

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462  
MINUTES, SEPTEMBER 21, 2000**

President Kessler convened the general meeting of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 8:03 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on September 21, 2000.

**Board Members Present:** Stuart Kessler, Marc Orlow, Robert Carroll, Gary Johnson, Hugh Lipshutz (arrived late), Thomas Marchozzi, Robert O'Neill, Jack Pinheiro and Thomas Yunker.

**Board Members Absent:** None.

**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; Brian Gallagher, President, CEA; Janet Rosa, President, EPSA; Tom Gibson; Andrew and Jill Goldwater; Scott Helfand; Andrea Leeds; Nancy Romberg; Ann and Bob Stormes; and John and Margaret Tye.

Mr. Kessler led the Pledge of Allegiance. He then recognized Mr. Johnson who, in turn, recognized Dr. Durtan who read a special tribute to Dr. Ann Stormes, former Director of Student Services, who is retiring from the district in December after 28 years of service with the district in a number of educational capacities. Dr. Durtan specifically cited Dr. Stormes' commitment and service to the district's students and her tenacity on the job. Mr. Johnson, on behalf of the Board of School Directors, presented Dr. Stormes a clock in gratitude for her years of outstanding service. Dr. Stormes thanked the Board for the recognition and reported that she was still working in education at the University of Pennsylvania and Ursinus College.

**Minutes:** Mr. Kessler asked for approval of the minutes of the Work Session of 08/14/00, the General Meeting of 08/17/00, and the Curriculum Committee Meeting of 09/07/00, as shown in Enclosures #1 through #3 on the agenda. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the minutes. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

**Financial Reports:** Mr. Kessler asked for approval of the financial reports which were listed as Enclosures #4 through #16 and #27 on the agenda. They included the Bond Fund Report, Capital Projects Report, and Capital Reserve Fund Report for the month ending 08/31/00; the Outstanding Investment Report, Cash Flow Summary, Comparison of Taxes, Real Estate Escrow Report and Reconciliation of Cash Accounts for the month ending 08/31/00; the Budget Analyses of 09/11/00;

Accounts Payable Items for Accrual, Contracted Payroll Accrual, and Hourly Accrual on June 30, 2000, Final Year-end Budget Transfers, and the Treasurer's Report for the month ending 08/31/00. Mr. Orlow moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the reports. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Public Comments of the Agenda: None.

Old Business: None.

Correspondence: Mr. Kessler reminded board members of discussions at the work session on the correspondence from Carol L. Clopp, Finance Director of Plymouth Township, requesting that the Board waive school taxes on a property recently purchased by the township. See Enclosure #17 on the agenda. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. O'Neill seconded a motion to approve the request. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Superintendent's Report: Dr. Durtan reviewed his Superintendent's Report, as shown in Enclosures #18 through #21 on the agenda. He again noted that the written reports contained information of personnel changes, additions to the substitute lists, adult evening school appointments, additions to the extra duty/extra pay list. He also shared information on a request from a board member to attend the annual conference on gifted students. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Yunker seconded a motion to approve the report. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Mr. Klinger reviewed current information on student enrollment contained in the enrollment report for the tenth day of classes, as shown in Enclosure #24. He and Dr. Durtan noted that class sizes had broken out nicely with relatively even distribution of students within grades in the elementary schools. They noted that no classes were outside the desired range. Mr. Kessler noted that many of the classes had fewer than 20 students per class. In response to Board queries, Mr. Klinger reported that there were 17 sections in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and 13 sections in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, with an average of about 23 students per class. He also responded to queries on how to determine statistics for kindergarten classes by explaining the half-day programs in all K-3 schools except Conshohocken Elementary School, which had a full-day program. Mr. Klinger also explained that class sizes at the secondary level varied greatly by course offerings and assured those in attendance that there were no classes above the desired maximum of 28 students per class. Dr. Durtan explained the impact of singleton classes on the master class schedule and confirmed that the desired range at the secondary level was 24 to 28 students per class.

Student Representatives Report: Mr. Pinheiro reported that Alicia Fabricio had called to tell him that she was sick and would be unable to attend the meeting. Board members expressed some concern about the absence of any student representation

and requested that administration follow up on the procedures for alerting alternates to fill in for student representative who were absent.

Dr. Lipshutz joined the meeting after attending the concurrently scheduled Back-to-School Night at Whitemarsh Elementary School.

