

the OAKES newsletter

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

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

September 24, 1979

AS THE 1979-80 SCHOOL YEAR BEGINS

The Philadelphia School District has a balanced budget this year and a plan for desegregation. Nevertheless, the budget and student desegregation continue to be the two most important, unresolved issues facing the District.

On March 9, there was a \$48.6 million deficit in the budget. By May 31, it had disappeared. How the budget was brought into balance is an important story.

	Preliminary Estimate for 1979-80 made on March 9, 1979	Operating Budget for 1979-80 adopted May 31, 1979
Available funds from local, state, and Federal sources	\$ 683.0	\$ 690.5
Surplus from 1978-79	(none expected)	19.7
Total Funds Available	\$ 683.0	\$ 710.2
Expenditures for 1979-80	731.6	710.2
(Deficit)	\$ 48.6	-

Three elements contributed to this surprising development:

1. The estimate of funds expected from the city and state increased by \$7.5 million between March 9 and May 31.

2. The \$19.7 surplus carried over from last year came from a \$10 million increase in estimated revenue, a \$4.9 million reduction in expenditures, and another \$4.8 million resulting from the handling of certain reserve funds.

3. Expenditures for this

year (1979-80) were reduced by \$21.4 million. Given scant public attention, the reductions have, and will continue to, hurt the schools. Coming on top of severe cuts in past years, they represent a further squeeze on the schools.

BUDGET CUTS

The preliminary budget of March 1, 1979 totaled \$731.6 million. It was based strictly on maintaining the status quo. It did not allow for any new or expanded programs, took into consideration the expected decreased en-

rollment, and allowed only 6% for price increases for materials, supplies, books and equipment.

The superintendent cut that standstill budget. The cuts, while framed in terms that did not alert or alarm people, will have a crucial affect on the educational program.

The School District expects to save \$7 million because of "anticipated attrition and job freeze." Positions which become vacant will be left that way. However, such a freeze can't be carried out. Teaching positions, for example, must be filled. So the School District, either by design or because it is grossly inefficient and callous, is practicing a modified freeze. Positions are filled with substitutes for long periods of time and in some cases hiring is endlessly delayed. In one secondary school last year, at least three teaching positions were filled with substitutes all year long and a fourth for eight months. The Personnel Department's explanation is that one was "overlooked." As for the other three, no qualifying exams for teachers of those subjects had been given and therefore there was no eligibility list from which to make appointments. The students were deprived of appointed certified teachers and in some cases were subjected to a series of substitutes. The School District saved the difference between substitutes' pay and teachers' salaries.

Vice-principals are another example. There were vacancies last year, but no way to fill them, because there was no eligibility list and there still isn't. The positions were filled on a "temporary" basis with teachers who were paid a vice-principal's beginning salary. No money was saved there, but the substitutes who filled in for those teachers pending their return to their classrooms were paid half, or less than

half, of what the teachers had been receiving. That's a big saving!

Another example of how costs are kept down is the case of the teacher who never received an aide last year although the number of her special education students justified one. The School District saved from \$5000 to \$10,000.

Reducing expenditures for personnel in ways such as those described is scheduled to save \$7 million this year and must have contributed substantially to last year's \$4.9 million reduction in expenditures which contributed to the surplus. Cutting spending in such ways seldom causes an organized protest, but subjects students to a grossly inferior program of instruction.

Per diem substitute service was another item that was cut. The funds for this year will pay for 16% less service than was rendered two years ago. (Last year was atypical and therefore invalid for comparisons.) There is no hard evidence that absenteeism will decrease that much this year. A change in health insurance rates and benefits may help to reduce absences, but no one knows for sure.

Total absences for teachers for the year ending in June 1978 was 9.7% and 9.6% for 1979. That's more than 18 days on the average for every teacher in every school. One would think that the School District would have compiled statistics in order to analyze the absenteeism and take steps to reduce it. But, not this School District! In fact, for example, the Personnel Department states that it does not know how much absence is a result of disability relating to pregnancy, nor how much increase there has been for this reason since 1974 when women became eligible to collect sick leave and health insurance for disability due to pregnancy. The

information is stored in the computer, but has not been retrieved.

To achieve greater continuity and quality of instruction, there must be a major reduction in the absence of teachers. Budget savings would be a welcome by-product. Unfortunately, little is being done to make it happen.

The budget may be balanced, but schools are suffering in many ways from lack of badly needed services and goods. Principals lack enough vice-principals or assistants to give them the time they need to provide educational leadership in their schools and to monitor the instructional program. There are not enough non-teaching assistants to make buildings secure against outsiders and to see to it that students go to class and conduct themselves properly in the hallways, lunchrooms and other parts of the school. Secretarial service has been cut and highly paid professionals have to take care of mundane chores that do not require their high level of skills. The counseling staff has been reduced while the need for their services has been increased by the addition of many special education students in most schools.

Books, materials, and supplies are in critically short supply. Allotments for books have increased by only about 5% since 1975-76. The testimony of principals and teachers indicates that the present allotment is totally inadequate. Many principals must rely on Home and School Associations to raise money to purchase some of their basic subject matter texts. One teacher told me that his elementary school had switched to a different reading series to improve the school's instructional program. The parents, together with the teachers, raised some of the needed funds. The school still does not have enough money in its budget to purchase the dictionaries that it needs.

As for materials and supplies, the principals' purchasing power was very substantially reduced this year. Budget allotments increased less than 6%, but the warehouse costs were added to each item to be ordered and this caused many items to jump about 50% in cost. Chalk went from \$1.17 a box to \$1.77. One dozen pencils went from 29¢ to 43¢ and mimeograph paper jumped from \$1.15 a ream to \$1.72. Forced to order less, the resulting shortages are likely to assume crisis proportions in the spring when the allotments are used up and the supplies are gone. Meanwhile, there are spot shortages to contend with. One teacher told me that there was no construction paper available to her this fall to refresh and brighten bulletin boards and no pencils to give students if they should need them.

By drastically reducing the materials and supplies that principals and other administrators can order, the School District has been able to reduce by about \$2 million what it will purchase from outside suppliers. A new accounting procedure incorporated into this year's budget without explanation, enabled the School District to escape public notice as it cut these purchases and thus cut its budgeted expenditures by \$2 million.

REPAIRS DELAYED

Another problem, faced by staff and students, is related to the lack of adequate funding. Buildings are not being maintained. For more than three years, school buildings have been deteriorating because the School District has been unable to secure funds to make major improvements except in cases of emergency. For example, there are many roofs which need substantial repairs or replacement. When the work isn't done, water damages ceilings and floors. The

School District is being forced to postpone all kinds of essential repairs. This leads to damaged, ugly, and uncomfortable buildings and adds immeasurably to the final cost.

DESEGREGATION PLAN UNDERMINED

The School District is still sabotaging the voluntary desegregation plan which it developed. In February of 1980, the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission will examine the results of the plan. If it determines that "the plan is not accomplishing desegregation as required by Pennsylvania law," the Commonwealth Court may take further action. Many believe this could be the ordering of an involuntary plan for desegregation.

Philadelphia is under a court order to desegregate its schools. The School District's plan is meager at best. Still, innumerable deadlines involved in the implementation of the plan have been missed. The plan was to start in September 1978. That deadline was missed and February 1, 1979 became the new target.

The programs were in at least some of the schools by February 1, but the publicity designed to let people know about them was delayed until it was too late. A newspaper

supplement developed to describe the programs wasn't inserted in the major metropolitan dailies until January 28th. That was only a few days before the next semester started and much too late for parents to assess the programs, make a decision and transfer their children. Very few parents are going to move their children during a semester.

In June, there was a plan to send a brochure home enclosed with the report card of each student. Incredibly, the 300,000 brochures describing the Federally funded desegregation programs weren't ready! Another opportunity was lost to urge all parents to consider transferring their children at a logical breaking point so as to bolster desegregation.

* * * * *

It is my hope that this newsletter will bring greater understanding of what has been sacrificed by the superintendent's balanced budget and a greater awareness that the desegregation plan is being systematically undermined. The superintendent and the board members deserve a very low grade for job performance, not the high one they've been giving themselves.

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Vol. XI, No. 2

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

October 24, 1979

CRIME AND DISORDER DISRUPT LEARNING

Crime, violence and vandalism hit schools all over the nation in the 1960's, mirroring the larger society which also experienced a greatly increased rate of crime. Testimony before a Senate subcommittee in 1975 established the gravity of the situation. A congressionally legislated study followed and further documented that crime and disorder had pervaded urban, suburban and rural communities both rich and poor.

