

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, NOVEMBER 20, 1997**

President Kessler convened the November meeting of the Colonial School Board of Directors at 8:03 p.m. in the Board Meeting Room of the Colonial Elementary School on November 20, 1997.

Board Members Present: Stuart Kessler, Jack Pinheiro, Beverly Brown, Rich Connolly, Gary Johnson, Allen Mandelbaum, Robert O'Neill, Marc Orlow, Thomas Yunker.

Board Members Absent: None

Also Attending: Dr. Stanley Durtan, Superintendent; Dr. Ann Stormes, Director of Curriculum & Instruction; James M. Bell, Director of Operation/Board Secretary; R. Scott Klinger, Director of Personnel; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services; Joseph Bickleman, Controller/Treasurer; Frank O'Hara, Solicitor; Katy Swetkowski and Janet Kim, Student Representatives; Carol Cohen, CEA; Charles Graham, Director of Technology; Sally Abbott; Gina Catanese, Jan Canterbury; Robert Carroll; Eleanor Carroll; Dave Beeghley; Jeanneane Bozzelli; Jennifer Davis; Mike Diehl; Allan Dovberg; Don Flathman; Naila Francis; Valerie Flounders; Tom Gibson; Young Kim; Hugh Lipshutz; Mike Macaninch; Darilyn Moyer, Donald Newmeyer; Phyllis Pupkiewicz; Gail Sutton; and Mary Thiess.

Mr. Kessler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes: Mr. Mandelbaum moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the Special Meeting of 10/6/97, the Work Session of 10/13/97, the Community Relations Committee of 10/15/97, the General Meeting of 10/16/97, the Curriculum Committee of 10/27/97, the Buildings & Grounds Committee Meeting of 11/12/97 and the Personnel Committee Meeting of 11/13/97 listed as Enclosures #1 through #5, #32 and #33. On roll call vote, all in favor, Motion carried.

Financial Reports: Ms. Brown moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the following financial reports: The Budget Transfer Report of November 1997; the Capital Reserve Fund Report For the Month Ending 10/31/97; Food Service Bills and Reports as of 9/30/97; the Outstanding Investment, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes Collected, Real Estate Escrow Reports for the ending 10/31/97, the Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the months ending 9/30/97 and 10/31/97, and the Budgetary/Deficit Status and Treasurer's Reports of 10/31/97, as shown in Enclosures #6 through #15. Mr. Kessler inquired about the current interest rate on investments, and Mr. Bickleman responded that the current rate was approximately 5.5 percent in the PLGIT Liquid Asset Fund. Mr. Connolly

noted the decrease in the funds held in the Capital Reserve Fund. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Public Comments on the Agenda: Mr. Newmeyer, district resident, spoke to the Board about his support for abstinence only sex education programs and noted that abstinence meant abstaining from behavior that brings grave consequences. He outlined his hope that the Board would accept the offer from the organizations willing to provide assistance in this area so that board members could hear first hand about their ideas. Ms. Brown commented that she realized for the first time that the programs Mr. Newmeyer was recommending were based solely on abstinence and stated clearly that she would not support such initiatives. Mr. Newmeyer commented that district staff had provided a good presentation on the district's sex education program but also noted his belief that alternatives to abstinence outside marriage could lead to trouble for young people.

