Federal Title I programs. Dr. Costanzo and his staff, having negotiated with this panel over a period of many months, accepted their final report and its

recommendations with a single exception. However, the Board of Education overruled the Superintendent and insisted on appealing to an arbitrator all of the panel's decisions to cut and eliminate programs. Dr. Costanzo's decision was an educational one properly made by the Superintendent and it should have been honored by the Board. The Superintendent cannot command respect nor maintain his authority if the Board does not support such decisions.

The Board's treatment of the Superintendent's budget, personnel and Title I recommendations demonstrates, at the very least, a visible expression of lack of confidence in the Superintendent. Or is it a deliberate effort to frustrate the Superintendent so that he will quit?

To date, the Board has refused to grant Dr. Costanzo the salary increase that has been recommended by The Greater Philadelphia Movement and supported in newspaper, radio and television editorials. A study of salary practices for top level administrative positions in Philadelphia revealed that of sixteen major cities in the United States, Philadelphia, the fourth largest, pays its superintendent the least. The Board of Education Committee set up to study this problem has offered Dr. Costanzo a \$6000 increase, but only if he will accept a two year contract to replace his six year one that runs until February, 1979. The long contract provides protection against a possible effort by the Board to oust him. He needs that defense and therefore cannot afford to exchange it for the increase to which he is clearly entitled without a quid pro quo.

The public has a very high stake in this contest between the Superintendent and the Board. A majority of the Board members have clearly demonstrated that it is frequently not the children's interests that influence their deci-

sions. The Superintendent stands as a shield between a viable public school system and a Board of Education who seems bent on its destruction. It would be disastrous should this Board have an opportunity to select a new superintendent for this School District.

Dr. Costanzo, particularly in fighting for the budget, proved his willingness to take personal risks for what he believed was in the best interests of the School District. He deserves our strong support and assistance.

It is well to remember that Dr. Costanzo was appointed Superintendent in December 1971 by eight of the nine present Board members. His capabilities were easily ascertained. He had taught in the Philadelphia public schools and served here as a principal, district superintendent and associate superintendent. Apparently Board members were sure of their decision since they made no national search and took only a week or two to arrive at it. About a year later, they gave Dr. Costanzo their vote of confidence when they voted 7-0 with one abstention to give him a six year contract. They have, therefore, an obligation to do all in their power to help Dr. Costanzo to be an effective leader.

The public demonstrated its

confidence in the Superintendent during the budget fight. It is important that the public have a way to continue to offer support and assistance to Dr. Costanzo so that his side will be strengthened in his struggle with the Board. His newly formed Citizens Advisory Committee for Quality Education could help with this task. In addition, a sub-committee of this Advisory Committee could monitor Board decisions, exposing those which are detrimental to the system at an early stage when they could be reversed.

The Superintendent feels, and rightly so I think, that he has suffered professionally and personally at the hands of the Board of Education. They have decreased his effectiveness by interfering with personnel appointments, reversing his decisions and publicly displaying by their manner and actions a lack of respect for him.

The facts and events discussed in this Newsletter reveal an ugly pattern of repeated attempts by some members of the Board of Education to make decisions in public and in private that are destructive to the school system. A way must be found to stop them from sabotaging the Superintendent's efforts to fulfill his role as the School District's instructional leader and chief administrator.

8/18/74

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# the OAKES newsletter

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Vol.VI, No.2

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

October 21, 1974

## ANNETTE TEMIN

### ONE WOMAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO PUBLIC EDUCATION

Over the last twenty-five years, Annette Temin has made a unique contribution to public education in Philadelphia. She founded the Citizens Committee on Public Education which gave Philadelphia a vehicle for citizen participation in the improvement of public education. By organizing, leading, stimulating, prodding, supporting and encouraging others, she has been successful in initiating many programs which have made our schools better institutions of learning.

There are several reasons for devoting this issue of the Newsletter to Annette Temin's accomplishments. First, her extraordinary, voluntary contribution deserves recognition. Second, she is an excellent example of the significant difference one person can make. Third, she serves to illustrate the fact that it is not necessary to have children in public schools in order to be dedicated and committed to their betterment since she has not had any there since 1951. And fourth, many of the programs that she has striven successfully to launch and sustain are important and of general interest.

Annette Temin has never sought the limelight. She has been satisfied to work hard and strive for accomplishment rather than for recognition. She would probably be among the first to agree that

much of what she has achieved has depended on others' contributions of time and energy. It is equally true that most of these projects and programs would never have been started or become successful without Annette Temin's leadership and drive. She didn't do it alone, but it wouldn't have happened without her.

During Mrs. Temin's early years in Philadelphia, she got her master's degree in education from the University of Pennsylvania. In 1949, her interest turned to public education and she joined the Education Committee of the League of Women Voters. In 1950, she became its chairman. It quickly became apparent to her that existing organizations were not going to be effective in bringing about necessary changes in the public schools. She set out to organize a committee of citizens similar to others being started nationwide. She was successful in getting the League of Women Voters to back her idea. In March 1953, fifty people from sixteen organizations met and from this meeting the Citizens Committee on Public Education in Philadelphia emerged. Annette Temin was its first president and she served in that role for five years until she moved into the executive vice-presidency from which she ran the organization for two more years.

Under her leadership, the Cit-

izens Committee became sufficiently strong so that its continuation was assured. It needed, therefore, to have legal status. Board members of the Citizens Committee approached the existing, but dormant, Public Education Association of Philadelphia and persuaded its board to agree to steps which led in time to its charter becoming Citizens Committee's. Since the Public Education Association had been organized in 1881 "to promote efficiency and to perfect the system of public education" it was appropriate for the Citizens Committee to pick up the reins and continue that effort.

### CITIZENS COMMITTEE

Annette Temin's contribution to the Citizens Committee on Public Education has been great indeed and has added immeasurably to its effectiveness. In addition to founding and leading it, she served on its Executive Board for twenty-one years, chaired its active and highly respected Committee on Reading Achievement from 1962 to the present and chaired its School Visits Committee from 1960-62.

From the beginning, the Citizens Committee has visited schools each year. This has given many people an opportunity, not otherwise available, to see first hand what schools are really like. By observing classes and talking with staff members, visitors have been able to see a school's or the system's strengths and weaknesses. Written reports of the visits have been widely distributed and included suggestions for improvement.

Down through the years, the Citizens Committee has been a vehicle for informing the community about public education and providing leadership for action on city-wide issues. It played an important role in getting the Educational Home Rule Charter developed and passed. It has analyzed operating and capital budgets, advocated and worked for changes when neces-

sary. It has sponsored annual Town Meetings on crucial educational issues.

The Committee on Reading Achievement, chaired by Mrs. Temin, has had a very significant impact on the great improvement in the reading instruction offered in Philadelphia schools. Long before the school system recognized that reading instruction merited a top priority, Mrs. Temin was focusing attention on the problems of teaching reading. Her Committee vigorously advocated the concentration of new funds and personnel on the development of a modernized reading program. It also offered concrete suggestions on how these new resources might best be utilized.

### LARC

Because, in the early 1960's, as today, so many children, particularly in the inner city, were failing to acquire the all important skill of reading, it was felt that new approaches and a constructive use of summer time might be helpful. As Chairman of the Citizens Committee's Reading Committee, Mrs. Temin worked very hard to get Language Arts Reading Camps (LARC) started and to keep them going and growing as the years have gone by. The purpose of LARC is to enrich and strengthen day camp programs by permeating them with reading, speaking, listening, writing and thinking. For two years, as an experimental program in one camp with sixty children, it was privately funded and operated by a social work agency. By 1967, there were nine camps with the LARC component and this summer the program had grown to seventeen, serving 1400 children.

The quality of the summer day camps varies greatly from one to another depending on the physical facilities and the financial resources of the organization operating the camps. However, in each case the LARC component is the

same. Each camp is provided with one language arts teacher, books and special materials. The teachers work with children, but also with counselors. Counselors learn to see and utilize all opportunities to increase children's vocabularies and their understanding of the spoken and written word. A counselor in a LARC camp teaching youngsters to play baseball would not only teach them how to throw, catch and hit the ball, but he would make sure that they understood baseball terms like infield, outfield, bunt, single, double, triple. He might work with them to write down some of the rules of the game.

Young people from the Neighborhood Youth Corps act as junior counselors at LARC sites. They too benefit from the language arts part of the program. In being taught how to help younger children, they often learn reading skills that they had missed in their earlier years. In camps where parents assist, they report that what they learn aids them in helping their own children. Since many of the counselors are teachers or teachers-to-be, they benefit from this opportunity to see that language activities can be fun as well as work for children and to learn how to more effectively use language arts materials and activities.

#### **VOLUNTEERS:**

The School District's Division of Volunteer Services reports that 10,000 volunteers worked in 222 schools last year, giving approximately 500,000 hours of service. This huge program did not exist in 1962. It owes its beginnings to an idea that Annette Temin had and those who know credit her with being its prime mover.

In the early 1960's when many people became aware that the public schools were doing a poor job in meeting the needs of many of the children, Mrs. Temin realized

that there was a great untapped pool of people who would give time to the schools and the children without charge. Anything that provided more individual attention and special help to students could not help but enhance their chances of achievement. Relieving teachers of some of their non-teaching duties would give them more time to teach. When the idea was originally broached to the School District, it was turned down. It wasn't until the Citizens Committee raised \$50,000 for a three year pilot project that the program was launched. When the value of volunteers became clear, the School District made the Volunteer Services program a permanent one with a director and small staff.