Many kinds of crime occur in schools. Teachers and students are assaulted. Possessions are stolen from desks or lockers and sometimes taken directly from teachers and students through force or intimidation. Fires are set in wastebaskets, closets and other places. Knives and guns are brought into schools. Drugs are sold and used there.

Assaults on teachers rank at the top of the list of serious crimes occurring in schools. In 1978, the School District reported 396 such assaults. Sometimes serious injuries result. One teacher suffered permanent eye damage, inner ear problems and deep psychological scars. Tragically, Philadelphia has seen one teacher shot and killed by a student.

The Philadelphia Federation of Teachers has responded by urging its members to press charges in all assault cases from the mildest to the most serious. The supposition is that if charges are

pressed, the student will be dealt with sternly and this will serve to reduce the number of assaults. Unfortunately, teachers are often frustrated and disappointed with the final outcome of their juvenile court experience.

I talked with a teacher who had been assaulted by a student. The incident began when the teacher, who serves as a disciplinarian in a secondary school, smelled marijuana, entered a girls' bathroom and was confronted with a student who used abusive language in refusing to go to class. En route to the teacher's office, the girl struck the teacher, knocked her down and pulled out clumps of her hair. The teacher pressed charges. She went to the school administration building, met with a security officer, and filled out a complaint form. She attended a preliminary interview at the Youth Study Center, a preliminary hearing in juvenile court, and finally the court hearing before a judge.

Juvenile court judges are limited in their decisions to certain alternatives — psychological help for the student, counseling, placement in a foster or other home, probation, or placement in an institution. Under present law, the purpose of the juvenile justice system is not to punish young people, but to treat, supervise, and rehabilitate them in whatever way is best for them. Institutional placement is reserved for

very serious offenses and is almost never the disposition on a first offense. In this case, the student was given probation. Although probation includes being judged a delinquent, having a record, and being supervised by a probation officer, many students do not perceive it as the serious matter that it is. The teacher felt that this student would view probation as a mild slap on the wrist and would therefore feel she had beaten the system.

Plainly, the policy of pressing charges in every assault case cannot be relied on to cure the problem. Too often, the outcome does not serve as a deterrent to other students. Therefore, it would seem wise to analyze all the data on teacher assaults and then look for ways to prevent them and alternative ways to respond to them.

In addition to having charges pressed against them, when students assault teachers or commit other serious offenses they are suspended and, in most cases, transferred to another school. That removes them from their peer group of friends, and if that was a substantial part of the problem, they may be helped. But in many cases, the problem lies elsewhere, and the student is afloat in a sea of unknown faces where no one seems to care that he exists. If he commits another offense, the process is repeated. It is seldom that the student receives any special attention or help, so some students continue to get into trouble, harming themselves and the school community.

You can see that for some of the students who cause trouble, injure others and destroy property, neither the juvenile justice system nor the school system is effective in modifying their behavior. As a consequence, a group estimated to be about 10% of the student population continues to

disrupt and undermine the education of all the others.

Last winter, senior high school principals were overwhelmed by increasing instances of disruption, violence and student misbehavior in their schools. They were swamped with students referred for discipline because of misbehavior, cutting, or more serious transgressions. The principals believe the situation was exacerbated by last year's incredibly destructive teachers' contract settlement which led to a great deal of teacher shuffling and the wide use of substitutes. Because the climate for learning was poor and there was fear that school crime would increase further, the principals met and wrote a report which they submitted to the superintendent.

The superintendent formed a Task Force on Violence soon after that. So far it has concentrated on attempting to lengthen suspensions, increase expulsions, increase the availability of temporary and permanent placement options for "problem students", and improve judicial-school district cooperation. All of these measures focus on responding to school crime and misbehavior after it has occurred. Important as this is, the Task Force should also be giving its urgent attention to the cure for and the causes and prevention of student crime and misbehavior.

VIOLENT SCHOOLS - SAFE SCHOOLS

A national study, Violent Schools - Safe Schools, was published in January 1978 by the National Institute of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare in response to a congressional mandate. It provides a great deal of information about the extent, pattern and victims of crime and misbehavior in schools as well as methods for reduction and prevention. Its intensive

study of ten schools led to the conclusion that "the single most important difference between safe schools and violent schools was found to be a strong, dedicated principal who served as a role model for both students and teachers, and who instituted a firm, fair, and consistent system of discipline." That being the case, a logical first step to reducing school violence would be to work to provide this kind of leadership for Philadelphia schools.

"A firm, fair and consistent system of discipline" depends on an entire staff working together. To achieve this, Philadelphia should return to the concept that teachers share responsibility for student behavior all through the school day and in all parts of the building. In the 1960's, with the advent of the union and contracts, responsibility for student conduct in the halls, lavatories, lunchroom, locker room and school yard was shifted from teachers to non-teaching assistants. Many teachers believe that their responsibilities do not extend beyond their classroom doors. Principals complain that teachers walk down the halls seeing, hearing, and sensing nothing that is happening around them.

Since violence and misconduct have escalated tremendously in the last 15 years, it is now in the teachers' own self-interest to join in demanding certain standards of conduct from students. Non-teaching assistants and administrators cannot carry the entire burden. Teachers have the numbers, and in the students' eyes the status, to be effective. Today's crisis demands that teachers join in a concerted effort to make students realize that all are united in their determination to have an orderly, safe environment throughout the building.

Another thrust of the findings in Violent Schools - Safe Schools

is that the amount of violence and vandalism in a school is related to the way students feel about their school. It was found that students who attend schools which can be characterized as safe believe that the school has something to offer them, that the staff cares about them, and that they have some control over what happens to them. In such schools, fewer students feel anonymous or alienated.

Good counseling is one way to reduce alienation because it helps students to adjust to school, to find their place and improve their academic performance. Unfortunately, counselors in Philadelphia schools have almost no time anymore for this important part of their work. Great blocks of their time must be spent providing expanded service to a substantially greater number of special education students. A shortsighted superintendent has been unwilling to increase the number of counselors. As a result, counselors' important, preventive work with regular students has been sacrificed.

Alternative programs and alternative schools often meet the needs of students who feel alienated and can't make it in a regular school setting. Some students need a different curriculum, a smaller setting, more individualized attention or greater understanding to feel they have a stake in a school. Removed from a large, impersonal institution, their needs are met and there is no buildup of anger and frustration. Unfortunately, under the guise of cutting the budget, the number of alternative programs has been drastically reduced in the last few years.

Students can be helped to develop positive attitudes toward their school. For example, at one high school, incoming 10th graders who had been in trouble in their junior highs were paired with

teachers who volunteered to work with one student each. It didn't require a great deal of time, but each student had a staff person helping him adjust, watching his academic progress, being concerned for his welfare, and pulling for him to be successful. Undoubtedly, other school staffs have developed programs that serve a similar purpose. These programs should be sought out and put into wider practice.

It is surprising, but some teachers bring assaults on themselves and/or provoke other violent acts. They display a lack of respect for students which approaches contempt. They make cutting, sarcastic or belittling remarks. They humiliate students by reprimanding them publicly. Sometimes a student subjected to this treatment feels he must get back at the teacher to prove himself to his peers. His code will not permit him to just take that kind of abuse. That does not excuse the violence, but it means that some assaults could be prevented if such teachers learned how to handle themselves differently. It is a problem that should be addressed promptly.

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The School District of Phila-

delphia, in no way unique, has a very serious problem with crime and disorder in its schools. Very few people seem to be alarmed enough about it. Admittedly, it is difficult to understand the meaning behind stark statistics, but it is necessary. What was it like to be one of the 396 assaulted teachers? How much pain, fear, stress and depression did they experience? What were the repercussions for their families, co-workers and students? Or, what was the potential for loss of life and injury in the 617 fires reported in 1978? How much property was destroyed and how did that affect ongoing programs?

The Task Force on Violence has already been in existence for six months, yet accomplished almost nothing. It appears to have no sense of urgency. It involves only administrators who are focusing on only one aspect of the problem. If an effective effort is to be mounted to reduce crime, disorder, and vandalism in the schools, teachers, other school personnel, students and parents must plan together, in consultation with the police, courts, public and private agencies. Only joint planning, cooperative action, and substantial effort will enable the schools to recreate an environment conducive to the learning process.