**New Business:** Mr. Kessler referred to an updated version of a revision of Board Policy #230, Public Performances by Students, as shown in Enclosure #22. Dr. Durtan and Mr. Pinheiro recapped the changes that had been made in the original draft to reflect Board direction given at the meeting the previous Monday. Mr. Johnson moved and Mr. Yunker seconded a motion to approve the policy, as amended, on first reading. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

Dr. Durtan and Ms. Iannelli gave an update on the Continuing Professional Education Plan. They noted that they had sat in on a teleconference with the state Department of Education and had learned that there would be a 60-day extension for filing the report. They also indicated that they wished to make some minor alteration in the report and would bring it back to the Board for consideration at the October meeting. Ms. Iannelli reviewed the process for developing the plan and defining activities. She indicated that she would be reformatting the plan to make it easier to read and understand. In response to Board queries, she acknowledged that the current document could be considered a draft and confirmed that the plan would need to be reviewed on an annual basis. Ms. Iannelli and Dr. Durtan explained the difference between cooperating teachers who support student teachers in the classroom and mentors who support new teachers during their first three years with the district. Ms. Iannelli confirmed that the plan had no new costs and that continuing costs had been included in the budget for the current year. Dr. Durtan noted that the board would be approving committee members when it approved the plan.

**Solicitor's Report:** Mr. Sultanik reported on a charter school application that the district had received from Reach, Inc. He indicated that the application was for a K-12 virtual school, that several local school districts had also received applications and that the stated intent of the organization was to operate statewide. Mr. Sultanik reported that there was already a virtual high school in Pennsylvania but that, to his knowledge, there was no other charter school of the scope and reach of the current one. He explained that the districts had 45 days to respond to the application and that, since a number of districts were involved, he had been working through Montgomery County Intermediate Unit to schedule a joint meeting on October 4<sup>th</sup>. He asked for administrative representation at the meeting. He emphasized that the school could have a tremendous financial impact on the district. Board members asked a number of questions about the part that facilities paid in the application, the way in which the school would function, and the possibility that students at the charter school would request to participate in district activities. Mr. Sultanik responded that the application was a complicated one that did not neatly fit the

mold of a traditional charter school and that many questions remained to be answered. He indicated that the district was free to grant or not grant the opportunity for charter school students to participate in district activities. He noted, however, that the application specifically requested the opportunity for students to participate in district activities.

**Committee Reports: Intermediate Unit Board: No report.**

**CMCAVTS: No report.**

**Personnel:** Mr. Pinheiro advised that the Board had received Dr. Durtan's official notice of resignation and asked Mr. Sultanik to explain an amendment to Dr. Durtan's agreement with the district to cover his resignation and transitional activities. Mr. Sultanik noted that the amendment was the third made to the contract and that it would formalize acceptance of Dr. Durtan's resignation and deal with transitional services that Dr. Durtan would provide to the district. He also noted that the amendment covered severance benefits and the district and Dr. Durtan's obligations. Mr. Pinheiro moved and Mr. Orlow seconded a motion to approve the agreement. During discussion, it became apparent that not all board members had had an opportunity to review the amendment. Mr. Pinheiro and Mr. Orlow withdrew their motion and second, and Mr. Kessler announced that the action on the agreement would be taken at a special board meeting scheduled for Monday, September 15<sup>th</sup>.

**Mr. Pinheiro spoke about the impact that having staff on maternity and child bearing leave would have on the district in the coming year.**

**Finance:** Mr. O'Neill reported that the committee had cancelled and would be rescheduling a meeting on Act 50 in the near future.

**Curriculum and Program:** Mr. Yunker advised that the committee had met earlier in the month and that the minutes of that meeting had been approved earlier that evening. He reported that the committee was recommending that decisions related to the school calendar and extra-curricular activities be handled by the full Board and not by the Curriculum Committee. Mr. Yunker also reminded the Board and audience that the committee was still awaiting answers to some questions that committee members had raised about the Terra Nova tests. He also advised that the committee had reviewed some of the Terra Nova reports and had recommended that the information provided to parents this year include not only the report provided last year but also a report providing national percentile information. He noted that parents could contact guidance counselors if they would like more detailed information about their children. The committee did not recommend distribution of local percentile data since the report containing the data was difficult to understand and could be confusing. Board members heard that PSSA tests were not available in a local percentile format.

Board members took note of the fact that committee assignments, as outlined by the committees themselves, were now in their hands. Dr. Durtan reported that the district would be working on a calendar for the coming year. He noted that Labor Day would be earlier next year and that, if the district followed the guidelines used in the past few years, classes would end on the second Wednesday in June. He recognized that other options were available, e.g. adding holidays to the schedule and having classes end for the year on a Friday or reverting to a traditional post-Labor Day start day for the new school year.

**Buildings & Grounds:** Mr. Orlow reminded board members of correspondence received the previous months from Sague Auto Service Inc, requesting a revision of the company's transportation contract with the district to increase by \$2.00 per bus per day to help defray the increasing cost of fuel. (Note: According to the correspondence, the total cost of this proposal to the district would be \$2,064.00.) Mr. Orlow explained that the committee recommended approval of the request for one year while it explored the possibility of purchasing fuel for Sague just as it did for its main transportation contractor. Mr. Orlow moved and Mr. Johnson seconded a motion to accept the committee's recommendation and to cap payments to Sague Auto Service Inc. at \$2,300.00. Board members discussed the proposal briefly and considered the advantages of having more than one transportation vendor. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. The motion was carried.