Since 1963, thousands of volunteers have gone into the schools to tutor students in basic skills, to share with them a particular interest or skill or specialized knowledge, or to serve as an aide. Children's lives have been enriched and their horizons expanded. Business and industry release employees to serve in the schools during school hours and many provide trips to places of interest or historical significance, to baseball and football games and to their own plants or business locations. Volunteers come from local and distant communities; Federal agencies; colleges and universities; public, parochial and independent high schools. Women and men from all walks of life give time in our schools.

10,000 people giving their time to students make an invaluable contribution that can never be fully known. There is no way to identify the student who is motivated to work harder by a volunteer, a student who without the extra interest and help would have floundered and possibly failed. There is no way to know what a child's reading level would have been without tutoring help versus what it is with weekly assistance



from a volunteer. Unfortunately, there is no way to measure what might have been against what is. Clearly, however, this gift of time and interest has been of very great value.

In doing the research for this Newsletter, I studied committee files which give some clue to the way that Annette Temin works. She keeps abreast of new or experimental programs and when she finds a worthwhile one which she feels is relevant to a priority problem here, she arranges a trip for several people to go and learn more about it or she plans a meeting and brings people here to tell of their work. In this way, she has introduced new ideas and concepts and stimulated others to try them.

For example, it became clear to Mrs. Temin some years ago, in advance of most others, that there is a crucial early learning period from birth to three years of age. Infants and toddlers need to be provided with many opportunities for learning by those who care for them. They need to be talked to and later conversed with. They need someone to make them aware of their surroundings and the meaning of words and concepts if they are to be ready to learn to read later on. Wanting to convince others and

get them to act, Mrs. Temin joined with the Director of Early Childhood Programs for the city's schools to convene an informal group of people interested in infants and toddlers. People from very different backgrounds and disciplines who shared an interest in very young children met together. During the first year Mrs. Temin brought in experts who reported on their work with mothers, teaching them how to stimulate and work with their infants and toddlers. Over a period of time, this group has been exposed to many new ideas and has engaged in interchanges of thought which have resulted in improved home and public care and education of infants and toddlers.

Regretfully, space does not permit an adequate account of Mrs. Temin's 25 year contribution to public education. She has accomplished much. As a volunteer, her work has reflected a greater sense of responsibility and more commitment than that of many people who hold high paying jobs. Schools are better places for children to learn in because of Annette Temin's interest and concern and devotion of her time and talent to public education.

9/16/74

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# the OAKES newsletter

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

Vol. VI, No. 3

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

November 22, 1974

## SCIENCE IN THE PHILADELPHIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

We travel together, passengers on a little spaceship, dependent on its vulnerable resources of air and soil; all committed for our safety to its security and peace; preserved from annihilation only by the care, the work, and, I will say, the love we give our fragile craft.

Adlai Stevenson, 1969

The Earth is like a spaceship, because it is a closed system too. Except for the sun's energy, what is "on board" is all there will ever be. If our world is to have "the care, the work, and... the love" that it must, then coming generations must understand why this is so essential. Translated into very practical terms that means public school students must have a strong background in science.

Air and water needed for survival are poisoned. Millions of people in the world suffer from malnutrition and starvation. In the future, supplies of food and energy may be inadequate to meet the demands of the world's population. It is obvious that today's young people need strong science instruction to enable them to better understand the cause and effect of these events, cast an informed vote, make decisions about the course of their lives and contribute to the survival of the planet.

There are those who argue that the schools' primary job is to teach the basic skills of reading, writing and computation. There is no conflict between this goal and

the teaching of science. Students learn faster and better if the development of these skills is connected to something that has interest and significance for them. The student who plants a seed from his Halloween pumpkin and watches it grow is excited by what he sees. He has a reason to measure the height of the plant each day and to go to reference books to learn about a seed's development into a plant with roots, stem and leaves. Also, because the situation has special meaning for him, the student may learn the skill of using a table of contents or an index better than he could through an exercise in a workbook that attempts to teach the same thing. Therefore, time given to science should not be thought of as time stolen from the three Rs. Quite the opposite, it has the potential for considerably enhancing the learning of basic skills.

### THE NEED FOR CHANGE

The School District is beginning the long process of making substantive changes which will revitalize science teaching in Philadelphia. Its goal is to make

all students scientifically literate, knowledgeable enough to have an understanding of the basic scientific principles that underlie and explain the world around us. This will help them to grasp and understand the significance of the problems of population, food growth and distribution, treatment of the environment, pollution and the fragility of life.

An outline of the School District's science program, as it existed last year demonstrates the necessity for substantial change. Most elementary school students had little science. In the middle or junior high school, science for most was a combination of traditionally taught chemistry, physics and earth, space and life sciences. Biology was taught in 10th grade to almost all students and represented their final science course. Only about 30% chose to go on to chemistry and only half of those took physics in grade 12.

Most of the secondary school science was taught by a teacher who stood in the front of the room, lecturing and demonstrating. Students listened and watched. Many were bored and they grasped and retained very little. They could not see how science affects their lives. Under these conditions, many students simply did not learn enough science to meet their immediate or long range needs. A new approach was required and except for about half the elementary schools where it is partially under way, conditions are the same now as last year.

Philadelphia's problems in science education are shared by many other school systems. There has been a national effort to revise the teaching of science. The drive began when the Russians beat us into space in 1957. This blow, accompanied by a recognition that there was a critical shortage of scientists, provided a strong impetus for reform and released very

substantial funds for the effort. From this evolved, over a fifteen year period, nationally developed curriculums written by scientists, teachers, educational psychologists and lay people working together.

There are some common threads running through almost all of these curriculums. They call for organizing students into small groups to work together with diverse physical and biological materials. The curriculums rely on motivating students to learn by capturing their interest with activity that is interesting, meaningful, and often fun. For example, students might learn about variables by flying folded paper airplanes that they made and discussing the variables that affected the distance that each flew. Or they might place a handful of mating fruit flies with some food in a jar and observe the staggering number of flies that come from the original ones. In their investigations, the students make observations, measure, interpret, infer and predict. The teacher facilitates learning, but is not primarily a dispenser of facts. Teachers have to assume a new and different role. They must learn to work in a different way with their students organized to work in small groups.

Implementation of the new curriculums requires a commitment of staff time and funding. Teachers must be trained to teach this new way. They must be provided with follow-up help to reinforce what they learn and to support and assist them as they try something new. They must have material and equipment with which to work.

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

At the elementary school level, up to this school year, science has received a very low priority in Philadelphia. Until 1972, there was no science staff at all in the central office working in the elementary schools and last year only

two of the eight districts had science collaborators working with classroom teachers. There was no money specifically allotted to schools to purchase scientific materials and equipment. Elementary teachers were inadequately trained by teachers' colleges in the field of science so very few taught it systematically.

A thrust to bring science into the elementary schools is off to a strong start this year. The Teachers' Contract, signed two years ago, called for a 45 minute preparation period for each elementary school teacher each day starting September 1974. This meant that every school had to add staff members. 131 schools chose to add a science specialist. They teach every class in the school at least one period each week. There is no question that more children in elementary schools are getting more science this year than before and that the instruction is of a higher quality. Because there is one person per school with whom the central office can work intensively, science instruction should continue to improve.

However, we should not be satisfied with what we have today. Only half the elementary schools have a science teacher and all should have them. Students should have three periods of science per week, as required by the new curriculums, not the one or two they now get. The new curriculums require materials and equipment for use by the students. Many schools do not have them. Since \$1 per child per year for five years is all that is required, the funds should be allocated for this purpose at once.

In addition, the schedule for science ignores the requirements of a good science program. It is designed primarily to provide a 45 minute preparation period for classroom teachers. It results, in many schools, in the science

teacher meeting about 700 different children in a week with no time interval between classes. I question whether even the most highly organized teacher, with all the required materials available, can take groups of children in six or seven different grades along at their own pace through a modern curriculum on that kind of schedule and with no assistance.

Science teachers should have time to consult and work with classroom teachers so that experiments begun with the science teacher can be continued and the science program and the classroom program can nourish each other. For example, some class spelling words could come from last week's science work. Or children could work on bar and line graphs in science and mathematics when they want to show the amount of growth of different plants over a series of days. The work in the classroom and in science can often be complimentary and greater learning will result. A child whose curiosity is piqued by a science experiment needs to be encouraged to get more information from books in the library. There is no one to do this when the science teacher meets with the children infrequently and the classroom teacher knows nothing of what is happening in the science class.

## SECONDARY SCHOOLS

At the secondary school level, there are thousands upon thousands of students who are being subjected to courses that are dusty, dry and totally irrelevant to their lives. If this is to change — and it must — there has to be a substantial commitment of time and funds to the retraining of teachers. One way to begin this would be to budget funds for next summer for as many science teachers as possible and work with them intensively through the following school year.

At the senior high school level, there is a further serious problem. At present, almost all students study biology to fulfill the state requirement that every student must take a laboratory science in high school. Since biology is the study of plant and animal life, its importance is evident. However, all students should study physics too, (only 15% do now) because that is the science which explains and gives reason to much of the world around us. It doesn't have to be a course that is full of mathematics and suitable only to those who think easily in abstractions. It can be taught so that most students will understand and enjoy it, admire men like Galileo and Newton, appreciate their genius and understand the concepts that they developed.

Learning something about heat, light, electricity, energy, etc. will help a student to understand the function of a fuse in home wiring and the reason that the safest air to breathe in a fire is near the ground. These are very simple examples of how understanding the principles of physics can aid us in making sense of observations and situations that we experience in our daily lives. It

also helps us to understand rockets, solar heating and many other things that may be a part of the future.

