the OAKES newsletter

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

Vol.III, No.1 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania September 17, 1971

BUDGET CUTS DEEP AND HARMFUL

Philadelphia public schools have opened for the 1971-72 school year and the total anticipated revenue from local taxes, state subsidies and federal grants is inadequate to meet budgetary needs for the fourth straight year.* "Financial crisis", while an accurate term to describe this situation, has been used so many times before that it has lost its ability to alert people to the grim truth. I urge you to examine the figures, the budget cuts, the possibility of a shortened school year, and then face up to this very real fiscal crisis.

Dr. Mark Shedd, Superintendent of Schools, presented a $394 million budget to the Board of Education last spring. (See below.) He pointed out that, even though it was $82 million more than the previous year, it was a "standstill" budget which provided nothing new or improved. The Board of Education, despite great effort, was unable to secure this additional revenue and it was forced to order cuts in the budget, slashing it by $34 million. This reduced the budget to $360 million — still $30 million out of balance. Believing that further cuts would jeopardize any possibility of conducting a sound educational program, the Board decided to bring the budget into balance by shortening the school year by about four weeks. That decision, based on reality, stood until September 13, 1971 when the Board of Education yielded to pressure and increased its spending level by $35 million reinstating the full school year, sports and extracurricular activities.

Millions		
$ 312		Last year's (1970-71) budget
82		Increase required to stand still (Covers contracted salary increases, debt service, etc.*)
$ 394	$ 394	Proposed 1971-72 budget
	34	Budget cuts
	$ 360	
	30	Saved by closing schools four week early
	$ 330	Adopted 1971-72 budget which equals the anticipated revenue from city, state and federal sources that is now available to fund the budget.
	35	Board of Education resolution of September 13, 1971
	$ 365	Revenue needed

* See The Oakes Newsletter, March 1971.

THE CUTS

The School District, in reducing its budget by $34 million, attempted to cut where it would hurt the basic educational program the least. Areas not relating directly to instruction were cut back hardest, but all programs were cut and the results will be felt in many painful ways by all.

Some of the most significant budget cuts are:

1. 650 teaching positions have been eliminated.

a. This sharply reverses a gradual trend toward decreasing class size. Teachers will have more children in their classes this year, making individualized instruction more difficult.

b. Secondary school principals, allocated fewer teachers, will have much less flexibility in their use of teachers for professional duties other than teaching. For example, in one school last year, two teachers had fewer classes and relieved the principal of some discipline problems. This year, however, they must return to full time teaching. The principal's school will suffer because he will have less time to observe and evaluate his teachers, to work for increased staff competency and higher staff morale.

c. Many art, music and physical education teaching positions in the elementary schools have been eliminated. The School District had made considerable progress since 1966 in providing these specialist teachers and now these services have been substantially cut.

2. The counseling and library services in secondary schools have been cut. In the schools which have sustained the cuts in counselors, case loads will be 15-20% higher this year than last. In some high schools, libraries will be closed part of the day.

3. There has been a drastic reduction in personnel assigned to developing and advancing the skills of both inexperienced, and other teachers. The 200 "lead teachers" who have carried the bulk of this burden for the last few years have been cut out entirely.* Others who provided leadership in improving the instructional program have been cut back.

4. Funds for the development of new courses of study (e.g. drug abuse, environmental education, foreign languages) and the subsequent training of staff have been severely cut.

5. Allocations for books, materials and equipment have been severely reduced creating shortages. Emergency funds to provide additional or supplementary supplies and equipment during the year, or to replace instructional materials that are damaged or stolen, no longer exist. If a school is broken into by vandals, there will be no money for replacements.

6. Funds for research have been cut. This lessens the capability of the School District to analyze, evaluate and monitor old and new programs and methods. It becomes more difficult to deter-

* This cut is being contested in court by the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers.

mine what changes will lead to increased student learning.

7. Provision of safe, comfortable and educationally efficient school buildings for the present and the future has been set back.

a. Funds to clean and maintain buildings have been severely cut. Peeling paint and broken windows and sidewalks will have to be tolerated in more and more places for longer periods of time.

b. Funds to rent facilities have been cut back. This will decrease possibilities for relieving overcrowded schools by leasing nearby buildings and may lead to half-day sessions, an evil removed from elementary schools eight years ago.

c. All building projects not currently under construction have been suspended. The building program, which was designed to remove obsolete, non-fireproof buildings from the system and relieve overcrowding, has been stopped. (This suspension of capital budget items results directly from the inability of the operating budget, now and in the foreseeable future, to support increasing debt obligations.)

8. There is a job freeze in effect, to make the necessary further reductions in the School District staff. People who leave the system are not replaced. Often, this leaves important positions unfilled and creates hardships for students and staff alike.

BUDGET REVISIONS

That, in brief, describes the austerity budget adopted by the Board of Education. It is a budget that excludes many programs and services which children need and to which they are entitled. Tragically, the storm of public protest centered almost solely on the elimination of sports and extracurricular activities which include music, art, dramatics, debating, student newspapers, yearbooks and class trips. While these are very important and give added meaning and purpose to the lives of many young people, they are not a primary function of public education. The Board of Education, at its meeting September 13, 1971, responded to the public clamor by restoring these sports and extracurricular activities, at an approximate cost of $5 million, in spite of the fact that the School District continues to suffer from the cuts of essential personnel, services, books and materials. It was a decision, in my opinion, which flaunts sound educational priorities and does not serve the best interests of the students or the City.

The Board of Education, at the same time, increased its budget further by extending the school year to its proper June closing date. However, we should all be forewarned. The Board based its budgetary increases on pledges of funds made by public officials and candidates for public office who have, at present, no specific revenue sources or legislation to back the pledges.

PUBLIC RECOGNITION NEEDED

If the schools are to remain open until June and if public education is to be placed on a sound fiscal basis, it will re-

quire public recognition that:

1. Philadelphia's "financial crisis" in public education is not just a phrase but a stark reality.

2. The toll in learning and the privation exacted by the 1971-72 budget cuts are intolerable and will have far-reaching consequences.

3. Every citizen of Philadelphia has a stake in a functioning, viable public school system.

4. It is the citizens who must insist that their representatives at the city, state and national level provide sound and adequate financial support for public education.

-September 14

A Note To New Readers:

The Oakes Newsletter is an independent publication which first appeared in April 1970 and has been issued every month since then except for July and August. The Newsletter is not affiliated with any organization.

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

- -

Subscription - $3.00 for one year. If you are able, please make a contribution over and above your subscription or renewal which may be deducted from your income tax. Make check payable to Acorn Educational Press, Inc. and send to 6400 Drexel Road, Philadelphia, Pa. 19151.

THE OAKES NEWSLETTER
6400 Drexel Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19151

the OAKES newsletter

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

Vol.III, No.2 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania October 22, 1971

THE DRIVE FOR READING IMPROVEMENT

Under the leadership of Dr. Mark Shedd, Superintendent of Schools, and with the support of the Board of Public Education, the Philadelphia public school system undertook in 1970, a massive effort to improve the reading ability of its students.

Many of the problems and frustrations of unsuccessful students stem from their inability to read. At least 40% of Philadelphia's public school students read poorly. Lacking reading skills such as the ability to pick out main ideas, infer from what is read, outline, read critically and use reference materials, they are constantly faced with school work which they cannot successfully complete. Meeting failure again and again, many become discipline problems, start to cut classes or to stay away from school and eventually many drop out. Then they are doomed to low paying, unskilled jobs or to joblessness and hostility to society and delinquency are natural concomitants. Thus, an inability to read is the root cause of many extremely serious problems for the student, the school system, and the community at large. Dr. Shedd gave reading a top priority in the spring of 1970 and began a program to wipe out this basic cause of widespread academic failure.

The Board of Education in June 1970 resolved that "By the end of the school year 1975-76, each student receiving instruction in regular classes will acquire those reading skills necessary to adequately function in school and society; and students in Philadelphia will read as well or better than students elsewhere."

The 1970-71 school year saw the beginning of the gearing up for an all-out assault on reading deficiencies in Philadelphia school children. Groups of teachers, principals, reading specialists and community representatives met in each district, and in many individual schools, to examine their problems and map out a program to improve reading achievement. Decisions were made locally by those who would then carry them out. Each of the eight school districts had a reading project manager, working under the district superintendent, who gave leadership and drive to the district effort. In many cases, new instructional programs were adopted and training for teachers was begun.

Many districts chose to depart considerably from previously used methods of teaching reading. There was a marked swing from fitting children into programs, to fitting programs to students. Some districts used programs which develop comprehension and study skills together with an enjoyment and appreciation of literature through the use of a wide range of materials geared to meet individual needs. The materials include tape recorders, record players, projec-

tors and filmstrip viewers together with books, magazines, all kinds of kits and programmed materials. However, any program tailored to the individual student makes heavy demands on the teacher who must determine each student's strengths and weaknesses, prescribe the specific materials and activities required to fit his needs and continually assess his progress. Many teachers need further training to carry out such a program.

Some of the responsibility for training teachers and for the day to day operation of the reading program falls to the reading teacher in each individual school. While he previously worked exclusively with small groups of students needing special help, now his primary role is to work with the school staff. Many reading teachers have needed assistance in developing the necessary skills to take on these new leadership responsibilities.

In every district now, there is a corps of reading specialists available to work with reading teachers and classroom teachers. Since many classroom teachers came into the profession with little or no work in reading, this service is particularly needed. Teachers now have more access to, as well as supervision from, professionals who can help them perfect old, new or different methods of working with children.

Any evaluation of achievement at the end of the first year of the reading effort must take into account that in many parts of the city, there were long delays in getting started, because new materials arrived late and staff members needed extensive training. In addition, there was a teachers' strike followed late in the year by a financial crisis that rocked the system. Thus, we could not have expected dramatic, system-wide improvement at the end of the first year.

