the OAKES newsletter

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

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THE LITERACY NETWORK CLASSROOM

In the last few years, some teachers in Philadelphia have dramatically changed their approach to teaching after taking courses largely developed by Dr. Morton Botel of the Graduate School of Education, University of Pennsylvania. Inspired by Dr. Botel's Literacy Network Seminars, they are successfully teaching children to read, communicate orally and in writing, think, and learn. The children are enthusiastic, deeply involved and invest great energy in their work.

The Literacy Network classroom differs from many others both in the way material is presented in the course of a day and in the way that children participate in their learning. Many elementary school classrooms are structured by dividing the children into three reading groups with which the teacher works each day. While the teacher is with one group, the other two work at their seats, usually in workbooks or on worksheets. Vocabulary, spelling and grammar are often taught in isolation rather than embedded in what children are reading, writing, and studying. Talking is limited to the times that teachers ask questions. All too often the subjects of reading and mathematics have forced social studies, science, and literature out of what is offered to students.

In contrast, the teaching of reading and writing in a Literacy Network classroom are embedded in literature, social studies, and science. Children learn that you read to find out things, to hear beautiful language, and to be moved emotionally. You write to keep a record, to develop and refine ideas, or to remember something. Ideas, thoughts, concepts, and facts from all subject areas are packed into the students' days, because with more knowledge comes increased understanding and greater interest.

School is exciting and rewarding for Judy McGonigal's first graders at Edmunds School. Based on a premise of the Literacy Network, Mrs. McGonigal utilizes an underlying theme to increase student interest and give more meaning to her teaching. At the time of my visit, it was plants. On one side of the room, there were long tables on which each child had several labeled pots with different sprouting seeds. A blackboard had diagrams showing how a seed develops. There were many books about plants propped on the chalk shelf and a chart, dictated by the children, listed the flower, vegetable and fruit seeds they had planted on June 1.

The morning began with the children doing math at their desks. In turn, with the help of older students, they counted and recorded the number of stems in each of their pots of seedlings. Next, the children were given a sheet of

paper with six boxes containing letters to be made into words. The children worked in pairs — a writer and a cutter. When the letters were cut up, they arranged and rearranged them to make as many words as they could. Having found more than 20 words, two teams tied for first place.

Mrs. McGonigal gave each child a carrot and sheets of orange and white paper. She directed their attention to a chart on the blackboard showing many vegetables growing. Is the carrot the leaf, stem, root or flower of the plant? The children identified it as the root. They reviewed how it grows from a seed into what you eat. They traced the carrots on the orange paper, cut them out and made pictures. One child made a rabbit with two carrot ears. Another made a clock with one carrot for the hour hand and a longer one for the minute hand.

Mrs. McGonigal reread a book from the fall. It was about a little boy whose family was sure that his carrot seed wouldn't come up, but he watered it faithfully "and then, one day, a carrot came up." Now, the children could identify with that boy's anticipation.

Next, it was time to write. The children went right to work. In this room where there is so much activity, children have ideas that they want to put on paper. When writing time was up, the children paired off and exchanged what they had written. They told each other what they liked about the other's writing and, in some cases, made suggestions for additions or change.

A visitor to this classroom finds ample evidence in the children's activities and their posted work that they learn by doing and that most of the reading, writing, and arithmetic are taught in the context of subjects such as science or literature. A snake and a toad were in residence and the children brought in worms and insects to feed them. A large sheet of paper displayed a recipe dictated by the children for fruit salad. It read, "Wash the fruit. Cut the fruit. Mix the fruit. Eat the fruit." There were twelve ingredients including 10 cherries, 18 grapes, and $\frac{1}{4}$ of a watermelon.

ENJOYING SHAKESPEARE

School is equally as stimulating, challenging and fun in Joyce Krasner's combined third/fourth grade at Sheridan School. For example, last spring they had the opportunity to attend a free performance of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Mrs. Krasner decided to devote time to studying the play before they went.

The class began by making a chart of what they already knew about Shakespeare and his world and then listed all their questions. Each child kept a notebook recording important ideas, dates, and people as they learned about them. On summary pages they recorded the most interesting thing that they learned each day.

They worked long and hard on the complicated plot of the play. They broke the play down scene by scene and posted their illustrated synopses along one wall. Mrs. Krasner used various techniques, such as acting out the storyline, to help them understand the play.

In time, each child was given a copy of the play. Mrs. Krasner read an excerpt from each scene and then the class discussed it. She wrote down new and difficult words, defined them and added them to the material on the wall. Repeating the excerpt, Mrs. Krasner read without stopping so that the students could hear the flow and the beauty of Shakespeare's poetry. On the third reading, she was joined by children who chose to read various parts along with her. Each child worked with a partner on perfecting their reading of one

excerpt which they then shared with the class. By the time they attended the performance, they were knowledgeable and appreciative members of the audience.

I spent a day with the class some weeks later. A youngster brought in a copy of an anthology of poetry and asked Mrs. Krasner to read something from Shakespeare. Mrs. Krasner picked a selection at random. She had completed only a couple of lines when some children stopped her to point out excitedly that what she was reading came from A Midsummer Night's Dream. The children then discussed who in the play said those lines, and quickly located the speech in their copies of the play. Proof positive that the entire experience had had deep meaning for them and that they had learned a great deal from it.

Later in the morning, Mrs. Krasner read them a story about Sybil, a young woman during the Revolutionary War, who rode out to warn the villagers that the Redcoats were coming. Before Mrs. Krasner began, they recalled another story that they had read about a brave young woman and other strong women that they had learned about. In a Literacy Network classroom such connections are often made. They also talked about the Revolutionary War and why it was fought. When Mrs. Krasner finished reading, she asked the students to tell what stood out for them most in the story. Among the answers, one student spoke of Sybil's bravery, another of her nervousness that she overcame as she rode through the night, and another of her fear.

FOUR CRITICAL EXPERIENCES

Teachers, influenced by the Literacy Network Seminars, organize their classrooms around "four critical experiences." The first is "responding to literature." That's what the third/fourth graders were doing when Mrs. Krasner asked what stood out for them in the story of Sybil's ride. Students can only give right answers to that question and they have to think. There are no rote answers. A response can be reading the selection along with the teacher, retelling or dramatizing the selection, interpreting it through art and writing, a panel discussion, etc. When you put a story in your own words, capture it in a picture, or portray one of the characters, you are doing something with the story that will help you to understand it, remember it, and to make it yours.

The second critical experience is sustained silent reading. The classroom has a library from which children select something they want to read. At a certain point in the day, everyone, including the teacher, spends time reading. Afterward, there is an opportunity to share what they have read with another student or the class.

The third critical experience is oral and written composing. The students have many opportunities to express themselves verbally as they recall what they already know about a topic, discuss personal experiences, or work together in pairs. Writing is scheduled every day and is related to a child's interests, or to something being read or studied in class. It is used to record how many seeds have come up, or thoughts in a personal journal. It is what helps them to understand and remember the plot of A Midsummer Night's Dream. Writing often goes through many stages until it is polished and ready to "publish" in some form for a wider audience. Writing becomes an important and meaningful part of these children's lives.

The fourth critical experience is an investigation of language. In part, younger children start doing this by reciting an amusing, rhyming chant. When they can read

it fluently, they work with some words from it to make their own sentences or some letters to make new words. That's what I saw in the first grade. This helps children learn in an organized way how to construct sentences and recognize and spell words. This takes place within a meaningful context which makes it easier to learn and remember.

In a Literacy Network classroom, children spend most of their time grouped as a whole class, or working with one or two study buddies. There is a spirit of cooperation and collaboration among the students. This is fostered by the work they do together — seeing how many words they can make from several letters, reading each other's writing, or writing a summary of a scene from a play.

Since much of the class work does not depend on a child's reading ability every child can contribute. Teachers frequently read literature or social studies to the children while they follow in their books. The students can then work on the more complex ideas in this material stretching their minds beyond what for some are the limits of their abilities to read.

There has been no formal research study on the achievements of these students, but teachers and principals have kept careful records. Mrs. Krasner's students gained an average of over two years in their independent reading level between September and February — double that of comparable groups. Every child gained at least the ½ year that would be expected in that period and some gained several years.

