THE OAKES NEWSLETTER

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

Vol.II, No.1 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Sept. 14, 1970

A Note To Readers:

This special issue of The Oakes Newsletter has been prepared since Tuesday, September 8 when it became clear that schools would not open as scheduled. It has been rushed to you in the hope that it would shed light on the pertinent issues involved in the public education emergency. The issue of the Newsletter originally prepared for September will appear in October in the printed format previously used.

The material that follows is based on research and on interviews with both a negotiator for the School District and a representative of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers.

Teachers' Contract Negotiations

The Philadelphia Public School System is shut down because the Board of Education and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers cannot come to agreement on a new contract. A total of 290,000 children are being deprived of their right to an education. The conflicts and antagonisms being built between individuals and groups will have long lasting, detrimental effects.

It is of the utmost importance that schools open promptly. To this end, the Board of Education and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers must bargain on the major issues separating them, with both sides driving for a quick settlement. It would be wrong for either side to try to humiliate the other or to try to use existing conditions to increase their power. This is a time for statesmanship, cool heads, and a determination to settle the issues on their merits.

The community has an overwhelming stake in an early settlement of these negotiations. At this time, because the negotiations are dragging, it appears that one or both sides believe that the mounting pressures will work to their advantage. The community should act now by insisting that the negotiators go into a final bargaining session from which they would not be permitted to emerge until there is a settlement.

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The important remaining issues separating the two sides are discussed in the following pages.

SALARY INCREASES AND RETROACTIVITY:

Beginning teachers entering the system in September 1969 with a BA degree earned $7300 for the 10-month school year. The Board of Education is offering to increase the salary for first year teachers by $800 to $8100 during the first year of the contract and by another $800 to $8900 for the second year of the contract. The Union is demanding a $1200 increase the first year for a salary of $8500 and another $1200 to $9700 during the contract's second year. Under the

present Board of Education offer, the top salary for a teacher with a BA degree and ten years of teaching would be $13,000 during the first year of the contract and $14,000 during the second year. The Union is demanding $13,600 the first year and $15,200 the second. The Union and the Board of Education are similarly far apart on salaries for teachers with a Master's or a Doctorate degree.

It is the Board's position that the money for salary increases must come from the State Legislature so that the settlement must be one that will appear reasonable to legislators and can be shown to be in line with salaries paid elsewhere. Philadelphia's salary schedule for 1969-70 ranked about the middle among sixteen other large cities in the United States and ranked close to the top when compared with salary schedules in eight nearby school districts. This being the case last year, it can be presumed that Philadelphia's salary schedule would remain in the same comparative position this year when the proposed increases are funded. This, then is the thinking behind the Board of Education's refusal to offer more money.

The Union's justification for asking for a $1200 increase in both the first and second years of the contract is that most of the increase is eaten up by increased taxes, increased retirement payments, the rise in the cost of living , etc. so that only a small portion represents improved buying power.

Since the money for increases must come from Harrisburg and a delay is expected, the Board of Education has asked the Union to accept retroactive pay increases. Originally, the Union insisted on receiving the salary increases immediately. Now they seem to be more flexible so that a compromise will be less difficult to achieve.

LONGER SCHOOL DAY:

The Pennsylvania School Code requires 990 hours per year of instruction in secondary schools. Instructional time includes all time spent in school except lunch and time spent passing between classes. Philadelphia high school student receive 840 hours of instruction per year which leaves them 150 hours or 15% short of the State requirement.

The high school day for students (excluding schools on dual shifts) is $5\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Lunch and time spent moving between classes consume one hour. This leaves an instructional day of $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours. To get the 990 hours required, the students must have $5\frac{1}{4}$ hours for 187 days. Thus, the high school day would have to be lengthened about 45 minutes in order to meet the State mandate.

Although this longer day has been required for years and attempts have been made before to make Philadelphia conform, this time Philadelphia has been threatened with loss of part of its subsidy payment from the State if this requirement is not met.

The Board of Education is trying to secure the longer day for as little additional money as possible and is therefore pressing for teachers to put in a longer day without extra compensation. The Union, while recognizing the need for a longer day for students, wants to see it obtained by employing more teachers so that no high school teacher will have to be in school more than the presently required

5 3/4 hours.

The newspapers have talked at length about the high school teacher's 4½ hour working day. This is the amount of time a teacher meets classes. However, it must be remembered that secondary school teachers meet 175 different students each day. The conscientious secondary school teacher who assigns written work and gives essay type tests needs many hours to correct the work so that his working day inside or outside school is much longer than 4½ hours.

It would be difficult for the Union, which is working to improve conditions for teachers, to accept longer hours without additional compensation. It is equally difficult for the School District and the public to accept the need to pay extra, either in overtime or additional teachers, to lengthen the school day to comply with State requirements.

Clearly, this is a most difficult issue to negotiate and it will require compromise on both sides.

ABSENTEEISM:

Teacher absenteeism is a very serious problem in Philadelphia public schools. The average rate for 1969-70 for the entire school district was 7.07%. This means that on the average, there were over 850 teachers out every single day of the year. 74% of the city's junior high schools had an absentee rate last year equal to, or exceeding, the 7% average for the city. Thus, an average size junior high school with a staff of 85 teachers coped with the difficulty of having 6 teachers, on an average, out every day of the school year. The School District reports that absenteeism is most severe on Mondays and Fridays and that on those days they can not supply as many substitute teachers as are needed.

When a teacher is absent and his class is covered by a substitute, it is common for the substitute to function purely as a "baby sitter." Often, the substitute can not command the children's attention and respect and the situation gets so out of control that nearby classes are disturbed.

The unevenness of the absentee rate proves that the 7.07% rate is higher than a normal rate of illness would account for. For example, there are 17 elementary schools in the system with an absentee rate below 5% in contrast to 28 elementary schools with rates above 10%. Undoubtedly, there are many, many reasons for teachers' absences. If one of them is a school situation that is difficult and discouraging, each unnecessary absence compounds all existing problems in the school and contributes to further deterioration of the situation.

A singular situation in regard to the economics of absenteeism exists in the School District of Philadelphia. Under the contract, just expired, each teacher was entitled annually to 10 days of sick leave and 3 days of personal leave at full pay. When those 13 days, plus any additional accumulated sick leave days were exhausted, a teacher could take advantage of his health insurance (if he carried

the OAKES newsletter

An Independent Monthly Dedicated To Improving Public Education
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A Note To New Readers:

The goal of The Oakes Newsletter is to contribute to bringing about improvement in the Philadelphia public schools. System wide changes are essential if the School District is to fulfill its obligations to the students and the City that it serves.

The Oakes Newsletter is an independent publication which first appeared in April 1970 and will be issued every month except July and August.

SEX EDUCATION

What Is The School's Role?

Are You Aware That -

The sex education given to students in Philadelphia public schools is, at best, limited in scope, and, at worst, misleading and inaccurate?

Sex education in junior and senior high school is taught as part of the health education course, usually with girls separated from boys, and the students have an attitude bordering on contempt for these classes?

Almost nothing is being done to update and improve the sex education that is being offered?

From these facts comes the conclusion that we are failing our students in the area of sex education.

If you have not previously given thought to the school's role in sex education, then perhaps you believe that sex education is the parents' job with possibly an assist from the church and other social institutions. To understand the importance of the school's role, you have to define "sex education."

WHAT IS SEX EDUCATION?

As discussed in this Newsletter, sex education means much more than giving students the "facts of life." Sex education encompasses education for healthy physical, emotional, intellectual, ethical and social growth as the boy becomes the man, husband, or father and as the girl becomes the woman, wife, or mother. Further defined, it focuses on "sexuality" rather than on "sex": sexuality meaning attitudes, behavior and feelings in every aspect of daily life that accompany being a female or a male, and sex simply meaning erotic physical expression.

A good sex education program would include among its goals:

1. Teaching about puberty so that students can understand the sequence of maturation and accept with equanimity their own development, even if it is earlier or later than most of their peers.

2. Explaining the reproductive process so that students can appreciate the complexity and wonder of

the organ systems involved.

3. The development of:

A. Healthy, responsible attitudes toward sex.

B. An awareness and understanding of an individual's own value system so that sound decisions may be made in keeping with it.

C. An understanding of the broad social implications of sex, i.e. abortion, illegitimacy, obscenity, population growth, prostitution and venereal disease.

4. Removal of fears and superstitutions surrounding sex.

Very few parents have information in enough depth to be able to provide sex education for their children. Also, most parents find it extremely difficult to discuss sex or sexuality with their children. In spite of this, parents play a tremendously important role in the sex education of their children and it is important for them to understand this. From birth on, the child is learning at home either about his maleness or her femaleness, about family sexual attitudes and values, about love between parents and parents' love for children. These are taught by example, by what is said and left unsaid, and by verbal and non-verbal responses to questions. Thus, parents give an important kind of sex education to their children whether they choose to do so or not.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

This, however, leaves a vital and important role to the school. It must provide the sex education that most parents cannot provide. It must have a program which conforms to the previously stated broad definition of sex education, attains the goals already described, and is a part of the curriculum from kindergarten through high school.

In addition, the school must provide the classroom setting for free and open discussion that will give each student an opportunity to develop attitudes and values that will serve as his guide for his own decisions and behavior. For example, each young person must determine for himself what his dating code is to be. It will have to be his own because there is obviously no way that a parent can successfully enforce a code. In classrooms where boys and girls are able to discuss such a subject with a qualified, sensitive teacher providing leadership in the discussion, there are opportunities to examine a range of alternatives, for boys to see the girls' point of view and girls to see the boys', for both to think about the effects of peer pressure on their behavior and to consider possible outcomes of different standards of behavior. The school has then done its best to foster responsible decision making.

