

the OAKES newsletter

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

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

September 16, 1981

SCHOOLS MUST OPEN - BUDGET CUTS AND MORE DOLLARS REQUIRED

As this newsletter goes to press, Philadelphia's teachers are striking for the sixth time in the last eleven years. Students have lost only two days of school so far but the outlook is ominous. Teachers are outraged because the School District is not honoring the terms of the second year of a two-year contract. The School District would need 225 million dollars more than is available from current revenue to make that possible.

On May 29, 1981, the Philadelphia Board of Education passed an operating budget for this school year which had cut \$192 million from what would have been required to maintain last year's level of operations. This was accomplished by eliminating 3500 positions, salary increases and increments, and employee benefits assumed to be guaranteed by contracts currently in force. These slashes still weren't enough, and the budget called for a school year shortened by more than three weeks to save the additional amount needed.

\$192 million cut from a \$903 million budget is a huge amount. It would have sweeping effects on students as well as employees. Half the elementary school reading teachers and all elementary school counselors and library staff members would be gone. Maximum class size would be raised from 33 to 36. Many supplementary programs which

have greatly benefited students would be eliminated. Alternative programs and the instrumental music program would be cut 50%. Desperately needed building alterations and improvements would be cut by \$2 million. The list of cuts is long and devastating!

There has been a budget crisis every year for many years. Teachers view this year's as just another in a long series that have always melted away eventually. In reality, they haven't disappeared. They've just been temporarily set aside by utilizing stopgap measures such as borrowing, advance payments or inflated revenue estimates. This year, however, there are very substantial and significant differences. The amount of the budget gap is the highest yet, exceeding the peak year 1977, by more than \$50 million. Money at every level of government is much tighter and harder to come by. The School District has misspent and wasted millions of dollars. Support for its mismanaged, discredited schools has deeply declined which translates into great public reluctance to make financial sacrifices for the schools. Some of the ways used to resolve the money problems in past years reduce the options available today. For example, the School District still owes \$35 million on \$80 million in loans used to aid in rescuing the system four years ago.

It is folly for teachers, or

anyone else, to believe that this year's \$225 million budget gap can be closed with new dollars. It is totally unrealistic to believe that this gigantic sum can be taken from other programs at the city or state level, or that it can come from new city or state taxes, or any combination thereof. The impact of raising that amount of money is enormous. For example, the schools presently derive almost three-quarters of their local funds from city taxpayers through the real estate tax. It would require a 62% increase in this tax to raise the needed funds. The tax would jump from the present \$6.75 per \$100 of assessed value to \$10.94 per \$100. Citizens wouldn't accept that burden and such a huge tax increase would severely damage the local economy by driving people and jobs out of the city.

School budgets have been out of balance year after year, because costs have steeply increased annually. The Philadelphia Federation of Teachers has won improved salary schedules for almost every year since bargaining began in 1965. Even when salaries stood still, all but those at the top moved up a step on the salary schedule and were paid more. Fringe benefits have been very substantially increased. In addition, various contract settlements have led to the employment of more teachers. In 1974, elementary school teachers won a daily 45-minute preparation period requiring the addition of 800 teachers. In 1975, when maximum class size was reduced from 35 to 33, 650 teachers were added. Costs have been pushed up by the addition of non-professionals who have assisted teachers and relieved them of duties such as lunchroom, hall patrol, and school yard. Inflation too has played a role as the School District must pay more for heat and light, textbooks, and everything else that it purchases.

Costs have been increased by

the expansion of special education from 17,000 served in 1976 to 29,000 last year. Special education costs contribute to out-of-balance budgets because the state has not paid in full for the extra costs of providing the services these students need, and because the School District has not made strenuous efforts to reduce these costs.

While costs have climbed, the schools have been stuck with revenue sources that did not begin to keep pace. Local revenue, primarily realized from the real estate tax, has risen in very small amounts because assessments have increased very slowly. Although funds coming from the state have increased, it hasn't been enough. State revenue, like local revenue, does not keep up with rapidly rising expenditures.

THE TWO YEAR CONTRACT

Members of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) were understandably angered last spring by the school board's decision to balance its budget through layoffs and by eliminating a contracted for 10% salary increase and improved benefit package. The PFT had a two-year contract. Teachers struck for 22 days last September to achieve it and lost 4% of their annual salary as a consequence. The contract called for no wage increase in Year 1, but a 10% increase in Year 2. It carried a no-layoff clause with the exception of layoffs based on declining enrollment. It gave the PFT improved benefits, mostly in Year 2.

The PFT believed that the school board would have to honor the terms of the contract. It came as a great shock when the school board, after some unsuccessful attempts to get increased funds, brought its budget into balance as required by the Educational Home Rule Charter by making drastic cuts. It appeared to PFT members

as a ploy — an attempt to use them once again to club more funds out of the city or state.

The PFT leadership took the position that the mayor of Philadelphia had promised to fund the contract and now was betraying them. Their recent literature says, "Both school children and school employees are being victimized by a cruel political game played by the Mayor. In September 1980, The Philadelphia Federation of Teachers agreed to a two year contract running through August, 1982. This agreement was reached through negotiation, sacrifice, and compromise. The Mayor guaranteed that the contract would be fully funded and it was on this basis that the contract was signed and sealed."

The mayor denies making any such guarantee. The evidence supports his denial. Comments by members of the school board when they voted on the teachers' contract prove the mayor made no such guarantee. One board member who voted against the contract said, "I do not feel that we have the legal right to enter into well over 100 million dollars of debt when we have no commitment from the city, the state or the Federal government on increased funding." Another board member voted "no" because "...experts in finance could not tell me where the money was coming from or how much was to be expected." A newspaper article quotes the city's finance director as warning that the schools might face bankruptcy if all parts of a complex financial package did not fall into place. Lastly, it makes no sense to claim that the mayor guaranteed to fund the contract, because he doesn't have the power needed to raise the money. He cannot raise taxes or transfer city funds without legislative approval from City Council or, in some cases, the state legislature.

In September 1980, it seemed

possible that the School District could honor its two-year contract commitment with the PFT. This became impossible when the budget gap soared to \$225 million. Contributing to this unmanageable gap were a state basic subsidy increase that did not materialize, special education excess costs that remain unpaid, Federal dollars that were unexpectedly cut, and a Board of Education that did not economize.

In an attempt to save its contract, the PFT went to court and sued. It asked that the School District be stopped from making its planned layoffs and be forced to observe all the economic provisions of the contract. On September 4, Judge Harry Takiff of the Court of Common Pleas ruled that the contract was unenforceable. The School District had no choice but to reduce its expenditures to balance its budget, because the legislative bodies on which it depends for its taxing authority did not provide the necessary funds. In the judge's opinion, the School District could not be forced to honor its second year contract commitments. The PFT has appealed this ruling.

ATTEMPTS AT RESOLUTION

During the summer, many efforts were made to bring all the parties together to fashion a solution to the schools' critical financial problem. It was very clear that the budget gap had to be narrowed by cutting the budget and then closed by increasing the revenue. On August 31, after all prior efforts had failed, Mayor William Green put a sound proposal on the table. He proposed a "long-term solution" based on all parties shouldering responsibility and making a contribution.

The mayor's plan has four parts. First, the School District "must produce 25 million in documented management economies" which

must include administrative cut-backs. Second, the School District and state must resolve the special education issue which now represents about \$85 million of the \$225 million projected deficit. Third, the teachers' union "must be willing to negotiate alterations in its current contract to bring the overall deficit down to manageable levels." Fourth, the mayor called for an increase of about 10% in real estate taxes. This revenue would be used to "go to the bond market to borrow the funds needed to pay off the District's cumulative deficit" which would be reduced by the three other parts of the plan. He envisions a future in which the system is scaled down to accommodate its smaller student population, with the cost of running the schools matching the revenue derived from present sources.

The mayor's plan is a long-range one pledged to end the annual crises which have caused such disruption and pain for both staff and students in the last several years. It provides for annual cuts to steadily reduce the size of the gap so that by the mid-1980's the budget will be in balance with no further borrowing required. This

is strong and bitter medicine to be swallowed by employees and those who have a deep concern for the quality of education as well as balanced budgets. Unfortunately, public education is not valued by the general public as it once was and its costs have gone beyond what the public is willing to pay. There is always the slim hope that a revitalized school system under new leadership will win more support and more dollars than presently forecast and that some of the future layoffs with accompanying diminishment of services could be averted.