Children who have spent a year in a Literacy Network classroom have some characteristics in common. They are enthusiastic learners. They are eager readers at school and at home. They think of themselves as readers and writers. They are more knowledgeable about themselves and how they learn best. Having experienced an intellectually stimulating environment, they have learned to be curious, ask questions, search for answers, and relate what they are learning to what they already know.

One important question of this decade is how can schools excite students about learning and turn out well-read, knowledgeable, reasoning, thinking graduates who have the ability to express themselves well? Dr. Morton Botel's Literacy Network Seminars offer an important answer.

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WAYS TO PROMOTE LEARNING

On too many days, in too many schools, for too much of the time, teachers can be found at the front of the room lecturing to students. Students listen, study textbooks and then answer fill-in-the-blank or true/false questions. Studying what seems to have no connection to their lives, material is often memorized today, given back on a test tomorrow and then quickly forgotten.

From the many studies published recently, we know that there is good reason to be dissatisfied with what students all over the nation are gaining from their many years in school. Students lack the ability to speak expressively, read thoughtfully, write coherently, think critically and reason. Test scores are down. Employers are dissatisfied. Our ability to communicate with one another is being diminished because we do not share a common rich background of knowledge and understanding. Even the tool of language — understanding the meaning of words and using them to precisely portray our thoughts — is being lessened because students do not read widely or write frequently and carefully enough to develop an extensive vocabulary. Since a major part of schooling for many students is learning facts by rote, there are too few opportunities to analyze, infer, make distinctions, or evaluate. Consequently, students do not learn to reason and think.

Secondary school teachers must find different ways to conduct their classes. In preparing for this newsletter, I visited the classrooms of several excellent teachers. They use some of the many ways available to get students engaged in their own learning process and help them to find meaning in what they read and study.

One of the many ways to stir student curiosity is to ask them a question. Searching for an answer stimulates interest and the topic is better received and remembered. A World History teacher began her course this year by having the students write as if they were telling someone their concept of where we came from. After they had written their personal version of how man began, they read stories from five different cultures about creation. It quickly became apparent to the students that this has been an important question for people down through time. The students had questions which led naturally to taking a more in depth look at creationism and the theory of evolution. Contemporary controversy around these two views emphasizes the importance of this question even in modern times.

On the day that I visited, the students were recording their current thoughts on how our species originated in their journals. They compared this with what they had written earlier and found that no one had changed her or his opinion.

The teacher asked them what influences us as we form opinions. The answers were religious beliefs, personal observations and experience, education, the media, parents, and feelings. The teacher asked the students to look at these six sources and decide which ones had influenced them in this case. Having made this analysis, the students could see that opinions are formed in different ways. The teacher pointed out that open-mindedness is important because based on new information, opinions may change. Students might experience that in this class sometime during the year. Clearly, this teacher is striving to have students develop their powers to think and reason.

RELATING TO THE CHARACTERS

In an 11th grade English class, the chairs were arranged in a big circle so that everyone could see everyone else. This arrangement facilitates dialogue between students, as well as with the teacher, and helps to reinforce the fact that the contribution of each student is valued. The class was reading a novel about an incident of cattle rustling which led to the formation of a posse and the hanging of three men who later proved to be innocent. To help the students get more from their reading, the teacher talked with them about mob psychology and false accusation. Had any of them ever felt pressured to go along with a group that did something they personally didn't want to do? One had left the school campus with friends when he knew that his parents disapproved and it was against the rules because he didn't want to feel like a "square." Others had experienced similar instances and many students knew what it felt like.

The teacher asked the students to imagine what circumstances could make rational people lynch someone. What made the characters in the book do it? The teacher asked them to see if they could feel, through the author's words, how the character in the book feels when he does something he doesn't want to do. Then the class talked about their experiences with being falsely accused and how that felt. It was upsetting. It made them angry. It broke up friendships. Having found some ways to relate to the charaters and to better understand their feelings as the events unfolded, they were better prepared to continue reading the book.

As the students proceed to read this book, there will be opportunities to go in a reverse direction — that is to relate back from the book to the students' lives. They will have the opportunity to think about what happened in a particular instance of mob psychology and to analyze the consequences. There will be discussions of the consequences of going along with a group or a mob or of standing up for what you believe. Students will be given insight into historical examples of the phenomenon. With greater understanding will come an ability to better respond to occasions in their own experience when a group might be in a position to exert an influence on their lives.

In a 12th grade remedial reading class, the students had just begun an autobiography of a young woman written in a diary form. The 15-year-old girl in the book gets into great difficulty with drugs, primarily because she has very low self-esteem. The teacher solicited the class' views on whether parents are justified in exerting authority and what it means to disobey your parents or defy them.

During this class, the teacher stopped briefly when words came up with which students might be unfamiliar. She clarified meaning, pronounciation, and spelling for

words like justified, superficial, poignant and esteem. She helped the students to identify synonyms. It was clear that the teacher wants these students to enlarge their vocabularies so that they will have command of the language. However, she didn't give them a list of unrelated words to look up and put in sentences. Because the words grew out of what they were reading and discussing, their meanings will be better understood and more easily remembered.

Since the main character is close to their age and writing of circumstances many understand, students don't require help in relating to this book. However discussing it under the guidance of a sensitive, caring teacher can help students to learn that their own feelings, concerns and views of life are widely shared. Other teenagers have problems relating to their parents. Other teenagers don't feel good about themselves. In the context of a discussion of the book, they can see how destructive it is to have a poor self-image and how important it is to develop a good one. They can think through how they feel about themselves and what are the factors that influence this. Maybe they will also see that there is something to be learned from books that can be of personal value to them.

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

In a World Geography class, the topic was peace and disarmament. The day that I visited, they watched a film which expressed the views of the "peace-through-strength" movement. The previous day they had seen an anti-nuclear film. In discussion, the students extracted the major points made in the film and the facts given to back them up. They looked at the methods of persuasion used in the films.

There is much to be gained from the discussion of controversial issues. Controversial issues excite student interest because they are current and there are strong feelings associated with them. This sharpens willingness to listen, speak and think an issue through. More important, it provides necessary practice for what a citizen must do to properly fulfill his obligations.

Students must be given opportunities to examine all sides of a question with a view to arriving at a decision. Teachers should help them be as objective as possible as they examine the evidence or facts and use them as the basis for their opinions or judgments. Students need to be very clear about how they reached a decision and on what it was based.

It is difficult to present a controversial issue to a class. The various sides of a question must be fairly presented and considered. If and when they make them known, teachers have to be careful not to let their own views carry more than a proper amount of weight. Unfortunately, most teachers are reluctant to undertake such a study with their students. They think the're not supposed to, or they are afraid of being accused of trying to indoctrinate their students, or of not presenting the sides evenly.

The School District has a policy statement which comes from the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Development that deals with controversial issues. It defines them as "important policies or proposals on which conflicting views are held by political parties, by management and labor, by city and country, or by other large groups of our people." It states that the school curriculum includes many controversial issues which "are appropriately studied insofar as the maturity of pupils and the available resources permit. Only through the study of

such issues (political, economic, or social) does youth develop certain abilities needed for citizenship in our democracy.... Free discussion of controversial issues is the heart of the democratic process...."

The policy statement supports the study of controversial issues. However, if it is to take place department heads and principals must talk with teachers about the importance of raising controversial issues within the context of a regular course of study and encourage them to do so. Some highly charged issues are difficult for everyone and teachers may do a better job and gain needed support if they work with other teachers in advance planning and as the study is progressing.

In each of the classes described in this newsletter, the teachers value discussion and use it as part of their repertoire to promote learning. Discussion enables students to examine ideas, raise questions, share with and learn from each other, listen to other points of view, and develop respect for ways of thinking other than their own. Discussion helps them to understand that there is not always a right answer. Sometimes there are different views and different answers and it is not a matter of right or wrong. Discussion helps students to improve the way they think and reason. It provides practice in expressing ideas verbally and synthesizing thoughts. Discussion turns students from passive observers to active participants.

There are many ways to stimulate student interest and to relate what is being studied to what students already know, their interests or their lives. Teachers must perfect ways to help students make the important connections between the past and the present, literature and life, and democratic principles and their futures. This is what lifts isolated facts off the printed page and gives them meaning and reality. This is what enriches thinking and deepens understanding. This is what is required if students are to apply themselves better, exert greater effort, and understand and learn more.