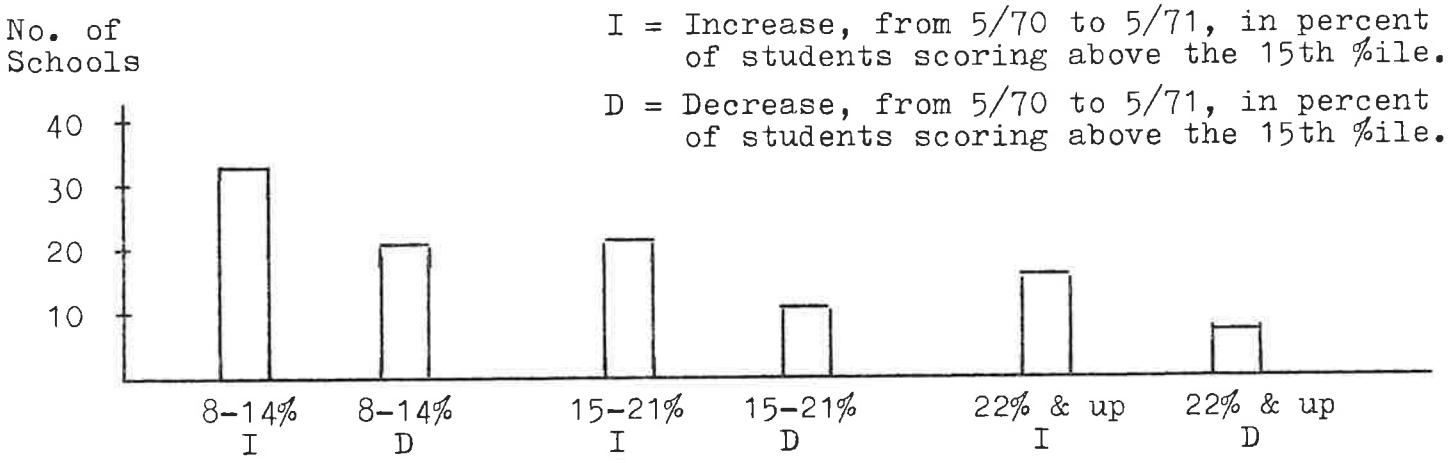
FIRST YEAR PROGRESS

Professionals in the system, however, point to much that is heartening. Among teachers and pupils there is a renewed interest in reading and an attitudinal change toward it,as administrators at all levels have placed a priority and a strong emphasis on it. Children sense its importance and this increases the amount of effort that they put forth. Teachers have noted improved attendance and a lessening of discipline problems.

There are also some encouraging results to be noted in the spring 1971 tests of students from year 2 (corresponds to grade 2) through grade 8. One of the major thrusts of the School District last year was to decrease the number of students whose test scores were at the 15th percentile or below. Most students scoring at this low level read poorly and can not cope with school work and if there is no improvement will leave school unable to read newspapers, fill out necessary forms or follow written instructions. The spring 1971 city-wide standardized test results indicate that children in year 2 improved their performance. In 69 schools, between May 1970 and May 1971,there was an increase of 8 percent or more of year 2 students scoring above this lowest percentile group. (See graph p.3)

Dr. Shedd attributes this year 2 improvement to the school system's concentration on early childhood education over the past few years. The Head Start Program gives summer kindergarten experience to children who would otherwise enter year 1 without any. Follow Through, a federally funded program in kindergarten through year 3 in about twenty schools, delivers a comprehensive education program accompanied by health, nutritional and social services.

Number of Schools Showing Increase or Decrease from May 1970 to May 1971 in Percentage of Students Scoring Above the 15th Percentile in Year 2 in Reading.



The number of schools that significantly increased the percentage of their students scoring above the 15th percentile between May 1970 and May 1971 far exceeded the number of schools that showed a similar decrease.

Another encouraging aspect of the test results is that there are elementary schools in which there was consistent improvement in reading achievement throughout the school. These schools are spread through the city, some are small and some are large. Among them are schools that have previously experienced the greatest degree of failure in teaching inner city children to read. Their success last year offers strong evidence that the job can be done.

This year we can look for greater improvement in achievement because we are off to a much better start. Most districts enlarged and stabilized their reading staffs last year and began this year with a complete staff. Teachers, benefiting from experience, were better prepared this year and knew how and where to begin. Materials and supplies were in place at the opening of school. School reading teams and district reading teams are entering their second year of working together and will probably be more

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - ORDER FORM - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Please enter my subscription to The Oakes Newsletter, $3.00 for one year.

Contributions over and above the subscription cost are most welcome, are deductible from your income tax and are needed to cover distribution costs.

Checks should be made payable to ACORN EDUCATIONAL PRESS, INC. and sent to 6400 Drexel Road, Philadelphia, Pa. 19151

Name _____

Address _____

effective because of this.

However, there are minuses to balance the pluses. The School District budget has been drastically slashed this year. While the reading budget itself has remained intact, reflecting reading's priority, other budget cuts will adversely effect the reading program. For example, the cut in the number of teachers led to increased class size which makes individualized reading instruction more difficult. Fewer counselors will mean more students with unresolved personal problems, some of which will interfere with their learning. The cuts in the library service will lessen students' opportunities to read and enjoy books and to use the library as a reference source.

Some generalizations can be made about last year's effort. First, there was a concentration on the weakest readers so that in many cases the stronger readers were not sufficiently challenged and therefore, made inadequate progress. This year, several districts will take special steps to gear programs to competent readers so that they too can achieve and show greater gains. Second, in almost every school there were grades that showed improvement, grades that retrogressed and some that didn't change. To a large degree, this probably reflects the quality of teaching and we must attempt to isolate what it is that the successful teachers are doing so that others can be assisted to do the same. Third, the secondary schools in many districts did not develop programs to effectively assist the great number of their students with very low reading skills. This year the junior and senior high schools will have more carefully developed programs and more teachers will receive training.

The School District of Philadelphia is making a determined effort to improve reading achievement. From Dr. Mark Shedd on down, there is commitment and dedication to this important goal. The public has a role to play too. It must appreciate the importance of this drive and the difficulties involved and support the funding of its vigorous continuation. It is possible that substantial achievement results may take a sustained effort over a number of years. Programs may have to be modified and teachers' skills may have to be honed further before they produce significant results. The public must practice patience while maintaining its support of this crucial effort. I am confident that big city children can learn to read and that under Dr. Shedd's leadership this will happen in Philadelphia.

THE OAKES NEWSLETTER
6400 Drexel Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19151

the OAKES newsletter

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

Vol.III, No.3 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania November 18, 1971

THE PARKWAY PROGRAM

The Parkway Program, often called "The School Without Walls" has succeeded in doing away with more than a building's four walls. It has broken down the walls standing between the student and learning, the student and teacher, the school and the community.

Four years ago, the Parkway Program was conceived by Clifford Brenner, then Director of Development for the School District, as a four-year Philadelphia public high school to eventually serve 2400 students, utilizing the many institutions and exceptional resources located along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway from City Hall to the Art Museum. His unique idea was that chemistry and biology could be taught in the classrooms and laboratories of the Academy of Natural Sciences, physical sciences at the Franklin Institute and art and art appreciation at the Museum of Art. In addition, requests could be made to the numerous nearby businesses, apartment houses, cultural centers, city government and human service agencies for space, personnel for teaching and opportunities to expose students to the world of work.

The Parkway Program has retained the essence of this original idea, but modified and broadened it. Presently, Parkway consists of four units—three based in center city and one in Germantown. Each unit has 200 students who come from all parts of the City. Each has its own budget, staff and headquarters and develops its own course offerings. Anyone of high school age, regardless of his previous academic or behavior record, may seek admission. Random selection, from the great number who apply, is by lottery, thus insuring a very diverse student body.

The Parkway school year is divided into three 12-week semesters. Courses are open to everyone in a given unit so that most classes have students of varying ages and abilities. Students select courses each semester, attend classes which meet one to three times a week and last from one to two hours. The range of choices is great. Students may study traditional subjects such as algebra, typing or chemistry or choose from courses as varied as "Green in the City", taught by Pennsylvania Horticultural Society staff members, or photography, or "Geriatric Folk Singing" which combines therapy for old people in nursing homes with guitar playing. Programs such as work-study, apprenticeship or independent study are also possible.

Some classes are taught by teachers, some by interns (college students in teacher training programs), and some by businessmen, professional men or other members of the community who volunteer to work with students using their special skills, talents, interests

or knowledge. With so many "teachers", most Parkway classes are small, ranging from six to fifteen students. However, because of the donated space and services, Parkway is able to achieve this low ratio while operating on a per pupil expenditure equal to all other high schools.

Each Parkway unit has a small administrative headquarters where the unit head and his assistant have their offices. All other space demands are met in the community through donated space. Administrators, teachers, interns and students share in seeking out individuals or institutions which can offer a space, a course, or a combination of the two.

Each student is assigned, again by lottery, to what Parkway calls a "Tutorial." Consisting of about twenty students, a teacher and an intern, it meets four to six hours weekly and serves many purposes. It is the small "family" group to which students belong for the year and with which they can identify. Here, they receive counseling in selecting their courses and dealing with any problems they may have. They are encouraged on a continuing basis to evaluate their own goals, their progress toward them and the Parkway program in all its aspects. Individualized instruction in the basic skills often takes place and students are expected to help one another with the more skilled in English and mathematics serving as tutors. The Tutorial provides a place where students from very different backgrounds can learn to work, talk and plan together.

Students and staff share responsibility for running their school. A Town Meeting of all the members in any one of the four units is called whenever there seems to be a need. Chaired by a student or staff member, announcements are made, problems are aired and solutions are sought. The Town Meeting that I attended was held in a large room in a church building. Staff members and students received an equal hearing as they discussed the governance of their unit and criteria for determining what notices could be posted on a limited-in-size community bulletin board.

BREAKING DOWN THE WALLS

High schools today are plagued with the problems of dropouts, absenteeism, cutting, hundreds of students failing courses, hundreds more viewing their course work as irrelevant and their schools as huge impersonal institutions. Obviously, these are symptoms of the high barriers standing between a student and learning and a student and his teachers.

Parkway offers an important contrast. Parkway teachers, caring about their students, are in a situation where they are able to show it in their daily school lives. Classes are small and meet for one to two hour sessions in an informal setting such as someone's living room or around a table in an office. This makes it much easier to come to know one another and establish warm, friendly, caring relationships among the students and between teacher and student. The Tutorial also contributes significantly to making students feel that they belong and that others are concerned for their welfare.

The student who picks what he will study from a number of offerings is more likely to develop a real interest in his work. For example, a Parkway student must accumulate four English credits to meet state requirements as every other high school student, but he selects from a catalogue that describes what is offered and who will teach it, and may choose from offerings as varied as creative writing, introduction to the theater, short stories, women in

literature, word study, Shakespeare, or the Poetry and Prose of Bob Dylan.