To date, the PFT has refused to consider modification of its contract. This stance is understandable since none of the other parts of the mayor's plan are in place yet. However, it is absolutely essential that everyone involved in this crisis — City Council, the governor, the mayor, the PFT, the School District, the state legislature, and the taxpayers — work in a spirit of cooperation and compromise to resolve this critical situation. Public education's survival is at stake and if settlement were today, it would still be very late.

9/13/81

REMINDER. 1981 School-By-School Statistical Analysis @ \$5.00. Earlier editions (1975 thru 1980) available for \$1.25 each with 1981 edition.

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

Vol.XIII, No.2

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MORE ABOUT THE STRIKE, CUTS, AND MISMANAGEMENT

Philadelphia's sixth school strike in the last eleven years drags on. With almost all schools closed, more than 200,000 public school students are losing valuable time. As this newsletter goes to press, students have lost nineteen days of instruction. It must be clear to them that their education merits a low priority.

The Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) is striking because the School District found itself unable to fund the second year of a two-year contract. The budget passed by the school board in May called for a \$192 million reduction in spending. This translated into 3400 layoffs of PFT members and none of the salary increases, increments, or improved benefits called for in the second year of the contract.

For many teachers this is a period full of emotion and stress. They are greatly concerned by the very steep reduction in services — particularly the elimination of library services, counselors, and half the reading teachers in elementary schools. Some teachers are scrambling to get jobs and must accept anything. Many teachers face serious financial problems, and many worry about the deep divisions being caused by clashes on the picket lines.

These are trying times for administrators too. They have been ordered to cross picket lines and to go into the few open schools to

teach. PFT pickets have subjected them to shouts, taunts, abusive language, and various other tactics of intimidation — physical abuse, destruction of property, and late night phone calls.

Parents are angry and frustrated that legislators delayed dealing with these complex financial questions until it was time for the schools to open. For those who are monetarily able to seek alternatives to public education, the pressure to do so increases with each strike or financial crisis. This serves to further weaken the system by diminishing the ethnic and economic diversity of its population.

Out of this bitterly divisive strike must come a long-range solution. It must insure the needed funds for a newly agreed upon long-term contract, provide at least minimally adequate educational services, and guarantee several years of uninterrupted schooling. The solution must be built on a budget that within a few years will have expenditures balanced against revenue. Based on projected estimates, this will be painful and difficult to achieve.

The following tables show the dimensions of the budget problem over the next five years under varying circumstances. In each case, the city's contribution of \$30-\$40 million annually would be used to reduce the deficit, or to finance it over a number of years.

IMPACT OF BUDGET CUTS AND ADDED REVENUE ON SCHOOL
DISTRICT'S OPERATING BUDGETS OVER FIVE YEAR PERIOD
(Dollars in Millions)

TABLE 1 - NO PFT LAYOFFS

	<u>1981-82</u>	<u>1982-83</u>	<u>1983-84</u>	<u>1984-85</u>	<u>1985-86</u>
1. Revenue	\$ 667	\$ 776	\$ 813	\$ 845	\$ 881
2. Adjusted expenditure level. .	903	862	867	890	913
3. Gap	(236)	(86)	(54)	(45)	(32)
4. Budget cuts	105	-	-	-	-
5. PFT reductions	-	-	-	-	-
6. State special ed. settlement.	30	-	-	-	-
7. Deficit	(101)	(86)	(54)	(45)	(32)
8. Revenue exceeds expenditures	-	-	-	-	-

Total deficit accumulated over five years = \$318 million

TABLE 2 - NO PFT LAYOFFS IN 1981-82, \$25 MILLION OF PFT LAYOFFS
AND OTHER PFT SAVINGS FOR EACH OF NEXT THREE YEARS

	<u>1981-82</u>	<u>1982-83</u>	<u>1983-84</u>	<u>1984-85</u>	<u>1985-86</u>
1. Revenue	\$ 667	\$ 776	\$ 808	\$ 840	\$ 879
2. Adjusted expenditure level. .	903	862	842	840	838
3. Gap	(236)	(86)	(34)	-	-
4. Budget cuts	105	-	-	-	-
5. PFT reductions	-	25	25	25	-
6. State special ed. settlement.	30	-	-	-	-
7. Deficit	(101)	(61)	(9)	-	-
8. Revenue exceeds expenditures	-	-	-	25	41

Total deficit accumulated over three year period = \$171 million

TABLE 3 - SUPT. MARCASE'S CUTS AS OUTLINED IN MAY 29, 1981 ADOPTED
BUDGET WHICH INCLUDES ABOUT 3400 PFT LAYOFFS AND OTHER PFT
SAVINGS IN 1981-82

	<u>1981-82</u>	<u>1982-83</u>	<u>1983-84</u>	<u>1984-85</u>	<u>1985-86</u>
1. Revenue	\$ 667	\$ 764	\$ 798	\$ 830	\$ 866
2. Adjusted expenditure level. .	903	782	787	810	833
3. Gap	(236)	(18)	-	-	-
4. & 5. Total budget cuts . . .	165	-	-	-	-
6. State special ed. settlement.	30	-	-	-	-
7. Deficit	(41)	(18)	-	-	-
8. Revenue exceeds expenditures	-	-	11	20	33

Total deficit accumulated in first two years = \$59 million

Table 1 shows the huge deficit of \$318 million which would be accumulated by 1986 if there were \$105 million in budget cuts, but no Philadelphia Federation of Teachers' layoffs. Table 2 shows the sizable deficit which would be incurred over a three year period even though there were \$25 million worth of PFT personnel and other PFT savings in each of three years after 1981-82. Table 3 shows what would happen to the deficit if Superintendent Marcuse's cuts, detailed in last May's adopted budget, were followed.

All of the tables are estimated. They take factors such as inflation, enrollment decline, and regular salary increments into consideration. The \$105 million budget cut for 1981-82 in Tables 1 and 2 includes the PFT postponed 1981-82 salary increases, increments and benefits; \$25 million in administrative and management cuts; and \$22 million in other cuts. All of the tables assume that the delayed raises will begin in 1982-83, but no other future salary increases are taken into account. The tables assume a \$30 million settlement from the state for special education.

A SURVIVAL BUDGET

The tables clearly show that very substantial cuts have to be made if the budget is to be balanced in the near future, as it must be. Spending must be reduced to a level which will provide for little more than survival. To achieve this and inflict the least possible damage, a spending plan must be developed that focuses all the available resources on the schools' primary mission — the education of the students in the classrooms. Certain expenditures are absolutely essential to accomplish that task. In each building there must be classroom teachers, a principal, a custodian to care for the building, and minimally adequate supplies of textbooks, pencils and paper. Beyond that, and up to the limit of available funds, other staff members should be added, but only if their presence will serve to enhance learning. Every expenditure should have to pass that test.

Recognizing that the school system must become a very different institution, many services must be eliminated for a period of time. The Division of Curriculum and Instruction, for example, is one such service. Obviously, no school system can move forward without devoting resources to re-

vising subject matter and upgrading teaching techniques. However, in the present crisis situation, very difficult choices must be made. It is more important to have people working directly with students than to have numbers of administrators whose role it is to devise, coordinate, facilitate, and lead. During this period, individual schools would have to depend on their own resources — the principal and teachers — to provide instructional leadership.

Central and district support staffs should be drastically reduced. Only enough people should be retained to prepare the payroll, manage the hiring and assignments for a greatly reduced staff, order essential materials and supplies, and tend to other similar mandatory functions.

In contrast to developing such a survival budget based on students' instructional needs, the superintendent chose to start with a "needs" budget and then cut it to ribbons. He began with a bloated plan for spending that represented the increased costs of maintaining all existing programs. He then cut \$192 million based on neither system, nor logic. He axed programs and services in the schools unmercifully, but made only light cuts of coordinators, supervisors, directors and others in the administrative areas. He presented no rationale for his cuts and did not explain their impact. Other than hand-wringing, he made no attempt to paint a picture of what the schools would be like when they opened.

With his budget document, the superintendent has proved once again that he does not have the vision, ability, or commitment to the students' best interests to head this school system. He cannot provide the schools with the leadership and plans necessary to salvage as much as possible from the very bad financial situation

in which the schools find themselves and to which he has contributed.

The six holdover Rizzo school board appointees, who have refused to resign their seats in response to the mayor's repeated requests, have also turned a deaf ear to demands that the superintendent be replaced. They continue to support him even though his budget document provides fresh evidence of his incompetence.