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THE PHILADELPHIA HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIES

Last month, The Philadelphia High School Academy Association was awarded a "private sector initiative commendation" by the President of the United States for its "exemplary achievement in strengthening the Nation's vocational education system." The Academies, and those who have contributed to their development, deserve this recognition for many years of hard work, dedicated effort, and excellent results.

Philadelphia has four kinds of Academies which prepare students for jobs in the automotive, business, electrical and health care fields. This year, there are eight sites serving about 750 high school students.

Founded in 1969, the first successful Academy was the Academy of Applied Electrical Science at Edison High School. It was conceived as a program that would emphasize learning a sequence of increasingly more complex saleable skills in the electric or electronics field in combination with the English, reading and mathematics required to accompany these developing skills. The students, many of whom would probably drop out without this program, are encouraged and helped to look ahead to a future in the electrical science field.

The Academy includes a large room with worktables and stools, large appliances, such as washers and dryers, and simple and complex electric and electronic equipment. Here the students learn such things as wiring outlets, soldering, and making motor repairs. Learning to do these things motivates students to increase their academic skills so that they can follow written instructions and understand the theory behind the work they are doing. A student who has worked with a broken washing machine, trying to determine why the motor doesn't work, will come to see why he needs to understand the operation of a motor.

While jobs in the electrical industry can be found for the oldest students, they are difficult to find for those 16 and under, especially on a part-time basis. As a substitute, Edison established an on-site "factory" which contracts with businesses for work. Students must have good attendance and grades to earn the right to be hired. In this way, a connection is drawn between learning and earning money. Students work after school or during the summer in the "factory". They are paid an hourly wage for repairing meters or assembling products. One businessman told me that they do good quality work which compares favorably with work done in his own plant.

The first Business Academy was opened in 1972 at University City High School. There are four now. The Business Academies prepare students for entry-level typing, clerical, secretarial or bookkeep-

ing positions but aim to give them the rounded education that will make them qualified for promotion in the future. To the extent that jobs can be found, students certified as job ready by their teachers work in offices after school and during the summer. These jobs are supplemented by a temporary office help program which provides students to businesses to fill temporary positions.

The Health Academy opened at Martin Luther King High School two years ago. It differs from the other Academies in that no vocational courses are offered. Students are given the academic background (English, mathematics, science, social studies and Spanish) they will need for acceptance into post high school educational programs in the health care field. Because there are so many people in Philadelphia who speak Spanish, fluency in this language will enable students to render an important service and give them an advantage for employment. Wherever appropriate, course work is related to health care. For example, in Spanish class students learn the vocabulary they would need in a hospital to direct people to various departments. All through high school, students are taught in myriad ways about the health care field and the career opportunities it offers.

The Academy of Applied Automotive and Mechanical Science has just moved and is in a transition period. Like the Electrical Academy, it combines academics with vocational education and has an after-school/summer job program. In this case, the on-site shop does car repairs.

CHARACTERISTICS IN COMMON

While the various Academies prepare students for their futures in different ways, they have many characteristics in common. All represent a true partnership between the School District and the private sector. The relationship of staff members to students and to each other is a close-knit one. All are small schools-within-schools. They serve a specific student population, place a great emphasis on preparing for the world of work, and encourage and foster parental cooperation and interest.

Each of the four different kinds of Academies has a board of directors that establishes policy, provides assistance and support, and works cooperatively with the School District. The members of each board are drawn from management levels of business and industry, post-secondary educational institutions, unions, the community, and the School District. Each of the four has an executive director. Each is incorporated as a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. This facilitates and provides incentives for contributions of money and services. The School District and the private sector work as partners in developing the distinguishing features of each Academy, including its curriculum. They work as a team to prepare students for jobs and to supervise them on the job.

Each of the eight Academies is small and located in a different high school. Currently, the largest one has 150 students. The students in each grade are scheduled to take most, if not all, of their course work together. The Academy staff is made up of a corps of teachers that work with these students over a period of years. This furthers the personalized individual attention and informal counseling that is encouraged. It leads teachers to feel a sense of mission about helping their students develop to their fullest. Whenever possible, teachers are scheduled for a common preparation period so that they can plan and work together daily. This enables vocational and academic teachers

to cooperate in melding some of what they are teaching. For example, a trip to an industrial plant in a vocational class provides the subject for an oral talk in English class. Academy staff and students get to know each other well. The students develop a sense of belonging, pride and identification with their Academy.

The Academies were developed to offer something special to high risk students who are not well motivated or not working up to their potential. They serve students who want a vocational education program but do not have the academic or attendance record required to be accepted into a vocational-technical school.

All of the Academies place a major emphasis on preparing students to get and hold a job. Attendance, punctuality, and proper attitudes are continuously stressed as being essential attributes. Students are expected to notify the school if they are going to be absent and a teacher phones the home if they don't call. Résumé writing, career awareness, and job interviews are all part of school work. In many subjects, there are links to job preparation or readiness. After school jobs provide motivation since students must meet certain criteria to be sent out for a job interview and those who are the best prepared are the first to be sent out. The jobs are within the students' fields of interest and further their career goals.

Parental cooperation and support are sought and valued by the Academies. Parents are invited to a parents' meeting early in the year to meet the teachers and learn more about the program. Strenuous efforts to get parents out have led to well attended meetings and a sound basis for future communication.

As already indicated, the private sector makes very substantial contributions to the Academies of dollars, staff, expertise and time. It provides modern equipment and needed materials and supplies that the School District cannot afford. It funds the four Academy executive directors and the time needed for such activities as developing curriculum or training teachers. Businesses, large and small, are generous in their willingness to come into schools and describe their business, industry or profession and explain its needs, expectations and existing opportunities. They provide invaluable assistance in preparing students to enter the world of work. They arrange for students to tour their businesses and to talk with employees. They give students practice in filling out a job application, taking a placement test, and going through a job interview. They provide part-time jobs, summer jobs, and frequently full time jobs for graduates.

The private sector also contributes by serving on the Philadelphia High School Academy Association Board of Directors, the group cited by the President. This superboard makes policy decisions for all of the Academies and supports them by raising funds. It is composed of chief executive officers of major corporations, the chairperson of each Academy board, top school district officials, the teachers' union president, and other important leaders in the community.

ACADEMIES ARE SUCCESSFUL

The Academies' success can be demonstrated statistically. Student attendance is high. For example, the average daily attendance for the Business Academies last year was 89% compared with 67% for the high schools in which they are housed. The Academies' dropout rate last year was under 1% compared to the system where a large percentage of students do not finish high school. Lastly, 85% of

the students who graduated and did not go on to further education got jobs. These are exciting results especially for a program that does not skim the cream of the student population, but develops the potential of students who might never have made it otherwise.

Businesses have many reasons for investing so heavily in these Academies. It is a good way to meet the need for a competent work force drawn from the city. It reduces the training costs for new employees and the turnover rate. It helps meet affirmative action responsibilities. To be good corporate citizens, businesses believe they have an obligation to help to improve conditions in their city. Inner city youth, who suffer such a high rate of unemployment, need and deserve better opportunities for employment. Helping to create a school setting that encourages young people to stay in school, become employable, and lead productive lives improves the quality of life in the city.

Superintendent Constance Clayton has challenged the Philadelphia High School Academy Assoc. to expand the Academies to 5000 students served. Within a reasonable time period, it would probably be possible to establish enough new Academies to meet this goal. However, finding the number of jobs that would be required poses the problem. Jobs are the key to this program. They provide motivation and purpose and bring the satisfaction and self-respect that comes with earning dollars. It is the jobs that may limit the expansion.

Two men have played key roles in the development of the Academies. They are James Lee Everett, Chairman, Philadelphia Electric Company and Hendrik Koning, Executive Director of the Philadelphia High School Academy Association. Hendrik Koning was loaned in 1970 by Philadelphia Electric to the Electrical Academy when it was just starting. That loan has now stretched to 14 years during which time Koning has used his talents, understanding, and belief in people to develop and perfect the Academy concept. As the number of Academies expanded, increased private sector sponsorship was essential. J.Lee Everett has been generous with his time, persistent in his vision, and persuasive in getting support and commitment from other corporate executives. These two men have provided the leadership that made the Academies deserving of national recognition.