What are the present circumstances? In public elementary schools in Philadelphia, there is a small beginning effort to improve sex education. In secondary schools, sex education is limited, for the most part, to the anatomy and physiology of sex. That is, in and of itself, a serious criticism, but what is worse, the unit of the 9th grade curriculum on "Adolescence and Maturity" is a model of how this information should <u>not</u> be taught. The unit contains <u>many</u> statements that most doctors would seriously question. It contains antiquated ideas and myths about sex that have been discarded long ago. It, also, leaves out anatomical and physiological information that adolescents need if they are to understand and adjust to what is happening to them. The emphases, implications and innuendoes resulting both from what is included and what is excluded from the detailed lesson plans are from another era. The unit is so

poor that it should be removed from the curriculum IMMEDIATELY so that no more classes will be subjected to its damaging contents.

Sex education in secondary schools is taught as part of health education so that to get some perspective on present sex education teaching, it is necessary to look at the whole health education program. Most students find the health education classes, taught by teachers in the "Physical and Health Education Department", to be drained of life and relevancy, repetitious and to offer little that is worth-while. The classes meet only once a week. By measure of time allotted, this ranks health education among the least important subjects studied. In further analyzing the cause of the students' poor attitude, it is apparent that too many administrators and teachers outside the physical and health education department look down on health education and also that some teachers in the department do not enjoy teaching health education but prefer teaching physical education. These, too, are contributing factors to student disinterest.

HEALTH EDUCATION SPECIALISTS NEEDED

The material that should be included in health education classes is of tremendous significance. These classes should be a vitally important source of information for students about alcohol, the anatomy and physiology of all parts of the body, communicable diseases, drugs, ecology, mental health, nutrition, pollution, sexuality, tobacco, etc. Many of these subjects have life and death implications. The material cannot be properly taught in classes that meet once a week through the year. For continuity of teaching, this scheduling should be changed to two or three times a week for parts of the year.

The material to be taught in health education classes is complex and for teachers to be properly qualified, they need extensive, concentrated college preparation. Therefore, the teaching of health education should be separated from the teaching of physical education. Teachers of health education should prepare for this in college and should have this as their major teaching interest. The State should create a separate certification for Health Education. Colleges and universities should be urged to provide a degree in Health Education and the extensive course work needed for those already in the field who want to improve their backgrounds for teaching this specialty.

Obviously, this course work should include sex education. To teach this subject well requires much from the teacher. He must have information in depth. He must feel comfortable and secure in transmitting information and in leading discussions of the topics with his students. He must know how to answer questions simply and directly. He must have compassion, sensitivity and understanding of the young people with whom he is working. This requires depth of preparation and will also require the introduction of new courses into college and university curriculums.

Meanwhile, the School District should take an important first step to educate its teachers by establishing, in a central location, a library collection devoted to all aspects of sexuality. It should be extensive and include most books, pamphlets, magazine articles and films contained in contemporary bibliographies. Such a collection would facilitate the serious, scholarly study needed at this time.

The original impetus for this issue of the Newsletter was the discovery that each year in Philadelphia about 3000 high school

students become pregnant. That is 30,000 babies born to school age girls in a ten year period. 10,000 of the 30,000 are born to girls 16 and under and 1,500 of these are born to girls still in junior high school. Consider the problems faced by the girls, their babies and society. While there is no statistical proof available that better sex education would result in a decrease in these teen age pregnancies, can society in good conscience provide less for these young people? Can we do less than to encourage and help students to think through their responsibilities to themselves, to think about the life that lies ahead for the baby of a 14 year old girl, as well as for the girl who becomes a mother so early in life?

COMMUNITY SUPPORT NEEDED

In the face of the mountains of problems facing Philadelphia public education, the question might be asked, "Why worry about sex education now?" First, this is an extremely important aspect of education that needs drastic improvement. Second, the catalogue of social ills related to sexuality i.e. unplanned teen age pregnancies, high divorce rate, venereal disease and abortions, demand that we at least remove as a cause of these ills, a lack of information. Third, the key to vitalizing sex education in Philadelphia is community demand and support for change. In the face of the hysterical support for the status quo in sex education voiced by some organized groups, the School District will only initiate major change in this program in response to a strong community request. Fourth, the changes needed are fundamental and will take time to implement so it is important to begin as soon as possible.

This Newsletter on sex education is written out of a conviction that "Education for Sexuality" should be a part of public education. The public must create the climate that will make it possible for the School District to make the significant changes and improvements in the curriculum and teaching methods that are so necessary.

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Send name and address of a friend and we will be glad to add the name to our mailing list for a sample copy.

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the OAKES newsletter

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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READING GETS TOP PRIORITY

It is a pleasure to report a new, important and substantial drive, all across the Philadelphia School System, to improve reading instruction. For the first time, there is reason to be hopeful that soon Philadelphia students may begin to learn to read. The high priority called for in this Newsletter has, at long last, been given to reading with new staff, funds and time allocated in a pervasive effort to improve reading instruction in Philadelphia.

One interesting aspect of this new effort is that it is a decentralized one. Each of the eight school districts is developing its own reading plan and will be responsible for the results. Central administration is providing the impelling force, new funds, the assistance of three reading specialists and constant monitoring. Everything else is left up to the districts.

In each district, this past summer, the superintendents involved administrators, principals, teachers, and in some cases community representatives, in the development of a plan for a district wide reading program. Each district planned, in its own way, to meet what it considers its unique needs and problems. While each plan is different, and there is great variation in the manner and speed with which they are being carried out, certain generalizations can be made. In every case, the district plan covers kindergarten through twelfth grade though the emphasis and the bulk of the funds are going to the elementary schools. Every district superintendent has appointed someone to serve as his reading project manager to spearhead the district effort and report directly to him.

Every district has new funds this year for reading ranging in amounts from $212,000 to $961,000. $5.5 million in new money has been allocated to the effort to improve reading instruction. In most cases, districts have invested heavily in new materials. Most of these are not intended to be used by groups of children but rather with, and by, individual pupils working at their own speed and on their own particular problems. A great deal of emphasis is being placed on materials to teach decoding - the conversion of printed symbols to words. Another emphasis is on "multi-level", "multi-media" materials that can be used for children who are in the same classroom but are at different levels of proficiency in decoding, comprehension and study skills. These materials appeal to many of their senses and include film strips, record players, tape recorders, word games and so forth.

Another important component of each district's planning has been staff development. Teachers must know how to utilize new materials to their fullest advantage and they must have training in new methods. Consultants from publishing companies are instructing teachers in the use

of their materials. Reading specialists, from within and without the school system,are meeting with teachers in small in-school groups, in larger inter-school groups and sometimes with all teachers in a district from one level (e.g.kindergarten or grades 1-3).

Every district has been required to incorporate in its plan, a statement of its achievement objectives, spelled out in concrete, measurable terms. Each district has also been required to plan for monitoring and evaluation of its program. Each district has or will test its pupils to determine their grade level at the beginning of the program with a retest at the end of the year to ascertain each child's progress and to see if the district has achieved its objectives. Many districts will check their progress several times during the year. A research specialist is assigned to each district office so the district superintendents have qualified personnel to design and carry out these programs for monitoring and evaluation.

VITAL NEW CONCENTRATION

Some Philadelphians may remember a time in the recent past when the School System, shocked by deteriorating reading test scores, urged each school to re-evaluate its reading program and determine what it could do to improve its reading instruction. Little, if any, improvement followed that effort. This time better results can be expected for several reasons. First, there is a commitment to this effort from the top. Dr. Mark Shedd, Superintendent of Schools, heads a team of central office administrators who are pressing this effort. Second, the effort is backed by $5.5 million. Third, people are sharing their ideas, their experiences and their skills in a way that is very different from anything in the past. The planning effort in the eight districts has brought together staff from different schools, different grade levels and varied professional backgrounds. Through this pooling of ideas and committal to a plan, there is a vital new concentration on teaching children to read.

Fourth, the specific objectives adopted by each district will spur teachers on to reach these goals. The monitoring at intervals during the year will draw attention to students, or classes, that are failing or succeeding. Groups of staff members can then discuss problems and share ideas about successful methods. This give and take will contribute to better reading instruction.

Fifth, in many classrooms in many districts, there is a greater emphasis on providing teachers with help part of the day from para-professionals, older students and adult volunteers. In a 4th grade classroom visited recently, the teacher was assisted during her reading hour by a parent volunteer and a 10th grade boy from a nearby high school. With the new stress on each child working at his own level at his own speed, volunteers (students or adults) can contribute importantly to giving the individual attention that will make individualized instruction a reality.

PROJECT READ

District 4, in developing its plan, elected to sign a contract with a firm that guarantees specific achievement for each child in the program. This decision, later approved by the Board of Education,led to a signed agreement between the Board and Behavioral Research Laboratories of California. This contract, known as a guaranteed performance contract, guarantees that by the end of the school year each student in the program will achieve at least a year's advancement in reading or the $40 per student cost will be returned to the School District. There are

15,000 students from Grades 1-6 in BRL's contract, "Project Read."

"Project Read" is a system of teaching reading consisting of:

1.Special materials based on individualized programmed instruction. The reading materials present symbol-sound relationships in a carefully detailed sequence that begins with reading readiness in kindergarten and continues through a series of 20 reading textbooks with accompanying readers.

2. A program for teaching teachers how to use the materials, work individually with children and monitor their students' progress.

3. A program for involving parents and community in helping children at home and assisting teachers in the classroom.

Under the contract, District 4 picked the students whose performance is guaranteed by BRL. The students selected have previously made less than one year of reading progress during a year in school or their testing indicates that this is the prognosis for them. The contract stipulation that students must have an intelligence quotient of at least 70 does not exclude any child in a regular class, but would exclude many children in classes for retarded children. However, District 4 wanted to try this reading system for its retarded students and BRL felt similarly, so, almost all of District 4's retarded children are in the guaranteed program. The contract also stipulates that children must attend school for at least 150 days during the year to be part of the guaranteed program. This clause permits a child to be out at least six weeks during the year and still meet the attendance requirement. Taking all of this into consideration, the terms of the BRL contract are such that if the objectives are obtained, the Reading System will have proved its worth.