More recent actions have demonstrated the superintendent's disregard for the Board's policy decisions. The budget adopted by the Board last May included savings resulting from a reduction in student transportation and, except for commitments already made to previous graduates, ending scholarship awards. Within three weeks, the superintendent countermanded the new scholarship policy and granted 129 scholarships at a cost of more than \$50,000 plus an additional \$172,500 in scholarships to the University of Pennsylvania. The School District has had an agreement with the U. of P. for many years to pay them the equivalent of 25 full tuition scholarships to be awarded each year to Philadelphia public school graduates based on need. With its tui-

tion now at \$6900, the cost of that agreement is very high indeed. By August, the superintendent had responded to parents' complaints and restored, again without consulting the Board, much of the transportation that they had eliminated earlier at a savings of \$9.7 million.

There has been an effort on the part of many of those attempting to settle the strike to temporarily set aside the issue of the mismanagement of the School District. If removal of the six recalcitrant Board members and the superintendent were a condition of resolution, settlement might be delayed even more. The lack of emphasis on this point should not be construed as a lessening of the drive to force them out.

The strike settlement will chart the school system's course for years to come. Sadly, there is no knowledgeable policy maker at the table serving as an advocate for students and fighting for what is in their best interests. This is just another instance of the enormous damage inflicted on the city's schools by seven people whose ineptitude, selfishness, and stubbornness blind them to the necessity for stepping down.

10/11/81

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MISMANAGEMENT LEADS TO LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE

The Philadelphia teachers' strike which began on September 8 ended abruptly fifty days later. Unfortunately, it was not a negotiated settlement, but a judge's order that caused the teachers to return to their classrooms.

Last spring the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT) sued the School District in an attempt to stop budget-balancing layoffs of 3400 PFT members and force the School District to honor all of its economic commitments. That led to a judge's finding that although the teachers had one year left of their contract, its terms were unenforceable because the School District did not have adequate funds. Later, teachers were ordered to go back to work. The PFT disobeyed the order and appealed both decisions. On October 27, Commonwealth Court ordered the teachers to return to work under the terms of the first year of their two-year contract. The 3400 laid off employees were reemployed, but the second year improved economic provisions were not granted.

Teachers went back to work, but with a severely tarnished image as professionals. Many people will never forget the behavior of some of the pickets who used verbal abuse, physical abuse, intimidation or vandalism as weapons against professionals trying to enter schools to teach. Pickets went so far as to circulate home addresses and phone numbers of

people crossing picket lines. This led to threatening phone calls and other forms of harassment. Clearly, these bullying tactics, designed to intimidate, were encouraged by the union leadership. Otherwise, they would have been quashed.

Many, many teachers must have disapproved of the union's methods, but they mounted little opposition. Perhaps each one felt helpless. However, the union belongs to the members and they must accept responsibility for it and find a way to curb such excesses. Meanwhile, teachers will command less respect from their students and the public, because so many of them have acted like thugs.

This has been a long, traumatic period for parents of public school students. Beginning last spring, once again there were the budget cuts and the threat of greatly reduced services for youngsters. Then came the long strike which was only bearable because there was the promise of a permanent, long-range solution. Next came the major disappointment of classes beginning with nothing settled. Now there is the renewed fear of future cuts and strikes.

As classes began October 29, there was a good deal of confusion about teacher assignments. There were too many teachers in some schools, not enough in others. Students experienced teacher and roster changes. Some have been subjected to a series of substi-

tutes because laid off mathematics and science teachers found jobs and did not return to teaching. In late December about 1100 teachers will be switched to new assignments, once again disrupting instruction for many thousands of students.

The strike and the judges' decisions have had many effects. Students lost thirty-two days of classes making it impossible to get in more than 170 of the 180 state mandated days of instruction. Teachers lost a 10% salary increase and a big chunk of their annual salary for this year. The public schools lost what is still an unknown number of students who were driven out by the prospect and reality of budget cuts, strikes, and turmoil.

The School District has shrunk its projected deficit for this year from more than \$200 million to \$69 million. This figure is almost certainly too low. It doesn't include \$5 million needed for special education if restored programs and staff remain through the year. Also, it rests on the quicksand of \$56 million in strike savings based on teachers receiving only 81% of their salary although they are scheduled to work 90% of the number of days that they usually do. It, therefore, seems very likely that the strike savings will be reduced and the deficit will increase.

Neither school board members nor teachers can assume that the public's patience and its pocketbook are inexhaustible. People are sick of budgets that annually climb precipitously while enrollment is dropping. They are tired of teachers' strikes and the annual threat to lay off thousands of teachers. They are frustrated by negotiations between the teachers' union and the School District that continue on their weary way month after month. They are weary of a budget pegged at three-quarters of

a billion dollars or more while school buildings crumble and textbooks are in scandalously short supply. People are disgusted by this mismanaged system whose leadership refuses to step down.

SCHOOL BOARD REPLACEMENT

The state legislature is equally weary of the turmoil in Philadelphia around the issues of budgets, teachers' contracts, and governance. Several bills have been introduced to bring about change. A bill supported by many Philadelphia legislators is named Public Education Act for Home Rule Cities of the First Class. Very importantly, this act calls for appointment of nine commissioners to replace the present school board members as of June 30, 1982. Appointed right after the bill is passed, they would begin immediately to plan for the school year that starts July 1, 1982.

The Public Education Act provides for the mayor, at the very beginning of his term in office, to appoint nine people to form a Commission on Public Education to serve for four years. Currently, a nominating panel submits names to the mayor from which he selects school board members. This same process would be used to select the nine commissioners.

The Act calls for changes in the relationship of the school district to the city by bringing the school district under the city charter. The bill gives the city the authority to run the schools, but then establishes "an independent Commission on Public Education through which the city shall administer, operate and manage the school district." The Commission would have a degree of independence similar to that of the trustees of the Free Library. It would have primary responsibility for school policies and programs as the present school board does.

The Commission would run the

school system subject to all provisions of the city charter with a few important exceptions. All school funds would be kept separate from city funds; employees would become employees not of the city, but of the new school district with everything related to their employment regulated by the Commission; and the annual post-audit would be conducted by a firm of independent certified public accountants instead of the controller.

The budget for the schools would be handled as the city's budget is. The Commission on Public Education would develop its plan for spending and submit it to the city's Director of Finance. The finance director would consult with the mayor, discuss and negotiate any necessary changes with the Commission, and develop a budget which the mayor would submit with the city's budget to City Council. City Council would adopt the budget and make appropriations to cover the expenditures. Appropriations would be made in lump sum amounts in broad categories. The city charter calls for lump sums to prevent Council from using its appropriating function to make administrative policy decisions. Once the budget is passed, expenditures for the schools would be controlled, as are those for the city, by a pre-audit process. The finance director and city controller approve payments only when expenditures are in line with the budget and there is money available to cover them.

Under different circumstances, it would seem very unwise to consider making important changes in the governmental structure of the schools without a very long period of calm deliberation. In fact, the current structure is not the problem and a new structure may not be the solution. It is the people chosen to serve that make the difference. However, the schools desperately need new lead-

ership, and a bill legislating significant changes seems to be the only way to provide it. This necessity for hasty change can be blamed directly on the six hold-over board members and the superintendent who have refused to resign.

TWO CHANGES NEEDED

To provide the Philadelphia schools with a more workable governing instrument, the Public Education Act should be changed in two ways. As written, the Act provides for the mayor to appoint the superintendent, subject to approval by the Commission on Public Education. The superintendent would serve at the pleasure of the mayor, subject to removal at any time, so long as the mayor specified his reason in writing. This makes the superintendent answerable to the mayor although he is designated as the chief executive officer of the Commission and is responsible for carrying out its policies. The superintendent cannot answer to the Commission and the mayor. If the Commission is to make the decisions on how the schools will be run (within fiscal limits), as I think they should, the superintendent must be answerable to them and they must be able to hire and fire him. The bill should be modified so that the Commission, subject to the mayor's approval, appoints the superintendent and has the power to remove him.

The Act also calls for the mayor to appoint all nine members of the Commission on Public Education at the beginning of his term. This makes no provision for continuity. The mayor should appoint five commissioners when he takes office and four more two years later. This would give him a majority on the Commission as soon as he comes into office, but there would still be some experienced members remaining on the Commission who could provide it with

continuity.

Another bill has been introduced into the legislature in Harrisburg which would provide Philadelphia with an elected school board. In my opinion, this is absolutely no solution. It is unlikely to provide either an effective board or the needed funds.

Elected board members would have to run either from a district or at-large. Those running from a geographic area would be expected to represent the interests of their specific constituencies and secure as much as possible for them. In this period of shortages, it would be very destructive to have board members competing with one another to secure a greater piece of the pie for their district. If board members ran at large, it would be very difficult for the voters to know them well enough to make a wise choice.