Having selected subjects that interest him, the student is encouraged to study and learn for what he will gain from the course, not for grades (none are given), not to please the teacher, and not in competition with someone else. Teachers formally evaluate student progress three times a year, at the end of each 12-week semester, but it is in terms of pass or fail, supplemented by a written description of the student's strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation's purpose is to help the student know and understand himself rather than to measure him against other people or set standards. At the same time that teachers evaluate students, students evaluate the course and their own work in it. These written evaluations are discussed by the student and the teacher and become part of the student's permanent record. Choosing a course, followed by a student's evaluation of his progress in it, forces a student to think about what he wants to learn and why as well as its meaning for him and what he hopes to achieve.

RESPONSIBILITY

Parkway offers freedom to its students—freedom to choose their own courses, move freely about the city, make their own decisions and take responsibility for their own education. This offers a stark contrast to our regular high schools where restriction and regimentation characterize the atmosphere, and those in authority attempt to maintain discipline. In Parkway the drive is always toward developing self-discipline and self-direction, encouraging the student to make choices and then live with the consequences. As a part of the effort to help students accept and manage this freedom, teachers do not assume authoritarian roles. At Parkway, the relationships between students and teachers are friendly and informal.

While Parkway's "freedom" may be a disturbing concept to some, it is really "freedom with responsibility" which is a far cry from permissiveness. It should be remembered that young people will have their "freedom" immediately after high school on their jobs, in their own homes or in institutions of higher education. It is important that they be prepared in advance. At Parkway, students learn to accept and deal with freedom in an environment of daily contact with adults who care deeply and provide counseling and support. It is necessary for students to develop the inner discipline that makes them behave responsibly toward themselves and others rather than relying on an authority figure to demand certain behavior.

A counselor and dean at Princeton University, speaking at a recent seminar for parents, told of the serious difficulties that many students face coming from highly controlled high school situations into universities which today have almost no rules and regulations governing daily life. Students must then determine their values and goals and how they will lead their lives while trying simultaneously to cope with a demanding academic program. Students graduating from Parkway are better prepared for life after high school because they have had an opportunity to develop their own inner controls, are more apt to be self-directed and know what their values are and what they want from life.

REVITALIZING THE HIGH SCHOOLS

There are more than 75,000 students in Grades 9-12 in Philadelphia. Obviously, only a small

fraction of this number could be served in Parkway type schools whose need for interns, community space and people would quickly exhaust the available supply. Therefore, Parkway's value lies in the inspiration it offers to revitalize our high schools and the aspects of the program that could be adapted and incorporated into existing high schools. Traditional secondary schools could profitably experiment with:

1. Developing alternative organizational structures within a school that would permit students and teachers to get to know one another and develop a higher level of trust.

2. Offering many more courses in every subject area so that students' interests could be captured and teachers could include courses in their own special interest areas, thereby making learning more exciting and stimulating for the students.

3. Changing Homeroom from a brief and impersonal attendance taking, notice-reading time into something more meaningful. Homeroom could serve some or all of the counseling, group identity, evaluative and basic skills development functions of the Tutorial if the utilization of more staff made the groups somewhat smaller and if the time available were lengthened.

4. Encouraging community institutions, businesses and individuals to work with students inside or outside the school building within the context of a course, students giving service or on an individual basis.

5. Motivating students to work for what they will gain from a course instead of grades.

6. Counseling students to help them develop their own value system and goals for the future while relating them to their education.

In describing Parkway, I do not intend to imply that it is functioning flawlessly. Parkway needs to develop and perfect many of its own innovations. However, the staff and students are aware of this and are working on it. In addition, not every student can flourish and grow at Parkway. A few will be unable to adjust, but many others will be challenged,and some will be figuratively reborn. And while the Parkway Program is a concept that cannot replace our high schools, it can serve as a catalytic agent to make them much better institutions of learning.

Subscription - $3.00 for one year. If you are able, please make a contribution over and above your subscription or renewal which may be deducted from your income tax. Make check payable to Acorn Educational Press, Inc. and send to 6400 Drexel Road, Philadelphia, Pa. 19151.

THE OAKES NEWSLETTER
6400 Drexel Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19151

the OAKES newsletter

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

Vol.III, No.4 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania December 16, 1971

PROGRAMS NOT PADLOCKS

A national magazine recently reported on the extreme measures being taken by city dwellers to secure their houses and apartments against burglary and theft. The daily newspapers report on increasing numbers of robberies, killings and rapes. People are turning their homes into fortresses, arming themselves with guns and purchasing dogs for additional protection. Vandalism is spreading to areas previously free of it. Many young people are terrorized by gangs as they go to and from school. As the months go by, more and more people feel less and less safe carrying on the daily activities of their lives.

If we examine society's response to its increased fears and anxiety, we see more windows barred, enlarged police forces, use of private guards, more locks on doors and more alarm systems being installed. While each of these precautions undoubtedly deter crime and violence, they are, at best, only a partial answer since they do not touch the causes, and therefore, have little effect on the incidence of crime.

If we are to be safer in our homes and outside of them, then we must invest much more of our human and material resources in programs that get at the root of the problems that lead to joblessness, poverty, family instability, drug addiction, frustration, hostility and eventually, for some, to anti-social acts. There must be significant National public policy changes; many institutions and agencies must participate in the drive to substantially reduce unemployment, underemployment, illiteracy, dilapidated housing, racism, segregation, hunger and inadequate medical care.

The public schools have a significant role to play. They have the opportunity, and the responsibility, to graduate students prepared educationally to lead fulfilled lives. To the extent that they are able to do this, they are successfully attacking a fundamental cause of crime and violence.

While some students can get an education in the traditional classroom, others need a more individualized, self-directed program.* Still others require special programs that reach out to the troubled, the alienated and those who cannot succeed in school without special help. I want to describe two existing programs that keep young people from being overwhelmed by the problems that they face. They help students to find themselves, complete their education or gain a saleable skill. This greatly benefits not only the individual student, but the larger community as well.

* See The Oakes Newsletter, May 1971 and November 1971.

THE SCIENCE ACADEMY

One such program is the Academy of Applied Electrical Science located at Edison High School, a public school for boys drawing from a black, Puerto Rican and white population living in a severely depressed area.

The Academy, sponsored by the Philadelphia Urban Coalition and jointly supported by the School District and industry, serves boys who would otherwise be likely to leave school before graduation. When they enter the Academy, most have reading skills that lag considerably below grade level and some have had poor attendance records.

The Academy offers a program that emphasizes learning a sequence of increasingly more complex saleable skills in the electric or electronics field in combination with the English, reading and mathematics required to accompany these developing skills.

The young men, most of whom enter the program in 10th grade, are encouraged and helped to look ahead to decide what they would like to be in the electrical science field. People from industry talk to them about job opportunities and they go on field trips to industrial plants to observe and see what standards they will have to meet.

The Academy consists of a single large room with work tables and stools; appliances — including washers, dryers, radios and an electric stove; simple and complex electric and electronic equipment; and, as in the room of an actual house under construction, three unfinished walls ready to be wired with outlets and electric light switches. Because most students enter the Academy reading at about the 5th grade level, it has developed its own teaching materials geared to enable them to succeed in the program in spite of their reading handicap.

The student learns about soldering by soldering, electrical wiring by doing wiring, radios by working with radios. Learning by doing, a so-called "hands on" program stimulates the student to improve his reading and mathematics so that he can follow written instructions and understand the theory behind the skills he is learning. At the Academy, theory follows practical work. A student who has worked with a broken washing machine, trying to determine why the motor doesn't work, will come to see why he needs to understand the operation of a motor. As the student develops a need for the theoretical knowledge, he is motivated to learn it.

Each student progresses at his own rate. In each class of 25 students, there is a school district teacher and two instructors loaned by industry. Each of these men has a deep concern for the students and, because of the low ratio of students to teachers, can provide each student with the individual help and attention that he needs to succeed in the program.

A goal of the Academy of Applied Electrical Science is to prepare students for existing jobs and see that they are placed in them when they graduate. The staff finds part-time jobs in industry for many students while they are attending the Academy so that they may have on-the-job training, industrial experience, and a chance to make the money that they need to stay in school.

Each student in the program determines his own goals. He may, for example, aim to graduate with the simple skills necessary for an entry level job in industry performing a simple manufacturing process; with the skills to become a high voltage wireman at $9000 to start; or with the skills that prepare him to enter **Community**

College for further training, leading to a job in an electronics testing laboratory with a still higher salary potential. There are certain blocks of work to be completed and the student can work along at his own speed as he moves step by step up the skills ladder. Only his drive and his willingness to work hard determine how far he will go. The staff offers him constant encouragement and assistance, scholastically and personally, to keep moving along. No one puts him in a slot or on a track — he has every opportunity to go as far as he is able.

A major lesson to be learned from the Academy is that boys of high school age with little previous proven ability can develop skills that will qualify them for good jobs and an exit from poverty.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

The second program that I would like to describe is Continuing Education for Pregnant Girls. It is designed for secondary school girls who become pregnant and do not wish to attend their schools during the last few months of their pregnancy. There are ten centers in Philadelphia now which served about 500 teen-age girls last year. Each center is different and functions independently, working with different and varied community groups, social and health agencies.

The Continuing Education program offers the girls encouragement and help in continuing with their school work so that they can return to school when the baby is a few weeks old and continue on with their classmates. It gives them information that they need to maintain their physical and mental health, and that of their babies, by providing instruction in nutrition, hygiene, family planning, pre-natal care, child birth and infant care.

I visited the Continuing Education center which serves the Overbrook High area and is housed in a church building. The girls spend three hours in the morning studying their school subjects. While they take English as a class, they work individually on their other subjects, getting help from the teacher when they need it. In the afternoon, provisions are made to meet the special needs of the girls relative to their pregnancy and the new life that will be theirs to care for. For instance, a visitor to the center might see the girls on mattresses doing breathing exercises under the direction of a nurse in preparation for delivery of their babies. On another occasion, the girls might be talking with a visiting psychologist from a community mental health center developing short and long range goals for themselves and their babies. On still another afternoon, a nurse might be demonstrating the proper way to bathe and dress an infant.

Because of the many obstacles and problems inherent in teen-age pregnancy and motherhood, each girl who completes her studies and graduates demonstrates her own high level of determination and the effectiveness of the dedicated efforts of the Continuing Education center staffs. Last year, 38 of the students at the Overbrook center were seniors. Of these, 36 have graduated and one is now attending night school.

