

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462  
MINUTES, OCTOBER 15, 1998**

President Kessler convened the October meeting of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:05 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on October 15, 1998.

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

**Board Members Absent:** None

**Also Attending:** Dr. Stanley Durtan, Superintendent; Dr. Ann Stormes, Director of Curriculum & Instruction; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Joseph Bickleman, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer; R. Scott Klinger, Director of Personnel; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services; Frank O'Hara, Solicitor; Janet Kim and Ross Weisbrot, Alternate Board Student Representatives, Darlene Davis, Principal, Conshohocken Elementary School; Darlene Schoenly, Curriculum Supervisor; Carol Cohen, CEA; Lori Cohen; William English; Tom Gibson; Betsy Gilliland; Debra Harris; Jan Johnson; Michael Macaninch; Lisa Nardini; Michele Palos-Samsi; Gary Pyle; Karen Reina; Barbara Seidenberg; Sam Silvers; Mark Spencer; and Mary Theiss.

Mr. Kessler led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Kessler directed Board attention to the minutes of the Work Session of 9/14/98, the Buildings & Grounds Committee of 9/16/98, the General Meeting of 9/17/98, the Personnel Committee of 9/24/98 and the Special Board Meeting of 9/24/98, as amended and shown in Enclosures #1 through #5. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Orlow seconded a motion to approve the minutes, as amended. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

**Financial Reports:** Mr. Kessler referred board members to the Bond Fund Report and Bills List, General Fund/Federal Programs Bills, Capital Reserve Fund Report, Outstanding Investment Report, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes Collected, Real Estate Tax Escrow Report, and Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 9/30/98; the Budget Analysis of 10/5/98; the Food Service Reports and List of Bills of 8/31/98; and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 9/30/98, as shown in Enclosures # 6 through #15. Ms. Brown moved and Mr. Carroll seconded a motion to approve the financial reports, as presented. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

**Staff Report:** Mr. Kessler recognized Dr. Stormes who initiated a report on plans for assessing student achievement in conjunction with the Conshohocken Elementary School-wide Project. Dr. Stormes noted the improvements already evident in school atmosphere and student behavior at Conshohocken Elementary School. She praised Mrs. Davis and Dr. Schoenly for their leadership and support of the program and commended the staff at Conshohocken Elementary School for its hard work and enthusiasm.

Mrs. Davis explained that assessment tools would be used at all grade levels to monitor student achievement. She noted that the initial round of assessments, which would be used to establish the baselines against which progress would be measured, had already been completed. She also explained how the assessment instruments would be used to track student progress and stressed the important part that on-going parental involvement played in the overall success of the project.

In response to a series of questions from board members, Mrs. Davis advised that the assessment tools being used to measure student progress were in line with state standards and the Pennsylvania assessment tests and meshed well with district report cards. She reported that they contained components requiring level tests in reading and writing and assessing math skills in accordance with the district's present program. Mrs. Davis noted that some of the assessment instruments came with the texts used in the curriculum. She indicated that testing was done both at the beginning and end of the year so that progress could be measured and comparisons could be made. She advised that the assessment program would support efforts to prepare students at Conshohocken Elementary School to compete successfully with their peers at the district's other elementary schools once they all entered 4<sup>th</sup> grade at Colonial Elementary School. She indicated that assessments would show the progress of Conshohocken students relative to their peers. Mrs. Davis confirmed that the reading program at the school included a phonics component. She also reported the very positive response of parents to the school-wide program, explained the requirement that a family member come in to school and represent each of the children, and highlighted the direct involvement of most parents in most school-wide activities. She thanked the board members for their support of the initiative and urged them to stay involved in the project and to visit the school frequently. Mrs. Davis answered questions about the methodology to be used in analyzing the data being collected. She reported that the program required that the district take a look at the progress made by every student in the school. She noted that the data could be screened and reported in a variety of ways. The Board congratulated Dr. Stormes, Mrs. Davis, Dr. Schoenly and all the staff and families involved in the school-wide project for their fine efforts.

**Old Business:** Mr. Kessler reported that Dr. Durtan had provided the Board, for its consideration and approval, a list of nominees who are willing to serve on the Enrichment Program Task Force. He also read the list of the proposed committee members: Ms. Patricia Iannelli, committee chair; and members: Mrs. Beverly

Brown and Mr. Marc Orlow, board members; Mr. R. Scott Klinger, Director of Personnel; Ms. Susan Regan, principal; Ms. Susan Hope, teacher; Ms. Natasha Frazier, Mrs. Michelle Killian, Dr. Darilyn Moyer, and Mrs. Laurie Walter, parents; and Mr. Allan Dovberg, resident. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to reconvene the task force and to appoint the individuals recommended by Dr. Durtan. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

**Correspondence:** Mr. Kessler noted that there was one piece of correspondence from William F. Ross, a member of the Board of Directors of L.A.M requesting that the Board consider closing all schools in the district in honor of Columbus Day or the birth of Christopher Columbus. (See Enclosure #16.) The Board took no action to change its present policy of not closing school for Columbus Day. Mr. Kessler indicated that the current policy would stand and that the place of Christopher Columbus in history would continue to be recognized in the curriculum through appropriate programs scheduled on or around Columbus Day.