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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THE IMPORTANCE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

For too many children, physical education translates into striking out or missing the basket; competing unsuccessfully with others who are bigger, faster, more aggressive or better coordinated; or being the last one chosen for the team. For some it means overwhelming humiliation, as for example, the overweight boy who in front of the whole class, is unable to do a single chin-up. And so a poor physical education program can make students feel clumsy and inadequate, deprive them of self-confidence, and discourage them from engaging in sports or other physical activity. Its damaging impact can last a lifetime.

On the other hand, a good physical education program can help students to get and stay "in shape", and develop positive attitudes toward exercise and physical fitness. This is very important since fitness contributes to the maintenance of good health. A high quality program can make students feel good about themselves physically. It can give them the basic skills and interest they need to participate in athletics or other physical activities. Since today's young people need constructive ways to fill their extra time, such a program makes an important contribution to the individual and to society. It also prepares students for a future which will probably offer them more leisure time than most

people have now.

In preparation for this newsletter, I visited several schools. My visit to Reynolds Elementary School began at 7:30 A.M., the time that an enthusiastic group of youngsters arrived. Arnold Dort, the physical education teacher, holds a gymnastics class at this early hour, before school starts, open to any child that wants to come.

Mr. Dort feels there are many reasons for teaching gymnastics to elementary school children. Early interest and practice lead to greater proficiency and an advantage over students starting later. Gymnastics can lead to participation on a varsity sport's team and eventually to a college scholarship. The exercises develop flexibility, control, muscle strength and endurance, and help to build students' self-confidence.

When Mr. Dort's regular gym classes started, the second graders were the first to come to the basement gymnasium. They shed down to their gym clothes. There were thirty children and a ball for each one so that all could participate in the activities. They were directed to move the ball through the gym using one hand, then the other hand. After that, every child was to throw his ball into one of the basketball hoops or into one of the large cans on the floor in the room. Mr. Dort explained that by asking the chil-

dren to "move the ball", instead of "dribble the ball", there is no right or wrong way to do it and every child can succeed. By providing baskets on the wall and cans on the floor, each child has something she/he can throw into whatever his/her strength or accuracy. Everyone is active. Everyone develops skill. No one fails. A positive self-image is nurtured in gym that, it is hoped, will carry over into the classroom.

Mr. Dort is a collector of other people's castoffs. That's how he got the rowboats standing in the corner which he uses when he teaches students how to get into and sit in a boat, how to change seats and how to row. Later, he takes his students to the river where, having learned the fundamentals of rowing on dry land, they can better utilize their limited time on the river.

Reynolds' students learn about bike riding on bicycles collected and maintained by Mr. Dort. Every child learns to ride and learns to ride safely — stopping, turning, and signaling. Because children enjoy riding and will continue for thirty minutes, bicycling provides one way for them to get the exercise required for cardiovascular development.

Older Reynolds' students, using a vaulting horse instead of a real one, learn the proper way to saddle and mount a horse. Then, when it's their turn to go camping in the spring, they put their skill to use on a real horse.

Mr. Dort volunteers countless hours and provides an outstanding during-school and extra-curricular program. He has many goals in mind. He wants every child to develop confidence in and have good feelings about himself. He wants students to become physically fit and develop specific fundamental skills such as throwing, catching, running, and jumping. He wants, through a very diversified pro-

gram, to expose children to many kinds of physical activity which he hopes will motivate them to pursue physical fitness and recreational interests and/or sports activities later on in school and/or vocations in the field.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

I visited three secondary schools. One senior high was picked at random. One senior high and one junior high were among those recommended by the Division of Physical Education for the quality of their programs.

The physical education program at the randomly selected high school is typical of many. The classes are organized so that three or four teachers and their students are assigned to a gymnasium at a particular time. One of the teachers leads activities for the whole group while the others do a lot of standing around. Students take a large portion of the period which is only 45 minutes long to dress for class. More time is lost taking roll.

At this school, about $\frac{1}{4}$ of the students arrived without the required gym clothes and took seats on the sidelines. The rest wore sneakers and just about anything else they wished. The same applied to the teachers. The lack of even minimal uniformity in appearance was one expression of the lack of standards that permeated the program.

One of the classes I observed began with warm up exercises. They were led by one teacher. When that ended, the boys went with a teacher into a separate room to practice football passes and the girls worked on some beginning field hockey skills with the three teachers remaining. Although the students and the gym were divided into three parts, providing an easy way for each teacher to work intensively with $\frac{1}{3}$ of the class, one teacher was instructing and

the other two did very little. Consequently, more time was lost and in the few remaining minutes of the period, some of the girls did not get even one chance to use a hockey stick.

In another class, physical fitness tests involving about 30 of the 80 students followed the warm-up. This pressed all three of the teachers into service for the last twenty minutes of the period. Students not involved could do as they wished.

Students dislike this kind of physical education. They are bored and put off by it. They express their feelings by coming to class "unprepared", or by taking a long time to get there, or by refusing to do some of the warm up exercises. They gripe about being taught the same fundamentals and rules of the same team sports over and over, year after year. Their time is wasted as is taxpayers' money. One can only wonder why a program of this inferior quality is tolerated!

A second high school that I visited is organized very differently. Each staff member has his/her own class numbering around 30. The school provides thirteen electives for students to choose from in the spring and fall. They include dancing; swimming; gymnastics; aerobics; team sports such as football, basketball, and hockey; and individual activities such as shuffle board and bowling. During the $3\frac{1}{2}$ month winter period students are required to rotate through a number of different activities to sample them. This school strives to prepare students to be active physically all their lives. By combining compulsory and elective activities, they hope to improve the students' athletic skills, get them to try some things they've never done before, increase their physical fitness and help them to develop a liking for vigorous activity.

At the junior high school I visited, like almost all junior highs, students take gym once a week for a double period. There was ample time to warm up, work on a skill, play a game involving everyone, and still have some time at the end for students to do whatever they wished. There were two teachers assigned to work with about 60 boys and girls. It was clear from the way that the class was conducted that the teachers have goals for the class. They want the students to acquire specific skills, be actively involved the whole time, have fun, get some vigorous exercise, and leave feeling positive and happy.

PHYSICAL FITNESS TESTING

All schools are required by the Division of Physical and Health Education to administer six-part physical fitness tests to every student from grades 5-12 twice a year. This is a complex, time-consuming task. The students must do as many sit-ups as they can in 60 seconds. They must do a standing broad jump with the best of three trials recorded to the nearest inch. Speed, agility and flexibility are tested in a shuttle run. There is a test of endurance of the arm and shoulder muscles done on equipment which can be used by only one student at a time. There is a 600 yard endurance run and a 50 yard dash recorded to the nearest 10th of a second. Even where student assistants are used, the tests consume great periods of time during which many students are inactive. An elementary school physical education teacher who sees students once a week can spend 4 or 5 weeks on this project in the fall and again in the spring, consuming 20% to 25% of the time allotted to physical education for an entire year. That makes no sense, especially because the information gained at all levels from the tests is put to little or no use.

It would be much better to test only once every second or third year.

Secondary school physical education has been rocked in the last few years by Federal law (Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments Act) and new state requirements designed to end sex discrimination in physical education and athletics. Schools have been forced to change to coeducational physical education. The elementary schools have always been coed, but in the secondary schools, the men taught the boys in one gym and the women taught the girls in another.

The new law gave schools a few years to prepare for coeducation. Some schools geared up for change and some used up the time postponing the inevitable. Some staffs have worked cooperatively to increase their professional skills and adapt their program to serving girls and boys together. Other staffs have floundered, because some teachers feel very insecure and inadequate in this new situation and are very unhappy at being forced to teach coeducational classes.

Under the new law, secondary schools are required to provide girls and boys with an equal opportunity for participation in interscholastic programs. There must be equal access to facilities,

coaching and instruction, practice time, games, equipment, coaches' compensation, etc. The Philadelphia schools did not have to make substantial changes to meet this mandate.

As physical education in the secondary schools was being forced to go coeducational, new ideas were being developed nationally that have much to contribute to the improvement of physical education programs at all levels. One of these is "humanistic physical education" which focuses on the individual and how to make him feel good about himself and have fun while increasing his physical proficiency and fitness. There are also New Games which stress physical activity, enjoyment, and cooperation. For example, in Infinity Volleyball, both teams work together to keep the ball going back and forth as long as possible.

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Physical education is important and merits greater public attention. The feelings, attitudes, and skills developed in these classes can affect students for the rest of their lives. Existing programs should be evaluated by principals, parents, students, and central administrators with a view to eliminating poor programs and providing more high quality ones.