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THE VOLUNTARY DESEGREGATION PLAN - ONE YEAR LATER

In December 1984, a Status Report on the Modified Desegregation Plan of the School District of Philadelphia was submitted to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission as promised. Dr. Constance Clayton, Superintendent of Schools, characterized the report as showing that "we are keeping our promises; that not only are we on course, on target, and on time, but that we are on the right track, ... and ahead of schedule." A study of what has occurred in this first year provides facts to support Dr. Clayton's enthusiasm.

A comparison of the 1983 modified desegregation plan with the efforts and accomplishments described in the 1984 status report shows that the School District had made a realistic plan which it intended to and did follow. The October 1983 plan, called To Educate All Our Children, was divided into three major parts: the Educational Improvement Plan, the Desegregation Expansion Strategy, and the Effort to Reduce Racial Isolation. The status report is similarly organized. An important underlying concept of the plan was that overall improvements in the system would lead to increased confidence in public education and an increased ability to attract students to the public schools or back to them.

Educational reforms have been instituted in an effort to provide access to educational excellence to all students regardless of their ethnic background or socioeconomic level or where they live or go to school. These reforms include a standardized curriculum, a testing program largely based on what is taught, and increased requirements for graduation. In addition, a broad-based committee has made recommendations for a new promotion policy which will probably be implemented next year.

The School District values the schools which were designed, or have served, to attract ethnically diverse populations. It has maintained them even though the Federal funding that some depended on has been decreased. Academic high schools, vocational-technical schools and magnet schools at the high school level and below have all been successful in promoting desegregation.

During this first year of implementation of the modified desegregation plan, there has been an emphasis on making some of the segregated neighborhood schools located in desegregated communities more attractive to those living near them. If these schools come to be viewed as being of competitively high quality, they may attract a more ethnically diverse student body. One such school incorporated suggestions from parents in the community and fasioned changes which drew students as hoped. The school has moved from a segregated status to a stably

desegregated one. Parents said they wanted small classes. Although the school could not provide a substantial reduction from the standard class size of 33, it was able to have students in classes of about 20 for reading and mathematics each day. Addressing the class size concern met a perceived need and showed parents that they were being taken seriously and that they could influence decisions. This served to bolster their confidence in the school and the system.

This year a program known as the Philadelphia Alliance for Teaching Humanities in the Schools (PATHS) is operating. It is an initiative of the Committee to Support the Philadelphia Public Schools whose board of directors includes the chief executive officers of some of the city's largest corporations, and presidents of several colleges and universities. Teachers, department heads, and principals competed for grants to support creative ideas for improving the teaching of the humanities in their schools. 33 projects were funded. It is anticipated that the grants will lead to new ways of thinking and doing things so that when the special funding ends improved teaching of language, literature, art, philosophy and history will continue. These projects add an important dimension to the schools they are in and improve the School District's overall image. This has the potential to aid desegregation significantly.

REPLICATING SUCCESS

Schools most in need of upgrading have been identified as Priority One schools and efforts are underway to assist them. There are ten in a first group participating in a project called Replicating Success. Last winter, each school's needs, strengths and weaknesses were assessed. A newly formed council, composed of the principal and representatives of the school staff and parents, used this information to help them write a three-year plan for schoolwide improvements. Subcommittees were formed to develop short and long range goals and work for their achievement. Each developed plans for its area of responsibility, such as mathematics, reading, science, social studies, parental involvement and self-esteem. These plans were approved by the council, often after modificiation in response to suggestions. At a school that I visited, the self-esteem committee's goal is "to increase students' knowledge and appreciation of the contributions made by Black Americans and raise the self-esteem of each student." One of the activities designed to achieve this goal is the presentation each morning of a biographical sketch of a Black American. The committee feels that expanding the system of recognition will help students take pride in themselves and focus everyone's attention on the behavior necessary for learning to occur. Awards, publicized on bulletin boards, acknowledge achievement, attendance, and good behavior.

Replicating Success is a three year project. While the positive changes in the schools in the first few months have been impressive, they cannot be expected to convert to appreciably higher achievement for some time. The climate for learning is improving and so are the children's views of themselves. Teachers are working together to heighten their classroom effectiveness. In time, all of this is expected to lead to the goal of higher academic achievement.

To this observer, an exciting early result of Replicating Success is that teachers feel empowered. While the principal is the instructional leader, has final say on the plans, and is ultimately responsible for the school s/he shares leadership and in-

volves the entire staff in the development, execution and monitoring of the plans. Teachers see themselves as the professionals that they are. They know that their contributions to the development and implementation of the plans are crucial and valued. As a result, teachers feel renewed and are discovering inner resources and skills they didn't realize they had.

DESEGREGATION PROGRESS

The Desegregation Expansion Strategy, the second major part of the voluntary desegregation plan, is designed to achieve as much desegregation as possible, as quickly as possible. Toward this end, the School District made three commitments. First, it promised to maintain racially balanced faculties and assigned teachers so as to accomplish this.

Next, the School District promised to increase the number of desegregated schools. It identified 50 schools and concentrated its efforts on them. Each school developed its own desegregation plan which included methods of recruitment and any requests for added personnel, new programs, or improvement of its plant. These plans went through a central approval process. The School District undertook an extensive student recuitment drive which included the distribution of brochures and media publicity. It also operated ten centers throughout the city on two Saturdays to provide parents with information about the various available options and then to assist them in applying for transfers. The free bus transportation for desegregation was improved by making it more reliable and shortening the rides where possible.

The 50 targeted schools were to be desegregated over a five year period. 21 schools have already become desegregated and another 23 have made some progress. (A school is considered to be desegregated if it is from 25% to 60% White and from 40% to 75% Black, Hispanic and Asian combined.) Only 6 of the original group failed in the first year to make any progress.

Currently, 71 schools are desegregated. The number of pupils attending desegregated schools increased by 13,000 from April 1983 to Fall 1984. This represented an increase from 19% to 26% of the total enrollment.

The progress that has been made to date can be attributed for the most part to two major factors. First, there are many people in Philadelphia who want their children to attend desegregated schools. Second, the School District tapped into this group and provided them with information and other assistance so that they could take better advantage of the varied opportunities.

Finally, the School District promised to create a climate in the schools "conducive to academic achievement, social growth, and integration." Steps were taken to ensure that transferred students would be hospitably received and helped to adjust. With their parents, they received orientation and were welcomed to their new schools. Separate two-day staff development sessions, held for teachers and counselors in August, were designed to give these staff members a sense of the importance of their roles in the desegregation process and an opportunity to improve their skills. The sessions were enthusiastically received by teachers and counselors who found them of exceptionally high quality and an inspiring way to look toward the start of a new year. Staff development for bus drivers and bus attendants is planned for early 1985.

Because only 25% of Philadelphia's public school population is

White, and some of these students live in predominantly White areas too far away to be a part of the desegregation plan, many schools will remain one-race schools. The plan calls for reducing and mitigating the effects of this racial isolation. This work is in its beginning stages.

Some curriculum has been developed, and more is in process, to increase understanding and appreciation of the many cultures represented in the schools. A new guide, Getting to Know You, was introduced to the teachers of the 50 targeted schools and they are testing it this year. Later it will be used in one-race schools to increase acceptance and understanding of other ethnic groups.

When special programs are implemented, efforts are made to insure that the participating students are drawn from racially isolated schools so that they have opportunities to meet and work with students of other ethnic groups. For example, paired classes of 5th graders are brought together from different sections of the city for visits to museums.

The School District has recently brought together the leadership of a number of public and private agencies, community groups and clergy to enlist them in the effort to provide good interracial and cross-cultural experiences for young people. There is a great need to create more such opportunities in the community to supplement what the schools can do. For instance, church groups and scout troops could increase the number of activities that bring Black and/or White, Hispanic, and Asian children together.

During the first year of implementation of the multiyear plan, an appropriate priority was placed on achieving desegregation and having students received well in their new schools. These efforts must continue, but with some of the foundation work done, other important aspects of the plan can be emphasized. To achieve integration, the plan's real goal, staff members must learn how to provide the setting and support necessary for students to associate with one another on the basis of complete equality and mutual respect and develop friendships and understanding. Because many students will continue to attend racially isolated schools, efforts must be expanded to prepare them to live successfully in a multiracial, multicultural society.