While an elected board would have taxing power, this would be of little help in securing more funds. The taxes levied by the board would have to be paid by the same citizens who already pay taxes that are among the highest in the state to support the schools and the city. In addition, instead of one elected body, City

Council, deciding what taxes should be levied based on its judgment of the relative merits and importance of the schools versus municipal expenditures, the school board and City Council would be competing for the taxpayers' dollars. There would be no orderly way to determine priorities for spending, or how much should be collected from whom.

Legislation that serves to remove the board members and the superintendent will finally put an end to their destructive mismanagement of the schools. Sadly, they will leave a legacy of a huge debt, misspent dollars, staff morale at rock bottom, buildings in disrepair, and diminished public support for the schools. It is going to be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to reorganize the schools so as to operate within budgetary constraints and still meet the needs of students and the reasonable demands of teachers. The one bright spot is that, for the first time in years, all of the people concerned with public education can stop the ceaseless battles to end what's wrong with the schools and begin to invest their resources and strength in working cooperatively to rebuild them.

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TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Startling national statistics reveal that eight in ten males and seven in ten females have had sexual intercourse while in their teens. Often pregnancy results. At this rate, 39 out of 100 girls who are now 14 years old will get pregnant while still in their teens. 15 will have abortions. 21 will give birth at least once. Many will be unmarried.

In Philadelphia, the statistics are just as sad. This year's first graders were born in 1975. 24% were born to teenage mothers. 170 babies were born to girls under 15 years of age, 2500 to young women between the ages of 15 and 17, and another 3200 to 18 and 19 year olds. On average, these children represent eight out of 33 students in a typical classroom. Nearly half of the eight are children of mothers who were seventeen or younger when they were born.

Teenage pregnancy is a national problem that crosses all ethnic, economic, and geographic lines. Young women, as well as their babies and society in general, are affected by the many adverse consequences. Pregnancies which end in miscarriage or abortion are upsetting and traumatic, but those that end in birth are of the greatest concern.

When teenagers have their babies, too often the die is cast. They drop out of school and are forced into low-status, low-paying jobs, or onto welfare roles if

they can't get a job at all. Frequently, they feel they must marry someone they would not otherwise have chosen.

Babies born to teenage mothers are more likely to die in the first year. They are more apt to be born with a low birth weight which is a major cause of infant death, as well as many serious childhood illnesses and defects, including mental retardation. Although many of these damaging health consequences could be avoided by early, high-quality prenatal care, teenagers, especially the youngest ones, often do not receive such care until much too late in their pregnancies.

Many of these young women are not mature enough to be mothers and their children are handicapped right from the beginning. Studies indicate that the children of teenage mothers are more likely to achieve less in school and to repeat grades. When they become teenagers, they are more likely to have children of their own and start the cycle all over again.

Society must bear much of the very high monetary cost associated with teenage pregnancy. Health care for the mother and the infant, who may be premature, is costly. Often too, these families require social services and welfare for long periods of time.

Teenage pregnancy has many causes. Young women and men are

marrying later yet maturing much earlier than they were just twenty years ago. The average age at which girls reach puberty is down to eleven.

SEX FEATURED

The media glamorize and exploit sex. Advertisers sell their products with it. It's featured in teen music, movies, and television. With its powerful ability to send messages, television often portrays a male/female relationship as a little romantic music and wine followed by the couple going to bed together. Television seldom offers moral guideposts or models. Perhaps, television cannot be expected to do more than reflect contemporary moral standards under which sex without marriage and living-together arrangements are widely accepted. However, television does a great disservice to impressionable young people when it glorifies sex, ignores the consequences, and places it in a setting devoid of universally accepted values, such as taking responsibility for one's actions, or consideration and respect for others.

Many teenagers suffer from an inability to establish life goals, make plans, and then make the necessary decisions to implement them. It is very hard to decide where and what you want to be five years hence. Teenagers need help in thinking these things through and in learning how to make decisions. Often, they don't get that help at home or at school. Teenagers who have planned their futures are more likely to consider the impact that the birth of a baby would have on their plans.

There are other causes for teen pregnancies. Some young people have low self-esteem. Not understanding or appreciating their own intrinsic worth, they don't show respect or consideration for themselves or for others. Some

are looking for the love they can't find at home.

Boys and girls are pressured by their peers and by adults. It is very difficult for a high school junior to say "no" to a boy that she wants to like her when he claims that everyone else is doing it and wants to know what is the matter with her. Many teenagers receive mixed messages from their parents. The girls are encouraged to be cute and seductive and the boys to be handsome and aggressive. Their parents push them into dating, but don't want them to have sex.

Adolescence is a time of transition to adulthood and of establishing one's self-identity. Many teenagers think that driving a car, smoking, drinking, and having sex are properties of the adulthood for which they are striving. Unfortunately, society doesn't provide teenagers with more appropriate ways of proving their maturity — such as taking responsibility on a job.

Pushed in so many ways and from so many sides to have sex, teenagers need information and an opportunity to discuss the complex questions involved. With help, they can establish their own values and bases for decisions. Unfortunately, much too often, this doesn't happen at home, school, or anywhere else.

Home is where children get much of their sex education. From birth on, the child is learning about family sexual attitudes and values, about love between parents, as well as parents' love for children. By example, by what is said and left unsaid, by verbal and non-verbal responses to questions, parents give an important kind of sex education to their children whether they choose to or not.

While parents have the major responsibility for their children's sex education, the school

can play an important supplementary role. Often parents do not have enough accurate information and they are uncomfortable discussing this topic with their children. A classroom staffed with a well-trained, highly skilled, sensitive teacher can provide a good setting for learning some of what young people need and want to know.

CONTRACEPTIVE INFORMATION

Sex education, including contraceptive information, can help to reduce teenage pregnancy if given early enough. Some people oppose providing birth control information to school age girls and boys because they believe that enabling women to avoid pregnancy encourages couples to have sex. However, the crisis we face is teenage pregnancy. Teenagers are having sex even though they have not been given contraceptive information. It is not information which leads to teenage sexual intercourse, but ignorance which leads to unwanted pregnancies.

Research indicates that over 20% of first pregnancies among unmarried teens occur within the first month after the initiation of sex. Half occur within the first six months. The younger the teenager the more likely she is to become pregnant. Lacking the facts, many teenagers simply do not believe that it can happen to them. Some have misconceptions and falsely believe they are protected. Others do not think much about it until it is too late.

Although sex education has been a part of the curriculum in Philadelphia for years, the School District only recently began offering an elective course in "Fertility Control and Contraception." Since it was controversial, the Board of Education required prior written parental consent, mandated appropriate orientation for parents, and limited the course to 11th and 12th graders. Just this

year, they extended it to the 10th grade.

Less than one-quarter of the eligible students took the course last year. The course is inadequately publicized. In addition, the need for parental consent, requiring high school students to take home letters and bring back signed permission slips, is a large obstacle to high participation. On the one hand, students need the course and strenuous efforts should be made to increase the number taking it. On the other hand, the classes should be expanded only if they can be staffed by people who have had extensive training, feel comfortable and secure teaching this topic, and relate well to students.

Most high schools should revise their scheduling so that the fertility control course ceases to be taught in once-a-week classes. For this course to have continuity and meaning, it must be compressed and taught in classes that meet several times a week.

If teenage pregnancies are to be prevented, sex education including contraceptive information, must be given much earlier — probably at the 6th or 7th grade level. Because girls of 11 and 12 are capable of having babies, 10th grade is much too late. Sex education teachers must go beyond giving facts and help youngsters come to view sex in its broad context which involves self-respect, personal values, and the acceptance of responsibility. This can give teenagers the confidence and stamina they need to say "no" when that is their choice. It can help them understand the risks if they engage in sex without adequate protection. It can give them the facts they need to secure this protection if they decide to become sexually active.

Philadelphia has developed an "Education For Responsible Parenthood" curriculum. When implemented

it should significantly contribute to the prevention of teenage pregnancy, help tomorrow's parents do a better job, and improve relationships and understanding between older and younger children. Students will learn how babies develop physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally and will learn some of the skills needed to care for them. At a young age, girls and boys will learn from observation and personal experience that babies require an enormous amount of care and that their healthy development depends on creating an environment in which they can grow and flourish. By the time they are teenagers, they will have a realistic view of what it means to have a baby and that should help to deter some young people from risking pregnancy.

Giving students courses in school is only one way to reduce teenage pregnancies. Another way would be to help parents and their children to communicate with one another on the broad topic of human sexuality. Skillfully led discussion groups sponsored by schools, churches, or community groups could provide youngsters and parents with a shared experience and give them the impetus for further discussion among themselves.