Teaching science to Philadelphia public school students merits a much higher priority than it is presently being given. I applaud the increase in the Science Education office at 21st and the Parkway from four people to six. System wide leadership is absolutely essential. Central staff can provide the impetus for change and bring resources to the teaching staff that will enable them to use new methods, new curriculums and new materials. At the same time, however, there must be increased science staffing in the districts and funding for science materials and equipment that is clearly earmarked for that purpose. The central staff has the inspiration, dedication, knowledge and insight to reach the goal of scientific literacy for students. For the very substantial effort needed in the immediate years ahead, they must have the support and commitment of the Board of Education, the Superintendent, the public and the business and science community.

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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## STUDENT RECORDS

The right to privacy of millions of children has been seriously eroded by school systems across the nation. School records have become places to store a vast accumulation of data — hard facts, unverified statements, and subjective evaluations and judgments. Students and parents have been denied access to these files while information has been available to almost everyone else including the armed forces, colleges, employers, law enforcement agencies and welfare departments.

In this age of computers, privacy is much more difficult to maintain than it once was. If a family has purchased health or life insurance or made purchases on credit, a great deal of personal health, financial and employment data has been fed into computers. Information compiled by schools about the child and his family can easily be added. With a flick of a switch, information can be retrieved for some unknown person at a place, time and for a purpose about which the family knows nothing. Computers pose a serious threat, because they make the storage and retrieval of information so easy, but the regulation and control of it so difficult.

Privacy is more than secrecy. A family may have nothing in their lives that they want to hide, but do they want very personal details revealed to others? Isn't the right to keep one's life secluded and isolated from the scrutiny of

or contact with others a right to be highly prized? Records, as they are kept today, often reveal a great deal about a student's and his family's past. Perhaps a parent and troubled child needed professional help to work through family problems that were surfacing at school in a pattern of disruptive behavior. That history remains in the record and is revealed to vocational and college guidance counselors years later when they work with that student. It may unfavorably color their judgment of the student and it certainly infringes on his right to be free of unnecessary intrusions into his life.

Record keeping in the Philadelphia public school system is in a deplorable state which affects students adversely in several ways. Intimate details of an individual's home life may be given in a kindergarten admission form or a discipline record and the forms remain in the files for decades. The records prevent students from starting fresh because their cumulative nature makes a clean slate impossible. They label and stigmatize students. Because prejudice and discrimination on the basis of race, religion, ethnic background, intelligence and different value systems still operate in society and schools, students may be unfairly judged by those writing the record. This may cause others who read it to be biased against them before ever meeting them.

In doing the research for this Newsletter, I examined the record of one of our children. I found data that was either very personal, or no longer useful, or both, which should have been destroyed years ago. A parent-teacher conference form which I filled out in 1962 asked questions about our five year old's "appetite (fussy, slow, good), quality of sleep (thumbsucking, bedwetting, nightmares), emotional stability (calm, high-strung, excitable), fears... any abnormal situations (premature birth, divorced or separated parents, adopted, etc.)." That form soon became useless and it should have been destroyed years ago.

As examples of useless materials in the files, I found a note to the principal about the date our child would enter kindergarten, an achievement test booklet (not the results) and three copies of the results of one Iowa test. Someone else found 52 different documents and forms in her daughter's file including a detailed account of how she bumped her head in 1965, who was contacted, and how she got home. The records are so thick, disorganized and non-selective that they cannot possibly be used effectively by teachers and others working with students.

They are filled with unsupported and judgmental statements that should not be there. For example, I was supplied with a form requesting psychological service (the student's name was deleted) that was written eight years ago and not signed. Under reason for referral, it says, "A. is a youngster who has a history of truancy, of stealing in the school and in the neighborhood. He also seems to lack a positive masculine identity."

#### PURPOSE OF RECORDS

Essential to the improvement of record keeping in Philadelphia is a new and clear definition of

why records are kept. I believe that beyond minimal personal data kept to establish that the student has attended school and completed so many grades, all other records should be kept solely to serve the student's best interests. The only exception to this would be cases where it was necessary to record information in order to safeguard the health and welfare of other children. Records should not be kept for the purpose of aiding employers or colleges in screening out applicants nor to provide social or law enforcement agencies with information. Guided solely by the interests of the student, the School District would, for example, routinely destroy all discipline records at the end of junior high school so that a student entering high school could have a fresh slate. Guided by this principle, a student with reading, psychological or home problems would have records pertaining to them destroyed when the records could no longer be used to help him. As the student changes and matures, he should not be handicapped by others' knowledge of his past. Records should not be kept in order to develop a comprehensive history of a student's progress through school except as this is reflected in the factual data of attendance and grades. An important rule to follow is — when in doubt, don't file it, destroy it.

Strict limitations on what is recorded and how long data is kept would go a long way in protecting the privacy of students. For example, unless they run out of space, most high schools keep the records intact forever of pupils who have left the system. There is a School District directive which says that all but a few essential facts (name, address, birth date, parents' address, attendance, grade level completed and grades) may be destroyed when a student is 21. If the word "may" is changed to "must", a great step forward will

have been taken.

## FEDERAL LAW

Congress, moving to respond to schools' abuse of the right to privacy, passed a law which became effective in November 1974. It provides that parents shall have "the right to inspect and review" all of their child's school records. They have the right to challenge anything there on the basis of its being "inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy or other rights of students." Further the law provides that, with very limited exceptions, information from a student's record may not be given out unless the parents give their written consent. (Upon becoming 18, these rights pass to the student.) The penalty for non-compliance with this law is the loss of federal funds.

We can be grateful for this law because its provisions mandate some very important reforms. At long last, parents can see and challenge material in their child's record. But that is not enough, because this serious problem will not be solved if 100 or 1000 people are able to straighten out their own children's records. The School District must be forced to develop policies, procedures and regulations that will enable the records to be stripped of improper or outdated entries from the past and prevent them in the future. The new federal law provides the public with the necessary leverage to compel a drastic revision of record keeping. It should be clearly understood, however, that this will not happen automatically.

Deep concern about school record keeping began in the 1960's. A conference held by the Russell Sage Foundation of New York City in 1969 developed Guidelines for the Collection, Maintenance and Dissemination of Pupil Records. This booklet has been immensely

helpful in stimulating thoughtful consideration of the problem and providing a well developed model for citizens, school districts and legislatures across the nation to use in working to improve the management of their school records.\* Some of the concepts were incorporated into the federal law.

The Board of Education of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania adopted regulations last July which require all local school districts to adopt and submit to the State Department of Education, by September 1975, guidelines for pupil records which conform to the Russell Sage Guidelines. They must, therefore, include such things as a requirement for informed consent before information can be gathered and the classification of data so that only the basic minimum is kept permanently while the rest is reviewed periodically and, if appropriate, destroyed.

The School District of Philadelphia has a tentative set of "Guidelines for School Personnel in the Use of Pupil Information" which should have been approved and adopted by the Board of Education in early November, but has not been reached on the agenda as of this writing. These Guidelines will put the School District essentially in compliance with federal law, but not with the Russell Sage Guidelines as required by the Commonwealth. They do not, for example, deal in any way with the serious problems of keeping subjective judgments or unverified data out of the records, destroying material when it is no longer needed, limiting access to the files by school personnel to those who have a legitimate educational interest and establishing responsibility for security of the files.

\*Single copies available free. Write Guidelines, Russell Sage Foundation, 230 Park Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.



## REGULATIONS LACKING

Many different kinds of records are kept for School District students. For most, there are no systemwide regulations, so each school keeps them in its own way.

Administrators keep discipline records. These are the records which can damage the most students. Yet, there are NO centrally developed directives which regulate their content, where they are to be kept nor how long they are to be retained.

Medical records can be the most sensitive of all records kept, yet they are often kept in unlocked files. The Division of Health Services has NO regulations detailing security measures, stating where records are to be kept and how they are to be transferred from one school to another.

One might reasonably assume that the Counseling Division would have responsibility for School District record keeping, but that is not the case. It has responsibility and authority to regulate records kept by counselors and attendance officers only and this it does.

It is absolutely essential that one person in the School District have the responsibility and authority to control and direct the keeping of all student records.

The logical person for this is the Director of the Division of Pupil Personnel and Counseling and I would urge the School District to take this step at once.

The School District has shown neither will nor willingness to move their record keeping methods into conformity with the Russell Sage Guidelines. In addition, they have taken no steps whatever to establish guidelines for principals when parents assert their right to inspect records and challenge their content. I recommend that the public give the School District three months to develop the needed regulations. If they are not complete by early April, I would urge community groups to organize parents to make appointments to review their children's records. The chaos which will follow as parents challenge such items as discipline records or teacher comments on report cards will impel the District to develop the needed guidelines.

The federal law was passed in August 1974. The Russell Sage Guidelines have been out for four years. There is no excuse for records in Philadelphia to continue to damage students, violate their privacy rights, be unprofessional in much of their content, be disorganized and lack security.

12/15/74

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## THE OAKES NEWSLETTER

### How To Inspect And Review Your Child's Record

Make An Appointment to review your child's record. Call his counselor first. You may have to make the appointment with the principal.

Examine the Record - Plan to spend from 30 minutes to two hours. Someone will probably explain the various forms to you. Then you should request, and if necessary insist, that you be given time to look through the record by yourself at your own pace. Examine the back and front of every form.

#### Your Rights:

You have the right to take notes on material in the record.

You may have copies of anything in the record. (Whether there will be a charge for this has not yet been determined.)

