

# Board 'too involved' — Peckenpaugh

**By BARBARA UNDERWOOD**  
 Too much board of education involvement in administrative details helped persuade Supt. Donald Peckenpaugh to leave the Birmingham School District, he said this week.

His search for a new position culminated over the weekend when he was asked to become superintendent of Consolidated High School District No. 230 in Cook County, Ill.

Headquarters for the suburban Chicago school district is in Palos Hills, southwest of the city. Peckenpaugh will begin on April 1.

His appointment coincided with his becoming last day as superintendent in Birmingham, a position he has held for almost six years. Dr. Roger Garvelink became superintendent in Birmingham on Wednesday.

Peckenpaugh's decision to leave Birmingham was the result of "several incidents which caused me to look elsewhere," he said.

"IT BEGAN when the board became too involved in administration," he said, conceding that there had been "a consistent effort on the part of the board in the past 18 months not to become as involved in detail."

Peckenpaugh said that while the board was involved in administrative detail, "it neglected its role in establishing priorities for the district."

He said he became aware of the problem two years ago and added, "It is beyond me to pinpoint its cause."

Peckenpaugh's assessment was a concern dur-

ing the annual evaluation of the board last summer when "it was determined that the board should establish specific goals for improvement in this area," board minutes show.

A lack of openness and candor between the board and the senior staff members also was a frustration, Peckenpaugh said.

WHEN ASKED about divisiveness among board members, he said he had not experienced it "except for two individuals" whom he did not name.

"There has been strong effort on the part of the board to have this not damage operations of the board or district," he added.

"I have been especially pleased with the quality of performance of the board members during the past 18 months. It has been a difficult time. When I announced that I was going elsewhere, it could have been a time for things to fall apart completely."

Peckenpaugh said he has been "most pleased with the leadership shown by the presidents of the board, with special commendation to Dora Hartwig, Robert Keldrum, John Dixon, J. Saltzman and John Siegemund."

The first indication the community had that Peckenpaugh was seeking other employment came in August 1976 when he was being considered for the position of superintendent in Syracuse, N.Y. He later withdrew as a candidate for that post.

THE SYRACUSE opening came just three

months after the Birmingham board renewed his contract for two years but with no increase in salary, by a narrow 4-3 vote.

At that time, Peckenpaugh said circumstances surrounding his contract renewal influenced him to consider leaving the district. In May 1977, he notified the board that he would not seek an extension of his contract beyond June 30, 1978. During the months since he has been interviewed for a number of positions and often was a finalist.

The position in Illinois came was offered to Peckenpaugh after he had visited the district five times and was on his way to California for another interview.

Representatives of the board of education in Palos Hills were in Birmingham recently for interviews with administrators, school staff and others in the community.

Peckenpaugh will take over a 72-square-mile district that has 6,100 students, 361 teachers and 35 administrators.

ONE-THIRD OF the district is in forest preserve and only 30 per cent of the available land has been developed.

Unlike Birmingham, which has faced declining enrollment and school closings during Peckenpaugh's tenure, the Illinois district has three high schools now and it is estimated that a new one will be needed every three years for several years, he said.

An acting superintendent has been directing the district since September when the former administrator retired after 23 years.

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# Supt. looks at record

**By BARBARA UNDERWOOD**  
 During his six years as superintendent of the Birmingham schools, Dr. Donald Peckenpaugh saw many of his hopes and expectations for the district become reality, he said this week.

Among these was improvement of curricular offerings, putting the business operations on a sounder footing and increasing community involvement in school affairs.

Major issues he had to contend with were declining enrollment, school closings, staff reductions, labor negotiations and autonomy of the schools.

"I might have done a few things sooner or with more emphasis and less vigilance. But I would have followed the same road."

—Dr. Donald Peckenpaugh

was a priority for Peckenpaugh. He said that has been accomplished "within a small percentage."

"Twenty per cent of the questions I was asked when I came here had to do with community involvement," he said. "Now we have 56 citizens' committee and heavy turnout at board meetings."

Peckenpaugh also listed a revitalized curriculum council with heavy parent involvement, the community education movement, curriculum development and an appeal process for parents as accomplishments.

Declining enrollment, school closings and staff reductions "will con-

tinue" in Birmingham, he predicted.

Commenting on the labor situation in the district, he said "I see the total question of collective bargaining and negotiations as having taken considerable time and effort, but the outlook is good at this point."

"I KNOW OF few school districts where there is as much communication and openness as there is between the Birmingham administration and the teachers' association."

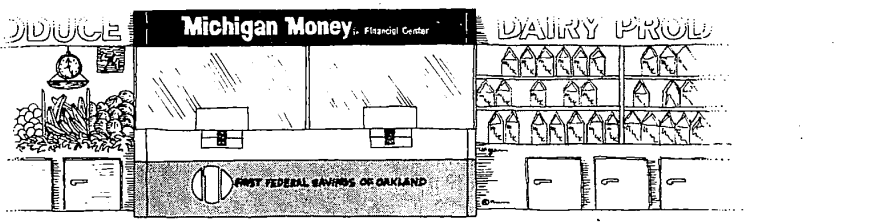
Principals in Birmingham have autonomy in the operation of their individual buildings, Peckenpaugh said, "but there has been an attempt to move beyond the superintendent and the principals and include parents, staff and students."

He said his hopes for Birmingham in the future are that he wants it "to continue to be outstanding and become even better."

Much work remains to be done in community education, curriculum improvement and "declining enrollment and school closings" to be faced, Peckenpaugh said.

"Most of all, the new superintendent must thrust out what the role of the superintendent is to be. The board will have to face up to its responsibility of setting policy and establishing money available at the goals and priorities," he concluded.

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