Some other preventive pregnancy measures are even more difficult to put in place, but no less important. Teenagers need parents and other adults in their lives to listen to them, respond in a meaningful way, care about them, and be supportive. They need many opportunities to be successful, both in and outside of school, so that they may develop a sense of their self-worth. They need to know that there are more than dead-end jobs waiting for them if they complete their education. They need to have faith in the future.

The causes of teenage pregnancies, which result in so many unintended births to immature mothers, are deeply rooted in the family and the society. However, the schools have an important contribution to make in reducing the frequency of these births. Students need facts and understanding, a sense of belonging, aid in developing their attitudes and values, and help in finding their niche and feeling good about themselves.

* * * * *

Source for most statistics in this newsletter - Teenage Pregnancy: The Problem That Hasn't Gone Away. New York: Alan Guttmacher Inst., 1981.

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

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

February 5, 1982

MUSIC PROGRAMS IN JEOPARDY

When viewed only as sound which provides enjoyment, music can be expendable. It is very much more than that. Music is an important part of our heritage. Its beauty uplifts and inspires. It contributes to our understanding of and empathy for times past and cultures different from our own. It adds to the spiritual quality of religious services. Children should develop an understanding of music and an appreciation for it, because it has a significant role to play in their lives. Making music, listening to it, and studying about it are all part of coming to know its beauty and meaning.

Sadly, there has been a steady erosion of support in the School District of Philadelphia for the instrumental and vocal programs that are so important to thousands of students and directly affect the development of their interest and talent. There hasn't been money to buy musical instruments for fourteen years! Gone are the two Saturday morning choirs which brought 800 elementary school children together to sing. Gone are the elementary and junior high school vocal and instrumental groups which drew together the most accomplished students from all over the city. The number of junior high school orchestras, bands, and choruses at local schools has decreased. There are fewer instrumental music teachers and less financial support for the All-Philadelphia Senior High

School Choir, Orchestra, and Band. If we value music, as we should, and want important aspects of the music program to survive or be restored, the time for action is now.

Elementary and secondary schools maintain a reduced vocal and instrumental program. Around third grade, children in elementary school are given the opportunity to start playing an instrument. An instrumental music teacher who comes on a weekly basis to their school, looks for children with an interest in playing and an ear for music, and then gives them a School District owned instrument to start on. They are given small-group lessons and opportunities to join with other students to form into a group that will play together.

There are important reasons for starting students on instruments in elementary school. It serves to identify talent early and sparks interest in playing when fewer things are competing for a student's time. At a rehearsal of the All-Philadelphia High School Orchestra which is comprised of the city's best players, I questioned some students about their start in music. Many said that a teacher in elementary school put an instrument in their hands and that started them on the road.

Belonging to a chorus, band, orchestra or smaller instrumental

group gives students a reason for working to perfect their skills as well as opportunity to do so. There are such groups in both elementary and secondary schools. Annually, there are festivals in the seven districts which bring the best voices and players together first to practice and then to give a festival concert. Being a part of the district orchestra, band, or choir is something to aspire to and work for and this annual event helps to motivate and stimulate students to achieve.

The best musicians in the city from both public and parochial schools are selected by audition to be members of the All-Philadelphia Senior High School Orchestra, Band, and Choir. All year they practice Tuesday nights for two hours at a central location.

The All-Philadelphia High School Orchestra was founded in 1945 as a means of raising the caliber of playing in the high schools and stimulating excellence. It gives students and teachers a goal to aim for and it sets standards. There are 104 of the city's most talented students in this orchestra. They can perform more difficult and varied examples of orchestral literature than is possible in most of their home schools. The quality and importance of this experience is attested to by the fact that there are musicians in most of the nation's top orchestras who played in the All-Philadelphia High School Orchestra. The Philadelphia Orchestra has more than fifteen.

The All-Philadelphia High School Choir also began in the 1940's. It draws 100 of the city's most talented singers. They have a repertoire that ranges from music of the Renaissance Period to opera to the Beatles. There is a 96-piece All-Philadelphia Band of equally high caliber which performs at many community and school functions.

DECREASING SUPPORT

There has been a steady erosion of support for these music programs which bring students together to play or sing. The system which used to spend about \$100,000 annually for musical instruments has had no money in the budget for that purpose since 1968! Instruments are in short supply. Many are in very poor condition and are difficult and discouraging to use.

In the more affluent areas of the city, Home and School Associations replace worn out instruments and parents buy instruments for their children after a year or two of lessons. In the poorer communities, this isn't possible. Therefore, as the supply of instruments decreases, the number learning to play goes down as does the time spent in that school by instrumental music teachers. More and more, children in schools in poverty areas are deprived of an opportunity to play or to develop their talent.

The number of instrumental music teachers has decreased by 30% to 40%. Some of these teachers are visiting as many as ten schools each week. As the time available for each school decreases, the students receive less instruction. Talent is not developed as it should be and there is less opportunity for the teachers to form the students into ensembles. Students have less chance to play their instruments in combination with others.

The All-City Elementary and Junior High School Orchestras, Bands, and Choruses lost their funds and were eliminated in the early 1970's. These groups provided opportunities for the most able elementary and junior high school music students to be part of a challenging organization that helped them to further develop their talent and skills.

There are fewer junior high

school choruses, bands, and orchestras than there used to be because rehearsals must be scheduled before or after school and music does not receive as many of the allotted extracurricular hours as in the past. Such disruption in the continuity of participation in musical groups leads to a loss of student interest and a reduction in the number participating in high schools. Some students retain their interest, but their level of proficiency is discouragingly low.

A deep cut this year in the money available for the All-Philadelphia High School Orchestra, Band, and Choir jeopardizes their continuation. There have also been cuts in the music department's administrative staff. Although there has been a public clamor for administrative cuts, it was based on the belief that administrators do not provide direct services to students. This assumption is inaccurate in the case of the Division of Music. The director and assistant-director not only conduct, but have responsibility for, the All-City Orchestra and the All-City Choir respectively. Supervisors, with two or more districts each, plan and put on the seven district arts festivals each spring as well as select, rehearse, and conduct the district orchestras and choirs.

Viewed from a broad perspective, the loss stemming from the accumulation of all of these cuts assumes major significance. We are losing some of tomorrow's inspiring performers, but we are also sacrificing opportunities for thousands of students to have experiences that could contribute significantly to their lives and to a better community.

ALL PARTICIPANTS BENEFIT

Obviously, vocal and instrumental groups give students with talent an opportunity to develop

it. However, all participants can benefit from the experience. The discipline of practicing develops self-discipline and an ability to budget time. These groups demonstrate to students that hard work can produce results which merit commendation. Learning that there is value in making a strenuous effort to reach a goal is an important lesson which can carry over into academic work and other aspects of life.

Performing groups provide an opportunity for the shy or insecure student to develop confidence and the ability to present himself well. These groups make students feel they have a place in their school and this gives them a sense of belonging. The groups serve to unite students into an entity in which they can justly take pride. In the process, their skills of working together are improved and their self-esteem is bolstered.

Some students would drop out of school, or attend irregularly, if it were not for their music. Music is what brings them to school. Also, the sharing of musical interests and experiences helps them to develop friendships which are important to them.

The concerts of performing groups provide pleasure to their listeners and serve to improve the image of the School District. The quality of the All-City groups brings credit to Philadelphia. You cannot help but be impressed and emotionally lifted when you watch and listen to fine young musicians producing beautiful music.* Whenever we have enthusiastic youngsters giving concerts, public education is being positively promoted. For all of these reasons, such groups should be valued and supported by all of us.

*Note: The Philadelphia Boys Choir is not mentioned because it no longer is associated with the Philadelphia public schools.

There are many fine, dedicated music teachers in Philadelphia of whom students speak very highly. Under very difficult conditions in recent years, they have provided encouragement and inspiration and demanded adherence to high standards. One such teacher whose achievements are remarkable is William M. Whitaker of Martin Luther King High School. In a four year period, he developed a jazz band that won national recognition.

When Whitaker arrived at M. L. King in 1977, there was \$64 in the band fund, fourteen students in the band and no jazz band. It takes thousands of dollars to travel to competitions and to purchase, repair and protect instruments. The principal was supportive, but unable to help much. Whitaker raised the money by annually bringing famous bands to King. The first year was a cliffhanger and he only broke even, but after that the concerts achieved their purpose.

The first competition that the Martin Luther King High School Jazz Ensemble entered was a local one and they took first place. They went on to enter and win competitions which drew from larger and larger areas. Last year they entered Down Beat magazine's annu-

al contest. Down Beat is the oldest and most respected jazz periodical in the country. Only the nation's best enter its contest. High school students are judged by very high standards and as "aspiring professionals." In the high school big jazz band category, there were about 45 entries. One school was selected as the winner and five were cited as having rendered an "outstanding performance." The M. L. King High School Jazz Ensemble was one of the five.