#### The Record Consists Of:

Pupil Pocket holding an assortment of forms.

Test Results which may be in the pupil pocket or elsewhere.

Medical Records which are usually filed in the nurse's office.

In addition, for many children:

Counseling Record which is kept in the counselor's office.

Psychological Record - May be in the pupil pocket or elsewhere.

Discipline Record -

If acquired in another school, it will be in the pupil pocket.

If acquired in the present school, it will probably be in an administrator's office. You should ask to see:

All existing "Form EH 20 - Discipline Case Report, Teacher", commonly known as the "pink slip" and "Form EH 21 - Discipline Case Report, Principal."

All other existing notes and records pertaining to discipline. Most secondary schools have developed their own form of record keeping of rule infractions. Everything that is written down and used by the School to take action or is shared with any other professional is a part of the school record and must be shown to you. The only exception is a counselor's or psychologist's notes which serve as memory aids for their own use while working with a pupil and are then destroyed. That means an administrator in charge of discipline cannot deny you the right to see any and all of his files on your child.

# the OAKES newsletter

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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## FLOYD LOGAN - A LIFETIME DEVOTED TO A CAUSE

Many people have heard of Floyd Logan and the Educational Equality League, but there are probably very few who know, understand and appreciate the tremendously significant contribution that he has made to public education in Philadelphia and other parts of Pennsylvania. For forty-three years, Floyd Logan has fought tenaciously and effectively against discrimination practiced against students and School District employees, for the promotion of democratic representation on the School Board and for the desegregation of schools in and out of Philadelphia. Though he is now in his 70's, he continues his untiring efforts.

I write this Newsletter for paradoxical reasons. On the one hand, more people should know that, because of the ceaseless efforts of the Educational Equality League, Philadelphia is far ahead of most northern big city school systems in the percentage of Black women and men in positions of decision making, leadership and major responsibility at the school, administrative and school board levels. Without the League's early and continuing pressure, this would not have come about. On the other hand, all of us should also recognize that the school system has a long way to go before it achieves an ethnic mix that is equitable and gives it the ability to meet the educational needs of the students and do so with sensitivity

and understanding.

Mr. Logan began his crusade in 1932 with a successful effort to remove an objectionable social studies textbook from the schools. According to newspaper accounts written at the time, he led a committee of sixteen "colored organizations" representing 110,000 citizens which wrote to the President of the Board of Education objecting to the use of this book which they said disseminated propaganda against Negroes. The textbook was removed from the approved list.

Not long after that incident he formally organized the Educational Equality League and it began its struggle against the flagrant discrimination and segregation that existed in the Philadelphia school system. There were twelve elementary schools in the City at that time in which all of the pupils, teachers and principals were Black. All of the Black teachers in the system taught in these schools. No Black teachers taught in secondary schools. No Black teachers taught white children in any school. The school board had no Blacks on it. Other than teachers, the School District employed very few Black men and women and only in the lowest paying jobs. There were no Black professionals in secondary schools or central administration.

It was Mr. Logan and the Educational Equality League that undertook the early, difficult and

highly significant battles for representation on the school board, the break down of the color line at all levels in employment and the integration of the students in the schools. It is a credit to his faith and perseverance that he has kept at it all these years and a tragedy that the history of the struggle is full of delays, postponements and foot dragging.

#### STEPS FORWARD

One of the first efforts of the Educational Equality League was a campaign to get a Black member appointed to the Board of Education. It resulted in the appointment of Dr. John P. Turner, a police surgeon, to the Board in 1935. He served as the sole Black representative on the fifteen member Board for twenty-three years, until his death in 1958. His seat was then filled by the now deceased E. Washington Rhodes, a lawyer and the publisher of the Philadelphia Tribune. It wasn't until 1962, when Robert W. Williams Jr., was appointed that the Board had two Black members. Black representation increased to three for the first time in 1971. The Board of Education is a typical example of the difficulty of securing justice for Blacks. Through Floyd Logan's efforts, Dr. Turner was appointed. While this was a significant accomplishment, it did not lead to further advances, as it should have, for twenty-eight long years.

In the mid-30's, the Educational Equality League began the struggle to have Black teachers appointed to the secondary schools and to abolish the racially sepa-

rate lists of eligible teachers which had resulted in Black teachers being assigned to teach only Black children. The League proposed a program of "experimental appointments" to secondary schools and achieved the first one in 1935 when a Black art teacher was appointed to the previously all white faculty at Sulzberger Junior High School. The lists were merged in 1937. It took extra courage and stamina to work for the merging of the lists, because this was not universally supported by Black teachers. Many believed that this would lead to a drop in the number of jobs for Blacks. However, in time, the abandonment of the dual lists did lead to desegregation of staffs in all schools and therefore more jobs for Blacks. Floyd Logan's stand on the lists was consistent with the way he works. He took a principled position and stayed with it, popular or not.

It was 1946, eleven years after the junior high school appointment, before a Black teacher was appointed to a senior high school. (See table below.) Ten years after that, there were less than sixty Black teachers in senior high and vocational-technical schools. There were no Black department heads and only one Black principal. You can see how slowly things have moved in the high schools from 1946 to the present. Although the numbers have improved, they are still well below what they should be, especially for teachers and department heads.

When statistics like these are brought forward, school administrators often reply that not enough Black people are qualified for

<u>Sr. High &amp; Voc-Tech.Schools</u>	<u>1946</u>	<u>1956</u>	<u>1966</u>	<u>Dec. 1974</u>
Black Teachers	1	58	333 (14%)	21%
Black Department Heads	0	0	1	16%
Black Principals	0	1	1	28%

these positions or take the examinations for promotion. It is important to remember that to the extent that this is true, the School District bears responsibility. For many years, very few Black people prepared to go into secondary education, because there were NO employment opportunities in it in Philadelphia. Also, it was not until very recently, as the chart shows, that there have been promotional opportunities for Blacks in high schools.

The Educational Equality League has worked consistently for the promotion of Blacks to top administrative levels of the School District. On two occasions in the early and mid-60's, there were a number of important positions to be filled. The School District tried to ignore the demands of the Educational Equality League and others to give equal consideration to the advancement of Blacks, but they were finally forced to promote Blacks to some of the top level openings. If the Educational Equality League had not been at work many years earlier there would not have been people in significant administrative positions to move into these top level openings.

The Educational Equality League has worked steadily for student integration inside and outside the City. Back in 1934, Floyd Logan was involved with securing admission of Black pupils into a new school in Berwyn from which they had been excluded. The League worked to desegregate Chester schools, Girard College, the Milton Hershey School in Hershey, Pa. and intensified its efforts to integrate the state's public school systems after the 1954 Supreme Court decision. Floyd Logan's efforts made him a target of hate mail and phone calls. He also received threats on his life which were taken so seriously by the authorities that on more than one occasion he was assigned police

protection.

Space does not permit describing many of the diverse problems and policies that the League has grappled with over the years. They have varied from the ending of segregated classes in hair-dressing in the vocational-technical schools to working for increased employment of Black non-instructional personnel. While the League's major emphasis has been on the problems of Blacks in the system, it has also served as advocate for members of other minority groups when they were subject to discrimination.

In October 1972, the Educational Equality League asked for a report on racial staffing patterns. The school system took sixteen months to produce the "Race and Sex Report" which consisted of a forty-nine page list of positions and the ethnic background of those filling them. It had no index, no discernible organization, no summary, no evaluation and no conclusions. The League found an independent consultant and developed its own report which links jobs, race and pay scales.

An examination of the League's report raises questions about: 1) the high percentage of Blacks employed as aides, helpers and attendants in low paying, unskilled, blind alley jobs, and 2) the low percentage or lack of Blacks in good paying, skilled jobs, and 3) the availability to Blacks of opportunities to get on the rung of a career ladder. Many of these non-instructional employees are unable to fight for their own rights. They need an advocate and the Educational Equality League has fought for them through the years and continues to do so now.

Clearly, Floyd Logan's struggle is not ancient history, but a battle that continues, because the problems remain. At the insistence of the Educational Equality

League, the Board of Education passed a resolution in September 1974 adopting in principle "a continuous affirmative action program for correction of all Black employment and salary inequities as were determined by the Educational Equality League through its evaluation of the 'Race and Sex Report' ..."

The Educational Equality League is more than one man. There have been officers and members over the years that have made significant contributions to the League's work. But, no one would deny, I think, that Floyd Logan has made the League what it has been and what it is today.

Who is this man that has been President and an effective leader of the Educational Equality League for forty-three years? Floyd Logan grew up in Asheville, North Carolina and came to Philadelphia in 1921. He worked for the U.S. Customs Service and then for the Internal Revenue Service until medical reasons forced him to take advantage of an optional retirement program in 1955.

Down through the years, the League has utilized many avenues in the pursuit of its goals. It has gone to the courts many times.

Floyd Logan has written thousands of carefully thought out, expressive letters to presidents, governors, mayors, boards of education and school superintendents. He has pointed out injustices, asked for corrective measures and always been factual, firm, polite and restrained. He has shunned histrionics and used statistics, logic, documented facts, analyses of School District reports and a methodical approach to achieve breakthroughs and improvements. He has developed good working relationships with board members, superintendents and top administrators and has proceeded to right all kinds of wrong through the practice of quiet, dogged, personal diplomacy.

Floyd Logan and his wife have lived first on his modest income and then on his pension — circumstances which might have caused a lesser man to have allowed himself to be bought off long ago. He has had no connection with the school system, so he has never had anything personal to gain from his efforts and he has always kept his independence. Floyd Logan merits our deep respect for his integrity, singleness of purpose, refusal to be turned from his course and sacrifice for a cause.