Mr. Kessler recognized Mr. Shipman, who represented the Colonial Foundation for Educational Innovation for the evening. Mr. Shipman introduced Mary Ellen Gorodetzer, Principal of Ridge Park Elementary School. Ms. Gorodetzer provided an overview of the Hardback Book Publishing Program underway at Ridge Park Elementary School and funded by a major grant from the foundation. She explained how teachers had piloted the program, worked their way through the initial growing pains of the project and created a booklet of helpful hints to those who would be working with the program later. She explained the excitement and interest that the program had generated among students and teachers. Ms. Gorodetzer advised that the school hoped to create a publishing center manned by the PTO and equipped to publish and bind the books written by the students. She reported that such a center was flourishing at a school in the Methacton School District. She introduced Ms. Grunes, a teacher at Ridge Park, who provided additional information on the booklet of helpful hints and circulated samples of student work. Ms. Gorodetzer thanked the foundation for its continued support and, in response to Board queries, reported that all teachers would be publishing at least one hardback book of student work during the school year. She also noted that the new library technology supported the program and that other building principals had expressed interest in it.

**Superintendent's Report:** Dr. Durtan briefly reviewed his personnel report and noted that it contained some additions to his original recommendations for additions, terminations, suspensions, demotions, leaves of absence, promotions, suspensions, transfers and resignations of staff and changes to the substitute list, as shown in Enclosures #17 through #18. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to approve the personnel report, as updated, and to accept the list of employee salaries as a matter of public record. Ms. Brown confirmed that the Board was not approving the salary listing because action on the salaries had

already taken place. On a roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried. Mr. Kessler noted that the salary information was available for review in the Personnel Office.

**Board Student Representatives Report:** Ms. Kim outlined activities planned for the week of homecoming at the high school. These included: Spirit Week, the selection of the king and queen, T-shirt Day, Dress Up Day, student switch, Color Wars, Jell-O wrestling, the bonfire, powder-puff football, the homecoming football game and the homecoming dance. She also highlighted the 1250 students involved in activity periods at the school and the fall theater production of "The Ugly Duckling". Mr. Weisbrot provided an activities update highlighting the girls' tennis team which clinched the Liberty Division Championship, night soccer and freshman football games, the cross-country team and the success of the Marching Colonials who had won all of the Cavalcade Championships in which they participated. Mr. Bell confirmed that safety procedures were in place for the bonfire in the open grassy area behind Gym #20. Ms. Brown inquired whether anything was bothering students at the high school, and Ms. Kim and Mr. Weisbrot responded that they were not aware of any concerns.

**New Business:** Mr. Kessler reported five items of new business which were discussed at the work session on 10/12/98:

- Mr. Connolly moved and Mr. Orlow seconded a motion to approve a transportation contract with Sague Auto Service, Inc., as shown in Enclosure #19. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.
- Ms. Brown moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to add First Trust to the district's list of investment banks, as shown in Enclosure # 20. Ms. Brown noted that it was the district's policy to add banks to the list provided that they had the necessary collateral to handle the investments and were willing to compete in providing the best investment package for the district.
- The Board received the fundraising budgets for all school and school-related activities planning to raise funds during the 1998-99 school year. See Enclosure #21. Mr. Pinheiro noted that the organizations were planning to raise a total of about half a million dollars during the year and that high school seniors would be raising \$145,000.00 of that sum for the annual class trip to Florida.
- Dr. Durtan advised that it was his intent to provide to the CEA for its review and comment a draft calendar which called for the start of classes for the 1999-2000 school year in the week prior to Labor Day. He sought Board agreement with this concept. Board members asked a number of questions. Dr. Durtan responded that his assessment of the early start of the current school year was positive. He advised that the majority of parents with whom he had spoken favored the early start and that most of the remainder considered it manageable provided that early notice was given. He noted that building principals had

reported no significant increase in student absences during the period and that there were some families reporting vacation conflicts regardless of the date on which classes resumed. Dr. Durtan noted that the calendar could be changed once the draft is made available. He noted the high interest in the topic and felt that it would be advisable to set the start date for the new school year at the November board meeting. The consensus of the Board was to have classes for the 1999-2000 school year begin the week prior to Labor Day.

- Ms. Brown moved and Mr. Carroll seconded a motion to approve the three-year renewal of the Intergovernmental Cooperative Agreement for the PA INVEST Program, as shown in Enclosure #22. On roll call vote, all in favor. Motion carried.

**Solicitor's Report:** None.

**Committee Reports:**

**Intermediate Unit Board:** Mr. Pinheiro noted that the I.U. would be following the district's lead and establishing a foundation primarily to raise funds for purchasing technical devices for special needs children. He advised that he would be serving on the board of the new foundation.