M. L. King is an almost all black high school which had no particular reason to draw musically talented students. The success of the King Jazz Ensemble proves yet again that students everywhere have latent aptitudes and the potential for excellence.

* * * * *

Few people realize that the School District's vocal and instrumental music programs are in jeopardy. It is true that this is a time of scarce funds, but that is all the more reason to very carefully examine the use of existing resources so as to save and nurture that which is most meaningful and important. Music is a central part of what makes us human. It should be prized.

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

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A NEW SUPERINTENDENT — WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Early in February, the Board of Education approved a memorandum of understanding between the mayor, the school board president and the superintendent which resolved the issue of extending Superintendent Marcuse's contract. Just prior to that, an attempt by some school board members to renew Marcuse's contract faltered. The superintendent must have decided that it was time to come to terms and exit. He will leave office June 30, 1982, remain on the payroll for two years, and then retire with full pension benefits. It is a generous — and undeserved — settlement, but well worth it to have him out of office.

That matter settled, the search for a new superintendent became a real one. There must be an aggressive national search that gives wide publicity to the opening and makes a concerted effort to seek out qualified applicants. The choice of a superintendent is the Board of Education's single most important responsibility. It should be made with great care and thought. The Board should solicit input from citizens to aid them in making the best selection and help insure that the superintendent enjoys broad community support after being chosen.

The Board should consult with the mayor about the selection of a superintendent. While under present law the mayor has no official input into this process, the per-

son chosen should be someone in whom he has confidence. The selection of a new superintendent has to be of great concern to Mayor Bill Green since he has suffered with the school system's problems ever since he's been in office. The public holds him at least partly responsible for the sorry state of the schools even though he has not had the power to influence decisions or initiate change. Obviously he has a big stake in the person chosen to provide leadership to the schools. It should be someone acceptable to him.

The next superintendent will inherit a legacy of problems. The schools are suffering from a loss of public confidence fueled by mismanagement, huge budget deficits, teachers' strikes and wasteful spending. Parents are sickened by strikes that close schools and the constant turmoil of budget cuts. Staff morale is very, very low. It is demoralizing to work for a system that faces an annual budget crisis. It is distressing to work in a system in which excellence goes unrewarded and promotions are often based on ethnic origins or friendships instead of qualifications and the quality of past performance. It is depressing to work in buildings with leaking roofs and broken windows.

In spite of the very difficult problems facing Philadelphia's public school system, there is hope that the job of superinten-

dent is so challenging that it will attract many talented people. To become superintendent here is to have the opportunity to positively affect the future of the city, as well as the two hundred thousand students in the schools. Success in this leadership role would undoubtedly bring national recognition and prestige along with great personal satisfaction.

What should the Board of Education be seeking in the next superintendent? Part of the answer to that question lies in identifying the most important tasks that must be undertaken. Although the Philadelphia schools are currently bogged down in questions relating to funding, the contract with the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, and governing the schools, the next superintendent should not be chosen for the skills needed to resolve these issues. These persistent, complex problems must be solved, mostly by others and soon, if legal requirements are to be met and reason is to prevail. The deadline for adoption of next year's budget is May 31, 1982. There is no way to adopt or attempt to fund a realistic budget in the absence of knowledge of the terms of a teachers' contract settlement. Therefore, if the contract negotiations are prolonged, it will be even more difficult to secure desperately needed additional revenue. For everyone's sake, both the contract and funding issues should be resolved in the next several weeks before a new superintendent takes over.

IMPROVEMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT

More than anything else, Philadelphia needs a superintendent with a vision of what the schools can become; someone who brings to the job a sense of purpose and a zeal that proves inspiring to others. The most important assignment for the next superintendent is the improvement of student achievement, especially at

the secondary level where it lags the most. This won't come through an intensification of presently utilized methods of breaking learning down into tiny pieces that are taught and tested, or by more stress on rote learning, or filling in workbook blanks. It must come through a broadening of the goals of classroom teaching, modifications in teaching emphasis and methods, and a means of measuring improvement that is consistent with these changes. Teachers should be providing students with the ability to communicate their thoughts through the written word, or to seek solutions to problems in mathematics or science through reasoning in contrast to preparing students to pick the right answer on a test. Better achievement must mean an increased ability to analyze, reason, interpret, and think critically, all of which are fundamental to reading, writing, and computing.

The next superintendent must hold, and be able to communicate, a strong belief that urban school children, many of whom come from poor and/or black and Hispanic families, can achieve. For too many years the blame for poor skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic has been placed on the students, their backgrounds, motivation, attitudes, and values. If a school system thinks its students are unteachable, it can shed responsibility for their lack of learning, as well as their poor attendance and high dropout rate. If teachers come to their classrooms with low expectations for learning, their belief becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Teacher expectations and the teaching process must be examined. Leadership from the top must start students and staff on an upward spiral of achievement that is rooted in high expectations for students and a firm belief that they can learn.

To provide leadership toward

such improvement in achievement, the next superintendent must be a person who has the background and experience to merit the respect of the professional staff and the community. She or he must be able to work with the staff to develop a plan for raising levels of achievement over a period of time. He or she must have the strength and drive to energize the system and move it ahead.

The next superintendent will have to make certain that the limited resources of people and materials are skillfully managed. It is absolutely essential that the School District be run without waste. However, the superintendent doesn't have to be a management expert because this responsibility can be delegated. The superintendent may then monitor the results to be sure that the resources are utilized to further the all-important instructional goals.

The next superintendent will have to live successfully with the teachers' contract and develop spending plans. He or she must have the courage to stand up to the union and get the most possible from a restrictive contract. She must be able to develop a sound budget that reflects system priorities and major policy decisions. However, she doesn't have to be a financial expert or a skilled labor negotiator, because she can rely on others to provide these services.

The next superintendent must be a person with proven integrity. It is unfortunate but after Superintendent Marcuse this important aspect of character cannot be presumed. The Philadelphia schools must have a superintendent who can be depended upon to make appointments based on merit; draw up an honest budget, free of false savings or exaggerated revenue; and make decisions that rise above playing favorites and are based strictly on each program's effec-

tiveness and cost.

"INSIDER" OR "OUTSIDER"

Although there would be some advantages to selecting a new superintendent from among present employees, they would be outweighed by the disadvantages. An applicant currently employed in the Philadelphia schools would know the system well, and at the outset could identify people and programs which are good or poor. However, an "insider" would be so debilitated by events of the recent past as to be unable to provide vigorous, inspiring leadership. The "insider" would be viewed with suspicion by many because of alliances or obligations which would be seen as making it impossible to decide personnel and other issues objectively. Even the "insider's" knowledge of the system wouldn't be of major importance, because it is not advisable to start out by shaking up the system and firing a number of people.

The next superintendent should come from outside the system. An "outsider" could provide a fresh perspective, enthusiasm, and a much greater potential for inspiring the staff to make a commitment to achieving newly defined goals. An "outsider" would be seen as being objective and could make personnel decisions without having them viewed as paying off debts, or furthering ethnic alliances.

While at first glance it might appear that the system would have to stand still while an "outsider" learned about the city and the schools, this is not the case. A new superintendent could take steps right away to create a new climate. It would make a substantial difference if — in contrast to Marcuse — the next superintendent holds high expectations for the top administrators who serve in the cabinet and makes demands of them. They will then do the same for their subordinates. This

will immediately be reflected at the school level where principals will be pressed to make demands of teachers who in turn will make demands of their students. Asking more of people, and expecting more of them, is bound to result in higher performance.

A superintendent from outside could work toward some important objectives from Day 1. Goals, such as improvement of staff and student attendance or increasing the number of books students read, could from the outset provide a basis for staffs to begin working together toward worthy objectives. Individual school staffs and district staffs would have to examine important issues such as what changes would be required to make students want to come to school every day? How can staff members find satisfaction in their jobs? How can pupils be encouraged to read? Plans would be developed. Their implementation would force schools and districts to improve their systems of communication within the system as well as between the system and the broader community. Implicit also in striving for even such limited goals is the establishment of an environment in which excellence is identified, acknowledged, and

acclaimed.

It is clear that this school system could start down a new path and begin to show improvement while a new superintendent became knowledgeable about the system and the city, made necessary changes in the organization of the administration, and developed a comprehensive plan for the future. Encouraging people to produce at capacity, developing communications, working cooperatively, and valuing excellence would all be like a breath of fresh air for the schools and would serve to bring about desperately needed progress.