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# the OAKES newsletter

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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## PREKINDERGARTEN IN THE PHILADELPHIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

There are about 5500 three and four year olds in five prekindergarten programs which are part of the Philadelphia public school system. They vary greatly from one another in many aspects, such as length of day and year, services provided and background of teachers.

The smallest program serves 164 young children in five public schools and is known simply as Pre-Kindergarten. It offers a half day session and is modeled after kindergarten except that it serves younger children with a program and staffing suited to them.

The Parent Cooperative Nurseries are twenty-one in number. They run from 9 a.m. to noon, follow the School District calendar, require each mother to serve one morning a week as the teacher's assistant and charge a small weekly fee to cover snacks. Housing for the Nursery is provided by the community to be served.

There are seventeen Child Care Centers which serve about 400 three and four year olds and about 1000 older children. They are open from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m. year round. The School District provides facilities and administers the program and the City Department of Welfare funds it. Available to families in various income groups, fees are charged on a sliding scale based on income and family size.

Prekindergarten Head Start

serves about 850 children in twenty-one locations in a program that runs from 8:45 to 3:00 September through July. The program is federally funded through the Philadelphia Anti-Poverty Action Commission. Only children from low income families are eligible. They benefit from a nutritional program and receive medical and dental care, psychological and social services as needed.

Get Set Day Care serves about 3750 three and four year olds in 96 centers. The centers are open five days a week all year round from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Low income families with a special need for day care are eligible.

Only a fraction of the children who need day care service are getting it in these, and the privately sponsored, programs in the City. There are those who question the need for educational programs for children too young for kindergarten believing that they should be home with their mothers. But if it is a single parent family and the parent must work, the child must be cared for. In many two parent families also, both must work if the family is to have a nutritionally sound diet and maintain a minimum standard of living.

Because of the dearth of child care facilities, many parents are unable to make proper arrangements for their children. This results in some children, even very little ones, being left alone, locked in



apartments. Other children have to fend for themselves all day, entering their homes at lunch time or after school with keys hung around their necks. Some must spend part or all of their days with brothers or sisters barely older than they are or with unreliable sitters. Many children are scarred for life by these experiences. Some become problems for society. Their parents suffer too as they live with constant worry and guilt. It is, I believe, in the public interest to be concerned about these children and to do everything possible to provide them with quality care.

Each of the School District's prekindergarten programs is an entity with its own administration, policies, program, staffing patterns, supervisors and plan for staff development. Each runs without regard for what its sister programs offer and most often without any links to the child's next step, kindergarten.

One fact came through loud and clear when I read through the School District's "Opportunities" bulletins for the job of teacher in the various prekindergarten programs. The School District has operated on the principle that any college graduate, with or without courses in early childhood education, can run these programs.

This parallels the thinking that young children just play in school and therefore special teacher training is unnecessary. But children learn through their play. Children climbing a jungle-gym are learning control of their bodies, how to estimate distances, and the meaning of words like "up", "high", and "down". Children playing imaginatively in the doll corner or with blocks are learning to use words, to converse and to express ideas. Play is children's work. Therefore, trained teachers are needed to provide children with a variety of materials and experiences and opportunities to

question, investigate, experiment, make choices and be creative.

## TEACHER REQUIREMENTS

The requirements for the twenty-one Parent Nursery teachers and the handful of Pre-Kindergarten teachers are the most stringent because they require certification — the completion of a State-approved program for the training of teachers. However, the certification can be in Early Childhood Education (Nursery - Grade 3), Elementary Education or Home Economics. In the latter two, teachers may have spent almost no time studying three and four year olds and often little time on five year olds. Teachers in the Parent Nurseries must have taken at least ten semester hours in early childhood education. While this recognition of the need for work in this specialty is to be applauded, ten semester hours is not nearly enough.

A Child Care Center teacher needs only a Bachelor's degree (no teacher training), supplemented by a minimum of ten semester hours in early childhood education. A Pre-kindergarten Head Start teacher must have a college degree too, but only six hours in early childhood education. Get Set Day Care, the program which serves the most children, requires the least of its teachers. They must have a Bachelor's degree, but need not have had any work in early childhood education.

There was an excuse perhaps in the mid-1960's for not requiring a strong background in early childhood education. Very few people had it and many colleges had fewer courses in this specialty than they do now. Times, however, have changed. Now there is State certification in this specialty and many colleges and universities offer degrees in it. Three and four year olds are just as valuable as all other children. As long as State certification is required for all other teaching positions,

certification in early childhood education should be required for all prekindergarten teachers. Judging by the course work required for certification, it takes eighteen to sixty semester hours, not six to ten, to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills.

Detailing the entry requirements for teachers into these different programs is perhaps the most significant example of the variations among them. Why should there be substantial differences of this type among programs which are all the direct responsibility of the School District of Philadelphia? They are all under one administrator yet there are no consistent quality standards, little or no coordination or cooperation among them. This has to lead to duplication of efforts and unnecessary costs as administrators in each program plan to meet similar needs, work to solve similar problems and develop their own way of doing everything. Standards should be established that would apply to all prekindergarten programs. This would strengthen the control of quality, reduce the cost of administration and most important, improve the offerings to children.

#### GET SET DAY CARE

I concentrated much of my attention on Get Set Day Care because that is the program serving 68% of the three and four year olds. Three-quarters of its funds come from a section (Title IV-A) of the amended Social Security Act. The federal funds are administered by the State Department of Public Welfare which sub-contracts for service to the School District of Philadelphia.

Get Set Day Care is an extremely complex program because it combines many services to both children and adults at many different sites. It provides children with an educational program; medical, nutritional, dental and psy-

chological care; and social services that are extended to their families too. It provides a career opportunities' program for adults who, through course work, training and experience, may move up from entry level positions. It involves parents in work with the program and decisions concerning its nature and operation. Get Set Day Care is housed in 96 different locations that must be kept clean, comfortable and attractive. Hot meals and snacks are prepared at each location. In addition, the instructional staff includes lead teachers, teachers, assistant teachers and teacher aides who must work as a team and cope with overlapping shifts necessitated by center hours of 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The Get Set Day Care program has been and is of tremendous value. It helps children to be healthy, adequately fed and better adjusted. It exposes them to many fine, dedicated and committed professionals and para-professionals who provide sensitive, loving care. It provides them with a diversity of materials and equipment such as blocks, paints, puzzles, books and toys that are not ordinarily available to the children at home. In many cases, it gives them exposure to the best in an educational program.

Having said that Get Set Day Care is a valuable, important, multi-faceted program that has served for several years as a lifeline for many children and adults, I must also say that it urgently needs substantial upgrading in the quality of the education offered to children in many of the 96 centers.

There are probably two major causes for the existence of centers that provide a poor educational experience for children. One cause has to be that the program is regarded by those running it and many other School District administrators as a social service program instead of an educational

one. Their reasoning is incomprehensible to me. The purpose of Get Set Day Care, they explain, is to strengthen the family unit and to offer parents care of their children during the day so that they can improve their situation by working or getting training designed to prepare them for paid employment or a more skilled job. Granted that purpose, parents are poorly served indeed if the program provided for their children is not a good one.

The major service being provided by Get Set, the one staffed by 70% of the personnel, is day care for children. These youngsters have an absolute right to a quality of care during the day which recognizes that this is a tremendously important time in their lives, a critical time when the best possible educational program is vital to their future intellectual, physical, emotional and social growth and development. Surely, when a school district administers a prekindergarten program, it has a solemn obligation to make every effort to provide a quality education to the children they serve.

A second major cause is the lack of professional training in early childhood education required of Get Set teachers. This should

have been remedied when the Board of Education signed its contract with the Federation of Teachers giving Get Set teachers parity beginning September 1974. On that date, Get Set teachers began to be paid on the same scale as all other teachers, except that they earn 20% more per year because they work 12 months instead of 10. When that contract was signed with its substantial jump in salary for each teacher, the School District should have demanded that all future teachers coming into the program be certified in early childhood education and that all teachers presently in the program be required to be similarly certified within a reasonable period of time. That was not done and the School District should be condemned for not using that opportunity to upgrade the qualifications of Get Set teachers.

From what I have learned about the Get Set program from people that I respect who have visited many centers, I believe that Get Set Day Care should be evaluated Center by Center by an outside agency or organization to determine if the quality of education is acceptable. Concurrently, the School District should begin viewing Get Set as the educational program that it should be and strive mightily to improve it.

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# the OAKES newsletter

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## READING ACHIEVEMENT SCORES IMPROVING

In the next few months, the School District of Philadelphia will be putting its budget for 1975-76 in final form and attempting to fund it. Unfortunately, there are many individuals who believe that the School District continues to fail at its most important task — teaching children to read. Obviously, this makes for less than enthusiastic support of the School District in its efforts to obtain the necessary funds for next year. Pessimism and despair, however, should be giving way to a spirit of optimism and hope. The School District has had some significant successes and a slow but steady improvement of standardized test scores.