The amount of achievement for each student in the BRL Program will be determined by an independent evaluator chosen by the Philadelphia Board of Education. This evaluator administered a test at the opening of school and will administer another form of the same test at the end of the school year. It is on the basis of these test results that a determination will be made of whether or not BRL has met the guarantees.

A GUARANTEED PERFORMANCE CONTRACT

A guaranteed performance contract is not a magic potion given to children that insures a year's progress for a year in school, nor is it outsiders coming in and teaching Philadelphia children to read.

A guaranteed performance contract is a business organization's promise to produce results or forfeit its compensation. In this case, it represents Behavioral Research Laboratories' confidence in its system for teaching reading. However, BRL does not do the teaching. BRL gives Philadelphia teachers a fine new tool, but the demanding part of the job must be done by the teachers who will work with children daily in the classroom. Although BRL made the guarantee, they are completely dependent on Philadelphia teachers' skill and dedication for achieving the desired objectives.

For years, Philadelphia school children have not been learning to read and educators have looked everywhere but in the classroom for the cause. This contract,under consideration since last spring, helped to set a new tone in Philadelphia. Here was a business firm that said it was so sure inner city children could learn to read using its method that it was willing to stake its profits on it. Behavioral Research Laboratories' expectation of success and belief in the children's abilities

were important contributions toward a new day and a new climate for learning in Philadelphia. Also by its willingness to be held accountable for the progress of each child in the program as measured by standardized tests, they introduced a new concept.

PRESENT STATUS

As of November 1970, the eight school districts are in varying stages of development of their reading plans. One district is revising its entire plan. Others are implementing different parts of their plans. All however are lagging in implementing plans for secondary schools, particularly high schools. Yet there are thousands of students with totally inadequate reading skills in junior and senior high schools that must be helped. It is an urgent problem that demands more attention than it is now getting. High schools must not be permitted to just drift along. Ways must be found to equip every teacher to teach reading comprehension and study skills as part of his subject.

It will probably be at least January before the elementary schools in each district have acquired all of their personnel and materials and completed the first phase of their staff development. Then, it will take additional time for teachers to become proficient in the new methods they are using. Therefore, it is extremely important for the public to realize that this is essentially a year for tooling up and proof of substantial improvement should not be expected this year. No program should be labeled a failure in June 1971 because of poor test results. Plans and programs should be given until June 1972 to prove their worth.

There is a strong possibility that this system-wide effort to raise reading achievement levels will be successful. However, it is essential that staff, funds and commitment continue at a high level and that greater emphasis be placed on secondary schools.

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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE HILL SCHOOL

The L.P.Hill School,described in the May 1970 issue of this Newsletter, reached the reading goal it had set for the 1969-70 school year by exceeding the average scores for the City of Philadelphia on the May 1970 Iowa tests. Congratulations to the principal, Mr. Oscar Goss, and his staff.

-November 10

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NEW TEACHERS

THE HANDICAP OF INEXPERIENCE

Last September approximately 1700 new, inexperienced teachers entered the Philadelphia public schools. For them to succeed, even minimally, they should have consistent support, skilled supervision and on-the-job training. Unfortunately for these novice teachers, and the more than 50,000 students that they teach, such support, supervision and training are in very short supply.

Although many new teachers enter the school system with a vitality, dedication, commitment and youthful viewpoint that could be valuable assets to the system, their lack of training and experience very often make it impossible for them to do an acceptable job in the beginning. Researchers have documented this inadequacy and thousands of children and parents can attest to it.

Why do new teachers fail? First, children meeting an inexperienced teacher sense his lack of confidence and competence almost instantaneously. In many cases, this leads to noise and confusion that make it impossible for teaching and learning to take place. Second, teachers with ethnic or economic backgrounds differing from their students often have great trouble communicating with and relating to their students. Third, these teachers have not been prepared to plan and carry through a day's teaching, to manage a classroom or to help students develop reading, writing and mathematical skills.

1700 inexperienced teachers is about 14% of the total teaching force. Since the vacancies in the school system are spread unequally through the system, many schools have first year teachers far in excess of 14%. This means that students in some schools have a much greater chance of being instructed by one, or more, beginning teachers than students in other schools. Most often these schools are in poverty areas where students' educational needs are the greatest.

For example, a student, already weak in reading and written expression, gets a novice English teacher. The teacher can't get enough order in the classroom to accomplish much of anything. Either he gives up in mid-term and a succession of substitutes takes over or he muddles along. The student's mid-year report card is dotted with D's and E's. Failures lead to more failures and a bad situation gets worse. Such a student facing daily failure in school often becomes a discipline problem or an absentee. Thus, his chance for getting an education becomes all the more remote.

Most parents recognize the importance of education for their children. However, families living in the worst poverty know that the only escape for their children is

through education. It is a crushing blow to them to find that this avenue of escape has been cut off by staff turn-over and inexperience which have so debased education that annual progress for students is almost nil.

ASSIGNING NEW TEACHERS

Compounding the difficulties faced by the new teacher are the classes to which he is often assigned. Many new teachers get the classes that are considered least desirable, for whatever reasons, by those teachers who have seniority and therefore their choice. Often, this results in the new teacher being required to teach students with serious learning problems, a task for which this teacher is totally unprepared. For example, a young teacher was recently assigned a class of slow learners in an elementary school. Some of the children are repeating the grade. Many of the children come from broken homes, some are emotionally disturbed and many live under conditions of overwhelming poverty. The teacher's "preparation" is limited to a liberal arts degree and one or two methods courses. It is not possible for him to succeed with these children in a situation that would challenge the most seasoned teacher. Since children of like scholastic ability, or lack of it, are grouped together in most Philadelphia schools, classes similar to the one described occur in many cases. It is wrong for these classes to go by default to the newest additions to the teaching staff.

One might suppose that teacher training institutions are preparing teachers for urban school systems. One might also assume that the School District, faced with this annual problem of new teachers, is dealing with it in a systematic way. Unfortunately, neither is the case. Teachers coming out of schools of education are not prepared to teach in city school systems and have almost as much difficulty as those coming straight from liberal arts courses. While within the School District there are many people at all different levels with responsibility for training and supervising new teachers, the job is not getting done. Often, those filling these supervisory roles lack the necessary training and skills. In addition, the responsibility is diffused among the eight district offices and the 270 individual schools and within the schools among consulting teachers, lead teachers, collaborators, coordinators, department heads and administrators. Part of the problem lies therein. The responsibility is spread over too many people.

TENTATIVE STEPS FORWARD

Three beginning steps have been taken to work toward a solution of the new teacher problem. First, and most significant, Temple University, working closely with the School District, is training many of its undergraduate education students in the public schools located in the four school districts around Temple University. The emphasis is on field work with close supervision. In one program, juniors begin by working a few hours a week with small groups of children in tutoring, club or other small group activities. This is followed by two semesters during which students study methods of teaching reading-language arts, mathematics, social studies and science and they have opportunities to apply what they have learned in school classrooms. Temple University professors teach these methods courses in the public school building. This helps to insure that what is taught in the "college

classroom" has direct application to the public school classroom. Each student also has a full semester of student teaching during which he is in the same school full time that he was in for the past year and a half on a part time basis. It is expected that students coming from this more intensive program of practical experience will be better prepared to teach in city schools.

Temple University also has graduate level programs for teacher interns. College graduates, after summer training, get on-the-job training while they are teaching. In one junior high school with a large intern program, the training of the interns is under the direct supervision of a Temple University professor who is in the school full time and works cooperatively with a School District staff member who shares responsibility for the program. Because these interns are carefully selected by representatives of Temple University, the school and the school community, it is believed that most will stay in inner city junior high schools where they are desperately needed. Therefore, this program could make a significant contribution to stabilizing and upgrading junior high school staffs.

Temple University supplies about 500 of the more than 2000 teachers needed annually to fill vacancies in Philadelphia public schools. Clearly, any steps that better prepare a portion of their graduates will contribute significantly to the future quality of education offered to Philadelphia students. Also, other colleges and universities could model their teacher preparation programs after Temple University's if they prove to be successful.

A second step taken toward solution of the new teacher problem is one taken by the School District. It has begun a two year study through which it hopes to develop new methods for selecting teachers that will provide more accuracy in identifying in advance individuals who will be successful in the classroom. At present, the National Teacher Examination is the major tool used to screen and select candidates. However, the number of teachers who do not succeed in the classroom demonstrates that the National Teacher Examination, by itself at least, does not serve as an accurate forecaster of success. The search is on for new instruments or measures that will serve better as predictors of teaching success. If the process of selection of teachers can be measurably improved, this will have an impact on diminishing the problems posed by new teachers in the classroom.

Third, there is one person in central administration devoting time to studying the problems related to teacher turn-over and new teachers and then developing solutions. Hopefully, something important will result.

It is estimated that if and when teacher turn-over is reduced to a minimum, there will still be about 1500 teaching positions to fill annually. Teachers retire each year. Young teachers leave to raise families, move to other cities with their spouses, seek other employment or go back to school — to mention some of the most important reasons that teachers leave the system.

Consequently, the problems posed by the annual entry of new teachers is a major problem now and will continue to be so. In the interests of the public school students, the incoming teachers and the city at large, this problem

ranks a high priority. Students have a right to better instruction. These young teachers are entitled to support and guidance as they begin their careers in teaching. It should be provided by people skilled in rendering such a service. Currently, new teacher supervision costs one or more millions of dollars, but provides more spinning wheels than forward motion. This problem should be given immediate and concentrated attention. One possibility would be an organizational set-up paralleling the district reading project managers in which each district superintendent, in response to a directive from Dr. Mark Shedd, Superintendent of Schools, would appoint a "new-teacher project manager." This manager would work cooperatively with principals and others in the district to develop and implement strategies and programs that would lead to a much higher level of performance by new teachers. Steps must be taken promptly to deal with this serious problem which is at the root of so many others.