Philadelphia's next school superintendent should be an energetic, creative, educational leader with inspirational qualities who is convinced that urban children can learn. She or he should be able to point to evidence of success in getting people to plan cooperatively and to strive diligently for excellence. He should have proven integrity. He must have the background and experience to warrant confidence that he can successfully work with others to devise and carry out a comprehensive plan that will upgrade learning in the Philadelphia schools to where it should be.

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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VALUABLE PROGRAMS MUST BE SAVED

Faced with revenue that is inadequate to meet costs, many worthy programs in the Philadelphia School District are in jeopardy. Every effort must be made to select for retention those which have proved the most valuable.

The School District is awash in red ink. There will be a deficit at the end of this year of at least \$60 million, probably more, depending mainly on the final settlement of the teachers' contract. Early estimates for next year's budget projected a gap between anticipated revenue and expenditures of \$40 million. That didn't include negotiated teacher salary increases, if they occur. To eliminate the imbalance all at once in the 1982-83 budget would demand cuts of at least \$100 million. Cuts could be much less drastic if the mayor's idea is adopted. He proposed balancing the budget by a combination of incurring long-term debt to pay off the District's deficit and eliminating the budget gap over a period of time by making cuts each year to reduce it.

The financial crisis is of such magnitude that it makes no sense to approach next year's budget as Superintendent Marcase did. Again this year, he produced a plan for spending based on maintaining everything that is in the schools now. Once more the next step was to make cuts to reduce or eliminate the huge budget gap. Instead, he should have begun with a

budget limited to what is absolutely essential for each school to carry out its primary mission of educating students in the classrooms — classroom teachers, a principal, a custodian, essential books and supplies, and a limited number of people in a central location to provide a few essential services. Then he should have added, up to the level of dollars available, the programs and services which contribute the most to students' learning.

The problem of the School District's Operating Budget is compounded by the fact that many important services, serving children exceptionally well, have been supported by funds from Washington or Harrisburg which are being cut back or not keeping pace with rising costs. Three such essential services are extra help for poverty students in educational difficulty, Affective Education's assistance to principals and teachers, and prekindergarten programs. The reduction in outside funding will force the School District to provide support for these services from the operating budget or see them reduced or lost entirely.

For many years, the School District's offerings have been augmented by Federal Title I programs. "Title I" refers to the first section of the seventeen year old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) which is the big federal program that targets

funds to assist poor children who are lagging behind in school. 161 public and 57 non-public schools in Philadelphia have Title I programs this year serving about 79,000 public and 10,000 non-public school students. Most of the 33.7 million Title I dollars are aimed at the improvement of students' reading and mathematics skills. The money provides more staff members which means intensified instruction for students and more individualized attention.

Title I has been successful. It has provided assistance to the lowest achieving students all across the nation with good results. National statistics show that students in Title I programs do better than similar students not in Title I programs. Their ability to read and compute improves significantly.

AFFECTIVE EDUCATION

Title I funds are also used to support the School District's Affective Education Office which helps teachers and principals in Title I schools implement ideas and concepts leading to improved academic achievement. Its Expectations and Mastery Learning Projects have the potential to positively affect great numbers of students and teachers. The Expectations Project strives to increase learning by helping principals and school staffs develop, and take action consistent with, high expectations for academic results. Mastery learning is an approach to teaching based on the assumption that almost all students can do well in every important subject area. It involves six steps. Teachers state their goals for a lesson, teach it, give a practice test, and let the students know how they did. Then in contrast to a regular classroom, teachers provide a different way to learn the same material for those who need it and then give a second test. The results from 250

Mastery classrooms last year was that on 3/4 of the units taught, 70% or more of the class achieved mastery, the equivalent of an A or B grade.

The staff of the Affective Education Office has worked creatively in Title I schools over a period of time to perfect ways to help teachers get higher achievement results. More learning takes place as teachers raise their levels of expectation for student success, modify the way they interact with their students, and use new teaching techniques. Affective Education should be transferred to the operating budget, because it has a major and unique contribution to make to the entire school system. It should be given responsibility for improving teaching and the climate for learning throughout the system.

In June 1981, in an effort to cut federal spending and reduce federal regulations, controls, and supervision, Congress passed the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act. When it becomes effective next July, eight sections of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act will be reduced to two chapters in the new bill. Title I will become Chapter 1 of the new law and remain separate. Seven other sections of ESEA will be collapsed into Chapter 2 which will go as a block grant to the states based on the number of school-age children in the state.

Chapter 1's stated purpose continues to be to serve educationally deprived children in areas of high concentrations of low-income families. However, the legislation having been reduced from 54 pages to 6 gives school districts more flexibility and leaves more room for interpretation. This gives rise to concern that Chapter 1 funds could slide away from the most financially and educationally needy.

President Reagan proposed re-

ducing Title I funding drastically over the next few years from \$3.1 billion this year to \$1.5 billion by 1984-85, a 52% cut. There was a small cut this year. Next year the cut could range from 10% to 23% depending on a Congressional decision still to be made. Every cut means a reduction in the number of children to be served or in the quality of service offered to them. Denied this assistance, many children will not succeed in school. That has profound implications for each of them, but for each of us too. Failure in school often means no job or a low-paying one with all the resulting consequences that are so destructive to the individual and society. Every effort must be made to keep these funds from being cut further.

Philadelphia is going to receive much less money under the new bill's Chapter 2 block grant than it did previously under the seven titles of ESEA. Previously, communities have competed for the money and Philadelphia has done well with its proposals. Under Chapter 2 the money will be allocated on the basis of population adjusted for children that cost more to educate. Less will come to Philadelphia and more of what comes will be distributed to non-public schools. Last year we received \$8.2 million. Next year it will be less than \$4 million.

It will be very difficult to decide how to spend the reduced funds. This year they support the desegregation plan and several smaller vital services. However, the voluntary desegregation plan, based on expensive magnet schools serving a limited number of students, will need all the funds to continue at its present level. That leaves other critical needs unfunded and unmet.

PREKINDERGARTEN

There are several different prekindergarten programs in the

School District that may be in jeopardy. Their city, state, and federal support has been steadily shrinking. The three largest are Child Care, Get Set Day Care, and Prekindergarten Head Start. Together they serve 6240 children, mostly three and four year olds, at 103 different sites. Their total cost is about \$26 million of which the School District is paying \$9 million this year, a reduced amount because of strike savings.

These prekindergarten programs serve two major purposes. Child Care and Get Set Day Care are day care programs with strong educational components. Open for eleven hours, they enable working parents or those in training to place their young children, in some cases infants and toddlers, in a safe environment where they can grow and thrive intellectually, physically, socially, and psychologically. Prekindergarten Head Start is designed to give children from low-income families a good beginning to their schooling. It provides an educational program during regular school hours supplemented by medical and dental care, and psychological and social services as needed.

Unfortunately, the costs of these prekindergarten programs are very high and must be reduced. Greater use of aides instead of more expensive assistant-teachers would help as would a reduction in the overlapping staffing that occurs in many of the day care centers.

Research indicates that pre-kindergarten programs which are well thought out and executed have important beneficial effects for children. Achievement test results for last year in Philadelphia indicate that children who have had prekindergarten experience score higher on achievement tests in elementary school than the total group of students living in the same area. Looking at graduates

of Prekindergarten Head Start separately, a program exclusively for low-income children, their performance at almost all elementary school grade levels equaled those of the total group of students living in the same area. This is worthy of note because the scores of low income children usually lag well behind children economically more fortunate.

In addition, a national study indicates that there are economic benefits to a school district which result from a quality pre-kindergarten educational experience for low-income children. Money is saved because a smaller proportion of such children are later assigned to the more costly special education programs and fewer have to repeat grades as they go through school.

Prekindergarten programs are essential and should continue. Because they are not required by state law, the School District could eliminate them. However, that must not happen. The programs are too valuable to children, parents, and the school system.

* * * * *

Every effort should be made to secure from Washington and Harrisburg continued funding to support Title I services, Affective Education, and prekindergarten programs at least at their present levels of service to children. Failing this, these services should be given every consideration for inclusion in the operating budget. They have proved their value.

4/4/82

NOTICE

The subscription rate for The Oakes Newsletter has been kept artificially low for twelve years. This has been possible because the Alfred and Mary Douty Foundation and The Philadelphia Foundation have been very generous in their support and I have donated a substantial portion of my time. Unfortunately, it is no longer possible to publish the newsletter without a subscription price that more nearly covers costs. As of April 1, 1982, the subscription rate is \$10 for one year, \$20 for two years.