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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THE "LITERATE ENVIRONMENT" KINDERGARTEN

There are "literate environment" kindergartens* in the Philadelphia public schools where five-year olds read books and write their thoughts down on paper. For 4½ years, the two teachers involved have been working with Dr. Lynne Putnam who is a reading consultant. They have endeavored to incorporate into these classrooms what is known about the experiences which have led some young children to teach themselves to read before entering school. Dr. Putnam conceived the"literate environment" approach and developed it as part of a National Institute of Education study conducted at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education in 1980-81. The goal is to chart the path that leads to enthusiastic and successful readers and writers. The thrust is toward making the classroom into a place where children will develop the inner drive, satisfaction and pleasure which have led some children to become readers at a very young age.

The theories and methods used in the "literate environment" kindergartens draw from studies made of early readers. There was nothing about the personalities or abilities of these children that set them apart from other children. Instead, there were common special features about their home environments. The children had been read to from their earliest years. Adults in their homes liked to read. When these children asked questions about print which they saw on signs and boxes, they received answers which stimulated further interest. They were provided with books, paper and writing materials. The children initiated questions which helped them to figure out the relationship of letters to sounds so that they could read words. At the same time, they had an interest in printing which led them to ask questions about how words are spelled. Reading and writing went hand in hand for these early readers. The learning process was directed by the children with the adults following their lead.

A visitor to a "literate environment" kindergarten is immediately aware that books play a vital role. During the first activity of the day, which lasts at least 30 minutes, many children read books or have them read to them. Some of their favorites have been made into "big books." The children treasure these books which are written in large print on big pieces of paper and illustrated by them or the teachers. There is a 45-minute period daily when the teacher reads to the children and they respond to what is read. Even at "choice time", when activities like clay and blocks are available, children may decide to read a book. Children are encouraged to take a book home every night. Implicit in much of

*Daroff School & Longstreth Annex

what occurs in these kindergartens is the message that books and reading are important and provide fun, fascination, and information. Children become eager to learn to read.

On a visit to a "literate environment" kindergarten, during the first 30-40 minutes of the day, children, collaborating with others or working by themselves, read books of their own choice and/or wrote what they wished. Each child has a 3rd grader who reads to him once a week. The day before the older children had been unable to come and several children decided to write their special friends. The teacher worked with them to sound out the words they wanted to write. One child wanted her letter to say, Thank you for reading me a book. You are my friend. Can you come to my house?" She wrote strings of capital letters. The last sentence was expressed by "KN U K KM TOW M I H." There is an extra "K", and the "W" and"O" are reversed, but the essence is there.

While some of the children were "writing", others were "reading." Many asked the adults in the room to read to them or to listen to them read. Some talked among themselves about their books, or "read" to each other. Often they said a word for each word on the page. Some relied on their memories of the story and drew clues from the pictures and "read" something close to what was on the page. Sometimes their imaginations took them farther afield. However, they already had an attachment to books. They understood, or were beginning to understand, that there is a connection between print and words.

If you question the value of these approximations to writing and reading, you join most people who are skeptical at first. However, a perceptive teacher observed that when children first attempt speech and babble sounds like "goo-goo", no one tells them to stop talking. Everyone recognizes this as a first step and encourages them to keep trying, and so it should be with early readers and writers.

"Inventive spelling" is the term which describes what children do when they have progressed to the point of sounding out words and writing down letters for what they want to say. When they start, they do not leave spaces to indicate the beginning and end of words. In the earliest stage, they write only the beginning consonant. Later, they add more consonants. The vowels come last. As they become readers, they make the transition to conventional spelling. Teachers help children to advance by seizing the right moments to give individual children information related to what they are working on and responsive to their questions and comments. They praise the children's efforts and provide stimulation and encouragement.

PRETEND READING

"Pretend reading" is the beginning. Children often choose a book to read with which they are familiar. They may have asked to have it read many times so that they almost have it memorized. When children pretend read, they mimic the language of books. They use unfamiliar words which they may adopt into their vocabularies. They give themselves practice in employing sentence structures which are more complex than those they use in conversation. They come to see that printed words convey meaning. With help and immersion in a literate environment, in time they figure out the connection between the print and words and learn to identify a few familiar words whenever they come across them. As they advance, they reach a stage where they understand the relationship of the sound to the letter and they want

to read precisely what is written. Inventive spelling and pretend reading progress from a gross approximation to the real thing. Although the process of learning to read is not yet well understood, it is clear that many children in the "literate environment" kindergartens are highly motivated to work hard to unlock the code of reading and writing.

After the 45 minutes of reading and writing, the children gathered on the rug. The teacher had a short math lesson. Then she read a book called One Dozen Delicious Donuts that was filled with "d" words, such as detective and dainty. Meanwhile, her aide printed "Dd" in the palm of each child's hand. The children could hear the "d" at the beginning of the words, at the end of the word "changed", and in the middle of "idea." The teacher made sure they understood the meaning of words like discussion and disappeared. The story taught the letter "d", its sound, and many new words. It was also a delightful story.

Next came three minutes of flash cards and the children calling out in unison the name of the letter and its sound, e.g. "R" says rrr-rrr-rrr.

The teacher turned to their study of Indians. They reviewed what they had learned about how the Indians got their food. The teacher asked them what the women did when the men and boys went hunting. Many children guessed that the women stayed at home in the tepees. Having placed a question in their minds, she began to read. When the men went hunting for several days, the women followed in order to prepare the meat. The book described how the men left a trail by tearing bark on the trees. When they killed an elk, they left the animal and a sign indicating when they would return to that spot.

The teacher helped the children to act out what they had just read. The boys pretended to rise early, leave with their bows and arrows, and peel bark so the women could follow them. They shot the elk and left their sign. Then it was the girls' turn. They filled imaginary blankets with corn meal and beans and a boning knife for the elk. They reviewed how they would know where to go and pretended to follow the trail. They came upon the elk and set about making the fire.

Dramatization is fun, but it is also a powerful learning tool. It highlights important facts and leads to better understanding of a social studies lesson. It works equally well with fiction where playing a part gives insight into characters, emotions and events. Dramatization adds interest, translates what may seem abstract into something concrete, and aids memory.

SUB-SKILLS APPROACH

The "literate environment" kindergarten with its emphasis on reading and writing stands in contrast to what is pervasive elsewhere. Most Philadelphia kindergartens, like those across the nation, base their teaching on the belief that children must learn certain things before they can begin to read. They use commercially published materials which have a similar underlying philosophy. The emphasis is on teaching a series of sub-skills. Children must learn to recognize letters and be able to distinguish similarities and differences in what they see and hear. They must learn to comprhend. Unfortunately, comprehension is frequently not taught through the use of literature, but rather from meager selections which are written to give practice in recalling a sequence of events or to teach the concepts of words like "in" and "out."

A visitor to most of the city's

kindergartens will see children going through a series of activities, each one focusing on a particular skill. For example, the teacher holds up the letter "D". A child identifies it. Another child gives its sound. The children practice "ddd-ddd-ddd" in unison. Then the teacher asks them to think of words that begin with "d". Or, the teacher says words like baby and boots and asks with what letter they begin. Since the children have no current use for this information and do not connect it with words and ideas and books, large blocks of time are consumed as children try to remember these letter/sound relationships. On the other hand, in the "literate environment" kindergartens children are trying to read and write. They ask questions about words and letters because they have a need to know. The answers have more meaning and are easier to remember.

Teachers who use the sub-skills approach believe in it and strive to have their children master the skills. This puts them under great pressure. Time is short because kindergartens only have half-day sessions. One teacher told me that what she must cover leaves her with only five or ten minutes at the end of the day to read to children. Much is lost in this effort to teach children sub-skills. In too many places, books which provide the reason for learning are neglected.

Like the grades, kindergartens have a standardized curriculum that is balanced and requires the inclusion of literature, science, social studies, art and music. It specifies, for example, that children are to have opportunities to select books, listen to stories and poems and respond to them in different ways. If the breadth of the curriculum and the importance of books is to be reflected in classrooms, teachers will have to be encouraged to spend extended periods of time each day reading to children and having them respond. There should be frequent opportunities for children to "read" literature and to understand that reference books provide information.

"Literate environment" kindergartens produce children who have taken important steps toward learning. They have developed the habit of "reading" and "writing" and view themselves as readers and writers. There is much to be learned from these kindergartens that could be broadly applied and would be of great benefit across the system.