BLACK TEACHERS NEEDED

One of the major staffing problems faced by the School District is the lack of black high school teachers and counselors — not to mention black department heads and black administrators. In many of our high schools where all, or almost all, of the students are black, the overwhelming majority of the teachers are white. Five years ago, in the fall of 1965, only 13% of the senior and technical high school teachers were black. With the passage of five years, this percentage has increased by only 5%. It stands at 18% now. In the context of the times, black high school students feel aggrieved, understandably, by this imbalance among their teachers and counselors. The personnel office should concentrate on recruiting and placing black teachers and counselors in the high schools. The present rate of improvement of 1% a year is intolerable.

COMING IN JANUARY ISSUE: Drugs, Schools and Youth

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

Vol.II, No.5 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania January 18, 1971

DRUGS, SCHOOLS AND YOUTH

Although a primary goal of the schools is to turn students away from drugs, it is an extremely difficult task. It makes demands on the entire society and requires infinitely more than just arming students with facts about drugs.

It is important to begin a discussion of the drug problem by emphasizing that drugs include alcohol, coffee, depressants, hallucinogens, narcotics, stimulants and tobacco.* It is important for adults to realize that although alcohol, coffee and tobacco are accepted and legal, they are nevertheless drugs and many of us use, or abuse, them just as many use or abuse marijuana, pep pills or sleeping pills. There is really no justification for concentrating on youthful users, except as an expression of our special concern for them.

* Coffee contains the stimulating drug, caffeine.

Depressants - Barbiturates and tranquilizers which relieve tension or produce sleep.

Hallucinogens - Ex. LSD and marijuana.

Narcotics - Ex. Morphine, opium and heroin.

Stimulants - Ex. Benzedrine, Dexedrine and Methedrine ("Speed").

Tobacco contains nicotine which is a stimulant.

The Pennsylvania Department of Health has just completed a study of drug use among high school students in the State.** It concludes that "the drug problem in Pennsylvania is universal, that no area of the Commonwealth, whether Urban, Rural or Suburban, is insulated or isolated from drug effects." The results indicate that 11% (about 1 out of 10) of the high school population or "123,000 high school aged children currently are taking drugs and are high users of them. Thirty-nine thousand of these are in the 12th grade and almost 5,000 are in the 7th grade." 70% (or 86,000) of those in the high use category come from the upper socio-economic levels while 30% (or 37,000) come from the lower socio-economic levels. Obviously, we face a very serious problem.

Why do girls and boys turn to drugs? A physician, and a young drug educator, spoke at length and with great feeling about the frustration and despair engendered by the society in which we live. Young people are distressed by the war in Vietnam. Poverty, discrimination and deteriorating city services

** Larimer, George S., Tucker, Alvin H.,Jr., and Brown, Ellen F. "Drugs and Youth". Pennsylvania's Health, Winter 1970, pp. 2-11. (Published by the Dept. of Health, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Harrisburg, Pa. 17120.)

burden some. Others come from affluent homes where they are showered with everything money can buy, but no one listens or pays any attention to them. Many parents, in all walks of life, work long hours, or two jobs, to buy more than the necessities for their children, without realizing that what they need most is their parent's presence, concern and love.

Young people see that the funds to alleviate hunger, support education or build housing are totally inadequate, but billions are spent on arms, Vietnam and space. They look, often in vain, for a model to emulate. Frequently, they cannot find someone who has a purpose in life that makes sense to them, who can get "turned on", not by drugs, but by work or creative effort. Youth searches, often to no avail, for principles and ideals that give meaning and structure to life. It is no wonder that a young person facing the normal stresses of growing up, compounded by the anxiety, frustration and pain of life today wants to escape and therefore turns to drugs. Drug abuse is thus a symptom of society's illness.

I pressed the doctor and the educator to draw on their backgrounds and experience and tell me what they believe can be done to stem drug abuse among youth. The thrust of their views was that there is little that will have real meaning until the deep sickness of the society begins to be cured. Therefore, it may well be true that we cannot stop the number of drug users from growing unless we are prepared to examine and deal with the basic causes of youth's despair.

SCHOOLS MUST CHANGE

An institution which is close to youth in our society is the school. Unfortunately, for many students, schools appear cold, impersonal and uncaring. In high schools, students are often no more than an IBM number. If they fail, if their grades fall precipitously, if they cut classes or skip school, it will be duly recorded on endless forms, but usually no one will have time, or take the trouble, to find out "why?"

Undoubtedly, the single most important step that the Philadelphia public schools could take to fight drug abuse would be to become places that demonstrate to students that the institution cares about the individual. Teachers should be kind to their students, interested in and concerned about them as people. Teachers who behave this way and act like human beings should be encouraged and supported by "the system." It should be "the way" to be. "The system" should also encourage students to relate and lend a helping hand to one another.

District wide meetings of students, school personnel and parents, grouped into elementary, junior and senior high levels, should be held. These adults and students should discuss and initiate steps that would make it possible for administrators, teachers and students to demonstrate, in concrete ways, that they care about, and are concerned for one another. For example, a home room teacher, or his designee, could call a student on the first day of an absence to inquire for him. I am certain that students and adults, meeting together, could devise a great many important and significant ways to humanize the schools.

Recognizing that the drug problem cannot be solved without effecting basic changes in the society, we have a responsibility to work constantly for these changes. At the same time, schools must do all that is possible to help students become mentally healthy young people who know how to deal with

their emotions and feelings, know how to make decisions,realize that their lives and their futures are their responsibility and have developed healthy attitudes toward drugs.

The School District of Philadelphia has just completed a new drug abuse curriculum guide for teachers. Convinced that healthy attitudes toward drugs must be developed from a very early age, the guide is geared to students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. For the youngest children, it stresses maintenance of good health and proper and improper use of medicine. In Grades 4-6, it includes the factors contributing to drug abuse (such as a drug oriented society and peer influence) and measures of prevention (such as developing emotional maturity and the ability to make wise decisions). In the secondary schools, the guide's emphasis is on why people abuse drugs, the path to drug abuse, the cost to the individual and society, the difficulty of treatment, and an alternative to drug use which is learning to handle reality. While a separate section of the guide includes specific information for teachers about the various substances and drugs that are abused giving symptoms, harm, addictive qualities and slang terms, the pharmacological aspect of drug abuse education plays a relatively minor role in the guide. The emphasis, appropriately, is on affecting behavior and attitudes.

Many teachers, particularly in the secondary schools, must have additional training if they are to use this guide effectively. It requires a teacher to be a skilled discussion leader who relates well to students and is knowledgable about drugs and the broad social and ethical questions surrounding them. To date, only a very few teachers have been trained and, at this time, the outlook for funds needed to train large numbers is very bleak.

Because drug education has as its goal the development of attitudes which will lead a student to be a non-user, it cannot be given on a crash basis. Some people now question the effectiveness of the big assembly program featuring the outside experts, particularly if this is the drug education for the school. Such programs can sensationalize drugs or arouse a young person's curiosity. At the very least, an assembly program should be followed by drug education in various subject classes. The social, historical, and scientific facts and issues of drug usage should be discussed in English, social studies and science classes as well as in health education classes.

Drug education consultants stress the importance of involving students in the planning of any school drug program. It is important to be tuned in to student thinking. Their suggestions for materials and approaches can aid immeasurably in developing a program that is meaningful to the student body.

All adults in the community can help with the drug problem if they will participate in organized programs or on an individual basis in work with young people. Youth needs, above all else, to know that people care. There are times when one adult's concern and interest can be a tremendously positive influence on a young person's life.

DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION

During interviews conducted in preparing this Newsletter, I learned of three promising programs designed to prevent drug abuse and to aid present drug users. Each depends totally on personnel who relate well to students, who care

about them and who merit their trust and confidence.

1. Classes With Mental Health Worker - A young mental health worker is brought into a secondary school to meet for a period of weeks with all health education classes. Students air and discuss questions and concerns about drugs and other problems that are troubling them, usually in the absence of their regular teacher. There are additional opportunities for students to meet with this worker, in small groups or individually, if they wish to do so. This program, tried two years ago in a city high school and about to be repeated, showed that such a worker can influence and help many young people. The worker comes from a community mental health facility at no cost to the School District and similar arrangements could perhaps be made elsewhere.

2. Peer Influence Education Project - A handful of 11th grade students and a faculty member from each of four public high schools were trained last year in the hope that they could influence their peers to steer clear of drugs. In one school a room has been set aside where the trained students can meet with other students in the school who come, during non-class time, to talk. It is believed that these students, who have since trained others, have influenced in a positive way the values and attitudes of many students.

Heavy demands are made on the faculty advisor on a project of this kind, because physical and emotional problems, some extremely serious, are referred to him by the students. Often, he must handle them himself for a period of time, at least, because this is the only way he can retain student trust and confidence which is absolutely essential to his continuing effectiveness.

3. Drug Counseling - Under this plan, not in use locally that I know of, junior and senior high schools would have full time drug counseling service provided by one member of the staff or a committee of 3 to 6 teachers, each spending part time. Counseling would be available to students in small groups or as individuals as often as necessary. The staff member(s) would also provide leadership to the school in developing a meaningful drug education program.

* * *

Today, schools drive many students to despair. They are part of the drug problem. We must work ceaselessly to change them so that they become, instead, a part of the solution.

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

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8TH GRADERS CHOOSE THEIR COURSES

What Are The Implications, Limitations And Dangers Involved?

January and February are decision months for 8th graders. At this time of year, 13 year old Philadelphia public school children are required to select the courses that they will take in 9th grade the following September. Since 9th grade is the first year of high school, these course choices start a student on a sequence of subjects which is in reality a track. Too often, the track leads to low paying jobs, or nowhere, instead of leading to what the student has described as his goal.

The junior high schools' approach to "helping" students select subjects for 9th grade is, in general, to ask students to choose between three possibilities — preparation for 1)college or other post high school educational institutions, 2)business or 3)industry. Limiting young people to these three alternatives is entirely out of step with the times. There are many other occupations and careers open to them, such as technician, health worker, government employee, for which preparation should be provided.

