

**COLONIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
PLYMOUTH MEETING, PA 19462
MINUTES, MAY 28, 2003**

President Orlow convened a special meeting of the Colonial Board of School Directors at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room of Colonial Elementary School on May 28, 2003.

Board Members Present: Marc Orlow, Thomas Davis, Lynn Glodek, Gary Johnson, Hugh Lipshutz, Susan Moore, Steven Slutsky and William Ryan.

Board Members Not Present: Tom Yunker.

Also Attending at the Start of the Meeting: Vincent F. Cotter, Superintendent; Mary Ellen Gorodetzer, Assistant Superintendent; Patricia Iannelli, Director of Research, Assessment and Compliance; Fred Shipman, Director of Pupil Services; James M. Bell, Director of Support Services/Board Secretary; Joe Bickleman, Chief Financial Officer/Board Treasurer, David Sherman, Administrative Assistant, Community Relations; Nancy Acconciamesa and Lorraine DeRosa, Curriculum Supervisors; Donna Drizin, Principal, Whitmarsh Elementary School; Beth Viechnicki, Psychologist; Lee Albert; Linda Doll; Martin Grossman; Alice Krepto; Nancy Mortimer O'Brien; Mark O'Neill; Michael O'Neill; Theresa Salvatore and Cynthia J. Slagle.

Mr. Orlow led the Pledge of Allegiance and announced that the primary purpose of the meeting would be to present information to the Board and the community about the possibility of the district offering an all-day kindergarten program in the future. He noted that, while the agenda called for public comment from the audience early in the meeting, the Board would offer the community an opportunity to ask questions and provide comments following the presentation by Dr. Cotter and his administrative team.

Mr. Orlow recognized Dr. Cotter who provided a brief overview of the District Office administrators who would be participating in the presentation on all-day kindergarten that evening. Dr. Cotter noted that the district was looking into an all-day program beginning in the 2004-05 school year. He noted the district's commitment to student achievement under the *Above and Beyond* program and shared a wealth of research data that was available on the impact of an all-day kindergarten program on both student readiness for school and achievement throughout the educational program. Dr. Cotter noted that time was a major factor in educational programs with standards and goals. He reported that the additional time to teachers and students in an all-day program offered many opportunities for developmentally appropriate, child-centered programs that provided a balance of small group, large group and individual activities. Dr. Cotter indicated that the research showed that all students benefited from an all-day program and that at-

risk students benefited the most. He noted that children who attended a full-day kindergarten program had an academic advantage over those who attended a half-day program. He also reported that children in an all-day program had consistently higher grades and conduct marks over the long-term.

Dr. Gorodetzer shared information on the district's current program, noting that it was very rigorous, based on standards and focused on integrated outcomes that were real-life based, primarily in language arts and math but also in social studies and science. She noted that the program offered individualized instruction to students and regular assessments. Dr. Gorodetzer reported that it was difficult in a half-day program to balance the increased academic expectations and new initiatives with the non-academic but equally important social and development skills. She also provided local and national statistics illustrating the readiness of students entering kindergarten.

Mr. Bell provided information on the number of additional classrooms that would be needed to house the projected 295 to 302 students in an all-day kindergarten program of 18 students per class in 19 classrooms. He reported that six additional classrooms would be needed but that the eight classrooms were being recommended to allow for greater than anticipated growth and storage. He offered two options for locating the eight rooms. The first was an option for placing all eight at Ridge Park Elementary School. The second was an option for locating four at Ridge Park and four at Whitmarsh Elementary School. The Administration was recommending the second option because, with flexible management of room use for other than regular classes, students in full-day kindergartens could be housed in their local elementary buildings without redistricting. The two-school option also left room at Ridge Park for an additional four classrooms, should a need for them arise later. Mr. Bell reported that the Administration felt that the benefits involved in not redistricting, not overwhelming common use areas (gym, all-purpose room, cafeteria) in any school, and keeping space open for additional classrooms, if needed, off-set the difference in cost between a two-school option at \$1,850,000 and a one-school option of \$1,524,000. He also reported that eliminating midday kindergarten transportation would save the district \$122,877 in the 2004-05 and more thereafter.

Mr. Berger reported that ten additional teachers would be required if the district implemented a full-day kindergarten program, eight additional kindergarten teachers and two specialists. He estimated that the additional staff would cost the district \$512,500, \$410,000 in salaries and \$102,500 in benefits, in the first year.

