

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462  
MINUTES, JULY 17, 2000**

President Kessler convened the work session of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:48 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on July 17, 2000.

**Board Members Present:** Stuart Kessler, Marc Orlow, Robert Carroll, Gary Johnson, Hugh Lipshutz, Thomas Marchozzi, Jack Pinheiro and Thomas Yunker.

**Board Members Absent:** Robert O'Neill.

**Also Attending:** Dr. Stanley Durtan, Superintendent; R. Scott Klinger, Assistant to the Superintendent for Administrative Services and Personnel; Patricia Iannelli, Director of Educational Services; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Joseph P. Bickleman, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services; Patricia Campbell, Principal, Plymouth Whitemarsh High School; Allan Dovberg, President, Colonial United Taxpayers and the Montgomery County Taxpayers Consortium; and Scott Helfand.

Mr. Kessler led the Pledge of Allegiance. He also reported that the Board had met in Executive session immediately prior to the work session from 6:30 p.m. to handle personnel and legal matters.

**Minutes:** Mr. Kessler directed Board attention to the minutes of the Buildings and Grounds Committee Meeting of 06/13/00, the Work Session of 06/19/00, the General Meeting of 06/22/00, and the Curriculum Committee Meeting of 06/28/00, as shown in Enclosures #1 through #4 on the agenda for the meeting the following Thursday. Board members suggested revisions to the minutes of the general and curriculum committee meetings. Amended minutes were to be available for Board action at the general meeting later in the week.

**Financial Reports:** Mr. Kessler directed Board attention to the financial reports which were listed as Enclosures #5 through #15 in the agenda for the general meeting on Thursday. They included the Preliminary Year End Budget Transfer Report; the Bond Fund Report, Capital Projects Report, and Capital Reserve Fund Report for the month ending 06/30/00; General Fund and Program Bills; the Outstanding Investment Report, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes, Real Estate Escrow Report and Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 06/30/00; the Budget Analyses of 07/11/00; and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 06/30/00. Mr. Orlow asked if a bill from Gilbane was for work performed earlier. Mr. Bell reported that it was and noted that the bill had been lost in transit and was being paid later than prior bills. Board members learned

that it would be possible in the future for the public to review financial reports on the district's web page. Dr. Durtan noted that there was an updated Reconciliation of Cash Accounts in Board packets and that it would appear as a yellow page on the agenda for the meeting on Thursday. Mr. Bickleman confirmed that the report had been reconciled to bank statements.

**Old Business:** Mr. Kessler noted that a bid for bleachers that had been deferred the month before would be up for reconsideration at the general meeting the following Thursday as Enclosure #16. Mr. Bell briefly reviewed the data on the item, noting that the district would save \$1,000.00 by purchasing bleachers on its own but would then have to invest time in assembling the bleachers and setting them in place. He advised that both he and Mr. Morcombe recommended acceptance of the bid. They felt that the district would be better served by having the contractor make this purchase and undertake the installation thereby allowing the district to focus its resources on other tasks. Mr. Yunker reminded the Board and administration that the bleachers would need to meet current safety standards for such equipment and asked Mr. Bell to confirm that at the meeting on Thursday evening.

**Correspondence:** Mr. Kessler noted correspondence from Linda M. Weber of Conshocken Town Watch, Inc. extending an invitation to "National Night Out".

**Superintendent's Report:** Dr. Durtan reviewed his Superintendent's Report, as shown in Enclosure #18 on the agenda for Thursday evening. He noted that, as in prior years, there would be substantial changes in the report as new information on staff leaving and joining the district became available. He highlighted changes, notably a recommendation to appoint Mr. Robert Slagle as Acting Assistant Principal at Plymouth Whitmarsh High School from 08/01/00 to 06/30/01 at a stipend of \$10,000.00 for the year and the probable recommendation of a candidate to fill the slot of Curriculum Supervisor created by the movement of Ms. Iannelli to the post of Director of Educational Services. He also noted the recommendation to appoint Meryl Rauer to the post of Curriculum Technology Specialist at an annual salary of \$50,000.00. Mr. Orlow asked if this last position fell within the CASEA group. Dr. Durtan confirmed that both that position and the position of Administrative Assistant for Community Relations fell within the CASEA group and that Hay Points would have to be established for those positions.