**Community Relations:** Mr. Johnson provided an update on the fine work that David Sherman, the district's Administrative Assistant for Community Relations, had done toward approving the district's web site, [www.colonialsd.org](http://www.colonialsd.org). He also announced that the district's next Town Meeting would be held at the Whitemarsh Township Building at 7:30 on Monday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>. He advised that the subject of the meeting would be student achievement. Mr. Johnson also announced that the district's Annual Report was in the mail and that residents should be receiving it shortly. He praised Mr. Sherman's work on the report and noted that the district had saved money by doing the work in-house.

**Legislative:** Mr. Carroll reported that the committee had met at the I.U. and that a representative of PSBA had explained the legislative platform that was currently being refined and would be issued as a series of recommendations in January. He highlighted the current demographics in the state legislature and explained why it was difficult to pass bills. Mr. Carroll also reported that there were 79 charter schools in Pennsylvania and provided additional information on the complaints filed by the Landmark Foundation against the NEA for using tax-free funds to support its lobbying activities. He noted that several former IRS officials felt that the complaints deserved to be investigated. At Mr. Kessler's request, Mr. Carroll provided the organizations web address: [www.landmarklegal.org](http://www.landmarklegal.org).

**Public Comment:** Andrea Leeds inquired whether a kindergarten teacher at Plymouth Elementary School would receive a teacher's assistant. Dr. Durtan responded that assistants were assigned when the number of students in the class exceed 24 students. Ms. Leeds expressed considerable concern that Plymouth Elementary School classrooms were not air-conditioned. Mr. Kessler summarized the district's on-going discussion of the subject of air conditioning in district schools and noted its preliminary findings that retrofitting for air conditioning appeared to be cost prohibitive. Ms. Leeds asked about additional ceiling fans. Mr. Kessler referred the subject to the Buildings & Grounds Committee and assured Ms. Leeds that the district would advise her of its findings.

Jill and Andrew Goldwater spoke at length about several issues, the most important of which appeared to be the possibility of a teacher's strike over the issue of performance-based pay, the relative ranking of the district's educational services and student performance relative to the other 500 districts in the state, the factors used by colleges and universities in ranking high schools and the students that attended them, and the fact that few district students attended the country's premier colleges and universities. They were looking for a way to determine whether or not the district was offering sufficiently challenging and competitive educational programs. Mr. Kessler and Mr. Gallagher shared information on the collective bargaining process. Dr. Durtan and Mr. Sultanik offered insights on college/university admissions practices, the current lack of district rankings in the formats sought by Mr. and Mrs. Goldwater, and recent state efforts to look into mechanisms for ranking schools. Mr. and Mrs. Goldwater remained incredulous that there was no standardized numerical ranking of school districts across the state.

Nancy Romberg expressed concerns about block scheduling at the high school on the course content of certain class offerings, particularly one-term honors classes. She was also concerned that taking honors and advanced placement courses early in the year when tests were given later in the year placed students at a disadvantage. Ms. Romberg reported that she had attended back-to-school night at the high school and received a number of comments from teachers about the negative impact that block scheduling was having on the amount of material that teachers could cover in class. She strongly felt that students should be receiving all the instruction that they had received in the years before block scheduling and that they were being short-changed by the block system. Mr. Kessler asked Dr. Durtan how administration would be assessing the impact of block scheduling. Dr. Durtan reported that the data was now in the hands of Econsult and that the district could expect a report within the month. Mr. Kessler advised that the data would be looked at with a critical eye. He also reported, however, that the district had polled teachers and gotten mostly positive feedback. He and Dr. Durtan noted that the district had conducted extensive in-service on block scheduling and a full-time administrator working on the program before its implementation. Dr. Durtan reported that a consortium of schools were working on the concept of earlier testing for advanced

placement but noted that it would be difficult to move the Educational Testing Service.

Mr. Gallagher noted that teaching was a labor of love and asked rhetorically how the quality of teachers could be measured. He expressed the hope that the Board and the CEA would reach a collective bargaining agreement and that the Board would consider the educational value as well as the financial cost of all charter school applications. Mr. Gallagher also asked Mr. Johnson to work hard on a collective bargaining agreement at the Center for Technical Studies. He noted that the superintendent had shared a draft calendar for the coming school year with the CEA and that the organization would be commenting on the draft. He also expressed the hope that Mr. Pinheiro would take an enlightened approach to the subject of teachers choosing to start families. Mr. Gallagher asked Mr. Kessler what contribution administrators, teachers and the community could make in the process of selecting a new superintendent. Mr. Kessler outlined the Board's two-tier approach of conducting simultaneous national and local searches. He advised Mr. Gallagher that the Board had found an outstanding candidate locally and would be holding a special meeting at 7:30 p.m. the following Monday to name a successor to Dr. Durtan.

There being no business before the Board, Mr. Kessler adjourned the meeting at 10:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Bell  
Secretary