Staff Report: Mr. Beeghley, a representative of the Board of Trustees of the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation, addressed the Board and requested Board approval for the award of nine mini-grants for a total of \$4,300.00. He recommended that the Board accept the grants. Mr. Kessler thanked the foundation for the wonderful work it was doing. Mr. Connolly noted that the Board usually had a hard copy of the grant information to review prior to taking action to accept the foundation's support. Dr. Durtan advised that this was an administrative oversight and that the Board would have written information on proposed grants in the future. Mr. Orlow advised, that as the Board's liaison with the foundation, he had reviewed the grants and had no hesitation in recommending their acceptance. Mr. Mandelbaum commended the Board for recognizing the fine work of the foundation and providing regular opportunities for receiving progress reports on grant activities. He praised the consistently good relationship between the Board and the foundation. Ms. Brown requested that written information on the grants be included in the next set of Board notes. Mr. Beeghley provided fundraising information in support of the foundation's three big initiatives: The satellite dish at the high school, electronic portfolios, and hardback book publishing for the elementary schools. He thanked all those who had contributed to these efforts and passed special thanks along to George Romano for work on the satellite dish, Bernie Murray for arranging the golf outing, and Linda Romano for her work on the walkathon. Mr. Beeghley read the list of grants proposed for Board acceptance. Ms. Brown moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to accept the grants from the foundation. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Old Business: Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Orlow seconded a motion to approve a proposed policy on behavior management on second reading. The policy is shown in Enclosures #16. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Correspondence: Mr. Kessler noted receipt of the correspondence contained in Enclosures #17 through #20 and #34 through #36. Ralph McKelvey, Jr., district resident, supported Mr. Dovberg's letter to the editor on block scheduling. PSBA Executive Director Joseph V. Oravitz notified the Board of appointments for specific responsibilities to be made at the reorganization meeting in December. Donald R. Newmeyer, district resident, wrote on the subject of abstinence-based sex education. Darilyn V. Moyer, district resident, addressed the concept of merit pay. The Whitmarsh Township Republican Committee expressed support for the Board's position on merit pay. Donald B. Scholl, PWHS faculty member, expressed his opinion of merit pay.

Allan Dovberg, district resident, requested assurance that students would suffer no repercussions if their parents spoke out on issues before the Board. Mr. Kessler recognized Mr. Dovberg who had requested an opportunity to address the Board. Mr. Dovberg read from a prepared statement which he provided to the Board. He shared his perspective on the interaction of the Colonial Education Association (CEA) and other speakers with the Board and the community at large at the Board work session the previous Monday. He also provided information on merit pay programs in use in districts in other states. His comments are attached to these minutes as Appendix #1.

Mr. Kessler recognized Carol Cohen, President of CEA, who had requested an opportunity to address the Board. Ms. Cohen read a statement clarifying reports in the local news media about the reason why a scheduled parent forum announced by the CEA had not been held. She noted that the CEA attempted to act honorably and correctly at all times. She advised that the CEA had, on November 4th, requested permission to use the high school auditorium on November 19th, that it had not been understood that the request represented a change in circumstances from the organization's usual meetings, and that no form had been requested or filed. Ms. Cohen advised that an association statement made to the press concerning the filing of the proper forms at the proper times had been based on an understanding of the timelines and procedures and not on what had actually happened. She stated that the CEA leadership had been under the impression that they had given notice of the association's intent to meet with parents on November 19th but acknowledged that Dr. Durtan first learned of the meeting when Mr. McMahan announced it at the November 17th work session of the Board.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Durtan reviewed his personnel report on the current additions, terminations, suspensions, demotions, leaves of absence, promotions, suspensions, transfers and resignations of staff, as shown in Enclosure #21 and the additions and deletions to the substitute list, as shown in Enclosure #22 and sought approval of the personnel actions included therein. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the personnel report and the changes in the substitute list. Mr. Pinheiro commented on recent news reports that local districts had been having trouble securing substitute teachers to cover classes in the