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

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TEACHER "ASSIGNMENT" POLICIES DAMAGING

We've read a lot in recent years about the assignment and re-assignment of teachers. "Assignment" is a very misleading word to use for a process in which the employee, not the employer, selects the school in which he will work. Except for new teachers coming into the system, principals have no say and the School District has little or none. With very few exceptions, other than the recent limit imposed by racial balance, certification is the only restriction on a teacher's choice. This can result in mismatches of people and jobs and lead to an incredible waste of skills and an inferior quality of teaching which is damaging to students.

Following are some examples of what can happen under the present system. Last September, a science specialist stood by and watched the last available science support position go to a grade teacher. The grade teacher had no special interest in science and had taken no science courses aside from the one or two she took in college while getting her elementary school certification. The science specialist, on the other hand, was well qualified to teach elementary school science having studied science in depth and spent two years teaching in a special science program. But now, the science specialist is teaching fourth grade and the grade teacher is "teaching science". With almost no training

or previous interest in science, she comes to the position with very little while the science specialist has the background to provide a stimulating, quality program. The parents of the children adversely affected, as well as taxpayers, have a right to assume that a "science" teacher in an elementary school must have special qualifications for the job, but that simply is not so.

Teachers graduating from special education programs in recent years have received broad certification enabling them to teach the "mentally and/or physically handicapped." One teacher assigned to the learning disabled took courses so that he could become more effective in his work with these children. When he was forced to transfer from that school and choose a different assignment, all the classes for learning disabled students had been selected by others. He ended up teaching severely impaired retarded youngsters about whom he knew much less. Many of the classes for the learning disabled were picked by teachers whose advanced training and/or experience was in other specialties. Again, personnel policy permitted teachers to select positions for which they had no special qualifications or interest even when there were people available who had both.

In the fall of 1978 when hun-

dreds of teachers were forced to transfer, classrooms previously staffed by open classroom teachers were made available to all elementary school teachers regardless of their background and interest. Previously required special examinations were waived and no knowledge or commitment to this particular way of teaching was demanded. The open classroom program was sacrificed on the altar of expediency and it was devastated.

At his request, a mathematics teacher transferred during the year from a junior to a senior high school with a vacant position. He had been teaching general mathematics and Algebra I and, by his own evaluation and that of the principal, is not capable of teaching more advanced mathematics courses. The principal of the high school had little choice but to develop a roster for this teacher limited to the more elementary mathematics courses. In the process, other teachers' rosters had to be rearranged to cover for his deficiencies and scores of students had to change teachers part way through the year.

If a teacher is judged unsatisfactory in one position and given a second (or even a third or fourth) chance to do better, he may designate five schools having vacancies to which he is willing to be transferred. He is then assigned by the School District to one of the five. If such a transfer is made during the year when the openings may be limited, the contract provides that the teacher may choose again for the beginning of the next school year. Even in the case of teachers who are failing in their jobs, the decision on where they will be given another chance rests primarily with the teacher and not with the system.

Even new teachers coming into the system may select where they would like to teach from available

vacancies. The teacher goes to the chosen school and has an interview with the principal. If the principal wants to reject the teacher, she must put her reasons in writing and submit them to the director of personnel and the teacher. Very few reasons are acceptable and they must be objective ones. On the other hand if the teacher is accepted and decides that she doesn't want to teach there after all, she is permitted to choose another school but is not required to put the reasons in writing.

Some schools, viewed as less desirable to teach in than others, are among the last to be chosen by teachers. As a consequence, these schools had the largest number of unfilled positions in the sixties, then the highest percentages of new and inexperienced teachers, and now they have unfilled positions once again. This is another example of how poorly the teacher "assignment" process serves the system.

CONSIDERED INTERCHANGEABLE

Fundamentally, the staffing needs of school are not being met because the School District operates as though people are mechanical parts that are interchangeable. On several occasions in the last few years, the School District has crammed the "reassignment" of hundreds of teachers into a very brief period. It has provided teachers caught in the process with no more than school addresses and maps of the city. That really says it all! Location is the only thing that matters, or is all that teachers have time to consider.

The Federation of Teachers has taken the view, to which the School District has acquiesced in all too many cases, that all teachers with a particular certification are equal to one another and that very few positions re-

quire special background and experience. Every art or music teacher is as qualified as every other one. Every grade teacher is equally qualified to teach science or language arts. In response, the School District has eliminated special requirements for many positions and not adopted them for others. So it is that special programs advertised as offering something special are frequently staffed with regular teachers, often recruited from the school's own staff, who may or may not have special qualifications.

For example, when the Instructional Enrichment Centers opened as part of the desegregation plan in thirteen schools last February, the School District stated that "specialized programs would be offered in math, science and language skills." The original plan was to advertise system-wide for the teachers. At the last minute, this was abandoned at the superintendent's direction. Principals were directed to recruit from within their schools. In some cases, qualified people were found. In other cases, this was not so. As a result, some Enrichment Centers are staffed with teachers who have little or no in depth knowledge of what they are teaching and/or little or no special experience. Therefore, children recruited for a program that was supposed to offer something unique, in some cases wound up with teachers having only the minimum competency in the subject area required for classroom instruction.

Another example of positions filled by teachers who are not required to have special qualifications is in the art and music magnet program. The School District advertises it as something special. The most talented young people apply and have a right to expect that the program will be staffed with the School District's best. But again, staffing depends only

on seniority and teacher choice, so some positions are filled with people who are exceptionally fine and some by those who are mediocre or worse. Talented art or music students will develop their talent best when they work under teachers worthy of their respect for their professional work as artists and musicians as well as for their teaching skills. Such teachers provide a role model and give students an incentive to be disciplined in and dedicated to their work. Whether they are studying art or music, mechanical drawing, history, or plumbing, students with exceptional ability are entitled to teachers who excel in the field and can challenge and inspire them.

Obviously, the system used to place personnel in schools needs drastic revision, but there is no simple way to do this. Students' rights to quality instruction are paramount, but teachers' aspirations and rights must be protected too. It is difficult to accomplish this under existing circumstances and constraints. Provision must be made for placing teachers forced to transfer, those wishing to transfer, and those new to the system. Racial and experience balance requirements must be met. The Federation of Teachers fights to keep the School District from adding special requirements to positions which would limit the number eligible to fill them, because they want as many jobs as possible open to selection by the large majority of their members. All of this makes appropriate solutions complicated to develop but essential nonetheless.

SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS NEEDED

As pointed out in this newsletter, many jobs require people who have strong specialized knowledge and competence in a particular area as well as special interest and related experience. There

should be special qualifications for special jobs. Criteria have to be established and candidates must be evaluated. Establishing eligibility lists is one way. Applicants should be ranked on the basis of a comprehensive profile with points given for various relevant aspects of their training, performance, experience and proven interest. Written and/or oral examinations could be part of this.

The system used to assign personnel should be modified to serve the schools better. The most important change would be a very fundamental one. As a matter of policy, the personnel department should make it clear to all that it believes people and teaching situations vary greatly one from another, and that the system will be served best by helping principals obtain properly qualified people with special abilities, when and if they are needed. Teachers should be supplied with adequate information about schools with job openings so they can make informed decisions. They should be provided with school profiles

giving information about such things as size, grades served, test scores, and special programs and including a paragraph written by the principal outlining what she wants to communicate most to teachers considering her school. Teachers should be encouraged to consider many factors when making their decision so that they can select a school in which they will be happy and able to contribute to the school's success.

* * * * *

I believe that in recent years the "assignment" practices have proven very destructive to the quality of instruction offered to students. The superintendent and Board of Education have stood passively by and allowed them to go unmodified. It is my hope that broader public knowledge and understanding of these policies and practices will lead to change so that, to a much greater extent, students' educational needs will be favored over all other considerations.

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

Vol.XI, No.5

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

February 14, 1980

MINIMUM COMPETENCY TESTING - NOT A SOLUTION

Business and industry complain that high school graduates arrive on the job without the necessary basic skills. Colleges are forced to give remedial courses in reading, writing, and mathematics to students accepted for admission. Scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test are reported to be continuing on a downward slide. Achievement tests given to Philadelphia students show that too many still score below national averages. All of this has led to a loss of confidence in public education and a cry for steps to remedy the situation.