Unfortunately, the capacity of the existing centers does not approach the level of need for service among senior high school students. In addition, there is almost no help available to the junior high school girls who get pregnant each year. Because of their immaturity, they need specialized programs offering even a greater variety of services and in greater depth. Clearly this lack of service poses a serious problem to the unserved girls and to the quality of life available to their

babies.

More than one thousand girls, 16 and under, become pregnant annually in Philadelphia and no one has a count of the number of high school girls 17 and above. Almost all of these young women keep their babies. Those who are able to go to a Continuing Education center are much better prepared to assume the responsibilities of motherhood and family life. Their babies will have a better start in life and an improved chance to lead stable, fulfilled lives. Thus, the development of serious individual and social problems is minimized.

The Academy and the Continuing Education centers have two important qualities in common: each works to serve the needs of the individual student and each is staffed by people of compassion and understanding who care deeply for the young people with whom they work. The young people entering these programs need a hand up and this is what they receive. Lives are thereby changed in a way that contributes to the realization of the individual's potential, to improved family life and to developing contributing members of society. Programs such as these deal with the roots of crime. They permit us to be human and humane to one another and are the keys to making our communities safe to live in and removing our worries and fears.

DR. MARK R. SHEDD, Superintendent of Philadelphia's public schools for over four years, has resigned in response to the changed character of the new School Board which reflects a basic difference in philosophy from his own.

The two fine programs described in this issue of the Newsletter came into being and were sustained during Dr. Shedd's superintendency. They reflect one of the important contributions that Dr. Shedd made to Philadelphia's schools. He was a superintendent who cared primarily about the students and thought of them as individuals. He cared for, among others, the dropout, the teen-aged mother, the student unreached in a traditional classroom, the student labeled "bad", the student frustrated by an authoritarian administrator, and the black child who had been short changed by schools and life. He tried to change the system so that these students could be better served.

Subscription - $3.00 for one year. Contributions over and above your subscription are welcome and tax deductible. Make check payable to Acorn Educational Press, Inc. and send to 6400 Drexel Rd.,Phila.19151.

THE OAKES NEWSLETTER
6400 Drexel Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19151

FIRST CLASS

the OAKES newsletter

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

Vol.III, No.5 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania January 20, 1972

PUBLIC EDUCATION, KEYSTONE OF OUR REPUBLIC

Public education comes under frequent attack. Too many students leave school unable to read adequately or function effectively. While the cost of education has skyrocketed, the "product" has not improved. Public confidence in and support of the schools is at a low ebb. This is clearly indicated by the fact that many school systems face desperately serious financial crises and many bond issues, needed to build schools, have been rejected by the voters. Some people have even suggested that the schools are so bad that if they ran out of funds and closed permanently, nothing would be lost.

In the face of mounting criticism of public education, it seems appropriate to re-examine the concept. What is it? Is it important to the nation? How strongly should we feel about its survival? To answer these questions, I went back in time to see when public education began, how it came into being, and why.

In early colonial days, very few people attended school and most of those who did had to pay tuition. The educational system was often similar to Europe's with advanced work for the upper social classes and a very limited elementary curriculum for everyone else.

The effort to secure free, publicly supported schooling for all began in the late 1700's. It took great public leaders, significant changes in American life, thousands of people and the passage of eighty years before it could be said that most states had a system of public education.

Thomas Jefferson made a tremendously important contribution to the establishment of public schools. He developed a plan and introduced a bill for the "More General Diffusion of Knowledge" into the Virginia legislature in 1779. It proposed that every "free" child in Virginia should receive, without charge, three years of elementary schooling in reading, writing, arithmetic and history. Each year the brightest graduates from poor families were to be granted scholarships to secondary schools and the most promising students from these schools were to be granted scholarships to a university.

While these ideas seem commonplace today, the suggestion that all children, rich and poor, should receive a common elementary education free was radical for that time. Radical also was Jefferson's proposal to educate, at public expense, the "best geniuses" of those whose parents were too poor to give them further education.

From 1779 until his death in 1826, Thomas Jefferson wrote and spoke of his plan. He introduced another bill into the legislature, made speeches, wrote letters to his contemporaries (including

George Washington and John Adams), and discussed the plan in his book Notes On The State Of Virginia and in his autobiography.

Jefferson's lifelong concern for education was tightly bound to his political philosophy and thought. He saw education as the "keystone of the arch of our government." He believed that only as there was education for everyone, without regard to position or wealth, could there be a foundation "for the preservation of freedom, and happiness" in the republic and could the people be rendered the "guardians of their own liberty." The people needed education to enable them to make sound decisions on important issues and select their representatives wisely. Jefferson's "selection of the youths of genius from among the classes of the poor" was designed to "avail the State of those talents which nature has sown as liberally among the poor as the rich, but which perish without use, if not sought for and cultivated."

Because Jefferson was tne author of the Declaration of Independence, a world renowned statesman, and third president of the United States, his devotion and dedication to universal, state-supported education was highly significant. Though his plan was not adopted during his lifetime in Virginia or elsewhere, his ideas, weighted by his great name, had a profound influence on the future development of public education.

Soon after Jefferson's plan was introduced, the United States Constitution was ratified (1788) and the new nation began its life. Many social, political and economic changes occurred in the ensuing decades which led finally to public support of public education. Some of the major changes were: (1)An increase in voter eligibility from one white male in seven when Washington took office in 1789 to something much closer to universal white male suffrage by 1840. At the same time, the idea was growing that any citizen could hold public office. It became clear to more and more citizens that unless both the voters and their leaders were educated to their responsibilities, the republic* could not last. (2)A growth of commerce and industry after the Revolution which led to a need for more skilled workers. (3)A sharp rise in immigration after 1840 which made it necessary to provide schools for the new arrivals so that they could learn the new language and a new way of life, and be assimilated into their new country. (4)A rise in the country of a spirit of social reform which included many aspects of American life such as education, abolition of slavery, and prison reform.

THE COMMON SCHOOL

For all of these reasons, there was a rising demand for free schools. Because education was interpreted to be a responsibility of state government, it was necessary to work within each state for legislation,financing and support. A number of dedicated educational leaders, working to promote and give direction to the effort, developed a new American ideal — the "common" or "public" school. It was to be for rich and poor alike. "The Common School," declared a New Jersey clergyman in 1838, is "common, not as inferior, not as a school for poor men's children, but as the light and air are common."

These educational statesmen believed that if children went to

*A state in which the supreme power rests in the body of citizens entitled to vote and is exercised by representatives chosen by them.

school together they would develop mutual respect and friendship. The common school was to be of such superior quality that it would draw students from all walks of life. Children from many different ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds would mix together in the same classroom. It was argued that after such an experience, different groups in the community would develop certain values, loyalties and purposes in common. These would serve as a force to unify the diverse elements of American society into one nation.

Many thousands of people wrote, spoke, pamphleteered, raised money, held mass meetings and lobbied for laws setting up tax supported, free elementary schools for everyone. In each state there were victories and defeats. When, eventually, common elementary schools were secured in a given area, further efforts were required to secure secondary schools open to everyone.

EDUCATED CITIZENRY ESSENTIAL

The cause of public education was supported for a variety of reasons. For some people, the goal was literacy so that there could be full participation in the commercial and industrial life of the community. For others, the goal was to enable their own children to develop their abilities, talents and interests. However, the overriding motivation of the 19th century advocates of the common school was the development of an educated citizenry which they felt was needed to sustain our democratic form of government. They believed that the electorate must be literate and have a knowledge of the past if they were to choose their leaders wisely. They also reasoned that if the country was to develop all of its potential leaders, universal education had to become a reality.

To go back now to the original question — Is public education important to the nation and thus worth fighting for? The answer has to be, "Yes." Public education is the bedrock upon which this nation is built. It is absolutely necessary if the republic is to survive. However, that is not to say that the status quo should be preserved. What must be retained is the concept of tax-supported, universal education for all children in a "common school." Therefore, our task is to make public schools into institutions that serve our democracy. We must not abandon them or allow them to be destroyed.

It is at least as necessary today as it was 100 years ago to prepare students to be good citizens. Issues today are more complex and thus more difficult to understand. More than common sense is required to arrive at wise decisions on questions relating to pollution, world trade, or budget deficits — to name only a few. A good basic education is needed in order to assess a candidate's stand on these public issues and to make a choice between those running for public office.

Thomas Jefferson believed that an educated people could recognize tyranny and fight it. Today, this continues to be of great importance. For example, it has been reported that the first ten amendments to the Constitution, printed in the form of a petition and not identified as the Bill of Rights, when submitted to people in the streets for their signature have gone unrecognized,unsupported and unsigned. It is up to the schools to teach young people the meaning of their democratic heritage so that they can recognize and appreciate their fundamental rights. American history must become more than a series of names and dates. It should provide students with an understanding of

what was fought for, what was won, what it means to them and why it is worth preserving.

Our democracy is more than a form of government. It is also a set of principles and values which include: (1)All men are created equal. (2)Each individual human being has worth and dignity.(3)There shall be freedom of thought, belief, speech, press, assemblage and petition. (4)Elected representatives shall arrive at decisions by way of discussion, debate and deliberation. (5)There shall be equality of opportunity for all. Schools should teach these in the classroom, but they must also demonstrate them in the daily life of the school. There must truly be equality of opportunity in the school in the curricular and extra-curricular offerings. The individual student must be of major concern and importance to teachers, counselors and administrators. The school must be run so that everyone's freedoms are preserved and group decisions are made democratically.

Democratic values can not be taught in an undemocratic setting. The segregated school, racially set apart by society, screams inequality and a lack of appreciation of the worth of the individual. The concreteness of this undemocratic setting grossly outweighs any abstract teaching of democratic ideals that occurs in the classroom.

A logical argument of the early educational statesmen for the common school, in order to unify the diverse elements of society into one nation, applies equally to its equivalent today — the integrated school. Similarly applicable is their belief that the school must be of superior quality so as to draw students of varying racial, economic and social backgrounds. Our country desperately needs the unifying force of black and white children going to school together, learning to respect and understand one another and developing common purposes and values.

Public education is a mighty pillar for our republic that must be reinforced at this critical time in our history. If we truly value our democratic way of life, then we must rededicate ourselves to making our public schools into institutions that successfully educate students and truly exemplify democratic principles and values.

COMING ISSUES: Student Bill of Rights * * * Home and School Council

- -

Subscription - $3.00 for one year. Contributions over and above your subscription are welcome and tax deductible. Make check payable to Acorn Educational Press,Inc. and send to 6400 Drexel Rd.,Phila. 19151.