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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THE PHILADELPHIA ALLIANCE FOR TEACHING HUMANITIES IN THE SCHOOLS

The Philadelphia public schools are very fortunate to have a strong, vigorous organization advocating and supporting the teaching of the humanities. The Philadelphia Alliance for Teaching Humanities in the Schools (PATHS) was created in January 1984 by The Committee to Support Philadelphia Public Schools. The Committee is an organization of leaders from large local businesses, institutions of higher education and foundations. PATHS brings together the corporate community, the school system, the teachers' union, and educational and cultural institutions to work in a common effort. Its $2\frac{1}{4}$ million funding comes from local and national foundations and the city's corporate community (i.e. Pew Memorial Trust, The Rockefeller Foundation, and The Greater Philadelphia First Corporation). This financial support is an outgrowth of the donors' confidence in the leadership and educational vision of Dr. Constance Clayton, the Superintendent of Schools.

Implicit in PATH'S existence and efforts is a recognition that public education is important to the entire community. The many corporations, universities and colleges involved in PATHS are demonstrating their belief that they should, and do, care about public education. They are also demonstrating their conviction that the humanities are an essential part of public education which should be supported and encouraged.

PATHS' stated mission is to "assist teachers to strengthen humanities education in the schools and to help their students to read and think critically, to write clearly and persuasively, and to appreciate the art, music, language, philosophy, literature and history of their own and of other cultures." PATHS is sponsoring six kinds of projects. The largest is Writing Across the Curriculum which is designed to increase the amount of writing done in classrooms so that students will become more fluent and lucid in expressing their ideas and will utilize writing as an aid to learning. Early in her administration, Dr. Clayton placed an emphasis on writing and she has given this project strong support.

Last July, a small executive committee in each of the seven subdistricts met to make plans to be implemented in four or more pilot schools in the fall. The individual district committees were then expanded to include teams from the pilot schools, a librarian from the Free Library and college faculty. These groups of about 35 have been meeting every two weeks in each district. They are receiving instruction in how to stimulate student writing and assist students with revising and rewriting. They are being trained in the many ways students should

utilize writing such as notes, summaries, and observations to increase their understanding in every subject area and their ability to remember what they learn. They are also developing plans for increasing the number of participating teachers and schools in each district. The goal is to reach everyone by 1987.

In the fall, there were skeptics among the team members, but many have since become converts. They have tried the recommended methods and found that they work. They have seen students make important progress in their ability to write effectively and to use writing in all areas of the curriculum to gain understanding and increase learning.

MINI GRANTS

Thirty-three Mini Grants were awarded last summer to individual schools for projects to "enhance humanities instruction" during the 1984-85 school year. Awards totaling $76,000 ranged from a few hundred dollars to many thousands. The projects vary from the study of poetry in a high school to focusing on an historical period in an elementary school. In most cases, the project director is a teacher or a group of teachers.

Edison High School has a project called "Exploring the Poetic Domain." On the day of my visit, a local poet arrived in midmorning to read some of her poetry to a large group of students assembled in the school's library. She began by urging them to find and memorize a poem rich in meaning for them, because once learned, no person or event can take it away. She recited a poem with special meaning for her. Then, she read her own poems and gave enough explanation before each one to aid in understanding. The students were attentive and appreciative. During the next period, the poet met with a class of students and worked with them to compose a poem. Following that, she had lunch with the English department staff. Teachers had the opportunity to talk with her about her poetry and to get her recommendations for teaching poetry.

This project is designed to introduce students to more poetry, overcome a common view that contemporary poetry is too difficult for high school students, and help Edison teachers find successful ways to teach poetry. It appears to be producing other results as well. The opportunity to hear, meet, and talk with published authors gives a substantial boost to student self-esteem. Also, in contrast to the past, students are being inspired to write poetry and prose.

The Feltonville Elementary School has a Mini Grant that permits the whole school to be involved in a study of the colonial period. Under the leadership of the principal, the staff is working to improve the curriculum and to expose students to people and places that will increase their understanding of concepts and events. With the PATHS grant, the school has gone on a series of trips to historical sites and museums, purchased a video system to make a record for future use of interviews and places visited, bought books for the library about the 18th century, and brought in outside experts.

Classes had gone to Bartram's Garden to make apple cider and candles as they were done in the 18th century. I accompanied the sixth grade there to see how maple syrup was made. In the course of the morning, the students also learned a lot about the identification and life cycle of trees and the life of John Bartram as father, farmer, and plant collector. The next day, as part of the daily morning meeting of the entire school, the students shared what

they had learned on their trip.

Two of the consultants brought into the school were the education director of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and an archeologist from the University of Pennsylvania. They brought their particular perspective to the study of the colonial period, but they also helped the students to understand the role and work of historians and archeologists.

The hallways of the school provide evidence of what the children have experienced and are learning. There is a large chart that compares words of yesterday such as "parlor" and "breeches" with those used today. There are children's drawings of a rocking horse and a grandfather clock seen on a visit to a Fairmount Park house.

For Feltonville, the PATHS project has energized the whole school. It has made teaching more exciting and stimulating. It has broughthistory to life, made art and music and literature more meaningful, increased student interest in what they are studying, and inspired student writing and artistic expression.

In addition to Writing Across the Curriculum and the Mini Grants, PATHS is sponsoring symposia, colloquia, summer institutes and history mini courses. A series of one-day symposia held on Saturdays has begun. Open to all teachers, they "focus on new techniques and approaches in the teaching of the humanities." One was held in February on literature and literacy at Community College. Speakers in the morning included a national expert on reading research. In the afternoon, teachers who have been successful in teaching literature to underachieving readers described their methods and approaches in a workshop setting. In the session for grades 11 and 12, five teachers explained how they approach and present authors like Shakespeare, Camus, and Kafka so that students will gain from and enjoy their writing.

COLLOQUIA

The colloquia explore topics as diverse as the Great Depression and literature for children and young adults. They meet for two-hour sessions monthly for an academic year. They are led jointly by a school teacher and a specialist on the topic from a local educational or cultural institution. The sessions are held at various cultural institutions so that teachers can be introduced to the city's many and varied resources. A recent colloquium met at the College of Physicians' Mutter Museum. The thirty-five participants heard a Temple University history professor lecture on the social and cultural implications of 19th century medicine.

At most PATHS activities, light refreshments are served and there is an opportunity for participants to meet and talk with other professionals with similar interests and concerns. This encourages the cross-fertilization of ideas and the establishment of lines of communication between schools and among staff members with diverse teaching assignments.

During July, there will be four institutes for public school teachers for a study of such topics as African-American literature and culture and the United States constitution. "The institutes' goal is to offer Fellows personal and professional enrichment as well as materials and ideas for their classrooms." Twenty Fellows will be selected for each institute and will attend six hours daily. The morning will be given to intensive study and the afternoon to curriculum development.

PATHS sixth project, a group of history mini courses, is the only one designed just for students. Developed by the Friends

of the Free Library and taught in a library setting, the purpose is to introduce students to the wealth of original history sources available and the value of these films, newspapers, periodicals, and books in understanding history.

Since PATHS is funded for a limited period, it is concentrating on projects and activities that will have enduring effects. PATHS' goals are to strengthen the teaching of the humanities, increase teachers' self-esteem and sense of professionalism, and build lasting connections between the School District and local colleges, universities, and cultural institutions. Each of the projects strengthens the teaching of the humanities. With the symposia, colloquia, and summer institutes, the emphasis is on teachers as learners gaining new understanding, insight, information, and enthusiasm. With Writing Across the Curriculum and the Mini Grants, the focus is on developing improved ways to help students learn.

Fundamental to all the projects is PATHS belief, demonstrated through its actions, that teachers are professionals who have much to contribute to the improvement of instruction. For example, the PATHS writing project says with its structure and plans that teachers working with others can bring about substantial change. By highlighting the creativity, resourcefulness, and abilities of teachers, PATHS projects contribute to an improved public perception of the profession.

Lastly, PATHS wants to build enduring relationships between schools and educational and cultural institutions. In each project, cooperative ventures are required or encouraged. Hundreds of teachers and principals have already learned a great deal about the wealth of human and material resources that are available. Alliances and relationships are being formed which should prove long-lasting. PATHS is moving forward toward the achievement of its goals.