Legislators who must fund public school systems find themselves under intense pressure "to do something" so that the public gets a better return on its education dollar. In many states across the nation, they have responded by enacting legislation requiring students to pass minimum competency tests prior to graduation, or at set checkpoints along the way through school.

The decision to have minimum requirements for graduation poses many complex questions? What basic skills or minimum competencies should be required? Should they be those needed to succeed in life or just to survive? What is to be the minimum passing score on such tests? Should it be the same for the brightest and the dullest students? What percentage of students can be denied diplomas by a school

system before parents mount a storm of protest? If more than that percentage are expected to fail, or do fail the test, is the answer to lower the passing score, or give students more remedial help so they do better? Unfortunately, these questions do not lend themselves to simple answers.

At first glance, it seems obvious that it is appropriate and right to require minimum competency in reading, writing and computation before a high school diploma is granted. If a diploma is to have meaning it should signify that the recipient has certain basic skills and has met specific standards. It may seem equally sensible to require acquisition of specified minimum competencies at the end of some grades, or each grade, so that students will not move on unless they have the minimum knowledge and skills they need to succeed at the next level.

Unfortunately, tests alone will not solve the basic problem facing the students, the schools, and the society. If some students are hardly learning at all in their many years in school, others are not learning nearly enough, and many are not achieving at the level of their ability. A test examining minimum levels of achievement will identify only the students who have been learning very little. Such tests do not raise a red flag for those who will need remedial help at the

college level, those bringing the Scholastic Aptitude Test scores down, or many of those scoring well below average on standardized tests. A danger connected with minimum competency testing is that it is seen as the solution to the problem when in reality it solves nothing. It doesn't even highlight many of the problem areas.

Minimum competency testing, with the inadequate objective of simply identifying failing students does, in fact, tend to create some serious new problems. An emphasis on minimum competency and basic skills can lead to lower standards and an impoverished curriculum. Minimum competency tests concentrate on reading and mathematics but only on the least amount of skill essential for survival. Because the tests utilize multiple-choice or true/false or short answer formats, they tend to stress isolated skills or bits of learning. They do not test such important skills as the ability to think logically or to analyze problems. Teachers, pressed to prepare their students for the tests, have a natural tendency to concentrate on that which is to be tested. That can translate into modifying the curriculum so that it is narrowed and neither demanding nor challenging enough.

There is another pitfall involved in testing for achievement of minimum competency. It may cause teachers to concentrate so heavily on the lowest achieving children, trying to get them up to a level where they can pass such tests, that many other children are not appropriately challenged. This happened with the California Achievement Tests. There was such a great emphasis on reducing the number of children scoring below the 16th percentile — the level below which children have a great deal of difficulty with reading and mathematics — that there was a tendency to neglect other students who might have achieved more had

expectations for their work been higher or more effort been exerted to push, cajole and stimulate them.

Minimum competency, back to basics, authoritarian teaching, drill, and rote memorization have a tendency to go together. As implemented in many classrooms, they make learning dull, joyless and disconnected from anything with meaning for the student. Paper sales reflect the trend. Schools are buying more duplicating paper, less lined paper. Students are filling in blanks on exercises produced on copying machines, not writing answers to probing questions or expressing their thoughts in writing. In this climate, subjects like foreign languages and music or activities like the school newspaper are considered less important and are more likely to be cut when there is pressure to reduce the budget. All of this threatens the education of today's students and has alarmed some educators.

The governing boards of twelve professional organizations representing diverse subject areas and some school administrators have banded together to urge the nation to "reaffirm the value of a balanced education." Their published statement is called "The Essentials of Education."

"The interdependence of skills and content is the central concept of the essentials of education. Skills and abilities do not grow in isolation from content. In all subjects, students develop skills in using language and other symbol systems; they develop the ability to reason; they undergo experiences that lead to emotional and social maturity. Students master these skills and abilities through observing, listening, reading, talking, and writing about science, mathematics, history and the social sciences, the arts and other aspects of our intellectual,

social and cultural heritage..."

There is proof that skills cannot be successfully taught in isolation. Many students taught grammar through special exercises score well on this section of an achievement test but, when they write a paragraph of their own, they do not capitalize, use periods or write complete sentences. In theory, they "know" the grammar, but they don't apply it — clearly demonstrating that it must be taught within the context of the students' writing if they are to really learn it.

Whether we are talking about thinking, reasoning logically, or writing, students need the opportunity to develop all such skills and abilities in many different subject areas, so that they have plenty of practice and can see their universal usefulness. For example, with writing, students should have the opportunity to write short stories in English class, reports of experiments in science, their own word problems in mathematics class and reports of research done on a specific topic in social studies class. Students must be made to see, in many different contexts, that they have something worthwhile to communicate to others and that other people can understand what they are saying only if they develop their thoughts and then express them clearly and correctly.

We live in a very complicated society where individuals are called upon to make complex decisions. Take as an example the contemporary question of whether or not more nuclear plants should be built to produce energy. Consider the amount of science and economics needed to understand the arguments on both sides of this question. To arrive at a position, one has to have had practice in assembling facts and weighing them against one's own value system. Today's high school students are

tomorrow's decision makers. If their education is not broad and deep, they will not be equipped to fulfill this responsibility.

FUNCTIONAL LITERACY

Pennsylvania does not have a minimum competency law now. However, in response to dissatisfaction with the low achievement level of some high school graduates, the Philadelphia school board has since 1977 required students to pass a functional literacy assessment test prior to graduation. In contrast to many other communities, this test was developed from a special, existing curriculum that had been put into the schools some years before.

In early 1970, an advisory task force made up of school staff and students, university professors, and community representatives established the achievement of functional literacy as one goal of an effort to improve reading in the school district. The task force called for all learners to have the skills necessary to enable them to read a newspaper, follow simple written directions, fill out forms connected with daily living such as applications for employment and driver's license, read instructional manuals, and read newspapers, periodicals and other publications for information and personal satisfaction.

The school district developed a curriculum for teachers to use with students of all ability levels. It was felt that all students could benefit from exposure to and practice in certain tasks required in daily living — filling out a job application, an income tax form, savings account withdrawal and deposit slips. After this curriculum was in place in the schools, a functional literacy test based on it was developed.

Students take the test in 10th grade for the first time and if they fail there are remedial

classes for some, practice exercises to do and several more opportunities to pass the test. In the three years that the test has been given, only slightly over 3% of the 12th graders have failed it proving that almost all Philadelphia students who stay in school through 12th grade do reach this minimum competency level.

Philadelphia also has minimum competency requirements in some of its elementary schools. Students in twenty-one Academics Plus Schools must achieve certain levels of competence or they are not promoted to the next grade. Surprisingly, there is no companion policy that provides help to the students who fail. It is left up to the principals who must rely on their school's resources whatever they happen to be.

There is discussion of expanding the use of competency requirements for promotion. If more students are to be held back, the school district should be prepared to spend extra funds to provide them with special help. Any broad policy of requiring students to repeat a grade when they don't meet certain standards must be accompanied by a program for meeting their needs.

As I have pointed out in this

newsletter, minimum competency testing has little to recommend it as it has swept the nation in the last few years. On the other hand, it could serve a useful purpose if its limitations were recognized and if minimums were only one aspect of the drive for achievement. Achievement at the minimum competency level is not enough to function adequately as an intelligent citizen or secure a job above the entry level. Minimum competency is not a worthy goal for a high school education for most students. It prepares students only for survival, not for a fulfilling, rewarding life.

Our schools need minimum, median, and maximum standards. There should be minimum requirements for earning a diploma or being promoted, but there should also be standards for achievement in the median and maximum ranges with an ongoing effort focused on having as many students as possible achieve at these higher levels. Concentration on the optimum development for every student would lead in a very different direction from the present public focus on minimum competency. Education should be moving to meet individual needs so that students develop their abilities and potential to the fullest.

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

Vol.XI, No.6

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March 17, 1980

THE VOLUNTARY DESEGREGATION PLAN - AN UPDATE

The School District of Philadelphia's Voluntary Desegregation Plan is based on encouraging parents to voluntarily transfer their children from neighborhood schools to other schools so they can receive an education in a desegregated setting. Essentially, the plan provides for creating programs that will attract students to a school, or publicizing existing programs that can attract because of their excellence and/or their unique qualities.