The major subjects provided for each of the three choices follows:

College Academic Course	Business Commercial Course	Industry Trade Preparatory Course
English	English	English
World History	World History	World History
Algebra	Algebra or General Mathematics	General Mathematics
Foreign Language	Introduction To Business	Shop

The essential differences in these courses are as follows:

1. The academic, college preparatory course includes algebra and a foreign language which start the student on the road to fulfilling requirements for entrance to college or other post high school educational institutions.

2. The commercial course, if the student takes algebra, can also be a college preparatory course, because many colleges no longer require a foreign language.

However, the commercial course with general mathematics and introduction to business, sometimes called commercial-clerical, does not lead to post high school education. The student in this course most often goes to 10th grade and

takes either "clerical practice" which prepares him for general clerical positions such as shipping clerk or receptionist or bookkeeping (a more demanding course) which prepares him for payroll or bookkeeping positions.

3. The trade preparatory course prepares most students for very little. An important reason for this is that many students in the course are not there because of a desire to work with their hands in wood, electric, metal, mechanical drawing or graphic arts shops. They are there because some adult, after consulting their school records, decides they can't succeed elsewhere, or because they wish to escape from academic subjects.

With so many students in the trade preparatory course for the wrong reasons, many spend their time just treading water. And, in 11th and 12th grade, 40-60% of their academic day is spent in the shop in which they have chosen to specialize (automobile repair, mechanical drawing, printing, radio and television repair, etc.). In addition, their English, social studies, mathematics and science courses are often so watered down that their value is highly questionable. Often, these students drop out or graduate with scant preparation for life in the last part of the 20th century.

INFORMATION LACKING

8th grade parents are provided with very little information to assist them in helping their children make wise choices. Usually, they receive a letter which lists and briefly describes the three courses offered and warns of courting frustration and failure by selecting algebra or a foreign language if their child is not doing well scholastically. Meetings are held to explain the offerings, but usually during the day when most people are working, and whenever they occur the message is the same — a student going to college should take the academic course, a student going into business should take the commercial course and a student going into industry should take the trade preparatory course. The importance of the decision and its lifelong implications are not emphasized. No attempt is made to urge students and parents to seriously consider algebra and a foreign language so that all doors to the youngster's future will be kept open whether he decides later to go to technical school, take a job, go to college, or begin to learn a skilled trade.

There is one public junior high school in Philadelphia that has adopted a new method. Penn Treaty in District 5 offers students a wide variety of subjects from which to choose. 21 of the 35 periods per week are filled with the State required English, world history, mathematics and minor subjects. For the remaining 14 periods, the student selects two major subjects and two minor ones from 44 offerings. This method helps to eliminate the tracking of students, to increase student motivation and interest, and to stimulate creative teaching.

GENERAL MATHEMATICS, ALGEBRA, FOREIGN LANGUAGES — WHO SHOULD STUDY THEM?

General mathematics is a course that should be slashed from the curriculum. Given in 9th grade, it is a review of material, such as percentages, area, volume, graphs, that students have had from 4th grade on. Students whose mathematical performance has been poor are usually "turned-off" by this re-exposure to material that they have had before while students who have passed mathematics through the 8th grade find the course incredibly dull.

Almost all, if not all, stu-

dents should take algebra. To limit algebra to the college bound and those who have demonstrated academic promise is to discriminate against all other students. A background in algebra increases one's ability to solve problems and to score better on aptitude tests, civil service exams, apprenticeship exams, etc. Therefore, an individual who has not studied algebra is handicapped in his ability to compete with others for many jobs.

Algebra I (first year algebra) does not have to be taught in the traditional way. Shoemaker Jr. High School in West Philadelphia is experimenting this year by giving 150 students, who would ordinarily have studied general mathematics, a new algebra course which converts Algebra I into a two year course. This gives the teacher more time to develop the concepts, making it possible for many additional students to study algebra.

Also, foreign languages should not be restricted to the "intellectual elite" but should be open to everyone. No one can say which student will or won't find satisfaction and success in learning to speak and understand a foreign language whether he has been having difficulty with school work or not. A foreign language can be a saleable skill in many sections of Philadelphia where businesses, social agencies and hospitals serve people who do not speak English. With the new audio-lingual method of teaching languages which utilizes films, film strips, tapes and records instead of a textbook-grammar approach, languages can be for everyone.

GUIDANCE ROLE ABUSED

During the course selection process, there seems to be a conspiracy to deprive many students of their chance to get a quality education and to proceed to good paying jobs. The system is bad in that it demands decisions from 8th graders who are too young to know what they want to do when they grow up and hence what they should study. The students need help in reaching a decision and it falls to school personnel to provide guidance. All too often, there is a flagrant abuse of this guidance role, many times having racist overtones. For example, a few weeks ago a black student was called to a counselor's office to make his course selection for 9th grade. The counselor talked to the student for a few minutes, found that he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps and that his father worked in "an office." In spite of the fact that his record showed A's and B's in mathematics and science and he should automatically have gone into the academic course, the counselor recorded the boy's course selection as the non-college-preparatory, commercial course with general mathematics and introduction to business. As it happened, the father's role in "an office" is top management in a large industry so the counselor was in error in what he obviously assumed. Beyond that, the parents knew that they wanted the academic course for their son and they knew how to get it. But what of the hundreds of other girls and boys who are routed to nowhere by school staff members? Staff attitudes and evaluations of individuals and life's opportunities allow them to place obstacles in young people's way which can be insurmountable hurdles. This must be brought to an end, at once.

Dr. Mark Shedd, Superintendent of Schools, has worked for decentralization of decision making, so that there are very few mandatory directives issued from central administrative headquarters. District superintendents and principals now have the power and the

responsibility to make their own decisions in many areas. While the thrust of this effort is to be applauded, I believe it should be modified so that the central administration assumes responsibility for maintaining a minimum level of quality in all schools. For example, while the trade preparatory course and the commercial course with general mathematics continue in existence, central administration might require principals to justify the numbers of individuals in these courses. This would force everyone to examine current practices. Schools with too many students in these low content courses would be subject to challenge and this would give some quality control and standardization among schools.

None of what has been said up to this point should be construed as a belief that all students should necessarily go on to post high school education. I do believe, however, that all students should study a variety of academic subjects to prepare them to function effectively in the world in which we live. All of us need to have a background in science to understand the everyday physical phenomena that occur as well as the giant ecological problems facing the planet. All of us need sound basic education to reason through governmental problems and vote intelligently. All of us need to develop our reading and writing skills as much as possible if we are to fulfill our potential. Since most people face the likelihood of several job changes during their working careers, each of us needs an educational background broad enough to enable us to absorb the training and retraining necessary to permit the switches in jobs.

This is not a brief for forcing all students into the traditional academic course being given today. It is an argument for strengthening the academic component of the shop courses and for abandoning watered-down English, history, mathematics and science courses given to trade preparatory and commercial-clerical students that affront, bore and waste their time. Many too many young people with good minds are shunted onto "tracks" that leave them unprepared to fulfill their post high school aspirations or to take their rightful place in society. There must be new offerings in English, history, mathematics and science that will challenge and stimulate students of varying abilities to develop their potential to the fullest.

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

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FINANCIAL CRISIS UPDATE

All of us are weary of the Philadelphia School District's financial crisis that persists year after year. Budgets are constantly being cut and, periodically, we are told that the schools will close early. Unfortunately, the problems are very real and about to escalate so that it is important to take another hard look at the facts of financing the public schools.

As of this writing, about $20 million of the $312.4 million School District budget for this year, July 1,1970-June 30,1971, (1970-71) is not in sight. This money was to have come from the liquor sales tax and the commercial realty use or occupancy tax, new taxes passed by City Council in the spring of 1970. The liquor sales tax was declared unconstitutional by the courts and the litigation over the use and occupancy tax has delayed its collection to the point that it will not provide what was originally estimated. This leaves Philadelphia about $20 million short on this year's budget. Where is this money to come from?

In spite of this $20 million question mark remaining over this year's budget, the Board of Education is required by law to annually submit to the Mayor and City Council its budget for next year by the end of March. It is already known that it will total about $400 million. This is an increase of about $85 million over this year and is needed to cover:

1. The October 1970 settlement of the Teachers' Contract, requiring $57.3 million in new money. The Contract provides that the salary increases for the first year shall be paid to each teacher in a lump sum on November 1, 1971 and the increases called for in the second year shall be paid beginning in September 1971. Therefore, all the costs of this Contract will be due for payment next year, artifically inflating the 1971-72 budget.

2. Salary increases for other employees of the School District.

3. New employee benefits negotiated in the Contract plus increased cost of existing benefits (e.g.Blue Cross and social security).

4. Salary increments (annual increases given to teachers at the end of each year until they reach maximum) - Totaling $7 million.

5. Increased costs of financing temporary indebtedness and the debt on the building program and the operating budget - Totaling $7 million.

6. Inflation - Increased cost of materials and supplies, insurance and utilities.

7. Operating costs of new, or expanded, facilities.

It should be noted that this $85 million increase in expendi-

tures buys no new programs. Basically, what we have this year will simply cost $85 million more next year.

When figures reach this size, they lose meaning for many of us. It may help to grasp the magnitude of the problem to realize that $85 million is within a few million dollars of the revenue currently produced by the real estate tax levied for schools. The real estate tax is the largest local tax funding the School District and it is six times larger than any of the other city taxes levied for schools. At the present annual rate of 21 mills on each dollar of the total assessments of all property that is taxable, it brings in $95 million annually. To meet the increase in the budget for next year, this tax would have to be almost doubled!

The School District's annual budget has increased $127 million from 1966 to the present. Most of this has gone for salary increases, debt service and inflation. However, it is perhaps important to point out some of the tangible benefits that have resulted. The increase reflects a salary schedule for teachers that will attract and hold good teachers, a debt that partially represents the "mortgage" providing much needed new space, education for 16,500 more students, kindergarten programs for 5000 more five year olds, some additional service to students, and libraries for all elementary schools, most of which had none before.