With this 134th issue, The Oakes Newsletter completes its fifteenth year of publication. I am very grateful to all those who have contributed to its support.

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TESTING AND EVALUATION

The School District of Philadelphia began a new testing program this year as did the state of Pennsylvania. That makes this an appropriate time to probe the purpose of these tests and to look at their effect and value. Should the system be judged by these test results alone or are additional means of evaluation needed?

The District has replaced the test it used for many years with a dual purpose one. The District wanted a test that would indicate whether or not students are learning what the curriculum prescribes and also provide a comparison of Philadelphia students with others across the nation. Test technology has advanced so that a single test can now supply this information.

Many central administrators, school department heads, supervisors and teachers played an important role in the development of the test. This was necessary to insure that it would be directly related to Philadelphia's new Standardized Curriculum. The first step in the process was to determine what objectives drawn from the Curriculum should be tested. For example, some of those chosen for grade 7 are understands plot and character; recognizes propaganda; uses charts, tables and diagrams to aid in solving mathematics problems; and can identify basic commonalities of living things. The objectives were sent to the test publisher who developed test questions to match them. Teams of School District people went over these questions. Some they rejected. Others had to be modified. In many cases, they had to draft replacement questions. Their input resulted in a test that meshed much more closely with the School District's objectives and its philosophy of testing than would otherwise have been possible. For example, many science questions that came from the publisher appeared to test reading more than science. School District staff members devised questions using diagrams and simpler language that tested students' knowledge of science and relied to a much lesser extent on their ability to read.

For grades 9-12, a similar process of test development was followed, but a greater proportion of test questions were written by School District staff. This spring 1000 students are taking each of the 61 subtests developed so that they can be perfected before they are put in place for regular use. The test for these grades will be ready for the 1985-86 school year.

Students in grades 1-8 were given the new, multiple-choice test in December and will take another version in June. In the first three grades, checklists are being used for science and social studies instead of a test. Teachers record whether or not, in their judgment, students have mastered an objective. For example,

second graders demonstrate understanding of a circuit by connecting a battery, wire and bulb so that the bulb lights.

Recently, the School District has emphasized the importance of broad-based, balanced classroom instruction. The new test reinforces this message, because it is given in science and social studies and not just reading/English and mathematics as was true in the past.

The new test will enable the School District to compare Philadelphia students with other students in the nation. For this to be possible, twenty questions on each subtest must be nationally normed. However, most of these questions are also linked to the School District's curriculum so that only a very small percentage of the questions are on the test solely for norming purposes.

One point that should be stressed is that this test is in the process of development. It is expected that in the future more test items will be written permitting subtests to be changed annually. Questions on the test given to students from kindergarten through grade 8 will be modified further. There was dissatisfaction with some of the questions used, but time ran out and additional changes had to be deferred until next year.

Parents will receive information about their child's performance. Teachers will get reports that tell them how each child in the class did on each objective. In the future, the information should get back to teachers very quickly so that they will know promptly of anything that needs reteaching, or of specific children that have not mastered certain objectives. This year it has taken several months to compile the results. This is understandable considering there are more than 17 million questions to be processed and reported on.

Principals and administrators will get summary information related to curriculum objectives and national norms. This will make it possible to determine if teaching strategies or methods should be changed. The scores will tell the School District where it stands in relation to the nation and will indicate areas and degrees of progress at subsequent testing times as they occur.

TELLS

The first test given this school year to Philadelphia students was Pennsylvania's Testing for Essential Learning and Literacy Skills (TELLS). Students in grades 3,5, and 8 across the state were tested in reading and mathematics in October 1984. The test will be administered again in the spring of 1986 and annually thereafter. The purpose of this required test is to create "an early warning system" to help schools identify students who need help to raise their level of competence in reading and mathematics to an acceptable level.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education was responsible for the development of the test and its administration. It compiled the results, determined the cutoff points for remedial help, and notified each school district how many dollars the state would provide for its program of extra assistance to students who need it.

Test results indicated that more than 27,000 Philadelphia students, or about 60%, need remedial instruction in reading or mathematics, or both, compared to roughly 32% of the students statewide. Philadelphia's educational problems are greater than those of the state as a whole but the School District has known for a long time that it faced severe problems. It is diligently attempting to deal with them. The

Standardized Curriculum, implemented only a brief time before TELLS was given, is one citywide effort. Two days this year, students were not in school and the time was devoted to the improvement of classroom instruction. A number of schools are participating in school improvement programs.

The state has identified students who need remediation and has allocated about $30 per student to provide it. Clearly, that cannot be stretched very far. Philadelphia's plan is to provide assistance to the students in need at each school. The ratio of students to teacher during reading and mathematics will be reduced by bringing additional staff into the classroom and/or tutoring will be provided. This summer, help will be available for a four-week period for those who require it.

EFFECT OF TEST

Tests do more than measure what students know. They strongly signal what the system considers important. In the past, great emphasis was placed on the California Achievement Test (CAT). The CAT was limited to reading and mathematics so that scores represented a narrow gauge of student achievement. However, the scores for each school were published and they were seen as important measures of a school's and the School District's success or failure. The stress on the CAT put teachers under pressure to prepare students for it. Many spent an excessive amount of time drilling students, or teaching reading in isolation from subject matter like social studies and science. This resulted in a severe narrowing of the curriculum which isn't good teaching and poorly prepares students for their futures.

Many steps have been taken that will overcome the CAT's effect and indicate to teachers and principals that the curriculum must be broadly based. Philadelphia's new test is one. The Standardized Curriculum, put in place in September 1984, is another. It requires teachers to teach science and social studies in each of the first eight grades. It calls for the inclusion of literature in every grade. This outlining of what is to be covered prevents teachers from concentrating on just reading and mathematics. Further, each principal is responsible for making sure that teachers follow the Curriculum.

PROMOTION POLICY

A new student promotion policy reinforces the concept that the curriculum must not be narrowly conceived. In 1985-86, promotion based on achievement will be substituted systemwide for the more prevalent promotion based on age. The required achievement extends beyond just reading and mathematics. In grades 1-4, students must pass language arts, mathematics and either science or social studies. In grades 5-8, students must pass any three of the four. Clearly, all must be taught. Also there are reading and writing requirements for promotion in grades 1-8 which emphasize the system's view that it is important for students to read literature and be able to express their thoughts in writing. To get a "D" in language arts, the lowest grade allowed for promotion, students must read at least 6 books a year and write at least 6 pieces of a quality "suitable to display within the room or be sent home to parents." Each higher mark requires two more books and pieces of writing.

Promotion in grades 9-12 will depend on receiving a certain number of credits by the end of each year. Beginning with students going into 9th grade next fall, the state will require 21.5 credits to graduate. 4 must be in English, 3

in mathematics, 3 in science, 3 in social studies and 2 in arts/humanities. Clearly, high school students will also have to meet wide academic requirements that represent in depth exposure to subject matter.

Plans for the future call for students in several grades to take writing tests. High school mid-years and finals will include essay questions. These steps will provide the system with a uniform way to judge writing quality. They will emphasize to principals, teachers and students that the School District places great importance on students learning to express themselves well.

The Standardized Curriculum calls for the inclusion of learning that is vitally important but can't be judged or measured objectively. For example, students are to develop an awareness of beauty in art and nature. They are to develop "the ability to collect, organize and evaluate data for application in problem solving." The School District needs to find additional ways to make it clear that these learning goals are essential, valued, and must be included.

Although the criteria and means for judging the quality of the system and what students are learning have been, and are to be, expanded significantly, the extension must go still further. The School District should look at and strive to improve its ability to hold students in school thereby decreasing the dropout rate. An indicator like this gives the system information about how it is perceived by students and how it meets their needs as they define them.

The School District should find ways to measure the quality of its graduates. Do employers find them better prepared for the world of work? Do post-high school educational institutions judge them improved in their ability to do the work at this level with a decreasing need for remedial help? A concern for these measures of success or failure would encourage everyone to look at teaching and learning in a context that includes, but extends well beyond, test scores. It would underscore the message that the school system values teaching and learning that broadly prepare students for their futures as citizens, wage earners and lifelong learners.