**CMCAVTS:** Mr. Johnson reported that 90% of the new lighting called for under a performance-based contract had been installed and that the improvement in the building was easily recognizable. He reminded the Board that the annual open house at the school was scheduled for 10/24/98, and both he and Mr. O'Neill urged board members to take that opportunity to visit the school and see the positive changes in the school environment first hand.

**Personnel:** Mr. Pinheiro reported that an earlier advertised meeting of the Personnel Committee had set the parameters for discussions with the unions representing non-professional employees that would be negotiating contracts in the coming months. He also reminded the community that information on the annual salaries of district employees was available for review in the Personnel Office.

**Finance:** Ms. Brown advised that she would be scheduling a Finance Committee meeting in the weeks ahead but needed prior to that meeting the total anticipated cost for projects which would be funded through the bond issue. She urged the Board to agree on these projects within the next few weeks. She also advised that the issue of tax reform would be on the agenda of the next finance committee meeting. Mr. Kessler questioned the need at this point for specific information on the cost of projects which would be financed by the upcoming bond issue. Ms. Brown referred him to a memo on the subject which she had provided to all board members. Mr. Connolly reported that a Buildings & Grounds Committee meeting would be held within the next two weeks to complete the review already underway of potential

bond issue projects. There was considerable discussion of the type of information and detail required before the Board could begin preliminary discussions on the subject of a new bond issue. Board members acknowledged a need to seek additional information and Board consensus on the subject before proceeding.

**Curriculum and Instruction:** Mr. O'Neill reported that a committee meeting had been scheduled for 10/26/98 at 6:00 p.m. and that an agenda would be forthcoming.

**Buildings & Grounds:** Mr. Connolly noted that the Board had already discussed the need for a committee meeting to complete the process of reviewing potential bond issue projects. He asked Mr. Bell to have copies of the procedures for dealing with change orders available for review at that meeting.

**Community Relations:** Mr. Orlow reported that ground breaking for the new science wing at the high school was scheduled for 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, 10/29/98 and the public was invited. He noted that staff, students, administrators, board members, contractors, and the construction manager and architect would be in attendance. Mr. Orlow also announced that the "Hop on the Bus" program was scheduled for 11/13/98 in connection with American Education Week. The public was invited and participants would get to visit at least two schools before returning to the District Office/Colonial Elementary School for a reception.

**Legislative:** Mr. Kessler noted that PSBA had developed a progressive legislative platform for the current year and that a seminar on tax reform was scheduled for 10/21/98 at the I.U. He asked board members who wished to attend the seminar to contact Dr. Durtan's office to register. Mr. Johnson reported that he would be representing the district at the regional PSBA meeting on 11/4/98.

**Public Comments:** A number of district parents addressed the Board on the subject of the district sponsoring girls' soccer teams at the middle school and high school levels. The speakers noted the strong interest in girls' soccer in the surrounding communities and lamented the lack of a program in the district's secondary schools. They reported that district girls were forced to give up the sport as they advanced into the secondary level. They noted that because the girls were being denied an opportunity to play soccer at school, they, therefore, lacked the opportunity to compete for athletic scholarships in soccer at the collegiate level. All speakers felt that there was sufficient interest in a girls' soccer program to field competitive teams. Several speakers from the audience and on the Board noted the lack of available soccer fields in the communities served by the district. They offered a variety of solutions, including the purchase of additional property on the WFIL tract, grading fields at the elementary schools to provide more space for soccer programs, and taking a look at which girls' sports programs were more popular and giving the most popular programs priority access to fields. Dr. Durtan noted that the issue had been under review within the district for some time but that it was a complex issue with a number of sub-issues that needed to be addressed. He advised

that insurance covering students was not one of the issues because students were covered when they traveled to other sites to participate in inter-scholastic sports. He did cite a current lack of available fields and PIAA scheduling as two of these issues. Board members suggested reviewing the allocation of fields to different sports in all seasons, canvassing students for indications as to which sports they would prefer to play, and taking a look at the possibility of grading open fields at district schools to create additional fields to accommodate the growing interest in soccer. Dr. Durtan stated that he could ask the Athletic Department for its reaction to this multi-faceted issue and share the report that he received with the Board.

Ms. Theiss asked if block scheduling would be implemented next year, and Dr. Durtan replied in the affirmative. Mr. English provided the Board and the community information on the cost of annual memberships to the Plymouth Township Community Center and advised that the fitness center would open in December and the pool in the coming year. He also reported the departure of Carolyn Hanel from the Whitemarsh Township Parks and Recreation Program and the search for her replacement, and he announced the search for volunteers to serve on the Plymouth Whitemarsh Scholarship Committee.

Recess: Mr. Kessler announced a recess at 9:53 p.m. so that the Board could go into executive session to consider legal matters related to a proposed settlement to a tax assessment appeal. Mr. Kessler reconvened the meeting at 10:20 p.m. No additional Board action was taken.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Kessler adjourned the meeting at 10:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Bell  
Board Secretary