Twenty-four schools have added new programs to enhance their drawing power. There are thirteen Instructional Enrichment Centers which have additional teachers and aides enabling them to offer intensified basic skills instruction and enrichment activities in reading, mathematics, and science. There are eight schools that have added special arts or academic programs. Three schools have all day "child development centers" for five-year-olds designed to attract new families to the public school system and then, it is hoped, to retain them. Also, some new schools have been created, such as the High School for the Creative and Performing Arts and the High School of Engineering and Science, which feature specialized programs and draw students from all over the city.

Examples of existing schools whose programs have drawn white and black students from all parts

of the city for a long time are Saul High School of Agricultural Sciences, Central High School, and Girls High School. There are also several schools in the predominantly white northeastern part of the city for which relatively large numbers of black students have recently been recruited. In two cases, desegregation has been accomplished by merging two pairs of nearby schools.

In its January 22, 1980 report on the status of the voluntary plan, the School District of Philadelphia states that in November 1976, with an enrollment of 258,000, there were 40,200 pupils in 47 schools receiving an education in a desegregated setting. In November 1979, with an enrollment of 232,000, there were 51,700 going to 68 desegregated schools. The report states that this is a 45% increase in the number of desegregated schools, and nearly a 30% increase in the number of pupils in desegregated schools.

It is important to know that the school district bases these figures on its own unique definition of desegregation. It considers any school that contains a white population of not less than 25%, nor more than 75%, to be desegregated. This definition is an arbitrary one utilizing a range which permits the district to consider the largest possible number of schools desegregated. The definition has not been accepted by

the Human Relations Commission which is currently judging the voluntary plan to determine how successful or unsuccessful it has been.

While the January 1980 report puts the best possible face on the changes that have occurred, the picture is less bright when the statistics are examined from the perspective of the whole school system. It becomes darker still when the definition of desegregation is modified to conform to a more widely accepted one. Even using the school district's definition, only 22% of the system's students attend desegregated schools today — just a small increase over the 16% in November 1976. That leaves 78% of the school district's children in segregated schools — almost half of which are 95% or more black or white. If the definition of desegregated was changed just a little, many schools would no longer qualify. For example, if a desegregated school was defined as one with a white population of not less than 30%, nor more than 70%, thirteen of the sixty-eight schools now considered desegregated would be removed from this category.

It should also be noted that too few white students have volunteered to participate in the plan. Of the 8500 pupils who have volunteered to go to schools at some distance from their homes, 85% are black. Therefore, a disproportionate share of the burden of desegregating the schools is being carried by black pupils.

The sincerity of the school district's commitment to desegregation is open to question for several reasons. First, its efforts rely heavily on expensive programs that depend on Federal funding which has been committed on a yearly basis and could be lost in total or in part at any time. That's a very insecure foundation for an effort of this im-

portance. Second, instead of increasing the number of students in inexpensive, desegregated, alternative programs, the district cut the funding for these programs causing a reduction in the number of students served. Third, it has undermined most, if not all, efforts of white parents with children in predominantly black schools to recruit more white students for these schools.

In several areas of the city, there are small groups of white parents with a deep commitment both to public education and desegregation. They view the public schools as instruments for preparing children from all ethnic groups and economic levels for their future and the nation's. They send their children to their local, predominantly black schools. They have worked with zeal and dedication to convince other white parents to do the same. Instead of valuing these efforts and giving them strong support, the school district — either through design or neglect — has done just the opposite. For example, in some schools where parents were enthusiastic about the "open classroom" which utilizes a somewhat different way of learning, it suddenly became difficult or impossible to get trained teachers. The school district did away with the special test and list of qualified teachers for "open classrooms" and any teacher could be assigned. Parents found themselves recruiting for a program that might disappear at any time. That is one example of the way that the school district, whether deliberately or not, has hurt efforts to recruit white students.

Another example is a small, desegregated school where the superintendent filled an administrative leadership position with an individual who had very little comprehension, empathy, or commitment to the school's program. Over a period of years, hundreds of

volunteer hours had been invested by staff, parents, and community in efforts to develop a school which featured cooperative teaching and learning, a creative curriculum, and an emphasis on helping students to become independent, self-motivated learners. The new administrator, having no respect for or understanding of the program, operated in a very destructive way. Through this one appointment, the superintendent seriously harmed a program that had taken years to build. Once again, efforts to recruit additional white students were undermined.

WHY DESEGREGATE?

In the course of doing the research for this newsletter, I learned of two incidents that document once again the importance of helping this generation to grow up free of the hate and bigotry of many of today's adults. A white youngster had been transferred by her parents to a program in a desegregated school some distance from her home. The child was doing well and the parents were very pleased with her progress. A local newspaper did a story on the school and happened to print a picture of the child. Some family members and neighbors learned for the first time that the child attended a desegregated school. The parents were threatened and subjected to so much bitter criticism that they felt compelled to return their daughter to her neighborhood school even though they did not believe that step was in her best interests. How deep the prejudice must have been for people to react this way to a parents' decision that could not have affected them in any way.

In the second instance, parents in a predominantly white school had a choice of having their children participate in a magnet program with black youngsters who were transferring in, or of having them remain racially

isolated and denied the enriched, superior academic experience of the magnet. Half the white parents chose to have their children stay out of the magnet program. With racism obscuring judgment to this extent, it is very clear that there is a great need for black and white children to go to school together so that they can rid themselves of these feelings which are so destructive for everyone involved.

No voluntary plan is going to desegregate Philadelphia's schools. It is not possible to create or fund enough different programs to attract enough students to enough different schools.

The alternative to a voluntary plan is a plan based on assigning pupils to schools. District 3 illustrates the necessity for assigning students if the maximum amount of desegregation is to be achieved. The ethnic distribution of children in the elementary schools in District 3 is 2% Asian, 50% black, 6% Hispanic and 41% white. Yet of the nineteen elementary schools, only six are desegregated now. The remaining thirteen are 80% or more white or black. In fact, there is a total of only five white children in three schools while three other schools in the district are 86% or more white. In this district, the elementary schools could be desegregated so that black and white children were in about equal numbers in each school and no one would have to travel too far.

Although the voluntary plan has succeeded in desegregating only a few of the school district's schools, there are some positive things that can be said for it. Several thousand more students are now going to school with students of different ethnic backgrounds. They are learning to know and respect one another. Friendships are being formed across what were once racial barriers. Many chil-

dren are receiving more individualized attention and many are benefiting from broadened academic programs and intensified arts programs.

If the voluntary plan is to fulfill its limited promise, there must be leadership at all levels in the city and the school district. Parents must be made to feel that putting their children into a desegregated school situation is a step that is viewed as promoting the health and welfare of the city as a whole. They must be made to see that this is the right thing to do and that it is in the best interests of their children and all children. It must become the thing to do — something which brings broad community approval.

The president of the school board must promote the value of desegregation and do it with conviction. The mayor must point out that one way to help bring the city's residents together is to have the school district's white, Hispanic, and black children

attend school together. The religious community must provide moral and religious leadership. Businessmen who want a vigorous, flourishing city should take a firm public position in support of desegregated schools. Philadelphia's elected representatives at the Federal, state, and city levels should also provide leadership and support the concept.

To support the concept of desegregation under present circumstances is to support a goal. It should be supported by everyone — those who live in the city and those who only work in the city. There should be newspaper, radio, and television commercials in support of desegregation featuring individuals representing the leadership of business and industry, the professions, and civic groups. Desegregated schools lead to understanding, respect and harmony. Every young person that attends a desegregated school and learns that it is the person that counts, not the skin color, will be a better citizen — and that can't help but benefit us all.

With this ninety-second issue, The Oakes Newsletter completes its tenth year of publication. I would like to express my gratitude to the Alfred And Mary Douty Foundation and The Philadelphia Foundation for their generous support of the Newsletter over a long period of time.

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the OAKES newsletter

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Helen Oakes - Author and Publisher

Vol. XI, No. 7

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

April 30, 1980

TOO MANY PAID TOO MUCH - STUDENTS AND TAXPAYERS SUFFER

The Philadelphia School District's budget for next year was made public at the end of March. As has been true for many years, expenditures were up considerably but revenues were not. The superintendent's proposal for closing the gap recommended cuts and identified the programs that he believes should be supported with additional funds from the city and the state.

The total amount of the superintendent's proposed budget for 1980-81 was \$780 million. This would have required \$50 million more in revenue. \$15 million was requested from city council — \$5 million to fund an expanded desegregation program and \$10 million for critically necessary improvements and alterations to the schools. \$35 million was requested from the state for mandated increases in the special education program.