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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A Note To Readers:

As you may know, on April 12, I was appointed to the Board of Education of the School District of Philadelphia by Mayor Bill Green. My goals as a school board member are identical to those I have had for twelve years as author and publisher of The Oakes Newsletter, that is, to promote public education and improve the Philadelphia public schools. Believing that the two roles are complementary, I plan to continue writing this newsletter. While it will now represent the views of a Board member, it will not reveal any confidential information. I believe that the Newsletter's value will be enhanced by this new perspective — but that is up to each reader to decide.

ADOPTING THE 1982-83 BUDGET

On May 28, 1982, the Philadelphia Board of Education passed its operating budget for 1982-83. For the first time in memory, the superintendent's budget document was amended by the Board. Some Board members made strenuous efforts to reduce expenditures in ways which had not been proposed by the superintendent. They were successful, even if only to a limited extent. A significant step was taken to demonstrate that the School District is ready to come to grips with its long, ongoing financial crisis.

In late March 1982, when the superintendent first introduced his budget, it was \$79 million out of balance. Lacking a teachers' contract settlement, the budget assumed \$80 million in savings for the period of last fall's strike and provided no money for salary increases or improved fringe benefits. That might seem like an improper way to develop a budget, but there was little choice. While budgets necessarily contain esti-

mates and projections of both revenue and expenditures, the outcome of complex teachers' contract negotiations cannot be predicted or estimated.

At the start of the budget process, the superintendent had compiled requests from his staff based on maintaining programs at their current level. That produced a projected budget deficit of \$99 million for the end of 1982-83. In what became known as the "column A cuts", the superintendent and his top administrative staff reduced that by \$20 million and submitted the "1982-83 Proposed Budget." Cuts were made in personnel — secretaries, administrators, health personnel, cleaning people and bus aides. The closing of 8 schools yielded a \$2 million saving. Some special programs were eliminated and one evening school was dropped. Special education was reduced by \$11.7 million, about 15%, and brought into balance with the level of state reimbursement. There was an effort to

limit the cuts to the least severely handicapped but, even so, some Board members voiced serious reservations about reducing services to this extent. State funds are supposed to cover all the extra costs of special education but don't. Although the state can rightfully claim that we should render these services for less money, we still could not do it with the funds being provided.

At the time that the superintendent made his budget public, he also produced for members of the Board a proposal for making further cuts, if necessary. Spread over three columns labeled B, C and D, these cuts sliced progressively deeper into essential programs and services. For example, column B reduced counselors and the instrumental music program while column C reduced reading and library services in elementary schools. The superintendent reduced his staff of top-salaried, non-school administrators by only 9.5% in column A yet, even though direct services to students were drastically reduced, he proposed NO further cuts among this group in columns B-D.

On May 11, the Board held an all-day closed session on the budget. Exchanges were heated and the day ended with another \$7.5 million in savings. A large portion involved the reorganization of early childhood programs with services provided at a lesser cost. In the past, these programs have received large portions of their funds from state and Federal sources. Because this outside funding has been reduced or entirely lost, their high cost must be reduced if the operating budget is to support these non-mandated programs. \$2 million was saved by a Board decision to stop paying high school teachers extra money to work the thirteen minutes longer per day needed to meet the state requirement of 990 hours of instruction per year. This is a

difficult teachers' contract issue, but Board members felt that this was an intolerable expenditure which could not be justified at a time when programs and services for children were in jeopardy. Also, it was decided to increase the amount to be saved by school closings by \$1.5 million.

The Board did not finish its work that day. It had gone only part way through the budget when it ran out of time. In spite of pressure for another session, the Board did not meet again to complete the task.

The next session on the budget was May 28, the day it was adopted. Some Board members felt strongly that the budget should be further reduced and in a closed session offered a series of amendments which were discussed and modified in some cases.

AMENDMENTS PASSED

When the public session began, the Board passed several amendments, most by unanimous vote. One cut more than \$1 million worth of top-salaried administrative positions. Another eliminated the balance of the scholarships to be awarded this June, elementary school Latin as a separate program, 1/4 of the extracurricular activities in junior high schools, and all extracurricular activities except safety patrol in elementary schools. This resulted in a saving of \$2.4 million. Reduction of transportation costs by \$2 million was achieved by effecting economies in the way the service is offered. Lastly, \$1.2 million in school or other facility closings was substituted for the \$3.5 million that had been in the budget. Unfortunately, the savings achieved by the cuts were diminished by this failure to meet the \$3.5 million reduction.

It was obvious from the time that the superintendent presented his budget in late March that the

financial crisis was real. Clearly, it was of the utmost importance to reduce spending as much as possible and still maintain essential services for students. I believe that the Board of Education should have directed the superintendent to make much deeper cuts in the top-salaried administrative staff of the School District. It should have been united in its determination to reduce its physical plant in keeping with the drop in enrollment. It should have proceeded to examine every department and division to determine if the service performed was essential to the instructional process, and if it could be rendered more efficiently at less cost. Some Board members invested large blocks of time in working for savings in each of these areas. However, their success was very limited because the Board of Education remains divided. Only a minority are committed to placing the highest priority on serving the interests of students and utilizing facts, reason and logic in a search for solutions to the problems.

SCHOOLS SHOULD BE CLOSED

School closings provide a good example of what is wrong with the School District under its present superintendent and a majority of the Board of Education members. For some time, the City Planning Commission has been prodding the School District to come to grips with its excess capacity and develop a long range plan for school closings. Although the necessity to deal with this problem is clear, the essential advance planning has not been done and the determination to make the needed, difficult decisions is still lacking.

Consider these facts. Enrollment in the peak year of 1969 was 284,000. This year the figure is 214,000 — a decrease of 25% over a twelve year period. Substantial additional decreases are expected over the next five years. Allowing

for changes in use of classrooms and errors in projections, there will be a surplus of more than 35,000 spaces by 1987. Depending on their size, we should close 35 to 60 schools to reduce our capacity by that amount.

In a time of grossly inadequate dollars, we cannot afford to staff and maintain more schools than are needed. Consolidation will enable us to reduce the number of staff required in such positions as principal, secretary and counselor. Closing excess schools means fewer buildings to heat, clean or light. There are fewer roofs to repair, walls to paint and buildings to keep secure. The savings are substantial and could very conservatively amount to \$12 million per year by 1987. Such savings could be used to retain instructional staff and programs and to provide needed textbooks and other instructional materials.

Beginning in June 1981, School District and City Planning Commission staff held a series of meetings resulting in mutually agreed upon factors to be considered in identifying schools for closing. There was agreement that schools to be closed in the fall of 1982 should be identified and there should also be a long range plan for school closings. It is unclear what happened to the process after such a promising beginning. There were long delays. Lists of schools to be closed were proposed by some of the superintendent's staff members but opposed by others. Believing it is essential to close schools, some Board members worked hard at it. However, there was not enough time left to get a sound list developed, gain Board support and community acceptance.

In the final outcome, some annexes will be closed and outside leases terminated. Not a single school is scheduled to close next September. The \$3.5 million dollar

goal for savings from school closings was not even approached. The Board of Education did not have a majority committed to meeting this responsibility. Knowing of the Board's division, apparently the staff did not feel compelled to come to grips with school closings either.

On May 28, the Board of Education passed an amended budget balanced by a combination of \$38 million in new taxes and a \$29 million item labeled "unidentified reductions." In the absence of a teachers' contract and funding to support it, that was as close as the Board could come to a realistic spending plan. It is, in part at least, the huge dimensions of the financial problem that have made a long-term contract settlement so difficult to achieve. The settlement that was proposed last December would have led to annual gaps between revenue and expenditures of enormous proportions. All of a \$200 million bond sale would have been used up by 1985 and there would still have been an accumulated deficit for the three years of \$68 million. Put another way, in 1985 we would have faced financial problems of approximately the same staggering dimension we face today but, in addition, we would

have been obligated to spend \$38 million per year for the seven years after that to pay off bonds whose proceeds were already spent. We need a contract that enables the School District to eliminate, or sharply narrow, the gap between revenue and expenditures by 1985 and reduce its 1985 deficit to zero. Only then can we press City Council to approve a bond plan that will enable us to meet our operating expenses during these years.

The solution to our financial problem lies in achieving a series of changes occurring over a period of time. There must be a teachers' contract that gradually diminishes the strain on our resources. The School District must eliminate waste, inefficiency and non-essentials. A bond issue must provide additional operating budget funds for the next few years. The School District must merit a restoration of confidence which leads to increased state support. We cannot survive with our present revenue sources which do not increase adequately as expenditures are forced upward. Philadelphia's students, as all others in the state, have a right to an education that prepares them for their future and the nation's. 6/6/82

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