THE OAKES NEWSLETTER
6400 Drexel Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19151

FIRST CLASS

the OAKES newsletter

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

Vol.III, No.6 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania February 18, 1972

STUDENT BILL OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

On December 21, 1970, the Philadelphia Board of Education passed a resolution approving the enactment of a Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities for senior and technical high school students. Because the Bill has been controversial from its inception, this Newsletter is devoted to it in the hope that a greater understanding of its content, purpose and potential will result.

Printed as a 13-page pamphlet and distributed to students and staffs, the Bill begins with a brief listing of rights and responsibilities.

The Bill —

A. Gives high school students the right:
   1. To freedom of speech, press and assembly in accord with the first amendment of the United States Constitution.
   2. To establish an elected, representative student government with offices open to all students and all students permitted to vote.
   3. To have ombudsmen who shall be trained to offer counsel as to students' rights.
   4. To counsel and due process in the matters of suspension, transfer and expulsion.
   5. To participate in a)decisions affecting the curriculum and b)the establishment of regulations regarding discipline.
   6. To have academic performance the only criterion for academic grades.
   7. Not to be subjected to corporal punishment, unreasonable or excessive punishment.

B. Prohibits students from disrupting the educational process in light of the creation of these orderly procedures for dealing with student concerns.

C. Gives students, parents and the school staff "the responsibility to promote regular attendance at school, orderly conduct and behavior, freedom from fear of insult or injury, and maximum opportunities for learning on the part of each student."

D. Provides that no rule or regulation shall be established which diminishes the right of any student as set forth in the Bill.

An 11-page Commentary which follows this listing of Rights and Responsibilities was considered by The Board of Education to be "an integral part" of the Bill. It includes the following:

A. A grievance procedure spelling out the formal route of a student

complaint from the principal to the district superintendent to the Superintendent of Schools. However, the Bill encourages informal settlement of grievances so that this formal procedure will be unnecessary. The grievance procedure has time limits for each step and requires that the grievance be submitted in writing and each decision be a written one.

B. A hearing procedure to be used when a student is to be suspended for more than five days or expelled from the school system. It permits the parties to be legally represented, to have witnesses and to cross-examine. Previously, students were suspended and expelled without the benefit of a hearing. One member of the Board of Education holds this hearing and then makes a recommendation to the full Board. This policy was adopted by the Board a month before the Student Bill was adopted, and resulted from a Court order requiring due process in suspensions of more than five days and expulsions.

C. An explanation of students' right to circulate petitions and handbills, to use bulletin boards and to wear insignia. There shall be no prior censorship or required approval of the contents or wording of written matter to be posted or circulated. This right does not give students a license to say or write anything, but rather makes them responsible for their words and subject to penalties for abuse of this right. School authorities shall prohibit material which is obscene or libelous or which "inflames or incites students so as to create a clear and present danger of the commission of unlawful acts or of physical disruption to the orderly operation of the school." Any individual or group denied freedom of expression under these provisions may request a hearing to determine whether such deprivation is justified. (This Board of Education policy predates the Bill by two years.)

D. A listing of disciplinary practices which are approved, and those which are forbidden, so that students and teachers may be guided as to what constitutes unreasonable or excessive punishment. There may be expressions of disapproval first in private and later, if necessary, in the presence of group; temporary isolation under supervision; detention for specific purpose; or withdrawal of specified privileges. There may not be sarcastic remarks, personal affront and indignity, school tasks imposed for punitive purposes, frequent detention without specific purpose, forced apologies, exclusion from the room without supervision or sending students to a lower grade. It is interesting to note that these two lists come directly from an Administrative Bulletin dated May 11, 1955.

OMBUDSMEN

The Bill provides for ombudsmen, elected annually by students, trained to offer counsel as to students' rights. They may be students, parents, teachers, counselors or responsible, qualified citizens of the community-at-large. Most of those elected last year were students, but there were also some teachers, a non-teaching assistant and a policeman. The ombudsmen received training in understanding and interpreting the Bill, attempting to view problems objectively, helping others to reach agreement, and resolving conflicts. This training was given by professional arbitrators and professional trainers from industry.

I have talked with some of the

student ombudsmen and was impressed by their attitudes, their efforts to see both sides of a question and to resolve conflicts amicably. In most cases, they have done this on an informal basis without invoking the formal grievance procedure.

Philadelphia's high schools are large impersonal institutions. Unfortunately, many thousands of students can not relate to any teacher, counselor or administrator in their school and, prior to the ombudsmen, they had no one to go to with a problem. It is, therefore,particularly regrettable that many school staff members, prizing the status quo, are hostile to the ombudsmen concept. The ombudsmen, chosen for their ability to empathize and to get things done, can fill a vital role in resolving grievances before they assume crisis proportions.

The Student Bill of Rights and Responsibilities has proved to be very difficult for some adults to accept. The twenty-five senior and technical high school principals in Philadelphia vary greatly in their view of the document. Some principals endorse it and encourage its use and implementation in their schools. Some throw roadblocks in front of most attempts to carry out its provisions. Others are hostile to it and see adults and "outside agitators" behind its drafting and its increased use by students. Some school staff members and parents believe that schools should teach unquestioning obedience to school rules and regulations and see the Bill undermining this authoritarian setting. Basically, I think this opposition represents an unwillingness to grant students the rights, privileges, dignity and respect to which they are entitled and a reluctance to work cooperatively with them, taking their ideas and values into consideration.

WHY A STUDENT BILL?

The Student Bill was developed in response to student unrest, demonstrations, hostility and disruption that characterized high schools in Philadelphia as well as other parts of the country in the late 1960's. High level School District administrators believed that an established procedure for hearing and resolving student grievances would minimize the disruption of the schools. By giving students a channel for dealing with their complaints,frustrations would decrease and it would be possible to achieve a greater cooperative effort in making high schools better places in which to learn. It therefore became necessary to provide a framework within which this grievance procedure could function. This led to the Student Bill with its definition of student rights and responsibilities so that students and school staff alike would have some guidelines for determining what was, and what was not, a legitimate complaint.

VALUE OF STUDENT BILL

The Bill is an important document that can help to improve the climate for understanding, cooperation and learning in the Philadelphia public schools.

The Bill will, over a period of time, be instrumental in the strengthening of student government. Traditionally, student government has devoted its time to such things as raising money to support its activities, chartering the clubs in the school, running charity drives, keeping the lunchroom clean and attractive, and putting on dances. Under the Bill, student government can take on a new and more significant role. It can participate in decisions affecting the curriculum and in the establishment of regulations regarding discipline. It can deter-

mine if there are to be ombudsmen in the school and how they are to be chosen. It can join with the administration and the faculty in establishing regulations as to the manner, time and place for using communication facilities of the school and in developing guidelines for the use of open forums to provide students with the opportunity to speak, or hear others speak, on topics of general interest. Students can take a greater interest in elections, because they will know that their representatives have the power to make decisions that affect school life in a real way. Elections will become more important and it will be possible for students to campaign on the basis of issues instead of popularity.

The Bill gives official recognition to the fact that students have rights. This should help to prevent or minimize some of the arbitrary, unfair ways that students have been treated in the past. It will limit to some extent the raw power which some administrators grossly misuse.

The Bill in its entirety is a marvelous instrument for student learning. 1)A curriculum guide for classroom use has been developed which includes a study of the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, the concept of due process, etc. 2)Student government elections can become opportunities to help students develop skills, equally applicable to elections in general, for selecting the individual who will best represent them. 3)The individual rights enumerated in the Bill can help students come to appreciate, value, and later work to protect the rights in the Federal Bill of Rights. 4)The freedom of expression required by the Bill carries with it the demanding responsibility to use it wisely.

The Board of Education approved the Bill in 1970 with the understanding that it would be subject to a complete review at the end of the 1971-72 school year. I hope that this Newsletter will contribute to public understanding of the Bill and support for its retention, modified only in ways that will increase its effectiveness.

The Bill provides our high schools with a meaningful way to involve students in the running of their schools. It gives them a measure of control over this institution which figures so very importantly in their lives. This could lead to changes resulting in improved attendance, decreased vandalism and, most importantly, greater interest and achievement in the classroom.

Subscription - $3.00 for one year. Contributions over and above your subscription are welcome and tax deductible. Make check payable to Acorn Educational Press, Inc. and send to 6400 Drexel Rd., Phila. 19151.

THE OAKES NEWSLETTER
6400 Drexel Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19151

the OAKES newsletter

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

Vol.III, No.7 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania March 21, 1972

PHILADELPHIA HOME AND SCHOOL COUNCIL
DRASTIC REFORM ESSENTIAL

Philadelphia calls its local organizations of parents and teachers, "Home and School Associations." The central group to which these local Associations belong is called the Philadelphia Home and School Council. The Home and School Council could play a most significant role in the improvement of public education in Philadelphia. It could provide dynamic leadership to local Associations enabling them to better mobilize the energy and support of their members. It could provide parents with accurate, concise information on the crucial issues of the day. It could serve as an authentic voice for parents. It could serve in the conduct of its own affairs as a model for local Associations. Unfortunately, it does none of the above and, if we examine Council's mode of operation, the reasons will be apparent.

The Philadelphia Home and School Council depends on the School District of Philadelphia for its basic financial support. It is taxpayers' money that provides Council with its office in the Administration Building, heat, light, a telephone, the services of a secretary ten months of the year, duplicating and mailing privileges on a regular basis and printing costs for its annual conference and annual dinner. Obviously, this arrangement makes it impossible for Council to be an independent organization. It is always subject to partial or complete control by the School District.

HOME AND SCHOOL COUNCIL SHOULD incorporate as a non-profit, tax-exempt organization so that it could solicit foundation funds and public donations. It should move out of the Administration Building and become completely independent financially of the School District. Then, it could properly represent the interests of parents.

HOME AND SCHOOL COUNCIL SHOULD develop the capability to provide services to local Associations that would be helpful and meaningful to them in fulfilling their role in their schools. Council could then look to the local Associations for increased financial support.

***

Council's election procedures, as well as its methods of operation, are narrowly based, undemocratic and restrictive which limits Council's ability to attract qualified, talented leaders. At present there are 45 people serving on the Executive Board of Council, 38 women and 7 men. Of the 45, all were appointed except for seven elected officers. 38 people — two representatives from each of Philadelphia's eight school districts, the chairmen of standing committees and two repre-

sentatives from Special Schools — were appointed by the President after she took office with the approval of the other six officers.