absence of regular staff. Dr. Durtan noted that the district was facing a tighter situation than it had in the past but had been successful in covering all classes to date. He noted that other districts had raised their substitute rates in an attempt to attract more staff, and Mr. Klinger advised that he would be taking a look at this trend and would report back to the Board at a later date on how the local market for substitute services might affect the district's substitute rate. Mr. Kessler asked Dr. Durtan to highlight the administrative changes in the personnel report. Dr. Durtan noted his recommendation that Mr. Cognato and Ms. Incorvio be confirmed in their positions as assistant principals at the middle and high schools and that Mr. Sigafos and Ms. Woodin be appointed principal and assistant principal at Colonial Elementary School. He also noted that a search had been conducted for the elementary school positions and that the recommended candidates were the best qualified to fill these positions. Mr. Yunker questioned when the salaries for the new administrators at Colonial Elementary School would become effective, and Dr. Durtan stated that they would be effective at the beginning of the transition into the new assignments. He noted that the actual date would be affected by some other potential changes in administrative assignments and that he would report back to the Board once that date is firmly established. Mr. Orlow asked why the salaries for the assistant principals at the middle school and high school were effective in July 1998. Dr. Durtan responded that their salaries for the current year had already been set and would not need to be changed. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Board Student Representatives Report: Katy Swetkowski reported on a series of successful events held by the high school chorus, band, orchestra, and theater group. She noted that the spring musical would be "Bye Bye Birdie". She advised that the high school chapter of SADD had sponsored a drama on the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. Katy also outlined the activities of the junior and senior classes, including the junior class's first annual Mr. PW Contest. Janet Kim filled in for John Lukens and provided an update on several school activities, including the recent efforts of the sports teams, a planned blood drive, American Education Week activities and the Honor Society induction.

New Business: Mr. Kessler noted that the Board would be taking action on several items of new business.

Ms. Brown moved and Mr. Mandelbaum seconded a motion to approve a resolution authorizing disbursement from the Capital Reserve Account, as shown in Enclosure #23. Ms. Brown restated her explanation for the resolution which was presented to the Board and community at the work session the previous Monday and is outlined in the minutes of that meeting. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Ms. Brown moved and Mr. Mandelbaum seconded a motion to approve the submission to the Department of Education Form 731, "Self-Certification Application for Non-Reimbursable Construction Project", as shown in Enclosure

#24. Ms. Brown noted that the cost of going through the Plancon process exceeded the reimbursement that the district could expect. Dr. Durtan noted that the resolution was a matter of routine when altering facilities. Mr. Mandelbaum added that the process put the Board on record as opting out of the Plancon process. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler outlined the district's long-standing anti-vandalism programs at the middle and high school and shared the results of the program for the 1996-97 school year. He noted administration's recommendation to make payments of \$2,315.03 and \$1,397.63 respectively to the student councils of Plymouth Whitemarsh High School and Colonial Middle School under the provisions of the 13-year old anti-vandalism initiative. The payments represent one half of the unspent funds from the 1996-97 anti-vandalism program. He also noted that administration was recommending that the program be re-established for the 1997-98 school year at the same funding level as the prior year, viz. \$5,000.00 for the high school and \$3,000.00 for the middle school, as shown in Enclosure #25. Mr. O'Neill made and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the payments to the student councils at each school and to reauthorize the anti-vandalism program for the 1997-98 school year. Mr. Pinheiro commented on the remarkable reduction in vandalism at the two schools. Mr. Johnson asked Ms. Swetkowski to report back to the Board on how the funds forwarded to the high school student council would be spent. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler introduced the topic of the award of bids for computers and associated equipment under a technology lease/purchase program, as outlined in Enclosure #26 and Mr. Graham provided a summary of the options for acquiring the equipment. Mr. Graham noted that the figures presented in the current report before the Board were very similar to those provided at previous meetings. He reminded the Board that the equipment included the computers, standard monitors, printers and tables. He noted that it did not include the interactive video system or 32" TV monitors with scan cards which would be bid at a later date. Mr. Graham indicated that these latter items were not on the current state bid and that the district was in the process of developing specifications for them. He also noted some technical glitches with a couple of the items under consideration and advised that the district would test the equipment before purchasing it.