And still, evidence of the need to spend more money to secure better service to students is all around us. Too many students do not master the most basic reading and writing skills. The average daily attendance rate of high school students has dropped from 87% in 1966 to 76% in 1970. More than half of the physically, mentally, emotionally or otherwise handicapped children of Philadelphia do not receive the more costly special education that they need.

More money in itself will not guarantee improved education, but the scarcity of it makes it impossible for education in Philadelphia to move forward as it must.

SCHOOL DISTRICT REVENUE

Revenue for the general fund of the School District of Philadelphia comes from three main sources: local taxes, state subsidies and federal grants. Using last year's figures (1969-70), which are actual rather than estimated, as this year's would have to be, the School District received a total of $279 million from these sources.

Local taxes provided $133 million:

- $ 95 million - Real Estate Tax
- 13 million - General Business Tax - 2 mills on gross receipts.
- 16 million - Corporate Net Income Tax - A tax of 3% on the net income of corporations doing business in Philadelphia.
- 9 million - School Income Tax (2% levy on non-business income), Pari-Mutuel Tax (2% tax on amounts wagered at horse races in Philadelphia), and Miscellaneous.

State subsidies provided $140 million:

- $ 104 million - Instruction Subsidy - Based on complex formula which provides partial reimbursement of instructional expenses.
- 15 million - Supplemental Subsidy.

$ 21 million - Subsidies in ten other special categories such as special education and school health programs.

Federal grants provided $6 million.

State support for public education has increased from $54 million, or 29% of the School District budget in 1966-67, to $140 million, or 50% of the budget in 1969-70. However, federal grants provide only about 2% of the total general fund. The Federal Government is more generous with its categorical aid, but this does not contribute to the solution of the general financial problems. As we face this need for $85 million more next year, federal funds seem to provide the only answer. A determination to cut back on spending for arms and an end to the war in Southeast Asia could release the needed dollars.

IDLE THREAT OR GRIM REALITY

On several occasions since the spring of 1968, the Board of Education has talked of closing schools early because of a lack of funds. Such a catastrophe has been averted to date, but it might be well to trace, briefly, the history of the threatened closings in order to evaluate the idleness or the reality of the threat.

May 31, 1968 - The Board of Education made substantial cuts in its proposed budget and adopted a budget for a shortened 1968-69 school year. The Educational Home Rule Charter requires the Board of Education to adopt, by May 31st, a budget for the following school year which balances expenditures against expected revenue. In order to do this and because City Council had not enacted taxes to provide the $29 million in needed new revenue, the Board adopted a short year budget.

Spring 1969 - Still no new revenue for 1968-69 as the school year approached its end. Schools were kept open by borrowing from the banks.

May 29, 1969 - The Board of Education adopted 1969-70 budget based on running schools only through April 1970. New taxes for 1968-69 still not passed by City Council. (See The Oakes Newsletter, April 1970,p.1 & 2.)

September 1969 - Taxes passed by City Council in June 1969 to finance year ending June 30, 1969 proved to be $16 million short of Council's estimate.

January 26, 1970 - Board of Education ordered expenditures reduced by $4 million.

March 9, 1970 - Board of Education determined to supplement available funds with short and long term debt in order to operate schools for the full school year. It authorized sale of $28 million in bonds repayable over a span of five years. While this postponed the day of reckoning, it offered no solution. Funds for the following five years, when the debt represented by the bonds would have to be paid off, were, almost certainly, going to be just as hard to raise.

May 29, 1970 - Adopted $312 million budget based on liquor sales, use and occupancy taxes. (See page 1).

March 1971 - Time to propose Operating Budget for next year (1971-72). As in March 1969, taxes to fund current year (1970-71) not yet settled.

The circumstances just described indicate that the financial crises were real. The Board of Education on many occasions did not know where it was going to secure tax revenue to meet necessary expenditures.

Philadelphia must be provided with financing that will meet in-

creasing costs and make long range planning possible. Constant improvisation to keep the schools open for a few months at a time is patently unsound practice. Frequent cost cutting, which necessitates important program cuts (e.g. summer school), is highly destructive in terms of children's learning and school staffs' morale.

Supplementing revenue by incurring debt jeopardizes the financial stability of the School District and simply puts off, temporarily, coming to grips with the problem. There must be adequate, consistent financial support for the public schools which matches today's tremendous need for a high quality of education for children. -March 9

AN ANNOUNCEMENT

The Oakes Newsletter will henceforth be published by Acorn Educational Press, Inc., a non-profit corporation with Helen Oakes as its President-Treasurer. To retain total independence and be eligible for tax deductible contributions or foundation grants, it was necessary to form a non-profit corporation.

Acorn Educational Press, Inc. is very grateful to the Alfred and Mary Douty Foundation for its help in getting The Oakes Newsletter started. The foundation grant was for the purpose of aiding the Newsletter until it could become self-sustaining. Therefore, the future of the Newsletter rests with you, the reader. If you are able, will you make a contribution over and above your subscription which may be deducted from your income tax? If you are not a subscriber, will you send your $3.00 for a year of the Newsletter? If you are a subscriber and have been getting the Newsletter for a year, will you send your $3.00 renewal fee? (Bills will be sent on the anniversary of a subscription, if you do not wish to renew at this time.)

This tenth issue of The Oakes Newsletter completes a year of publication. The response from readers has been most gratifying and I am most appreciative. The press of a monthly deadline has not always permitted me to answer those of you who have written.

Helen Oakes

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THE OAKES NEWSLETTER
6400 Drexel Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19151

the OAKES newsletter

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

Vol.II, No.8 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania April 15, 1971

INTEGRATION

Many people who worked some years ago for integration of the Philadelphia public schools now despair of achieving it, because of the racial separation inherent in the housing patterns and because of the lack of public support, black or white, for desegregation. However, what we must all realize is that desegregation is not only the law of the Commonwealth, but an absolute necessity if our society is to survive.

In late 1967, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, in a case involving the Chester School District, ruled that education offered in racially imbalanced public schools is discriminatory whether brought about intentionally or not. Following that, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission wrote to seventeen school districts in Pennsylvania ordering them to prepare and submit desegregation plans by June 30, 1968. Philadelphia requested a series of extensions and finally submitted a plan on July 1, 1969. That plan was rejected by the Commission in March 1970 because it was found to result in minimal desegregation. In October 1970, the Commission lodged a complaint that the School District, by its failure to adopt a plan and timetable that would substantially reduce segregation, is withholding "advantages" from black pupils and is, therefore, in violation of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act of May 1966. In March 1971, the Commission held hearings in Philadelphia on this complaint.

The Commission's staff presented to the three Commissioners hearing the case, evidence proving that racial separation in Philadelphia's public schools is even more pervasive in 1970-71 than it was in 1968-69. The Commission and the State Department of Education define "racially balanced schools" to be "those having a percent Negro enrollment within 30% of the percent Negro pupils among the buildings of the same grade span." For example, the percentage of Negro pupils in the Philadelphia senior high schools this school year is 56%. 30% of 56% is 17%. Therefore, a racially balanced high school by the Commission's definition would be one with from 39% (56%-17%) to 73% (56%+17%) Negro enrollment. A racially imbalanced high school would be one with 0-38% or 74-100% Negro enrollment.

By this definition, Philadelphia has 228 racially imbalanced schools out of a total of 281 schools. Of these, 139 schools are over 95% of one race, an increase of 23 schools over two years ago. 96,000 Negro pupils attend schools today that are over 95% Negro. This is 6,000 more students than two years ago. Thus, the staff of the Commission showed that racial separation pervades Philadelphia schools and has increased in the past two years. The staff went on to depreciate most of what the School District claims to be doing to bring black and white students together and to point out how

little desegregation has resulted.

The School District then presented its case. Dr. Mark Shedd, Superintendent of Schools, spoke of his firm belief and commitment to racial integration as a necessary and important goal of society. However, the School District maintains that it is beyond its power to bring about the degree of desegregation demanded by the Human Relations Commission because monetary constraints do not permit the necessary busing.

Another witness for the School District submitted a 38-page document detailing the existing "instructional programs designed to promote desegregation." It included Philadelphia's two academic high schools, the All Philadelphia choirs and orchestras, summer school, public-parochial school system cooperative programs, an eight week program at the Franklin Institute for 640 children, etc. Granting that all of these programs bring about desegregation as claimed, the amount of desegregation achieved effects only a small proportion of the students in the Philadelphia public schools.

Having taken the testimony, the Commissioners will now decide if they should hand down a desegregation order to the School District of Philadelphia and, if so, what it should contain.

WHAT IS INTEGRATION?

For clarity, it is important to distinguish between "integration" and "desegregation". To desegregate a school is to bring black and white students together in one building. Integration is the process which follows desegregation. The goal is to have pupils associate with one another on the basis of complete equality and mutual respect, share experiences in and out of the classroom around common purposes, develop friendships and understanding, learn from one another and acquire the skills of citizenship that will make it possible for them to function effectively in the world of the 1970's and 1980's.

WHY INTEGRATE THE SCHOOLS?

The United States Supreme Court's decision of May 17, 1954 explains clearly why public schools should be integrated.

"We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other 'tangible' factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does.

"...To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may effect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone....

"We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal...."

Many believe that this decision does not apply to communities like Philadelphia, in which school segregation was not compelled by law. But is this true? In the South, schools were segregated by law, because that was the will of the majority and they passed laws to carry out their will. In Philadelphia, the majority carried out its will, and created segregated schools, by fleeing various parts of the city and by restricting housing opportunities for black families, forcing them to live in only certain areas of the city. Whether segregation is de jure or de facto, racism is the cause, the results are the same, and the effects

cited in the Supreme Court decision pertain equally.