The process of electing seven new officers began last month at a Council Executive Board meeting when seven Executive Board members were elected to serve as a nominating committee. This committee, as prescribed by the Constitution, must select the entire slate of officers from individuals now serving on the Executive Board. No one, except "members of the Executive Board of Council at the time of election" may run for office. To pick the list of seven candidates from the limited number of people presently on the Executive Board makes the choice so confined and narrow that it is a mockery of the democratic process. Home and School Associations may "suggest" names of other members of the present Executive Board to run for office, however, the Nominating Committee is not required to accept their suggestions.

Council should be a model of democratic principles, striving for great breadth and depth of representation and leadership. Instead, it has been so manipulated that the incumbents are in complete control and have the power to prevent any challenge to their authority.

- COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS SHOULD be changed so that the election procedure becomes an open one, more Executive Board members are elected and the Board thus becomes more representative. Amendments should provide that:

1. The Nominating Committee be composed of some members elected by the membership from the membership-at-large as well as some elected by the Executive Board.
2. To be eligible to run for Council office, an individual need only be a resident of Philadelphia and have a child in a Philadelphia public school.
3. There be provision for nominations from the floor in the form of a nominating petition signed by a small number of schools.
4. The sixteen district representatives be elected by the Home and School Association Presidents of their district by a procedure which would include nominations and a secret ballot.

***

In addition to the School District's financial support, Council collects $20 in dues from each member Association. At the end of February 1972, there were 240 members who had paid $4800 into the Council treasury. The Executive Board does not submit a written budget to the membership and the members do not know how the Executive Board plans to spend the money. The treasurer's reports are given verbally, are confusing, and give disbursements in a lump sum for the month so the members don't know how the money is actually spent. This raises many questions which could only be answered by clear, written treasurer's reports.

It is an established Council practice that, at the end of each president's two-year term, she and her Executive Board decide how any "surplus funds" remaining in the treasury are to be spent. They select some worthwhile program or project which they believe will benefit children in all parts of the City and donate "their" surplus to it. This surplus has ranged as high as $5000, the equivalent of a year's dues, which indicates that more money is being taken in than is needed to support Council's present program.

HOME AND SCHOOL COUNCIL SHOULD request a professional association of accountants or financial executives to establish for Council and all Home and School Associations, standard procedures and forms for control and accounting of income and expenditures. If Council and Home and School Associations knew exactly how their funds should be handled, misunderstandings, mishandling and misappropriations of funds could be avoided.

***

Council gives very little help to officers of Home and School Associations who often assume their demanding, time-consuming jobs with little preparation or knowledge of what will be required of them. Council provides Presidents with a "Handbook", including a sample constitution, information on conducting a meeting etc., but it is ten years old and hopelessly outdated. There are district workshops and monthly Council meetings which are informative on such topics as the Parents Advisory Council for Title I funds or Special Education, but only occasionally provide practical information helpful to Home and School Association leaders. There are meetings by districts for Presidents which can be useful in giving them an opportunity to discuss their problems with other Presidents and to share ideas and experiences. However, the District Representatives who plan these meetings often leave little time for free discussion and, since they are not trained to conduct these meetings, they are often unable to make them as productive for the Presidents as they could be.

COUNCIL SHOULD develop, duplicate and distribute to officers of local Home and School Associations a notebook containing detailed instructions on such practical Association activities as developing a budget and a program for the year, getting a mailing permit, preparing a bulk mailing, handling funds and preparing publicity. Any surplus Council funds on hand in June 1972 would be well spent in producing this valuable resource.

COUNCIL SHOULD be professionally staffed so that it could provide local officers with leadership training and skills, a resource for information and help in overcoming obstacles. Such assistance to local Associations would strengthen their organizations and their programs so that more parents would join administrators, teachers and students in a common effort to create a better climate for learning in their schools.

***

Council's constitution makes no provision for the General Membership, the representatives from the member schools, to participate in the development of Council policies and programs. It is the Executive Board which makes the decisions and very little Council business is brought before the monthly membership meetings which usually attract less than one hundred people. This is an unhealthy, undemocratic way for Council to operate, since it provides no formal channel for direction to come from Home and School Association Presidents and little or no opportunity for them to become involved or to express their opinions.

COUNCIL SHOULD become a membership-directed organization so that it is responsive to the needs and views of local Associations. The Executive Board should bring plans and proposals to the membership for full discussion and a vote.

***

Council does not inform its members on the vital or controversial issues of the day. It is not

structured to provide leadership in the consideration of important contemporary concerns such as the financing of the School District, reading and drug abuse. Its method of determining its position on a controversial issue neglects the all-important ingredients of debate by proponents of differing positions and full discussion by Council members. Council usually just polls Home and School Association Presidents, encouraging them to canvass their Executive Boards or their members to come up with a position representative of their school.

COUNCIL SHOULD modernize its committee structure and operation so that it would have ongoing committees established to study, report and recommend action in areas of present day concerns. A committee studying the problem of securing increased funding to meet the budgetary needs of the School District could have played a significant role ever since 1968 in documenting and supporting the reality of the financial crises.

COUNCIL SHOULD, when it wishes to take a position on a controversial issue, provide its constituency with fact sheets and an opportunity, in public meetings and on television, to hear the issue vigorously debated by advocates of each side. Democratic procedures require debate and careful weighing of both sides of a question before a decision is reached.

***

The Philadelphia Home and School Council, as the organization encompassing 280 schools with outreach to half a million parents, has a tremendous potential for organizing parents on behalf of their schools, informing parents on the critical issues of our times, providing parents with a vehicle through which they can participate in the solution of some of the school system's major problems, giving leadership to local Associations so that they can better involve parents in the life of the school and thereby enrich and improve the educational experience of the students. This potential can only be achieved if Council undergoes the drastic reforms which will make it independent, democratic, membership-directed and adequately supported financially.

Subscription - $3.00 for one year, $6.00 for two years. Contributions over and above your subscription are welcome and tax deductible. Make check payable to Acorn Educational Press, Inc. and send to 6400 Drexel Road, Philadelphia, Pa. 19151.

THE OAKES NEWSLETTER
6400 Drexel Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19151

First Class Mail
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID 8¢
PERMIT NO. 64
PHILA., PA.

FIRST CLASS

the OAKES newsletter

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

Vol.III, No. 8 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania April 21, 1972

MONEY CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

A new and dangerous myth is being spread across the country. Daniel P. Moynihan, professor of education and urban politics at Harvard University, in an article in The New York Times' Annual Education Review of January 10, 1972, wrote about "the effect of expenditure, equal or unequal, on education. The evidence seems to be that there is so little effect as for practical purposes to be naught..." An article on the editorial page in The Bulletin on March 22, 1972 quotes from the report of the President's Commission on School Finance to show that smaller classes, of themselves, have not produced more or better education nor have increases in per pupil costs been accompanied by discernible improvement in educational quality. When articles such as these follow reports such as Head Start children failing to retain their gains as they move into the primary grades and of only slight improvement in reading achievement in Philadelphia, the public may reach the erroneous conclusion that, since taxes are so high and money reportedly doesn't make a difference, it is all right to tolerate standstill or slashed public education budgets.

The myth needs to be examined with care. By the application of common sense, some cold facts, and a probing of our efforts to improve public education, we can come to understand why the results reported to date seem to have been negligible and why education must be adequately funded if we are to realize the achievement results that are absolutely essential for the survival of society.

THE APPLICATION OF COMMON SENSE

Could it be that in education, contrary to all other services or products in the United States, quality and expenditure of funds are independent of one another? All of us predicate most of our lives on the thesis that a better home, a better car or superior medical care will cost us more. Are we really expected to believe that the size of the school library, the sophistication of the equipment in the labs and shops, the ratio of adults to students — that all of these, which directly relate to expenditure, will not affect the quality of education offered to our daughter or son? Could Mr. Moynihan convince a Lower Merion resident that his child would not be adversely affected by cutting expenditures $260 per student — the present difference between what Lower Merion spends per pupil as compared with Philadelphia?

Common sense, as well as personal experience, tell us that there is a direct and significant relationship between the expenditure of funds and the quality of education that a school is able to offer.

HARD FACTS

Many people believe that vast sums of money have been spent on the improvement of public education since the mid-60's. The Federal Government has increased its level of spending and school district budgets all over the country have escalated. Philadelphia is no exception. Its $365 million budget this year is almost double the 1966-67 budget of $185 million. However, most of the $180 million increase has gone to a greatly improved salary schedule, the inflated costs of goods and services, and the costs of the debt on the School District's building program and operating budget. The amount left was small indeed and represents what has gone toward improvement of education.

		In millions
1966-67 School District Budget		$ 185
Salary Increases - Estimate of increased cost to the School District brought about by a much improved salary schedule (the average teacher's salary was $8700 in 1966-67, but is $13,000 today) and increased fringe benefits such as retirement, health and welfare and social security:		
For 18,400 employees - Number employed in 1966-67	$ 78	
For 2800 employees - Number added to the payroll since 1966-67	12	90
Inflation - Estimate of increased cost of books, supplies, equipment, utilities and contracted services		5
Building Program Debt - Increase in principal and interest payments. This amount represents the increase in the "mortgage" on the School District's investment in new and improved school buildings.		28
Operating Budget Debt - Increase in principal and interest payments on money borrowed to keep school doors open. This $9 million is a reflection of the fiscal crisis and was an almost non-existent expense in 1966-67.		9
Retroactive Salary Payment - Due teachers for 1970-71 school year, but paid from 1971-72 budget.		18
		$ 335
New or Expanded Programs, Services and Materials		
2800 New Employees (Salary increase costs have been deducted. See above.)	$ 26	
Purchase of Goods and Contracted Services Above the 1966-67 Level	4	30
1971-72 School District Budget		$ 365

As one can see, only $30 million of the whopping $180 million increase in the budget, or less than 17% over the five year period, has gone toward providing enlarged, improved or expanded programs or services.

The impact of Federal funds has been minimal because the total sum ($5.8 billion this year) is spread over a great multitude of programs, a tremendous number of students and institutions from pre-school through college. Title I of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act is the largest Federal aid to education program and a good example of the prob-

lem. In an April 1971 study printed for Senator Walter F. Mondale's Committee, the point is made that "many school systems have spread Title I allocation thinly...The result is a superficial veneer of fragmented programs...the average national expenditure for each pupil participating in a Title I program last year: $95...this level of Title I spending is highly unlikely to achieve marked change in the quality of education afforded the educationally disadvantaged."