Board members thoroughly discussed several options for leasing or purchasing the equipment and the timing of the acquisition. In the process, various members made the following points. Mr. Yunker received confirmation that the electrical systems at the schools would support the proposed installations but that modifications of electrical distribution systems would be required to add technology beyond what was currently planned. Mr. Graham noted that the electrical distribution system was approaching full capacity and that the middle school electrical system has been at capacity for some time. Dr. Durtan noted the importance of the feasibility study of the electrical distribution system at the high school. Mr. Orlow indicated that he

was hearing about electrical problems at the middle school for the first time. Mr. Yunker questioned when the equipment would be delivered if it were ordered immediately. Mr. Graham indicated that the equipment was currently in inventory but that he had not confirmed shipping times. He noted that shipment had taken approximately two weeks in the past. Several Board members queried where the installation process would start and how it would be handled. Mr. Graham indicated that it could start at either the middle or high school. He stated that his plan was to handle the installation in two phases, to do much of the work in-house, and to arrange contracted assistance if that proved necessary to affect timely installation. He noted that personnel involved in the installation would have access to the rooms during the day as well as after hours.

Mr. Connolly queried whether the district had to proceed with installation as originally planned if block scheduling were not implemented in the fall of 1998. He and Ms. Brown believed that block scheduling at the high school was the impetus for installing the new technology in a single year. Both felt that it might be possible to spread the installation over three years and purchase rather than lease the equipment. Other board members indicated that block scheduling was but one of many factors considered when the board made the decision to take advantage of leasing arrangements to secure and install the equipment in the current school year. They felt that there was consensus on the Board that there was value in securing technology outside the context of block scheduling. Mr. Mandelbaum noted that block scheduling added some urgency to the acquisition but that the decision to acquire the equipment had been made in the context of improving communication. He suggested that teachers might be better able to assimilate the new the technological advances in the absence of block scheduling. Mr. Orlow reminded the Board of its decision to put at least one computer in each classroom. Mr. Yunker noted that recent graduates of the high school had indicated in a survey that they were not able to compete strongly in the area of technology with their peers from other schools. Mr. Kessler and Mr. Mandelbaum noted that the Board had debated these issues in the spring and had decided that students needed the opportunity to use and interact with technology in the classroom.

Ms. Brown urged the Board to avoid leasing the equipment at a time when it was planning to secure a sizable bond for construction related work. She indicated that the technology could be purchased and installed over a three-year period. She felt that undertaking the lease of technology needlessly muddied the financial waters prior to issuing a sizable bond. She advised beginning installation at the middle school. Mr. Kessler suggested that the Board defer making a decision until the meeting of the Board on December 1st when the status of block scheduling would be known. Several Board members noted that postponement would not affect their vote. Mr. Pinheiro noted that the Board had not adopted much of the original technology proposal but had decided on one computer per classroom. He suggested that, while block scheduling was a consideration, it was not the primary reason for the Board's decision to move forward with the current technology initiative.

Several board members had additional questions on the installation schedule, training plans, and the value of one computer in each classroom. Dr. Durtan noted that software use was currently in use in all curricular areas. Mr. Graham advised that the district had a current grant which provided seed money to assist the district in integrating technology in the classroom, including teacher training in that technology. Ms. Brown indicated that tax advantages and the ability to get more for the money were the usual advantages of leasing but that neither applied to this acquisition of technology. Mr. Kessler noted that the primary advantage of leasing the technology was that acquisition of the equipment could be accelerated. Board members discussed funding and budgeting before Mr. Orlow moved and Mr. Mandelbaum seconded a motion to approve the CoreStates lease to acquire 111 computers, printers and tables for \$254,826.00, with payments spread over three years and a \$1.00 buyout at the end of the lease, as shown in Enclosure # 26. Mr. Yunker inquired about the current specifications for the equipment and changes in the state bid over time. Mr. Graham and Mr. O'Hara noted that, in using the lease in the current state bid, the Board would be approving the number, the cost of the machines, and the current or successor Compaq model listed on the bid. Ms. Brown expressed concern about the possible need to replace all or many of the computers purchased now at the same time in the future. Mr. Pinheiro and Mr. Kessler noted that they were in favor of securing the equipment but would prefer timing the vote on the purchase for the meeting of December 1st when the status of block scheduling would be known. On roll call vote, Mr. Yunker, Mr. Orlow, Mr. O'Neill, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Mandelbaum in favor. Mr. Connolly, Mr. Pinheiro, Mr. Kessler and Ms. Brown opposed. Motion carried.