Racial segregation injures the children of the majority group too. They become infected with the racism that accompanies segregation. Since separate schools are obviously undemocratic, it becomes impossible to teach democracy in such a setting. White children in white schools can not learn to live comfortably and function effectively in the multiracial society that is the world today.

SCHOOL DISTRICT LACKS COMMITMENT TO INTEGRATION

There is much concrete evidence of this lack of commitment and some examples follow. There have been communities in various parts of the city that have become desegregated, producing desegregated schools. One such school lost staff and students during such a period when it was allowed to rapidly deteriorate as it suffered through three changes in principals in a brief period of time. In contrast, if all desegregated schools had been valued, as they should have been, the School District could have provided strengthened instructional programs which would have retained significant numbers of children of both races in the schools. There should have been an announcement that these potentially integrated schools were important and valuable to the School District and the community. At the very least, they should have been given status as integrated schools and provided with extra instructional and intergroup relations services and increased staff development time.

The School District's building program, based on the neighborhood school concept, clearly has and will produce segregated schools.

In the document presented to the Human Relations Commission, the School District says, "A major development that will foster desegregation in the Vocational Education Program is the Skills Center concept." Four Skills Centers appear in the newly released 1972-77 Capital Program. The importance of the desegregation aspect of the Skills Centers can be judged by the fact that the first one to be built will be located in the <u>far</u> Northeast, in District 8, which is the 95% white district of the city. This Skills Center has the least potential for being desegregated of any of the four being contemplated!

Lastly, two years ago there was an office of "Integration and Intergroup Education." It is now the "Community Affairs" office with intergroup relations responsibilities. Symbolically, integration has been dropped from the title of the office as it has from the thinking of the School District.

INTEGRATION IS ABSOLUTE NECESSITY

To achieve the goal of integration, as defined previously, the professional and non-professional staff of the School District must also be desegregated. While space does not permit an analysis of this aspect of the problem, it is a very important issue demanding extensive and intensive examination followed by action. If racism is to be expunged from the School District, there must be black and white personnel in meaningful numbers at all levels. It is <u>shocking</u> to find that of Dr. Shedd's three deputy superintendents (planning, instruction and administration) and the nineteen administrators working directly under them, there is only <u>one</u> who is black.

It is time for those who wring their hands over the difficulty of student desegregation, and those who have washed their hands of it, to take stock. Three years ago, the Riot Commission, chaired by

Otto Kerner, Governor of Illinois, concluded that: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal....Discrimination and segregation have long permeated much of American life;they now threaten the future of every American....To pursue our present course will involve the continuing polarization of the American community and, ultimately the destruction of basic democratic values." In referring to education, the Riot Commission said, "We support integration as the priority education strategy; it is essential to the future of American society....It is indispensable that opportunities for interaction between the races be expanded."

It is essential that the School District start talking and thinking in terms of the absolute necessity to move our schools away from segregation and toward integration. Much could be done right away. There are white children within reasonable distrances of black schools, and vice versa, so that physical desegregation of many schools is possible. In addition, there must be constant planning and pressing for integration, so that there will be increasing numbers of students affected in the future. Newly designated school districts, combining urban-suburban areas, would be a partial answer. Increased cooperation with parochial schools is another.

A middle school in Southwest Philadelphia, now under construction, will reserve 25% of its space for parochial school students who will be intermixed with the public school students for all subjects studied in the public school building. This will aid the Archdiocese in the solution of its financial problems, but it also brings public and parochial school students together. Thus, benefits accrue to both systems. Since the 136,000 parochial school students in Philadelphia are about 90% white, if programs like this one were widely expanded, desegregation of many local schools could be accomplished.

What is needed is leadership from the Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools, the Mayor, City Councilmen, the Governor, State Legislators and Federal Officials. It requires courage to espouse the cause of integration in this period when it has little public support. However, integration is not a matter than can be separated out from quality education or the country's survival. This is the message that responsible leaders must take to the people.

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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LEARNING AND HAPPY

There are classrooms in Philadelphia, entire schools in fact, to which children come eagerly. They spend their days in a setting where there are warm personal relationships, pleasure in learning and a good deal of freedom. It is a new way to educate and it goes by many names - "informal education", the "British Infant School", the "open classroom", the "integrated day", the "free day", the "free school", "Open-Space Plan", "open school", the "integrated curriculum", and the "Leicestershire Plan".

While each "informal classroom" is different and depends on the personality and interests of the teacher and the age, interests and personalities of the children, it may be helpful to describe a typical classroom. As you enter, you are struck by the many activities going on and by the buzz of children talking and working. In one corner, a group of three children is working with a tape recorder. In another corner, there is a big tub of water and near it tubing and containers of many shapes and sizes. On the window sill are clear plastic cups, one for each child, with four or five different seeds sprouting from between a paper towel and the side of the cup. A sign on the wall says:

When did you start your seeds?
What kinds did you start?
Remember to look at your
seeds every day.

Carrots, pineapple and sweet potatoes are putting out sprouts and roots on a small table near a collection of books about seeds and plants.

In the middle of the floor, there are cages housing a brown and white rabbit and a couple of gerbils. Also, as you look around the room, you find a typewriter with a child using it, an easel with a child painting at it, a reading corner stocked with books of many kinds and a shelf with math materials and games. The walls are covered with children's pictures and stories. You can see that art, music, crafts, dancing - many different forms of non-verbal expression - play an important role in the school lives of these children. Creativity of all kinds is fostered.

You sit down next to one of the tables. The teacher calls a child over to bring his cup with the sprouting seeds. There are three other children at the table drawing pictures of their seeds and writing about them. The teacher helps the child she is working with to describe what his look like today. Two have put out gray roots. She writes down what he says and then asks him to copy it himself at the bottom of his picture as a record of his observations. As he wants to put the date down she suggests that he consult the calendar on the wall.

In another part of the room,

four boys are making buildings of paper and cardboard. Someone is stroking the rabbit. One child is examining the sprouting carrot. She lifts it gently out of the water to look at the roots. Two children are knitting. Three children are working with the tape recorder, reading words from their booklets, and then playing them back, much to their delight.

The teacher calls four children over, gives each one a box of colored blocks and a piece of paper with some mathematical questions on it. These children are working to understand simple multiplication. You can see that 3 x 4 equals 12 when you pick out 3 groups of 4 blocks and count them. All the while that the teacher is working with individual children or small groups, other children are coming over to her to show her a finished story or picture, to ask a question or to get a word spelled.

THE TONE OF THE CLASSROOM IS RELAXED AND FRIENDLY. The children work together without friction, help one another and, for the most part, work consistently and well. The teacher never raises her voice and only infrequently does she have to quiet a child down or suggest that there is no need to argue over the tape recorder because there is plenty of time for everyone to have a turn. The children come to the visitor, if the teacher is busy, to have a word spelled, for approval and appreciation of a newly finished picture, or for an opponent in a mathematical lotto game. The adult visitor is received by the children in a warm, natural way and made to feel very much at home and a part of the class.

The teacher finishes the multiplication work and begins to gather another small group of children for work on the sounds of words. She passes by a child who has finished constructing his building and stops to talk with him about it. She observes a child pouring water from one container into another and suggests that he might like to estimate how many half-pint containers it will take to fill the quart bottle he has in his hand and then he could test his estimate and write down his findings. Then, she says, he might like to pick a "task card" and follow its directions for working with the water and containers.

INFORMAL EDUCATION NOURISHES TEACHER CREATIVITY and helps to make learning exciting for the child and the teacher. For example, how can you build on a child's interest in shadows (a sundial-how it works, its history; calculating heights by measuring shadows), the Empire State Building, or batting averages? It is a challenge, but the rewards of success are great.

Though the teacher seems to move with ease and in a relaxed way, it is obvious that a great deal of planning has preceeded the beginning of the day. The teacher has provided this rich environment which has so many different things to do and learn. The children spend their time, moving from one activity to another, as they choose, for the most part. However, it is not random activity nor are they left to rediscover the mass of knowledge that has come down to us through the centuries.

The teacher keeps accurate records on each child's progress. She helps him move along by encouraging or redirecting activities which he has initiated, by capitalizing on an interest, by asking questions which help him make discoveries or see relationships or principles, by suggesting an activity, or by working with him individually or as part of a group.

The essence then of informal education is the emphasis on the child's learning as opposed to the

teacher's teaching. A child is free to make choices among many alternatives, "to teach himself," with individualized help and sometimes direction from the teacher. He has a relationship with the teacher and with the other children that is based on mutual respect and easy communication. This combination results in a joyful child who is absorbed in learning.

The concept of informal education was first developed in England in the British Infant Schools. A substantial proportion of England's primary schools, those serving the rich and the poor in both urban and rural settings, are now using this method, proving that it is widely applicable and that all kinds of teachers can be successful using it.

In August and September 1967, Joseph Featherstone wrote a series of three articles for The New Republic* on these schools bringing them to the attention of many Americans for the first time. Charles Silberman's book Crisis In The Classroom, published in the fall of 1970, includes a long section describing the English schools and similar schools in various parts of the United States, including Philadelphia.

Informal education can be carried out under many different circumstances. The physical setup can be a single classroom or a large open space occupied by several classes of children and their teachers. The most important physical requirement is enough acoustical control so that children can converse in normal tones in different parts of the room without disturbing one another. For best conditions, this demands acoustical ceilings and rugs on the floor. Rugs stop many sounds before they start - heavy footsteps, dropped materials, and chairs scraping.

There is a large body of theory backing the concepts of informal education. The Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, has had a strong influence. There is a heavy emphasis on doing, on the learning that results from handling materials, demonstrating things to oneself. Children learn counting by counting, all kinds of things - sunflower seeds, buttons, feet, desks. Children learn by experimenting with concrete materials, e.g. a cup of water is always a cup of water whether poured in a bowl or a quart bottle.

There has, to date, been no definitive study comparing reading and mathematics achievement in children coming from informal vs. formal classrooms. There are individual success stories, but no conclusive evaluation.