In Philadelphia, the average expenditure per pupil in Title I funds this year is $160 which does not go very far. For example, the Philadelphia Reading Skills Centers show promise for producing improvement in reading. The space chosen for a Center is divided into four distinct working areas to match the four basic components of reading — decoding words, comprehension, study skills and literature. Each Center is staffed with a reading teacher and at least one aide and is equipped with special materials of many kinds. Each student served has a specific program designed to meet his individual needs. The Centers cost $25,000 to equip and staff for one year. 125 is the maximum number of poor readers that can be adequately served by one Center. Therefore, $160 per child falls $5,000 short of being enough money for such a Center, and the limitations of this level of spending are demonstrated.

PROBING THE EFFORT

Many new programs have been tried. While the reported results of most seem disappointing, it is essential to search for the reasons by examining the programs carefully. Head Start is one such program. It was designed to prepare children for kindergarten and first grade so that they could be successful in their beginning years in school. Before Head Start was established, some experimental pre-schools had demonstrated that early intervention in the life of a "disadvantaged" child, with a carefully designed program implemented by trained teachers, increased a child's intellectual performance. Expectation and hopes were high until evaluations comparing Head Start 1st, 2nd and 3rd graders with non-Head Start children in the same grades showed little difference between the two groups.

Several good explanations have been given. One is that children make significant gains in Head Start, only to lose them when the quality of the programs that follow in the kindergarten and primary grades is poor. Another is that many Head Start Centers were not modeled , either in staffing or goals, after the pre-schools that had been successful. They did not have the trained personnel and much of their thrust was toward proper nutrition, dental and health care and social growth rather than the strong focus on "cognitive" growth which characterized the experimental pre-schools. Neither of these explanations justifies a decision that Head Start is a failure. Rather they lead to the conclusion that program modifications are needed in Head Start or kindergarten and the early grades.

Another new program which has shown small gains to date is the Philadelphia reading program. Philadelphia has mounted a sizeable city-wide attack on the problem by adopting new methods, ordering large quantities of new materials and bringing aides into the classroom. If the reading achievement results have been disappointing, it would be wrong to conclude that increased spending has produced little effect. Rather, there has not been enough money to provide teachers with the intensive work that they need to become skillful at teaching reading, using the new materials and utilizing aides most efficiently.

Further evidence that expenditures do make a difference is provided by a new book, Schools and Inequality by James W. Guthrie, et al. It offers proof that the quality of a school affects the level of achievement of the students. Higher-quality schools are shown to have a direct relationship to higher levels of achievement while lower quality schools are linked to lower levels of achievement. This relates directly to expenditure, because quality is determined by such components as the ability of the instructional staff, the physical facilities and the adequacy of the instructional materials.

It is very important when making educational policy decisions based on evaluations of existing programs to take a hard look at the data and its interpretation by the evaluator. Collecting and interpreting data on human learning and behavior is an extremely complex undertaking. Most people doing educational evaluation have to be comparatively new to the field since in 1957, just 15 years ago, there were only 150 trained educational researchers in the nation. In addition, very little money has been devoted to educational research. Last year, only $210 million was spent representing less than four-tenths of one percent of the $53 billion national expenditure for education. This small investment in the research and development component of education condemns us to seek improvement by the slow and expensive process of trial and error.

Money alone may not give us better schools because it can be used in ways that result in no change for students in the classroom. On the other hand, in countless instances only the expenditure of funds can improve the learning situation and raise student achievement. Lowering class size, for example, which requires more teachers and costs more money, does not in and of itself increase student achievement. The teacher may just stand in the front of the room and lecture as he has always done and nothing will change. But a trained, skillful teacher given a class of 20 students can work in a creative, individualized way as he never could with 35 and can thus raise student achievement.

While the problems of education can not be solved with funds alone, neither can they be solved without much more money than is now being spent. The effect of expenditure on education is great indeed and can make a difference.

Subscription - $3.00 for one year, $6.00 for two years. Contributions over and above your subscription are welcome and tax deductible. Make check payable to Acorn Educational Press, Inc. and send to 6400 Drexel Road, Philadelphia, Pa. 19151

THE OAKES NEWSLETTER
6400 Drexel Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19151

the OAKES newsletter

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

Vol.III, No.9 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania May 19, 1972

HOW SHOULD SCHOOLS BE FINANCED?

There are a number of forces and events bringing the question of how best to finance public education to the attention of citizens and legislators:

1. Large urban school systems are losing ground annually as city residents struggle unsuccessfully to adequately support their schools.

2. The problem is no longer restricted to the big cities. State Representative James J. A. Gallagher, testifying at a hearing in Philadelphia held by the U.S. Office of Education earlier this month, said, "...the capacity of Pennsylvania citizens to support education through local and state taxes is very nearly exhausted. Here in Pennsylvania...the total volume of tax dollars needed to meet the rising costs of education and the needs of a constantly expanding student population is simply greater, statewide, than the Pennsylvania taxpayer can reasonably be expected to supply."

3. The California Supreme Court decision of August 30, 1971 which declared California's system of financing its schools unconstitutional raises questions nationwide about the legality and propriety of relying on local wealth (i.e. property tax) with its great variation from community to community to support local schools.

4. The National Educational Finance Project study which was released in November 1971, provides the public with a wealth of statistical data and a number of carefully worked out alternative models for local, state and federal financing upon which intelligent debate and decisions can be based. This Project, initiated by the United States Office of Education in June 1968, was the first comprehensive national study of school finance in forty years. The research was prodigious, was carried out by professionals at institutions of higher learning all over the nation and is described in seven published volumes. The findings are condensed into a 61-page, very readable pamphlet called Future Directions For School Financing.*

5. The President's Commission on School Finance has made recommendations which will stimulate thought and discussion nationwide. This 18-member Commission, appointed March 3, 1970, was charged with the responsibility "to study and report to the President on future revenue needs and resources of the Nation's public and non-public elementary and secondary schools." It gave its

* National Educational Finance Project, 1212 Southwest Fifth Ave., Gainesville, Fla. 32601. Of interest also is Volume 5, Alternative Programs for Financing Education which summarizes the findings of Volumes 1-4. Available free.

final report, an 147-page booklet called "Schools, People and Money, the Need for Educational Reform,* to the President in March 1972.

* * * * *

The NEFP and the President's Commission came to a number of conclusions, some similar and some different. Three of the major ones speak to the state's role in school finance, the necessity to allocate funds according to variation in the educational needs of students and the Federal role in school finance.

THE STATE'S ROLE

Both studies conclude that for a state to provide equal educational opportunity and quality education to the children living within its borders, revenue for education must primarily be raised by the state as opposed to the local districts. This is because severe inequities result from the present, widely used method by which each community supports its own schools largely through taxation of local property. If the community is poor, the value of real estate is low and taxes on property result in fewer dollars per child than in a rich community where the value of property is high. This can result in the poor district taxing itself at a higher rate than the rich district, but raising less money per pupil. For example, Lower Merion, a suburb of Philadelphia, spends $1300 per pupil per year while the Central Fulton School District in south-central Pennsylvania spends only $600. The principal source of this inequity is the difference in property value in the districts. Lower Merion has $66,500 in market value of real property per student while Central Fulton has only $3900 per student — a ratio of 17 to 1. Thus the quality of education, as measured by the revenue that a School District has to spend, depends in large part on the accident of where a student lives. If he lives in a suburb with expensive homes or prosperous shopping centers, he will attend schools that provide superior services. If he lives in a poor district, whether it is a rural one with very little industry or a city with declining property values and fleeing businesses, school taxes will raise less money and the schools will have much less to spend.

The widely quoted California decision, Serrano vs. Priest, declared that this system of financing education is a violation of the "equal protection of the law" guaranteed by the 14th Amendment, because it produces substantial disparities among school districts in the amount of revenue available for education. As the Court put it, "Affluent districts can have their cake and eat it too; they can provide a high-quality education for their children while paying lower taxes. Poor districts, by contrast, have no cake at all."

It is the states to whom the Constitution delegates the responsibility for education. They have the authority and the responsibility to eliminate the financial inequities within their borders. To quote the NEFP, "The only way this can be achieved is through a state tax structure and allocation plan which provides each district equal access to fiscal resources." Several different ways, detailed in the NEFP study, are open to the states to achieve this equalization.

INDEX OF EDUCATIONAL NEED

The President's Commission and the National Educational Finance Project both recommend that allo-

* Order from Supt. of Documents, Govt. Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. #PR 37.8:SCH6/3 $1.00

cation of funds to school districts take into consideration the different educational needs of children and the widely varying costs of programs designed to meet these needs. Equal opportunity can only be provided by unequal per pupil expenditure which will provide the required special programs. Common practice now is to distribute funds on bases such as the average daily attendance of pupils or the number of children from low income families. Since special programs such as those for the physically handicapped, pre-schoolers and vocational-technical students cost more than the typical elementary and secondary programs, it is essential to determine the level of funding necessary to support each one of these programs. One method of comparing the difference in costs is the "weighted pupil" technique. The weight of "1" is arbitrarily assigned to the least expensive kind of education which is the standard elementary school program. If it is found that the cost of educating emotionally disturbed pupils is approximately twice the cost per pupil of regular pupils in elementary schools, then these pupils are given the weight of "2". The NEFP developed the methods for computing the relative costs of different educational programs and the following sample weights are quoted from its Future Directions For School Financing:

Educational Programs	Weight Assigned
Basic Elem. Gr. 1-6	1.0
Grades 10-12	1.4
Physically Handicapped	3.3
Compensatory Education	2.0
Vocational-Technical	1.8

If a school district were to determine the number of students that should be in each of these educational programs, and the state then allocated funds on the basis of the weight assigned, its funds would be more equitably distributed to meet the specific needs of the students in the various districts.

THE FEDERAL ROLE

The President's Commission and the NEFP fundamentally disagree when it comes to the Federal role in the financing of elementary and secondary education. The President's Commission sees the Federal Government "performing a leadership and pioneering role in long-range educational policy, but only a supplementary role to the States in the financing of school capital and operating costs." Their recommendations severely restrict Federal financial involvement. The Commission points to limited funds and unlimited demands for them and states its belief in "a more reasoned approach to the issues of Federal involvement in education than the conventional exhortation merely for massive infusions of cash into the system."