Mr. Connolly advised the Board that the Buildings & Grounds Committee had reviewed the bids for a nine passenger school van and recommended awarding the bid to Wolfington Body Company, Inc., the lowest responsible bidder meeting specifications, at a cost of \$25,841.00, as indicated in Enclosure #38. The vehicle will replace a five-year old van with considerable mileage. The new van will be used primarily for non-public and special education transportation. Mr. Connolly moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the purchase of the van. All in favor, motion carried.

Ms. Brown reviewed a resolution to authorize Public Financial Management to take action to secure a General Obligation Note in the amount of \$10,000,000.00 from the 1989 Emmaus/PLGIT Bond Pool Program, as shown in Enclosure #27. During the Board discussion which followed, board members understood and accepted that there had to be a good faith intention to proceed with the planned projects in order to proceed with the note. Various board members spoke of the opportunity to keep moving forward with the project, the ability of the district to reimburse itself for start-up costs, and the advantage of earning interest on the funds while holding them for later payment of construction work. Several board members sought clarification of the degree of commitment by the Board in order to secure funds

from the Emmaus/PLGIT Bond Pool Program. Mr. Kessler asked if there were any downside to borrowing the money. Mr. O'Hara stated his belief that the proceeds were refundable if the district decided at a later date not to proceed with the projects. He also stressed the need for a good faith intention of moving forward now with the projects and a firm commitment at the time of the final bond issue. Ms. Brown moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the resolution. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. O'Neill moved and Mr. Connolly seconded a motion to approve a request for a high school band trip to Toronto, Ontario. The trip meets district guidelines and is endorsed by the high school administration, as noted in Enclosure #37. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Kessler introduced and Dr. Durtan elaborated on an offer from The PW Aquatic Club to donate timing equipment to the district for the high school pool. The Board received a description of the equipment in Enclosure #41. Dr. Durtan advised that the aquatic club was a local community youth organization which uses the pool and has donated items for use in the pool in the past. He also advised that the district would have to store, maintain, and insure the equipment at its own expense. The gift is valued at approximately \$10,000.00. Ms. Brown moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to accept the donation. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried. The Board expressed appreciation and thanks to the PW Aquatic Club for the donation.

Solicitor's Report: Mr. O'Hara briefly reviewed the information which he provided at the work session of November 17th about a resolution to file a Certificate of Request to Terminate Authority as the final step in terminating the CMCAVTS Authority. Ms. Brown made and Mr. Mandelbaum seconded a motion to approve the resolution, as presented to the Board and attached to these minutes as Appendix #2. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Committee Reports:

Intermediate Unit Board: Mr. Pinheiro reported that an agreement had been reached between the intermediate unit and the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit Education Association on a three-year contract. The agreement includes provisions for a 190-day work year (an increase of one day), co-pay for health benefits, no pay increases for staff receiving unsatisfactory ratings (and the rating is not grievable), and salary increases of 3.8% the first year and 3.9% and 3.8% in each of the next two years. The increases include a 2% step, so actual raises are either 1.8% or 1.9% depending on the year. The new salaries put the teachers at the intermediate unit in the mid-range of their peers in Montgomery County districts.

CMCAVTS: Mr. Johnson reported an articulation agreement between the vo-tech school and Johnson and Wales University

Personnel: Mr. Pinheiro voiced the Board's hope for a contract settlement that would allow for the scheduled implementation of block scheduling at Plymouth Whitemarsh High School. He also noted that issues raised by speakers expressing concern that too few observations were performed to serve as a solid foundation for merit pay were unfounded because administrators were actually observing teachers many times each year and not just during formal classroom observations.