Reasoning and common sense, however, lead one to conclude that INFORMAL EDUCATION HAS MUCH TO RECOMMEND IT.

1. Children are led by their interests. Because learning is fascinating and fun, the child is self-motivated. We all know how much more we, as adults, can accomplish when we want to complete or learn something because it is of interest or importance to us.

2. Subjects are combined in a natural way. The day is not divided into time segments labeled reading, spelling, writing, science and mathematics. A child who is watching his developing seeds and recording information about them is combining science, reading, writing and spelling. Should a child decide to see how many of the 100 seeds in the package germinate, he has crossed over into percentages and mathematics. The integration of all subjects

* A reprint of the three articles called "The Primary School Revolution in Britain" may be obtained for 50¢ from Pitman Publishing Corp.,6 E.43rd St.,N.Y.,N.Y. 10017

(from whence comes the names "integrated day" and "integrated curriculum") gives each one more meaning and greater significance.

3. The classroom setting provides almost constant opportunities to listen and to speak - two skills that children must develop before they can learn to read. Children are provided with experiences to talk about and conversation is encouraged.

4. Children are helped to see reasons for learning to read and write. The growth records of the seeds, records of other activities, in words and pictures, show children the value of the written record. Children are encouraged to write and write so they may express their own ideas and share them with others. Teachers write messages to children so that they can see that reading serves a useful purpose and is something that they should want to learn. "Don't forget to put the covers on the paint." "John - Please go over your words with me today."

5. Children learn from their experiences in school that you read for enjoyment and to acquire knowledge. They learn to love reading, not to hate it.

6. Discipline problems are minimized or non-existent because children follow their own interests and instruction is individualized. There are no children bored by a lack of challenge nor are there children frustrated by work that is too difficult.

7. School is a happy, more human place with childhood becoming a time to treasure. Teachers have relaxed, friendly, caring relationships with children. Increased attendance and decreased vandalism are two of the many positive outcomes.

When one considers the evidence of the failure of education today (dropouts; functional illiterates; absenteeism; disruptive, bored and failing pupils) one can clearly see that education must be reformed and renewed at all levels. Accomplishing this at the secondary school level will be the most difficult because there are very few examples to study and those that exist are quite new. It is exciting to know that a way has been found to capture student interest and develop potential in the early years. It is important for the public to know about "informal education" and how it functions, so that we can support and encourage teachers and administrators who are willing to try this new way.

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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LEARNING MUST INCREASE WITH BUDGET

To write about public education in Philadelphia, in June 1971,is to be forced to write about the financial crisis which continues to face the School District. The Board of Education and the Superintendent have been struggling with this most difficult problem for a long time and resolution seems no closer now than it was months ago.*

As of this writing, the School District lacks $109 million of the funds required to balance the combined budgets of this year and next year:

$ 15 million	The demise of the 10% liquor tax, enacted by City Council last June and later invalidated by the courts, created this deficit in this year's (1970-71) budget.
2 million	Use and Occupancy Tax fell short of the amount it was expected to produce.
92 million	Difference between proposed 1971-72 budget of $394 million and the $302 million in revenue presently available to fund it.
$ 109 million	

The following possibilities exist for narrowing this $109 million gap:

$ 35 million	From $25-35 million could be provided in increased revenue by a revision of the State subsidy formula, now under consideration by the State Legislature.
7 million	Could flow to the School District from an increase of 3% in the tax on amounts wagered at horse races in Philadelphia. A bill increasing the rate of this State pari-mutuel tax, from 2% to 5%, has passed the Senate in Harrisburg.
15 million	Could become available by passage of a 10% tax on across-the-bar liquor sales. This tax, already through the State Legislature, has to be enacted by City Council, signed by the Mayor and levied by the School Board by 6/30/71.
$ 57 million	Maximum Total from State Legislature (See p.2)

* See The Oakes Newsletter, April 1970 and March 1971.

$ 57 million	Maximum Total from State Legislature
20 million	Slashing existing programs and jobs from 1971-72 budget.
$ 77 million	
32 million	Still Required
$ 109 million	

There are only four possible ways to deal with this $32 million that is still required:

1)Increase taxes benefiting schools which City Council, in an election year, has rejected to date.

2)Make budget cuts in excess of the $20 million planned, which is unthinkable.

3)Increase the federal contribution to the general budget beyond the present 1.3%, but this kind of special "disaster aid" for big cities is not now being contemplated by the federal government.

4)Sell bonds and extend the payment of this debt over a number of years,which contributes nothing to bringing revenue into balance with expenditures. Also, the School District credit rating would be further jeopardized while the interest charges on the bonds would only add to the annual debt.

THE HIGH PRICE

The price extracted by this chaotic financial situation is very high in human terms and ultimately in dollars, too.

1)Dr. Mark Shedd, Superintendent of Schools, is so preoccupied with trying to find new money and lowering expenditures that he is unable to devote himself to improving the instructional program of the School District. He cannot provide educational leadership while spending excessive amounts of his time lobbying for funds in Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Washington, and agonizing over what will be the least destructive cuts in programs and personnel.

2)Teachers and all other School District employees work under conditions of tension. The uncertainty surrounding the continuation of their jobs, and the threatened delay of their pay, is demoralizing and must effect their ability to concentrate and establish a good learning atmosphere in the classroom.

On May 24, 1971, School District employees received a letter from Dr. Shedd containing the following news: "I have been instructed by the Board of Education to notify you that due to the School District's extreme financial crisis there may not be sufficient cash on hand to meet June payrolls...So far, the Board has received no assurance that funds necessary to complete the present school year or to begin the 1971-72 school year will be forthcoming..."

Put yourself in the place of an employee receiving this news. Add to this, the bleak outlook for securing funds to meet contracted salary increases due in September, the probability that the average class size will have to be increased, and the threat, or the reality, of losing your job. Add further, the distinct possibility that the School District will not be funded for a full year when and if it opens in the fall and you can begin to appreciate the strain and tension under which teachers and other employees have been working.

The School District did find a

way to "pay" teachers for June. The last two "pay checks" for this year, to be received by teachers June 18 and June 25 and representing 10% of their annual salary, will be in the form of drafts payable July 30 and August 31 respectively. These drafts represent an obligation by the School District of Philadelphia to pay the face value of the draft on a specified date at one of eleven commercial banks. These drafts may be presented prior to their due dates for cash, but there will then be a low interest charge or a minimum fee. This means that School District personnel who are unable to wait 6-9 weeks for their money will have to pay this cash penalty, which is unfortunate and regrettable.

3)The annual inability of the School District to balance its budget threatens to adversely effect the School District's credit rating and cause an increase in the cost of financing the School District's temporary, short and long term debt. In addition, because the School District and the City of Philadelphia are tied together financially by sharing a common tax base, if the School District's credit rating slides downward, the City's may well go with it, further increasing the cost to the taxpayer of financing the City as well as the School District debt. Since these increased costs involve many millions of dollars, the Mayor and the City Councilmen would seem to have an important stake in the financial health of the School District.

4)Students' attitudes are adversely effected. They are influenced to put as low a value on their education as the public does when it denies the schools adequate funds to survive.

5)Continuation of federal funding of special programs is jeopardized. Philadelphia expects to receive $56 million next year from the federal government for specific programs that have been approved by Washington for funding. The amount of these categorical funds has increased annually for several years but future increases, or even continuation at the same level, depend on producing results in the funded programs. This in turn depends on the school system running at some acceptable level and for a full school year.

6)Long range planning becomes impossible because there is nothing you can count on. For example, a Task Force On Improving High Schools has temporarily broken off its work, as the number of unknowns surrounding high school organization and operation for 1971-72 made it impossible to develop proposals for a new and better situation in the future. All segments of the school community are distracted from the important job of improving education by the necessity to work for its very existence.

CHILDREN MUST LEARN TO READ

The public has a right to expect that an annual school budget of over $300 million should produce results in the classroom. One measure of the school system's success, or lack of it, is the results of the annual testing program. Scores on the Iowa Tests for last year (the latest results available), show that 42% of all Philadelphia pupils in Grades 3-8 scored at the 15th percentile or below in reading. This means that while 15% of the students nationally in Grades 3-8 scored at that low level, 42% of Philadelphia's Grade 3-8 students did.

While it is difficult to generalize about this group of more than 50,000 Philadelphia students scoring at the 15th percentile or below, it can be said that they read poorly and are not able to cope with school work at their

grade level.

The 42% figure indicates serious weaknesses in the system, but the picture becomes even darker if School Districts 1-5 are separated from Districts 6-8. While all districts serve children coming from a wide variety of economic backgrounds, a large percentage of the children in Districts 1-5 come from low income backgrounds while the economic picture is, on the whole, brighter for most children in Districts 6-8. 52% of the students in Districts 1-5 rank at the 15th percentile or below. Clearly, the School District is failing in its efforts to teach the children of the poor to read. They <u>can</u> learn to read, but only if we improve our teaching methods. This is where a breakthrough is absolutely essential.

Since last September, there has been a great emphasis in the School District of Philadelphia on reading. Hopefully, teachers are able to be more thorough and systematic in their teaching methods and students will show significant gains in their reading achievement by a year from now. However, there must be no let up in pressing for much better reading results. We must constantly look for classrooms and schools where teachers are getting good results, so that we can analyze their success and utilize those solutions in the entire school system.

There is a tendency in big institutions to be suspicious of success and to see someone else's achievement as a threat to one's own status. In this crisis situation however, it would be well for all professionals to adopt the attitude that someone else's success may be everyone else's salvation.

It is absolutely clear that there is a need for increased revenues to support the schools. However, increased taxation will require substantial sacrifices on the part of already overburdened taxpayers and will, I think, be tolerated only if the schools can begin to show positive results. The Philadelphia school system must begin to demonstrate that it can successfully teach all its students the basic skills - a school's single most important job. The system must begin to prove that the increased staff, the new buildings, the improved salary schedule, and the innovative programs are paying off by producing children who can read, write and, in general, function better scholastically. —June 10

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