It is of interest to note that nine of the eighteen Commissioners dissented from this conclusion about the Federal role. With eight other members concurring, Dr. John Fischer, President, Teachers College, Columbia University states his belief that federal funds should be used to equalize educational opportunity at a reasonable level among the States.

Just as there are differences in wealth of school districts within each state (except Hawaii whose schools are supported 100% by the State), so there are great disparities of wealth among the states. Some states have greater natural resources, or more business and industry, and the residents therefore have higher incomes. These differences in fiscal capacity lead to differences in expenditures for elementary and secondary education which can be as

great as $1370 to $520, the difference in what is spent annually per student in New York State as compared to Mississippi. Since the states' financial circumstances do not permit them to alter this situation in any substantial way, the federal government should step in to provide equity between states.

The National Educational Finance Project recommends that "the public schools should receive at least 22 percent and preferably 30 percent of their total revenue from the federal government in order for the schools to have an adequate tax base and in order for the federal government to accomplish legitimate and appropriate federal purposes."

Federal funding at this level would strengthen public schools in all of the states and make it possible for the poorer states to support their school systems adequately. Because people can and do move from one part of the country to another, limited educational opportunities in one state often cause major problems in another state. Some of today's big city problems, including unemployment, underemployment and poverty, have their roots in the inferior education received by residents who migrated from the financially starved schools of the southern states and rural areas of the midwest. If we do not resolve today, as a nation, to share the cost of educating all of our children, we will undoubtedly have to face the higher future costs of uneducated adults. Therefore, it is a sound Federal purpose and in the national interest for the Federal Government to supplement state and local funds so that students nationwide are accorded an equal opportunity to experience an adequate basic school program.

* * * * *

Developing new and better ways to finance public education will require changes in the roles played by the local, state and federal governments. The National Educational Finance Project reports, written in laymen's language, provide a wealth of information about many different alternatives. If the public becomes informed, it can join legislators and educators in choosing the best plan for school finance. Public participation is vital, because the decisions that will have to be made deeply reflect values and goals.

Subscription - $3.00 for one year, $6.00 for two years. Contributions over and above your subscription are welcome and tax deductible. Make check payable to Acorn Educational Press, Inc. and send to 6400 Drexel Road, Philadelphia, Pa. 19151.

THE OAKES NEWSLETTER
6400 Drexel Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19151

the OAKES newsletter

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

Vol.III, No.10 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania June 19, 1972

INTEGRATING PHILADELPHIA'S DESEGREGATED SCHOOLS

Out of more than 250 public schools in Philadelphia, only about 40 are racially desegregated in a proportion so that neither black nor white students are in an obvious minority. Of these, very few are integrated schools, that is schools in which students, as well as staff members, associate with one another on the basis of mutual respect and equality and develop friendships and understanding.

The problem of desegregating school systems, not only in Philadelphia, but all over the nation, is a complex one which demands solution if this nation is to avoid the frightening consequences of continuing racial separation in the public schools. Only if children from different ethnic backgrounds go to school together can the hate, prejudice, hostility and fear poisoning our society begin to be eliminated. While racial hatred and misunderstanding persist, solutions to the economic, social, educational and housing problems that affect us all will be impossible.

Desegregation, the physical presence of black and white students in the same building, while all-important,is only a beginning. If integration is to follow, an intensive effort on the part of the individual school and the School District is required.

This newsletter is written to re-emphasize the importance of integration, to urge the School District of Philadelphia to actively support and promote it, and to point out that it does not just "happen" as a natural consequence of desegregation.

A description of Olney High School, one of Philadelphia's five racially well-balanced high schools, can highlight the opportunities and the challenge offered by a desegregated school. Olney serves 4000 students and has the potential to positively influence this large number of young people in the area of race relations. It currently enjoys a racial ratio of almost 50-50,but unless the school can retain its reputation in the community for a quality educational program, there is great danger that it will not be able to keep this racial balance.

Olney High School is located in the northeastern quadrant of the city. Nine years ago more than 90% of its pupil population was white, coming from many different ethnic backgrounds. In the mid-1960's, black families began to live in greater numbers in the area served by Olney so that the black student population increased until there is now almost perfect racial balance there.

About three years ago, Olney went through an extremely difficult period characterized by fights, expressions of overt hostility and a school atmosphere that was often tense, volatile and

dangerous. Since then, efforts have been made by many to improve relationships among students and all other members of the school family. The new principal who came to Olney in the fall of 1969 has worked with great dedication and commitment, especially with the community and the students, to develop lines of communication and relationships of trust. As a result, the atmosphere of the School is calm with overt racial conflict reduced to the vanishing point.

In talking with some Olney students, it was clear that desegregation has made a difference to many students. Black and white students have had a chance, in class as well as extracurricular activities, to work together and come to know one another. They talked of the experience as an opportunity to get a perspective on life, to rid themselves of stereotype thinking, to be exposed to people of different backgrounds and points of view, and to make friends across racial lines. These students have learned something from this experience that is invaluable to them as individuals and as members of society.

There are other students, however, who face obstacles to good interracial relationships which require effort and understanding to overcome. Many students come to school with fears, prejudices, or feelings of hostility, anger or resentment. Other students experiencing desegregation for the first time naturally approach fellow students of another race with suspicion and anxiety. The whites and blacks who sit apart from one another in classes and in the lunchroom provide visual evidence of poor relationships. There are indications that the white students in the school have begun to withdraw from active participation in many school activities. Fewer are running for office, going out for sports and attending dances and plays. This is a symptom of a problem with serious implications.

While the principal has been building bridges of communication to the student body, he has been relatively unsuccessful in communicating with his teaching staff and getting them to pull together. The faculty's human relations' committee which should be working hard to improve relationships between individuals and groups in the school has been inactive all year. In spite of many obvious indications of the need to work for positive interracial associations between black and white students, the staff has not come to grips with the problems or even its own feelings and attitudes. Unfortunately, sensitive, empathetic staff members with the skills to facilitate intergroup understanding are the exception rather than the rule.

In my opinion Olney High School should adopt three goals for the immediate future:

GOAL 1 - EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE.

Because Olney is a recently desegregated school, people are concerned about the continued quality of its educational program. Parents of some white students graduating from schools that feed Olney are sending their children in greater numbers than in previous years to other schools. Parents of both races with high educational aspirations for their children are fearful that the educational program of a school with a changed student population will be allowed to deteriorate. These fears should be counteracted by the School District with programs that promise across-the-board improvement of education for all students in terms that can be clearly seen and understood.

****Place special emphasis in 1972-73 on English and mathematics to demonstrate that these very important elements of the curriculum will remain of high quality. These two departments could adopt new,

highly visible, programs as components of their regular offerings. For example, the English department could place an emphasis on writing of all kinds -factual, journalistic, creative, etc.Whether a student is going to take a Civil Service or apprenticeship exam, or a college aptitude test, his score and, therefore, his future depend on his ability to communicate via the written word. Thus, a focus on this particular skill would be meaningful for each student. More writing could be assigned if volunteers or paid college students were brought in to work under a teacher's direction, going over each student's written work to help him develop his writing skill.

****Focus on the library by bringing in more special exhibits, authors and programs and encouraging its greater use for class work and recreational reading.

****Individualize instruction to a greater extent so that assigned work offers a challenge to every student, but overwhelms none. This is important because of the broad range of abilities which exist in every school, and the variation in the quality of education received by the students previously.

GOAL 2 - INFORMATION. Olney's public image will measurably effect its level of community support and its future racial balance, so it is important to develop a means of providing accurate information to the entire school family.

****Produce a newspaper of professional quality, mailed at least every other month to all Olney parents, local newspapers, community groups and businessmen, all parents of children in Olney's feeder schools and the staffs of those schools. The newspaper would report on activities of students, the various departments, and staff. It would include writing and artwork done by students plus news of future school events.

GOAL 3 - INTEGRATION. The key to moving from mere desegregation to integration is the staff of a school, and this includes all professionals and non-professionals. First, the principal and staff must recognize that as a desegregated school, they have problems. To work toward solutions, staff members must be willing to make an investment of time and to become emotionally involved in the effort to improve human relations and, thus, create a better environment for learning.

****A comprehensive plan for staff training should be developed. There are many educational institutions and agencies that will provide staff and consultant services to assist in the process of integration and there are Federal funds available for these purposes. The School District is planning a training program this summer in which Olney could and should participate by sending a team of people.

Olney could advance toward all three goals by creating a task force of students, parents, school personnel and community to work together on an educational task. One such endeavor might be the evaluation of a list of objectives for the School which was prepared by the faculty in 1970. One of the objectives, for example, is "to maintain a constant and effective dialogue between the school and the community." The task force could decide whether that is now being done, how it could be improved and what the members of the task force could contribute to achieving this objective.

* * * * * * *

While the foregoing was written about Olney High School, the three goals would be equally ap-

propriate for any desegregated school.

RECOGNITION ESSENTIAL

The Board of Education, the Superintendent of Schools and his staff have an obligation and a responsibility to demonstrate, through words and actions, that they value the biracial schools of this city. They should:

1.Give the desegregated schools the status and prestige they deserve because they are carrying out a vital public policy by publicizing their names, visiting and financially supporting them and speaking frequently about the value of this school experience for the students involved, the School District and the city.

2.Rank integration with other School District priorities around which budget policy is developed.

3.Reward desegregated schools by providing across-the-board improvement in the educational offerings for the students.

4.Provide leadership, direction and resources so that each desegregated school can:

A.Develop and carry out school-wide plans for integration.

B.Train teachers to facilitate understanding among students of different racial and other ethnic backgrounds.

C.Develop teams from among its own staff to meet the problems that accompany interracial education.

5.Each fall and spring, make an important occasion of gathering together representatives of the staff, parents, students and community from each of these schools for an inspirational meeting pointing toward the goal of improved human relations.

6.Use these schools for University-School District cooperative programs. This would offer additional services to the schools and provide the universities with opportunities to train students in desegregated schools.

Philadelphia's desegregated schools should be nurtured and prized by the School District, teachers, students, parents and the community-at-large. When our schools move closer to achieving integration, they will offer increasing hope for greater racial understanding and make Philadelphia a better place for all of us to live.

Subscription - $3.00 for one year, $6.00 for two years. Contributions over and above your subscription are welcome and tax deductible. Make check payable to Acorn Educational Press, Inc. and send to 6400 Drexel Road, Philadelphia, Pa. 19151.

THE OAKES NEWSLETTER
6400 Drexel Road
Philadelphia, Pa. 19151