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PREVENTING DRUG ABUSE

Just like their elders, too many students use and abuse alcohol and other drugs such as marijuana, stimulants and sedatives. Recent national statistics indicate that 41% of a cross section of high school seniors were involved in binge drinking of alcohol in the preceeding two weeks and 46% had used marijuana in the past year. The consequences which include young lives ruined, families destroyed, death on the highways, and babies born addicted to drugs should impel the schools and the entire society to work to prevent the abuse of drugs.

There are many factors which influence young people to use and abuse drugs. There is pressure from schoolmates and friends. Adults important to youngsters use and abuse. Many students come from disrupted or distressed families that are unable to provide security, support, and love and they seek escape in drugs. Many students lack skill in making decisions and don't even weigh the consequences of becoming involved with drugs. By constantly pushing drugs to allay discomfort or pain, the mass media encourages the taking of a drink or a pill to feel "better." Young people who lack self-esteem look to drugs to make them feel good about themselves. Youngsters with time on their hands turn to drugs for something to do.

There is a national consensus that a school drug abuse prevention program must address itself to as many of these reasons for turning to drugs as is possible. Simply giving students information about the properties and effects of drugs assumes that if young people know that drugs can harm them, they will abstain. This has proved to be untrue. In fact, for some, learning of the dangers only increases the excitement of drug experimentation.

Drug abuse prevention in the Philadelphia schools is funded by the City's Coordinating Office for Drug and Alcohol Abuse Programs (CODAAP) and the School District. Programs are now in some schools at each level.

Because it was recognized that a truly preventive program must reach students by 4th grade, a new initiative began in the elementary schools in September 1984. Elementary schools utilize a drug education curriculum selected by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and widely used across the state. Called "Here's Looking at You, Two", it is composed of teachers' guides accompanied by large tubs of instructional materials, such as pictures, pamphlets, games, and filmstrips to support the activities described in the manuals.

In addition to receiving basic information about drugs, students learn about decision-making. They learn to consider consequences; the feelings, attitudes and values

which affect their decisions; and to make the choice which is in their own interest and that of others. Students, in the self-concept phase of the program, look at and learn more about themselves. Being aware of unique qualities that they possess can help them feel better about themselves. Students consider how their desire to be included and popular might influence a decision to go along with the crowd and risk trouble instead of acting independently.

"Coping skills" include identifying situations causing stress and recognizing its effects. Students consider ways to reduce stress such as talking to someone, exercising, reading a book, or listening to music. They come to understand that everyone has experiences which make them feel anxious, confused, or threatened. Students are helped to identify sources of aid in stressful situations, such as a friend when lonely or a teacher when there is a problem in school. While students can learn all of this in elementary school, it must be retaught and reinforced as they get older and face new situations, differing pressures and environments.

Project PRIDE

The primary drug prevention program for the middle and junior high schools is Project PRIDE. Begun in 1969, it is provided by the Jewish Family and Children's Agency and funded by CODAAP. Believing that early adolescence is an especially vulnerable time because youngsters are going through an intense period of development and change, Project PRIDE focuses on 5th to 7th graders. The Project PRIDE staff works with small groups of students for 12 weeks to help them develop the skills they need to resist using or abusing drugs. In an effort to stretch its resources and reach more students, some work is done with classes of 33 students for only 6 weeks. Project PRIDE promotes "heightened self awareness", and works on communication skills, improving relationships with peers and adults, decision-making, self-esteem, and alternatives to drug use.

The high school program is called Rites of Passage. It combines prevention and intervention and serves a mix of those who are involved with drugs and those who are not. A substance abuse prevention specialist endeavors to develop a core of students who run group sessions for students under adult supervision, plan and provide leadership for wholesome activities, and promote the program. The specialist also works with students who are involved with drugs and refers them to outside agencies when indicated.

At one high school, I sat in on a student-led group session. The leader solicited endings for unfinished sentences like, "When I am 30, I expect to be..." Activities like this give students an opportunity to discuss things that concern them. They find that they are not alone in their misgivings, fears, and lack of confidence. They learn to listen and really hear another person. The group is a source of strength which helps them gain self-confidence and a sense of self-worth. This enables them to resist peer pressure more successfully.

On another occasion, I was present when a group of Overbrook High School Rites of Passage Players put on skits as they often do for students during homeroom periods. A short drama is divided into brief scenes and after each one the audience discusses what they saw. For example, in one scene a young woman tells her boyfriend that she is pregnant. One of the students then led an audience discussion of what led up to this and how it could have been prevented. The students spend a good deal of time developing the

plots, rehearsing, and learning to lead discussions. This is an example of the kind of healthy activities fostered by the program.

MANY NOT REACHED

That is a very brief explanation of the School District's existing programs. Unfortunately, they are reaching only a small proportion of the students in the school system. At the elementary level, "Here's Looking at You, Two" has been introduced into only 12% of the elementary schools this year. At the present rate, it will be 1992 before it reaches them all. In addition, the tubs of materials on which the program rests are very costly and, the logistics will be complex and require supervision and coordination, if schools must share them.

In the middle/junior high schools, Project PRIDE is designed to reach students once while they are at this level of their schooling. At best, only about half the students receive this service. At the senior high school level, seven specialists are each assigned to serve two high schools. This leaves 50% of the high schools with no service and also stretches service very thin where it is provided.

Although the School District and the city know what constitutes quality drug abuse prevention programs, it is clear that the resources presently allocated to this effort are meager when juxtaposed with the problem and the large number of students to be served. There are several ways that more existing school resources could be utilized in this effort, and there are also ways for the schools to use more outside agencies who are willing to work with them.

All students in secondary schools could be reached with a drug abuse prevention program if the time allocated to health education were better utilized and teachers were specially trained. Major changes would be required, but they should be made. Currently, students in secondary schools take health education once a week for most of their six years. Because it is given only one period a week, it ranks very low in importance in the students' view. Yet, in addition to substance use and abuse, it addresses other vitally important topics such as nutrition, disease control, human sexuality and mental health. With only a handful of exceptions, health education is taught by teachers who are physical and health education teachers. Many prefer to teach physical education. Most do not have in depth backgrounds in health and do not have the special interest, the training, or the experience to help students develop the intellectual and emotional understanding vital to their well-being.

Health education should be scheduled five times a week for a semester at a time so that there could be continuity of instruction and students would place importance on the course. The state should move to require those teaching health education to have certification in the health education specialty. This would assure a highly trained staff with health education as a primary interest. In the meantime, the School District should do all in its power to encourage and support teachers interested in health education to secure more training. Rosters should then be modified so that trained staff members do not divide their time between health education and physical education, but give full time to health education.

A very important aspect of coming to grips with drug use and abuse prevention is that what has been found to be successful coincides with what has been found to be important in preventing teenage

pregnancy, youthful suicides, vandalism, delinquency, school failure, truancy, and dropouts. Young people who develop self-esteem; know how to communicate, set goals, and make decisions; and have learned to deal with circumstances and events are broadly equipped to act in their own best interest day to day as well as at crisis points of their lives. This is encouraging because it means that the many people and programs attacking these different problems of youth, both inside the schools and out, could pool some of their efforts, work cooperatively and reach many more youngsters.

There are many agencies and organizations in Philadelphia that provide social services, medical, or mental health services to youth. They could be helpful to the schools in many ways. For example, they could conduct inservice training for teachers and then be supportive as teachers work with students in new ways to improve the classroom environment and better foster constructive youth development. They could adopt schools and work intensively with the students and staff of a high school and its feeder schools. They could give advice in their areas of specialty on the latest and best information and resources available and provide expert guest speakers. Invited into the schools, public and private agencies could provide their services on site so that community resources would become more accessible to students and school staffs would benefit from the association.

These suggestions carry little or no added cost to the School District. They would provide an expanded and more effective drug abuse prevention program and also strengthen the effort to prevent other teenage misfortunes such as dropouts and children having children. Coordinated with this, there should be a drive to expand existing drug abuse prevention programs. In addition, there is an urgent need for counselors with time to provide more services so that problems, originating at home or school, can be dealt with while they are small and manageable. The School District should revise its health education curriculum and adopt one that includes an appropriate emphasis on self-esteem, communications, goal setting, decision-making, and dealing with problems. The tragedy of scarred or lost young lives should provide the incentive to give drug abuse prevention the urgent attention that it deserves.

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