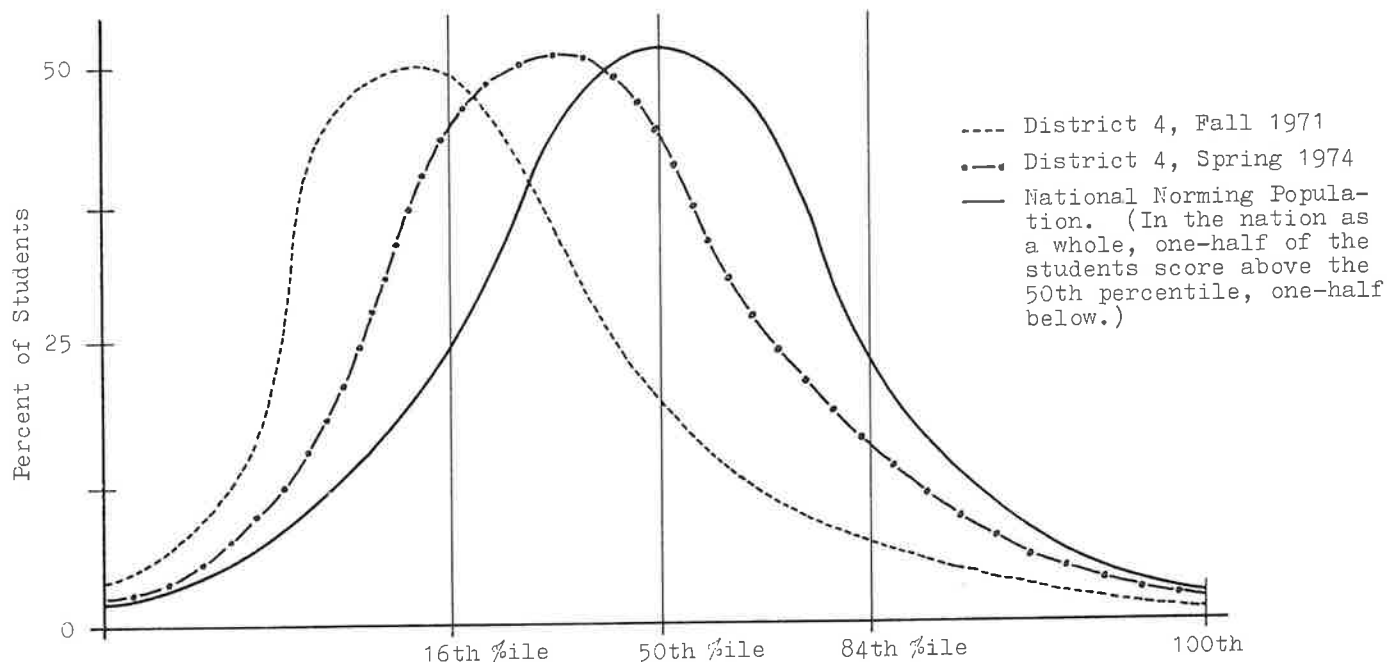
The School District has given very little publicity to the progress that has been made, partly because they are not sure what it is. For a series of complicated reasons, involving the use of different tests, it has been impossible, to date, to arrive at precise figures on growth in achievement. The Research Division is working on a study which will make it possible to equate these different tests. In the meantime, we do know that since September 1970, when the School District began a concentrated effort to teach reading, the percentage of students scoring above the national average has increased and the percentage of students making very low scores has decreased.

In the absence of hard facts

and comparisons applicable to the entire School District, it seems worthwhile to cite the growth in reading achievement for District Four. The graph on page two shows the excellent progress made in this district between the fall of 1971 and the spring of 1974. The percentage of students making very low scores (below the 16th percentile\*) dropped from 52% to 32%. The percentage in the average range (16th through 84th percentile) increased from 46% to 61% and the percentage in the highest achieving group (above the 84th percentile) increased from 2% to 7%. Note the way that the bell-shaped curve representing District Four's reading achievement moved toward the higher percentiles between 1971 and 1974 and came closer to the one that represents the achievement of the nationwide sample used to develop the norm for the test. Clearly this is very significant improvement and provides good reason for optimism about the possibility for similar

\*Percentile tells how a pupil ranked among other pupils in the nation. A student with a percentile rank of 50 is demonstrating performance at the national average and has better scores than 50% of the pupils in the nation on that test. A student scoring at the 85th percentile is way above the average national achievement and has better scores than 85% of the pupils.

District 4 Reading Achievement Scores In Percentiles For  
California Achievement Tests Compared With National Norm.



	0 thru 15	16 thru 49	50 thru 84	85th and above
Fall 1971	52% students	34.5%	11.5%	2%
Spring 1974	32%	40%	21%	7%
National Norming Population	15%	34%	35%	16%

progress across the entire School District.

District Four enrolls about 40,000 students and encompasses a large area of North Philadelphia and parts of West Philadelphia. Almost half of its students come from families receiving aid to dependent children and many more come from other low income families. 95% of its students are Black. Therefore, its achievement progress lays one myth to rest. It is not true that the high correlation often found between low achievement and low income is based on what the children bring with them to school. District Four proves that it is not the child but what transpires within the school that makes the difference. What is important is what the schools offer children, what teachers believe they can achieve, and the degree of skill and dedication of the staffs.

District Four's excellent progress will hopefully prove to have been duplicated or at least approached by other districts when the results for each district are known and published. There are several good sound reasons for expecting such improved performance.

Philadelphia has been developing an organized, unified, system-wide reading program since 1970. Each district has a reading budget and a reading project manager with a staff that includes reading specialists and a measurement expert. These key people have brought new methods, materials and insights to classroom teachers. They have given leadership to the greatly intensified effort in the schools to teach reading more effectively.

The School District has developed a curriculum guide for teachers that outlines the sequential development of reading skills.

Having this carefully defined, detailed outline of competencies pupils must develop, teachers are helped to teach students in a very systematic way. Word analysis, comprehension, study skills and appreciation of literature are developed through fourteen levels of difficulty. By level nine, students must, for example, be able to understand and use synonyms, antonyms and homonyms and such sources of information as the encyclopedia, atlas and almanac. The School District has also developed tests (Criterion-Referenced Tests) which teachers use to determine if students have mastered these specific skills or whether more instruction and practice are needed.

Every elementary school has a reading teacher charged with providing leadership to the reading program in that school. They are responsible for the development of the staff's skill in reading instruction. They work with, help and guide classroom teachers to organize their classrooms so as to meet the individual reading needs of the children. They give demonstration lessons, assist with individual or groups of children, introduce new materials, monitor and chart reading progress in the school. The role is a demanding and significant one.

Still another reason for anticipating improved achievement is a new program called "Checkpoint" initiated last year by the Superintendent. Checkpoint classes serve children of average ability in grades 1, 2 and 3 who are not working up to their capacity. It is a basic skills program devoted to reading and mathematics. There are sixty children in one hundred schools who go to a Center staffed by a teacher and an aide for forty minutes each day in groups of twelve to fifteen. The teacher tries to determine why and in what ways each student is underachieving and then designs a special instructional program for that child

which meshes with his program in his regular classroom.

It is too soon to know how effective Checkpoint will be. However, this early intervention in the school careers of 6000 children, 10% of the total Grade 1-3 population should make a significant difference in their lives and their achievement in the basic skills.

Though not pervasive or universal, there also has been a drive in secondary schools to improve reading instruction. Financial support for it has been relatively low, because the School District has concentrated its resources on the early years in an effort to prevent the development of reading problems. However, many secondary schools are making strenuous efforts to improve the reading achievement of their students and many reading project managers and their staffs are doing all they can to upgrade instruction.

At one high school this year, the entire faculty has spent half a day once or twice a month learning how to teach reading and study skills. Most secondary school teachers, particularly at the high school level, were not trained to teach these skills. So far, the staff has worked on such areas as vocabulary development, identifying the main idea, reading for details and test taking skills.

At another high school, most 9th graders are in a special program which concentrates, both with staff and students, on an intensified reading and mathematics curriculum.

Many secondary schools have adopted a plan for a skill of the month. First the staff receives instruction. Then English teachers teach outlining, for example, in their classes. Following that, teachers in all other subject areas emphasize outlining so that students can get practice and come

to see that this study skill is useful and necessary in every subject.

While all of these efforts should be reflected in improved scores on standardized tests, they also represent improved teaching which benefits all students from the lowest to the highest achievers.

There should be a greater, system-wide thrust to improve students' reading and study skills at the secondary school level. Central administration should establish criteria for reading staffs and require each school to meet them. Specific secondary school goals should be set by the Superintendent and principals should be held accountable for the quality of their school's effort.

#### FUNCTIONALLY ILLITERATE

Philadelphia must continue to strive for an achievement profile that will mirror the national average and show only 15% of its students scoring below the 16th percentile. Now, unfortunately, although the percentage is de-

creasing, many more than 15% are receiving this low ranking. For a long time, we have been led to believe that all of these students are functionally illiterate. While no definitive study has been completed, preliminary testing indicates that many high school students that score below the 16th percentile have acquired the limited skills that they need to survive. They can follow written instructions and fill out a form such as a deposit slip, driver's license or an application for credit. They can read and understand job-connected manuals, newspapers or periodicals and essential directives such as an aspirin bottle label. They can use the classified ad index and read the want ads in search of employment. Apparently, many students have gained more from school than we had thought.

I hope that this discussion will hearten my readers and encourage public support for funding of a school budget for next year that will sustain the reading effort and meet other essential needs.

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The Oakes Newsletter for April will be an index and will be sent only to subscribers. It will contain brief summaries of the last ten issues and an index by subject for all issues to date. To get your copy if you are not now a paid subscriber, SUBSCRIBE TODAY.

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4/1/75

ANNOUNCEMENT

A thirty page School-By-School Statistical Analysis will be published in April. It will give for each school — enrollment, capacity, average class size, racial composition of staff and student body, percentage of low income children, absentee rate for staff and students, percentage of inexperienced teachers and reading scores. The cost will be \$2.00 which includes postage and handling.