The superintendent arrived at a 1980-81 budget figure of \$780 million by adding \$112 million in increased costs for 1980-81 to this year's estimated expenditures of \$734 million and then subtracting \$66 million in cuts from the total. The increase of \$112 million is attributable to \$42 million in salary increments and salary increases (already contracted for); expanded special education services; increases in employee benefits; expanded spending for desegregation (\$6 million) and

building repairs (13 million); increased costs, especially for fuel and utilities; and several other smaller items. Some of the larger items in the list of \$66 million in cuts are \$17 million due to a projected decrease in enrollment of 14,000 in regular classes; \$21 million saved by increasing maximum class size by two and reducing teacher preparation time; \$7 million due to a decrease in the use of substitutes; and \$6 million saved by a reduction in non-school personnel.

After the superintendent's budget was presented, \$40 million of the anticipated revenue was thrown into question. During a budget crisis in 1977, the former mayor of Philadelphia had promised the school district grants from the city for five years — \$20 million for the first three years and \$40 million for the last two. Although the school district would have much preferred an increase in the real estate tax, it had to settle for the grants. The new mayor, believing that the city and the school district budgets should be kept separate, has refused to make such a grant from the city's general fund and ordered the \$40 million removed from the city's budget. He said, however, that he would support a request to city council to raise taxes for the schools if the school district could prove that it really needs the money.

The loss of the \$40 million widened the gap in the superintendent's budget to \$90 million. The school district is now coming to the taxpayers asking for substantially increased taxes to maintain essential services. Unfortunately, when scrutinized, it can be shown that the school district is currently mispending millions of dollars.

There is a glut of highly paid people. Many, many salaries are so high that they are completely out of line with the job requirements and with what is paid for like jobs outside the school district. Many highly paid administrators carry relatively little responsibility and have few people under them. In the last five years under Dr. Marcase, jobs have been upgraded to become even higher paying and new high salaried positions have been created.

Recent access to a list of everyone in the school district making over \$25,000, excluding teachers and principals in the schools, brought some messages home forcefully. There are 1,050 people in administrative and supervisory positions on the list. There are 33 people in positions such as executive director and associate superintendent making over \$40,000. There are 193 people, mainly directors and assistant directors, making between \$35,000 and \$40,000. There are 263 people in the \$30,000 to \$35,000 range, 575 earning between \$25,000 and \$30,000. It is important to remember that to calculate the real cost to the taxpayers of these high salaries, you have to add another 19% for fringe benefits. Also, on May 1, 1980 these salaries will go up another 5%.

Trying to get an accurate picture of how the school district spends its funds is like trying to find your way through a maze. However, my study this year convinces me that millions of dollars can be

saved by abolishing high level, high paying administrative positions that can't be justified and many other positions that are outrageously costly.

A strong Office of Research and Evaluation is absolutely essential if the school system is to develop sound educational plans or make wise decisions, but an examination of the staffing of this office reveals wasteful spending. Of its 52 researchers, 23 are research assistants paid reasonable salaries (\$18,100 to \$26,700 per year), but the other 29 are research associates, 24 of whom earn over \$33,600 per year. That is about 1½ times what a comparable research person outside the school system earns. There is also a very strong probability that the office could function just as effectively with more research assistants and fewer of the associates.

The administrative hierarchy of Research and Evaluation consists of one executive director, five directors, one assistant director and two managers. Six of the nine earn \$37,000 or more and the other three earn only two or three thousand dollars less. Under Dr. Marcase, this office has added a top administrative position and two positions have been upgraded from assistant director to director. There is no justification for so many highly paid administrators. All in all, hundreds of thousands of operating and Federal fund dollars are being squandered. The costs of this office should be reduced by abolishing many research associate positions and some administrative positions.

The Office of Federal Programs provides another example of an office wallowing in high priced administrators. The office is responsible for bringing Federal dollars into the school system and for developing and monitoring the Federally funded programs. It has an executive director paid \$40,516.

Under him, there are three directors paid from \$37,000 to \$38,700. There is one for "coordination", one for "development and field services" and another for "planning and operations." Incredibly, there is even a newly created position — an assistant director at \$31,700. These five people supervise only 22 others, but draw down \$184,000. The school system does receive over \$100 million Federal dollars for programs, but they are administered by other offices. It doesn't take five administrators at those high salaries to secure the money and handle the paperwork. If proof beyond common sense is needed, the office functioned with two less directors in 1975. Although all but the executive director are paid with Federal dollars, it is still taxpayers' money and shouldn't be squandered no matter what its source.

Many, if not most, administrative offices could fulfill their functions at much lower cost. Informational Services provides another example. It has a director paid \$40,500, a "coordinator of external communications" paid \$36,700 and a public information specialist at \$33,100. The office does little more than convey information to the public and the press and aid communication within the system. At a time when school children do not even have enough books and paper, the system cannot afford to invest so many dollars in a service such as this.

It is hard to imagine a school superintendent adding to an already bloated administrative bureaucracy during a period when there was not enough money to keep schools clean or make needed repairs. But those were the circumstances when Dr. Marcuse created a new high level position of Executive Director of Communications Media which pays \$40,516 today. Under his appointee he grouped some existing offices which only amounted to fiddling with the school system's table of

organization. The only significant change resulting from the creation of this unnecessary position was that administrative costs went up and more dollars were drained away from those needed to provide services to students.

More dollars could be saved and better service rendered if the school district would reduce the plethora of elementary school programs. Today, there are six of them — Academic Resource Center Program, Benchmark, Checkpoint, Follow Through, Primary Skills and Project Bridge. Each was developed to raise academic achievement. Each is a separate program with its own administrators and source of funds and its own unique program and materials. Together they employ nine secretaries and fifty-six people that supervise or coordinate. Selecting the most successful programs and dropping the others would reduce costs.

I am convinced that a careful study of each of the administrative offices of the school district would reveal even more clearly that there are too many people at extremely high salary levels. The only available remedy now is to abolish a large number of positions so as to greatly reduce the number of people that are so highly paid.

MORE MISSPENT DOLLARS

There are more examples of squandered dollars. There are 223 department heads in the high schools and 83% of them earn \$32,000 or more during the ten month school year. Unfortunately for the taxpayers, their teaching load is 60%-80% less than a teacher's. They teach only one or two periods per day instead of the five required of teachers. However valuable the service they perform, it is not worth the astronomical cost and cannot be justified. The school district has tried to negotiate an increase in the teaching

load with the Federation of Teachers, but it has failed. Therefore, the position of department head should be abolished and any essential functions picked up by others.

The salaries of school psychologists can best be described as another crime committed against the taxpayers. There are 64 psychologists. By next September, 35 of the 36 working the ten month school calendar will be earning \$33,200 and all 28 of those now on a twelve month salary schedule will be earning \$39,850. That is at least \$10,000 more than psychologists receive for comparable work in other agencies and institutions. Apparently, the only practical way to reduce the cost of this service is to do away with this position and then contract the service out.

It should be noted that the salaries of all principals and administrators are linked to the maximum salaries of some of the more highly paid groups of people represented by the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers. The PFT has done well for its members by greatly increasing salaries and fringe benefits over the years. Because of the salary linkage, and

a contract clause guaranteeing the same benefits, the administrators have done equally well. The school board has given the cabinet members and the superintendent virtually just what these other two groups got. Put in perspective, this means that everyone on the school district's side of the bargaining table negotiating with the teachers has a built in conflict of interest. Each stands to gain personally whatever the teachers get. That leaves no one trying to hold costs down. It explains, in part at least, why personnel costs are so very high.

I am very aware that presenting these facts at this time will, if anything, make it more difficult for the school system to get whatever additional funds it really needs. However, it is wrong to increase taxes and continue to mispend funds. The school system should make drastic changes which go way beyond the few examples I've cited before it receives more funds. There should be conclusive proof that the system's first priority is providing the school children of Philadelphia with the essential services that they deserve.

4/30/80

Correction: The Oakes Newsletter for March 1980 was the 94th issue and marked the completion of the tenth year of publication.

Note: The index for The Oakes Newsletter has been delayed but will be sent to paid up subscribers when it is completed.

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BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT MUST BE REPLACED

Once again the School District of Philadelphia faces major problems. Its recently passed budget requires substantial, harmful cuts to bring it into balance and is based on some very doubtful premises. The teachers' contract expires August 31. The new one must incorporate essential changes, avert a strike, and keep the budget in balance. This is a very difficult task.