Mr. Bickleman gave an overview of the costs involved in implementing a full-day program. They included monies for facilities and staff. The former at \$1,850,000 would likely be covered by bond funds; the latter at a net cost of \$389,623 would be funded in the annual operating budget. Mr. Bickleman noted that there might be additional costs associated with the upkeep and operation of somewhat larger

facilities and additional debt service costs but advised that the exact costs could not be determined at that time.

Mr. Orlow complemented the Administration on a presentation that brought all the aspects of the issue together so clearly.

Mr. Slutsky asked if all-day kindergarten at Conshohocken Elementary School had had a positive impact on student achievement as children moved up through the grades. Dr. Cotter replied that it had and cited some personal observations of student work over time. He also cited some positive input from Dr. Davis on student preparedness in higher grades. Dr. Gorodetzer noted that Dr. Davis had data that could be shared at a later date. She noted that first-grade students were now more adept at reading, writing and math skills than they had been in the past. Dr. Cotter and Dr. Gorodetzer confirmed that all-day kindergarten was not just a kindergarten issue. They stressed that the extra time in all-day kindergarten helped in identifying and meeting student needs early and setting the stage for higher achievement later on.

Ms. Glodek had some questions about space. Mr. Bell explained again how adding four classrooms each to two schools and maintaining flexibility in locating I.U. classes and other programs over all four K-3 elementary buildings would allow the district to provide enough classrooms in each school to keep students in their home schools from kindergarten through 3rd grade.

Dr. Lipshutz asked if the Administration had identified any programs that might have to be curtailed because of the need to house an all-day kindergarten program. He wondered if additional space might be needed. Dr. Cotter reported that he and Mr. Bell had discussed that issue earlier in the week and would be looking into it further in the days ahead. Dr. Lipshutz also asked if the Administration had explored the idea of putting Colonial Elementary School to use as a regular elementary school and having five K-5 elementary schools. Dr. Lipshutz noted that there had been community interest in the subject in the past. Dr. Cotter reported that it had not been discussed recently because of the costs involved and the need for a major realignment of attendance boundaries. Dr. Gorodetzer reported that the K-3 and 4-5 design model worked well. She indicated that there was a good flow to the instructional program and that socialization needs were being met effectively. Dr. Cotter noted that student and parent anxiety was present for short periods at all levels as children moved from one school to another. Mr. Orlow noted that converting all elementary schools to K-5 buildings would require a complete redistricting of elementary students.

Mr. Orlow asked if the Administration had any local or national evidence that children were not ready to handle a full-day kindergarten program. Dr. Cotter noted that most districts allowed for a transition into a full-day program by allowing new all-day kindergarten students more rest time at the beginning of the

school year and then gradually scaling back. Mr. Bell shared some information from Cheltenham School District. He noted that parents who had taken advantage of a half-day option when all-day kindergarten was implemented there soon realized that their children were ready for a full-day program. The half-day option quickly disappeared. Dr. Cotter noted that an activity-packed half-day program could itself be stressful.

Mr. Orlow had questions about staffing. Mr. Berger reviewed the numbers. Mr. Slutsky asked about net costs and Mr. Bickleman reviewed the figures. When asked about her enrollment experience at Whitemarsh Elementary School, Ms. Drizin reported that her kindergarten classes at Whitemarsh Elementary would be in the range of 19-20 students next year.

Public Comment: Two local residents posed a number of questions. Mr. Bell and Mr. Orlow confirmed that the district had done its best to consider the influx of students from private all-day programs if it offered an all-day kindergarten program. Mr. Bell and Mr. Bickleman addressed questions about costs. Mr. Orlow noted that initial facility costs could be covered by current bond funds if the Board reordered its project priorities or by a later bond if not. He noted that project timing and priorities would be issues to address if an all-day program moved forward. Mr. Orlow also noted that, if the Board chose to implement an all-day kindergarten program, staffing costs would be covered by the operating budget but not until the year 2004-05.

Mr. Orlow indicated that he would place all-day kindergarten on the agenda for the June Board meeting for further discussion and possible action. He asked board members to forward their questions and/or concerns to Dr. Cotter. He noted that there was a lot to do if all-day kindergarten was to be in place by September 2004.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Orlow adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James M. Bell
Board Secretary