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My check made payable to The Oakes Newsletter is enclosed. It covers:

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# the OAKES newsletter

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

Vol. VI, No. 8

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

April 1975

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The summaries briefly describe the contents of each Newsletter published in the last year.

"Index To The Oakes Newsletter" - Brief summaries of each issue beginning with the first, April 1970 and running through March 1974. (April 29, 1974)

"The Tenure Law" - Definition of tenure, purpose of the law and its provisions, rating of professional employees, causes for dismissal, provision for due process. (May 22, 1974)

"Gratz High School - The Long Road Back" - Description of Gratz at its low point. The principal's efforts to create a new climate for learning and to achieve excellence: establishing performance standards, reducing student anonymity, upgrading automotive shops, improving self-discipline. (June 15, 1974)

"The Superintendent Versus The Board Of Education" - Ugly pattern of repeated attempts by some members of the Board of Education to make decisions destructive to the school system, to challenge the Superintendent's authority and undermine his ability to provide instructional leadership. (September 4, 1974)

"Annette Temin, One Woman's Contribution To Public Education" - Founded and led Citizens Committee on Public Education, chaired its reading committee; started Language Arts Reading Camps and was prime mover of today's huge volunteer program. (October 21, 1974)

"Science In The Philadelphia Public Schools" - Why today's students need a strong background in science. The need for science teaching to be revitalized. Many elementary school children exposed to science this year for first time. Why all students should study physics. (November 22, 1974)

"Student Records" - Present record keeping system violates students' right to privacy, labels and stigmatizes them. New Federal law gives parents the right to inspect, review and challenge records. Most information cannot be given out without parental permission. Supplement explains how to inspect and review your child's record. (December 30, 1974)

"Floyd Logan - A Lifetime Devoted To A Cause" - Floyd Logan's 43-year fight for Black representation on the School Board and school desegregation and against discrimination practiced toward students and School District employees. (January 28, 1975)

"Prekindergarten In The Philadelphia Public Schools" - Brief description of five School District programs. Necessity for strong background in early childhood education. Get Set Day Care described in some detail. (February 28, 1975)

"Reading Achievement Scores Improving" - District 4's growth in reading achievement graphed and explained. Description of the many steps taken by the School District which provide good sound reasons for expecting improved citywide performance. (March 31, 1975)

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# the OAKES newsletter

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

Vol.VI, No.9

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

May 14, 1975

## PUBLIC EDUCATION FACES ANOTHER BUDGET CRISIS

I am sure we are all equally weary of the annual school budget crisis. We wish that it would disappear and leave us free to concentrate on educating children, but it won't. Anyone who has responsibility for public education must give this very serious problem the study, understanding and effort that it will take to resolve it. Legislators at all levels must come to grips with the problem. Parents, teachers, administrators and the general public must recognize the urgent need to find an appropriate way to finance public education.

City, state and federal officials are trying to keep spending and taxes down. Countering these efforts are constant requests for money for needs that can only be met by government. Meanwhile, inflation is pushing expenditures up and a depressed economy is keeping revenue down. This makes it very difficult to secure new money for schools. But since school expenses also escalate while the revenue base increases very slowly, the schools face an annual fiscal crisis. This year is no different and next year's situation may be even more serious.

I hope in this Newsletter to explain the dimensions of the problem, the reasons for annual escalation of the budget and some ways that have been proposed to reduce this year's \$70 million deficit.

The proposed School District budget for next year stands at \$548 million. That is about \$75 million more than this year and \$148 million more than last year. Budgets increase by these huge amounts because of such things as contractual obligations, salary increments and inflation. Next year's budget increase will be due in large measure to:

Salary increases for teachers and other employees as required by contract	\$ 22.6
Reduction in maximum class size to 33	8.4
Salary increments (annual increases given to teachers at the end of each year until they reach maximum)	7.9
Inflation and settlement of contracts to be negotiated in 1975-76	16.5
Operating costs of new facilities	1.6
Full year funding	7.1
Expanded Programs	2.9

Some of the listed items require explanation. While the lump sum for teachers' salaries is many millions of dollars, it represents, in the light of inflation, very modest salary increases. The Teachers' contract, signed in early 1973, is for the four years from September 1972 to August 1976. Teachers got a 4% increase in 1973, 4% during 1974, 4% last month and they will get 4% next December. That comes to 16% for the four year period.

\$8.4 million is specified in the Teachers' contract to reduce maximum class size in 1975 from 35 to 33, with the stipulation that if this can be accomplished for less, the balance is to be spent to further reduce maximum class size. A very reliable independent agency makes it possible to put this in perspective when they roughly estimate, using School District data, that it will take 420 teachers at an approximate cost of \$5 million to achieve the goal of 33 next year. The \$8.4 million worth of teachers is an addition to the budget and is so shown, but elsewhere in the budget document is the dollar savings connected with the 217 teachers to be dropped because of a projected 2% enrollment decline. Similarly, the actual number of teachers to be hired to reduce class size will be offset by the 217.

The \$8.4 million will be money well spent. Reducing class size from present levels is, I think, one of the very best ways to enable teachers to individualize their instruction and meet each student's needs better.

There are several contracts to be settled in the coming year so money is set aside in the budget for this purpose. It is lumped with the money expected to be needed for the increased costs of materials, supplies and utilities.

The \$7.1 million for "full year funding" covers the addition-

al costs related to projects or positions which were funded for only part of this year. A school may have opened in November, a program expanded in January, or authorized positions left unfilled until March — it is the added costs of supporting these for a whole school year that comes under "full year funding."

The \$2.9 million in expanded programs reflect the Superintendent's commitment to provide for better education of Philadelphia's school children. The programs supported by this money reflect his priorities and some of his answers to the system's problems. "Follow Through" in the early grades, alternative programs for children whose needs are not met in regular classes, more reading teachers in the secondary schools and more programs for the academically talented — these are among the programs that have been added.

#### REDUCING THE DEFICIT

In the light of the difficulty of securing more money for education, the school budget should be scrutinized for ways to reduce expenditures and increase reimbursement for State mandated services. There are some places where this is possible.

The student population is gradually declining. As a result, there are many elementary schools and a few junior highs with enrollments well below their capacity. The School District should reduce the number of underutilized schools by closing its non-fire resistant schools and reassigning the students to nearby schools with extra space. There can be no justification for continuing to use combustible structures. In a quick survey of the location of some non-fire resistant schools and their proximity to underutilized schools, I found that most children displaced from unsafe buildings could go to school very

nearby.

Each 600 capacity elementary school closed would save the School District approximately \$100,000 in administrative staff, custodial staff and equipment and utilities. Further savings could be effected by reducing the amount of space rented by the School District for office space, prekindergarten and alternative programs and moving as many of these as possible into underutilized schools. The savings here would be at least \$1 or \$2 million and possibly more.

We have all heard about the \$4 million spent annually by the School District for post-audit and tax collection functions performed inefficiently and at great expense by the City. The City hires and supervises non-civil service people who perform the jobs, but the School District pays them. An Ad Hoc "Municipal Services Committee" was appointed at the direction of the Board of Education. It was chaired by the President of the Chamber of Commerce and made a report in March 1975 in which it recommended that the School District contract with the City for these services. The City would have full responsibility for managing the departments in question and paying the employees. The School District would pay 2% of the yield on taxes collected exclusively for the School District and 1% of the yield of the real estate tax for the next five years. After that, the City would absorb the total cost since this tax supports the City as well as the School District and would have to be collected by the City anyway. This new arrangement would result in the saving of about \$1.9 million annually, more after five years. The School District could precipitate such a change by deciding to stop paying for the present service and thereby force the City to negotiate.

The Philadelphia School District provides health services to pupils in public and non-public schools. The State pays a subsidy per pupil, a set amount which has not changed for over twenty-five years. The School District's health program costs \$7.6 million and reimbursement amounts to only \$1.9. There would be a saving of up to \$5.7 million if this reimbursement were increased to cover costs, or if the Legislature passes a recently introduced bill which provides for reimbursement on the basis of the cost of performing reasonable medical, dental and school nurse services.

Transportation is another area where the budgetary impact could be minimized. Under the present financial circumstances, the School District should transport only the special students for whom the State pays all reasonable costs and those elementary school students covered by the State's partial reimbursement. State reimbursement applies to students who must travel hazardous routes to school or elementary school students living one and one-half miles or more from their school or secondary students living two miles or more. The reimbursement rate for Philadelphia is only about 41% so there is considerable cost involved even when State guidelines are adhered to.

The School District however, is currently providing free transportation to students, public and non-public in grades one through eight, who live as close to their school as one mile. This policy should be changed. \$1.8 million could be saved by not providing transportation to 7th and 8th graders and providing it only to students in grades one through six who live one and one-half miles or more from their school.

Close to \$7 million could be taken out of the budget if a State Senate bill is passed. It provides

reimbursement for actual cost of transportation if it is deemed reasonable by the Secretary of Transportation and if it conforms to standards approved by him.

All of these savings and budget reductions add up to \$16 million at the very most. One proposal for further closing the budget gap is advance payment by the State for vocational education. This would amount to \$36 million and together with the \$16 million would reduce the \$70 million deficit to \$18 million which would then have to be raised to avoid drastic cuts in the budget.

Children and their education deserve a high priority. The needed funds should be raised. It is also in society's self-interest to adequately fund education because money invested in students today increases the likelihood that they will contribute to society tomorrow as opposed to being supported by it.