Finance: Ms. Brown reported that the district had received an unqualified opinion from the independent auditor on its financial statements. She observed that no material weaknesses had been reported and that as number of prior concerns had been resolved. She stated her belief that the district had received its finest audit report ever and applauded administration on a job well done. Ms Brown moved and Mr. Pinheiro seconded a motion to accept the audit report. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

Curriculum and Program: Mr. O'Neill provided an update on the committee's work on the funding of co-curricular activities. He noted that the committee was reviewing recommendations and looking into a report from the music programs that they would be adversely affected by proposals under consideration. The committee will schedule another meeting to resolve the outstanding issues and report back to the Board at a later date.

Transportation/Buildings & Grounds: Mr. Connolly noted that the committee had discussed modifications to the sound system in the Board Room and that Mr. Bell was working on a final solution for implementation in the near future. He also provided a brief summary of meetings with the Zoning Board and Planning Commission of Whitemarsh Township on the proposed high school addition. He noted that the architect had scheduled completion of construction drawings for the project by March 1998 and would be providing information to the Board on feasibility studies on the east wing of the high school and Colonial and Conshohocken Elementary Schools before winter break. Mr. Connolly asked Dr. Durtan to seek from Mr. Berneski a current update on electrical issues at Colonial Middle School.

Community Relations: Mr. Orlow advised the Board that 18,000 copies of the annual report had been mailed and that there had been a good reaction to the expanded format. He also noted that the "Hop on the Bus" initiative had been well done and well received. The committee hopes to make it an annual event with greater participation.

Board Member Recognition: Mr. Kessler recognized Mr. Mandelbaum who was finishing his term on the Board and presented him with a service plaque and clock

as an expression of appreciation for his four years of service to the Board and the community. Mr. Mandelbaum thanked the community for the opportunity to serve and characterized his four years as a Board member as a challenging experience and an enlightening and rewarding adventure. He said that he had met a lot of wonderful people in the community and singled out fellow board member, Robert O'Neill as a good friend and a valued peer on the Board. He ended by thanking his family and fellow board members for their support throughout his four years of service.

Public Comments: Because of the late hour, Mr. Kessler limited comments to three minutes.

Ms. Abbott, district resident, noted that the advisory committee on which she had served endorsed the concept of merit pay but not language on how to implement the concept. She noted that there might be several ways to approach the subject and urged the Board to go back to the drawing board and try to find a solution acceptable to all parties. She thanked Mr. Mandelbaum for his service to the schools and the community, especially in the area of technology. Mr. Kessler responded to her comments by noting that merit pay was under continuing Board discussion.

Dr. Lipshutz, district resident, thanked the Board for passing the technology initiative and noted that the current plan was a compromise on the larger plan originally proposed. He urged the Board and administration to put the technology in place as soon as possible for the benefit of the students.

Dr. Moyer, district resident, commended the Board on its decision on technology and commented on merit pay. She referred to Mr. Dovberg's comments about information available in the public domain and expressed concern that some administrators at different levels might not be behind the merit pay plan. She expressed outrage with Mr. Dovberg's comment that some parents feared reprisals against their children if they spoke in favor of merit pay. She characterized the teachers as upstanding individuals aware of freedom of speech. She noted that she had spoken with many parents and learned their opinions. She summarized Dr. Durtan's comments on administrative response to merit pay in a manner which he considered inaccurate. He restated his remarks for the record, noting that some administrators had logistic concerns with implementing a merit pay proposal but stood ready and were technically prepared to implement any merit pay initiative based on a Board decision.

Mr. Dovberg, district resident, noted that parents were aware that children had suffered reprisals for their parent's willingness to speak out at public meetings in other school districts. He reminded those in attendance that parents contacted him anonymously out of fear of reprisals and that he had reassured them that such activity would not occur in Colonial School District. He congratulated incoming

board members on their recent elections. Mr. Kessler stated that he did not doubt the professionalism of the district's staff but knew that some parents were concerned about reprisals against their children and voiced that concern when declining to respond to the district's annual parent questionnaire.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Kessler adjourned the meeting at 10:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**James M. Bell
Board Secretary**