**New Business:** Mr. Kessler noted that a revision of the PWHS Student Handbook would be an action item on the agenda for the Thursday meeting. Dr. Durtan called on Ms. Campbell to provide a presentation to the Board on the proposed revision. Ms. Campbell walked board members through the significant changes being proposed and pointed out that many of them were needed because of the change to block scheduling. She reported that they reflected current thinking on discipline and grading issues. Throughout the presentation there was interaction between board members and Ms. Campbell as they raised questions and she provided answers. Among the many issues raised were a redefinition of some offences under

the discipline code, a formalization of the policy for towing the cars of students who parked on campus without authorization, and a re-thinking of how to handle class cuts within block scheduling. Ms. Campbell also explained the purpose of school suspensions. She pointed out that in-school suspensions happened in school but outside regular class hours. She also explained that out-of-school suspensions were given as a last resort but were sometimes necessary to get the attention of parents and make them become responsible for children who did not meet school attendance requirements. She pointed out that the school had a large safety net for students but could not motivate all of those who chose not to attend classes. Ms. Campbell also explained that administration had deliberately left the wording surrounding loss of parking and social privileges vague to provide options for handling infractions. She noted changes in how issues of harassment were handled, how the policy on lateness had been modified because of block scheduling and how the graduation project had been expanded. Dr. Durtan noted that references to corporal punishment had to be reworked since such punishment was forbidden by board policy.

Board members discussed proposed changes to the grading system at the high school. They noted the fact that the Curriculum Committee had recommended some changes above and beyond those originally recommended by the high school staff and administration. Ms. Campbell advised that there had been no changes in weighting factors but that there had been changes in how GPA's were calculated and honors were granted. Various board members expressed concerns about the impact of plus and minus grades on student motivation and the negative effect that changing the grading system might have on the district's ability to track performance over the course of several years, a requirement under performance-based pay guidelines. Ms. Campbell felt that the recommended grading system represented a good compromise based on all of the input received. She felt strongly that there should be no concern about the integrity of the grades and suggested that some reduction in the ability to track progress over time was outweighed by other factors. In response to Board queries, she noted that there were many grading systems in place across the region, that they varied widely, and that the high school's challenge was to explain fully to institutions of higher learning how its grading system worked. Board members sought and received assurances from Ms. Campbell that the school would make sure that the students understood the system. There was discussion on goals for changing the grading system and the incentives involved in making students aware that performance had a noticeable effect on grades. There were also questions about the appropriateness of denying credit to students whose absences exceed 15%. Ms. Campbell explained how missing a lot of the in-class interaction impacted student learning and outlined the appeal process open to students who were denied credit because of absences. Several board members had questions about the upswing student honors during the past school year, and Ms. Campbell reminded them that higher student achievement was an expected outcome of block scheduling. Dr. Durtan noted that a number of issues had come out of the dialogue that evening and that Ms. Campbell would have to

make some changes in the handbook and come back on Thursday to answer any additional questions that the Board might have.

Mr. Kessler advised the Board that a revision of the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline would also be on the agenda for Board action at its Thursday meeting. Dr. Durtan reported that board members had annotated copies of the revised code and noted that it had been developed based on administrative input and undergone legal review. He noted that there had been only minor adjustments to the code. Mr. Orlow asked if the special education changes were mandated and Dr. Durtan confirmed that they were.

Mr. Marchozzi left the meeting at approximately 9:45 p. m.

Mr. Kessler noted that the Board would be considering routine annual requests for early admission to kindergarten. Mr. Shipman confirmed that the requests had been processed in accordance with Board policy 6-0001. Mr. Pinheiro observed that two out of ten children had passed the district's screening process. Board members were interested in whether the district followed up on the performance of early admission students in any formal way and learned that follow-up occurred informally. Dr. Durtan noted that a case the previous year had led to a change in the process this year and a more careful screening of student readiness.

Mr. Kessler reported that the Board would be considering a settlement of a tax assessment appeal at its meeting on Thursday.

**Solicitor's Report:** None.

**Committee Reports:** None.

**Public Comment:** None.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Kessler adjourned the meeting at 10:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Bell  
Board Secretary