At this critical time, it is very unfortunate that the schools are stuck with a Board of Education and a superintendent in whom a great many people have lost all confidence. The board members, all appointed by former Mayor Rizzo, appear to be unwilling and unable to grapple with the system's problems or to even try to understand them fully. Superintendent Michael Marcuse casts himself in the role of a successful leader of a large urban school system while staff morale sinks lower and lower and it becomes increasingly more difficult for teachers and principals to do their jobs.

As scheduled, the Board of Education passed the 1980-81 School District budget at a morning meeting on May 29. Although board members received copies of the budget resolutions just before the meeting began and could not have known what they were voting on, they raised no protest. With discussion limited to the legality of assuming certain revenues would be

forthcoming, it was all over in less than an hour.

School District budgets, when presented in detail, reveal a great deal about the district's priorities, goals, and specific plans. The entire budget process this year, depending on your point of view, was designed to, or served to keep board members and the public in the dark. As originally presented in March, this year's budget was in a very condensed, summary form. In addition, in a departure from prior years, most of it represented what had been requested by the various directors and managers — not what was proposed by the superintendent. The superintendent's input was limited to a two page listing of cuts. Some were specific, many were not. For example, the reader had no idea what positions would be eliminated by the superintendent to save the \$4.6 million he labeled as non-school administrators, supervisors, and specialists.

When the School District went before City Council to plead for more revenue, the superintendent presented Council with the thin summary document. City Council members asked for the detailed back up document and were outraged when they found that it didn't exist. They demanded a detailed budget but when they got it, it didn't tell them very much. The 1,729 positions to be cut from the budget (at a saving of \$50.7 mil-

lion) were still simply listed on two pages with little inkling of what the superintendent really planned or what the effects would be.

Throughout the entire two-month period, the Board of Education spent very little time on the budget in public or private. There was never any public discussion of the superintendent's proposed cuts and their impact on the classroom, or whether his budget really allocated all possible resources to benefit children in the classroom. Board members expressed little interest in, or knowledge of, this crucial document.

To balance the budget, the superintendent plans to eliminate \$20.8 million in positions required by the present contract of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT). He proposes to increase maximum class size from 33 to 35 and reduce teacher preparation time in elementary and junior high schools. Both provisions are ones for which teachers have fought long and hard. Parents are with them in opposing larger class size. Other measures could be taken to reduce spending. There are many millions of misspent dollars, as cited in this newsletter's last issue and in testimony by others before City Council, which have not been eliminated from the budget.

The superintendent did a miserable job of negotiating with the PFT in 1978 and that contract is the cause of many of today's problems. At a time when the union might well have made concessions in exchange for the salary increases they got, none were extracted. Just the opposite happened. The PFT walked away with a big new pot of gold.

The superintendent argued recently in an op-ed piece in The Inquirer that he and the Board of Education had no responsibility for the 1972, 1976, and 1978 con-

tract settlements. He claimed the Board held firm in every case, but outsiders came in, took over, and capitulated to the union. If we examine the 1978 settlement, it is clear that Mayor Rizzo did step into the negotiations and must share responsibility for the results. However, the superintendent did nothing to protest, or stop the gift giving, or even identify what was being given away. Instead, he applauded the settlement. The Bulletin of September 10, 1978 reported that "School Superintendent Michael P. Marcase told everyone he couldn't be more delighted." From my own observation at the time, both Dr. Marcase and Board of Education President, Arthur Thomas, seemed to be walking on air.

One wonders what they found to celebrate. They had a contract, but there was nothing in it to bring a smile to the face of anyone who felt responsibility for providing children with a quality educational program. There were provisions, designed to save dollars in the first several months, that were sure to create an educator's nightmare. The settlement provided lots of gold nuggets for the PFT and nothing for the school children.

Money was to be saved in the first year by laying off 1700 teachers from September to February 1. This was accomplished by the temporary expedient of increasing class size to 37 and using per diem substitute teachers to cover classes two periods a week during teachers' preparation periods. For more than half a year, the schools had to cope with a generally chaotic personnel situation which included incompetent, inexperienced, or many different people in classrooms some or all of the time.

The Philadelphia Federation of Teachers got salary increases and wrested a job security clause from the school system. This guaranteed

jobs after February 1, 1979 to all union members employed during 1977-78 for the life of the contract. Because enrollment is dropping, this generated a surplus of teachers. At a time of shortages and unmet needs, the School District was forced to retain and pay teachers that it didn't need. In addition, the no lay-off clause made it impossible for the school system to meet the classrooms' changing needs. It had to utilize the people it had even if that meant jamming a square peg into a round hole.

The PFT secured an agreement to pay \$100 per year for each employee into a Legal Services Fund which provides employees, their spouses, or dependents with free personal legal services. At a time of grave financial problems for the School District, no such new fringe benefit should have been added.

One outrageous clause was never announced and probably is still unknown to most Board of Education members. I found it by comparing the new contract with an old one. Appearing for the first time in the present contract, a clause reads "Parent-Nursery teacher shall be considered as 4/5 teachers (effective 7/1/79)." Until that date, these teachers received 3/5 of a regular teacher's salary for teaching prekindergarten children from 9:00 to 12:00 each day. Three-fifths appears to be more than fair for those hours. It is hard to imagine why Dr. Marcase capitulated to this unreasonable demand and then kept it so quiet.

One of the most destructive agreements arrived at is the method for theoretically giving high school students the 990 hours of instruction each year that is required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Almost every high school is short 36 to 58 hours per year. The union and the School District agreed to meet the time

requirement by holding classes twice a week after the end of the regular day. These classes were to be staffed by volunteer teachers who would be paid at the extracurricular rate which is now \$16.87 per hour. All students would be required to attend the extra classes if they were not already taking extra subjects or involved in activities.

Principals knew from the very beginning, and the superintendent must have known, that the plan wouldn't achieve its educational objectives and would be costly. Most students simply will not willingly stay after school for a class that is not absolutely required. Apparently most teachers won't either, because not nearly enough teachers volunteered.

At one typical high school that I visited in May, the failure and fraudulence of the plan was obvious. 2200 students were required to attend the extra classes, but only enough teachers volunteered to accommodate about one-third of that number. Predictably, only 300 students signed up. By late May, the number attending had dwindled to less than 200 and many classes had as few as five to fifteen students.

Principals are put in the position of trying to enforce an unenforceable rule. This serves to undermine their authority, diminish their credibility, and cause students to have less respect for them. No superintendent who knew, understood, and cared about the high schools in his district would ever have agreed to this damaging, unworkable plan.

In testimony before City Council, and in the same op-ed piece in which Dr. Marcase tried to shed responsibility for the contract settlements, he understated the size of the salary increases granted teachers in the last six years. He said that the increases since 1974 have averaged 7.4% per

year. Although this statement may be accurate, his calculations were based solely on the percentage increases negotiated through the contracts. He totally excluded the automatic annual salary increments that all teachers get in each of their first ten years. Therefore, 7.4% does not give a true picture of the real gains teachers have made. Substantial annual increments should have been included, particularly because the contracts have caused them to greatly increase over the period. For example, in 1974 a teacher going from step 7 to step 8 received about \$500 more, but today it is about \$1100.

Let's examine Dr. Marcase's 7.4% figure using two examples from the group of teachers with masters' degrees who represent more than 35% of the teachers. Teacher #1 was on step 4 of the salary schedule in September 1974 making \$11,554. As of May 1980, she is on the 9th step with an annual salary of \$21,679. Taking her income each of those years and calculating the percentage increase for each year and then averaging them out, as Dr. Marcase did, her average annual increase was 11.2%, more than half again over 7.4%. Teacher #2 was at step 11, the top of the salary schedule

in September 1974 making \$16,787. Today, compensation at step 11 is \$26,723. Calculating as described above, his average annual increase was 8.2% (more than 7.4%), but he is making almost \$10,000 more today than he was in September 1974.

For an overwhelming majority of teachers, whether they were on a step in September 1974 or at maximum, their salaries have increased by a larger amount than Dr. Marcase's 7.4%. The superintendent is currently involved in critical negotiations with the very powerful teachers' union, yet he saw fit to understate the salary increases that the union has won for its members. That serves to hand the PFT another weapon to use against the taxpayers and offers further proof of the superintendent's incompetence.

* * * * *

The case against Dr. Marcase has been made in this issue of the newsletter and in prior ones. He should be replaced. Through the budget process, Board of Education members have vividly displayed their unwillingness and inability to shoulder the awesome responsibility of public education. They should step down. It's time for new leadership.

6/9/80

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