However this year's budget crisis is resolved, it is very important to start at once to

look toward next year. There will be the usual annual increases in the budget including the results of negotiation of a new contract with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. In addition, if we get the \$36 million for vocational education this year, it should be thought of as a loan because it will have to be repaid to the State next year. The \$36 million will be added to the revenue side this year to decrease the deficit, but it will not have that effect in following years. Next year the amount which comes to Philadelphia as revenue will be offset by an expenditure, similar in amount, which is the repayment of the "loan". Therefore, \$36 million in new revenue would have to be found in 1976-77 to replace this year's vocational education money.

All of this adds up to a very big financial deficit for 1976-77 which requires intensive advance planning. A committee of School District officials and educators, legislators, business and community leaders should be formed at once to begin work on this.

5/11/75

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The April issue of The Oakes Newsletter has been delayed. It is to be an index and will be mailed to all subscribers before July 1.

The twenty-nine page Statistical Analysis (School-By-School) of The Philadelphia Public Schools is available now at a cost of \$2 which includes postage and handling.

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# the OAKES newsletter

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

June 18, 1975

## LIVING WITH THE TEACHERS' CONTRACT

Next October, the Philadelphia Board of Education and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) will begin to negotiate a new contract to replace the one which expires August 31, 1976. The School District has been at a disadvantage in several of the past negotiations and it is going to happen again unless strong measures are taken promptly.

The PFT began to prepare for these negotiations some time ago. The School District has not worked nearly as intensively as the union and as of this writing it has the serious handicap of having no chief negotiator.

The PFT comes to the bargaining table well staffed and well prepared having drawn its talent and expertise from a tremendous pool of over 18,000 members. In addition, the PFT can call on people from the national level who have knowledge of and experience with negotiations in other cities. When the PFT goes into negotiations, it fields a team that is knowledgeable, tough and experienced. At the bargaining table and in the schools, the PFT works vigorously, as any union would, to secure as much as possible for those it represents.

The PFT has a staff of about twenty people who work year in and year out with the contract, protecting their members' interests and extracting further concessions from the school system. In contrast, the School District employs

only eight people to assist principals and all other administrative personnel to understand and work with the contract, respond to PFT grievances and try to hold the line. These same eight people must also prepare for and conduct negotiations with several unions representing many groups of workers. Because the School District has spread itself so thin, its bargaining position must of necessity be less well prepared.

The School District must find an experienced chief negotiator promptly. He must be able to hire staff to work with him. He should meet and talk with principals and supervisors and develop a lengthy list of proposals for contract changes together with the arguments and data to back them up. He should have been brought on board several months ago to give him adequate time to become thoroughly grounded in the intricacies of running the Philadelphia Public School System, the problems connected with this contract and the School District's goals for the new contract.

The chief negotiator's background must make him an equal match for the PFT's chief negotiator who has served in that role from the beginning, five contracts ago. He must be tough, but fair and worthy of the PFT's respect as an advocate for the School District. It would be disastrous to select someone knowledgeable of the system, but lacking rigorous



negotiating experience. Rather, the School District needs a chief negotiator who is a skillful, imaginative, aggressive, strong-minded, experienced bargainer.

The chief negotiator should also be free to operate without interference. In the past, the public has watched the Board of Education or the mayor become involved in the bargaining and eventual settlement with the PFT. These contracts contain hundreds of clauses which can be vitally important to the running of the schools. Some of these may be overlooked or receive inadequate consideration if city officials or Board of Education members become involved in the negotiating process. For example, in the present contract, elementary school teachers are guaranteed they will "receive not less than 225 minutes of preparation time each week in addition to recess and lunch periods..." If teachers have to take assignments during their prep time, the School District is required to pay substitutes to make that time up to the teachers some other time. In the secondary schools, it is not so guaranteed. A principal is simply required to give his reason in writing for requiring the teacher to cover an assignment during the preparation period. One wonders, if the negotiations hadn't been subject to outside intervention and pressure for settlement at the end, if the elementary school teachers would not have received their daily prep time on the same basis as the secondary teachers.

#### WORKING CONDITIONS

Albert Shanker, President of the United Federation of Teachers in New York City, in a recent Sunday column in the New York Times made the point that the clause in the Philadelphia contract requiring the School District to negotiate with the PFT before making changes in teachers' working conditions is typical of most con-

tracts in both the public and the private sector and is essential if the contract is to be worth the paper it is printed on. He also pooh-poohed the idea that the teachers, through collective bargaining, control the schools. If you are inclined to agree with Mr. Shanker, consider the following case.

A high school home and school association decided last fall to try to increase the involvement of parents in the education of their children. They planned to encourage parental pride in the school and enhance parent-teacher and parent-child communication by scheduling a monthly parent visitation day. On a particular day each month, parents would be invited to accompany their daughter or son to class. Parents were to be informed that this was an opportunity to observe only, that if they wished to confer with a teacher, they would have to make an appointment for another time. The home and school association believed that parents would be favorably impressed with the quality of the staff of the school, the content of the courses, and the excellently equipped vocational shops and commercial labs. The association was prepared to work out whatever ground rules were necessary.

The plan was supported by the principal and the district superintendent. The PFT, however, had a long list of reasons for being against the idea stretching from the discomfort of teachers having visitors in their room to a fear that the visits would become system-wide and lead to parent evaluation of teachers.

The PFT vigorously opposed the plan on the grounds that it was inconsistent with the past practice clause in the contract. That clause (Article B-II, Section 1a) states that "The Board and its representatives shall take no action violative of, or inconsistent

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with, any provision of this Agreement or any policy or practice governing working conditions of employees existing on the date of the execution of this Agreement..." The PFT maintained that the parents' visits would represent a change in working conditions. Since the PFT interprets "working conditions" to mean almost everything that occurs in a school, this contract clause, when unchallenged by the School District, cements the status quo into place. Literally, a school must operate today and tomorrow exactly as it did yesterday unless the PFT views a change to be in their best interests and is therefore agreeable to it. Surely a contract clause that enables the PFT to veto all change, however slightly it affects teachers, is, contrary to Mr. Sahnker's view, not essential to give teachers the contract protection to which they are entitled.

Mr. Shanker is wrong on the other count too. Clearly, if "the teachers" which in reality means PFT representatives who are teachers too, can veto plans of a parents' association that has the principal's approval, they have gained a large measure of control of the schools.

The major problem with the "working conditions" clause in the contract is that the term is not defined or limited in any way. As the years go by, the PFT is broadening its definition of working conditions and fighting more proposed changes. So it was in the case of the monthly parent visits. A top central administrator capitulated to the PFT's argument and refused to give the principal permission to arrange the visits.

For him, amicable relations with the union seemed to have a much higher priority than parents' rights.

The School District could have argued that since the high schools have no uniform plan for parent visits to classes, there was no existing practice and therefore, the setting up of the parent visits could not be a change in a past practice. If the parent visits were considered to be a "new policy or procedure", the contract requires only that they be a subject for discussion with the PFT's committee in the school. After this discussion which gives the PFT members an opportunity to state their ideas, the principal may make the decision. In other words, this clause calls only for consultation. The past practice-working condition clause requires negotiation, which means that there must be agreement, and in essence gives the PFT veto power.

**ADMINISTRATORS NEED SUPPORT**

Many people who work closely with the schools are becoming increasingly frustrated as the PFT contract seems to be strangling the school system in a tight noose of restrictions which makes it almost impossible to run the schools efficiently and in the best interests of children. Equally frustrating are the attitudes and actions of the School District's Offices of Labor Relations and Field Operations which do not fight nearly hard enough to keep the PFT from seizing more control and decision making authority. They seem to want peace, no matter what the price. They offer little, if any, resistance to PFT demands

which consequently, quite naturally, escalate as the months go by. Given Philadelphia's strong, articulate union, well-versed in the contract provisions, the only way that the School District can hold on to what it has and prevent further erosion of its rights is to have these offices provide administrators with strong support and backing. This is not happening, because too great a premium is placed on having things go smoothly with the PFT.

The principals that I talked with feel that they stand very much alone. They need, but do not now have, advocates in the Office of Labor Relations who will look at a problem from their point of view and work very hard to find a solution.

Shockingly, the School District's Personnel and Labor Relations Division even permits grievance hearings to be conducted in such a way that principals and supervisors are subjected to verbal abuse that is both intolerable and inexcusable. The contract provides for a three step grievance procedure, the second step being an appearance before a hearing officer who is a School District employee. In this hearing, the PFT frequently resorts to name calling, ethnic slurs and other forms of personal attack calculated to humiliate and degrade the principal or other administrator against whom the PFT has brought a grievance. This is a deliberate tactic

on the part of the PFT designed to punish principals. It is calculated to discourage them from standing up to the PFT thus causing grievances to be brought against them. Since this is a quasi-judicial procedure, administrators have every right to expect and insist that it be conducted in such a way that respect is accorded to everyone by all those present. By tolerating this highly objectionable, improper behavior, the School District gives the PFT license to attempt intimidation. That is wrong and harmful.

There should be immediate changes in the quality and quantity of the support principals and other administrators receive from 21st and the Parkway. Administrators should receive training in greater depth in understanding, interpreting and utilizing the contract in the best interests of the schools and the students. Principals should be encouraged to stand up to PFT attempts to erode the contract provisions further and should receive expert assistance in so doing.

The contract with the PFT poses many serious problems to the School District, but they could be minimized if the central administration adopted a new attitude, exhibited some backbone and fought skillfully and hard to utilize every possible contract provision to promote the School District's best interests.

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