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Shaq To Governor Christie: I Think You're Very Cool

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Shaq To Governor Christie: I Think You're Very Cool

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Transcript:

Governor Christie: Those children in that room and the children they represent in our urban communities all over the state need to believe that they can accomplish anything they can dream if they work hard. And we need to give them the tools to be able to turn that hard work into a fulfillment of their potential, and that shouldn't matter where you live in New Jersey. If a child has a big enough dream we should be able to give them the tools to achieve that dream if they're willing to work hard enough to do it. That's why the mayor and I are working so hard on improving the education system in Camden because we know that only through a great public education can kids really be ready for the 21st century jobs that are going to help make their lives bigger and better than they are today. And that's why Shaq and I are working on this Just Play project as well, because if we lose them to gang violence, if we lose them to drugs, then the ability for them to achieve their dreams is going to be snuffed out, and in the worst cases their lives will be snuffed out. We don't want that or need that. We want our children to be healthy and strong and successful. So speaking of healthy and strong and successful, one of the great things about being Governor is that when you work on things that really matter you get to make friends that matter. And over the last year I've gotten to become friends with Shaquille O'Neal. This is one of the few things that I do as Governor that makes my kids think I'm actually cool. When they saw Shaquille come to my office and visit with me a few months ago and we took a picture, after they got done laughing at the picture and how small their father looks standing next to Shaq, you know kids, my kids, they're big basketball fans, said to me, why would Shaq want to come and visit you? And I said because we both care about this state and we care about the kids in this state getting the best opportunities they can, and as I said before he has shown it not with just

words but with his deeds. Coming here and investing in New Jersey in economic opportunity and development up in Newark, being here now and being our ambassador statewide for this Just Play program, paying honor to how the Boys & Girls Club in Newark helped to shape his life, which he just talked to the kids about. And so I don't think I'm cool but I'm glad my kids do, and part of the reason they do at least for a day or two is I got a day like today—the kids asked me before they left for school, so what are you doing today? Uh, I said just a normal day. I'm going to hang with Shaq in Camden, and so that made them think that at least for today I was a little bit cool, so let me get out of the way and introduce my friend and New Jersey's friend Shaquille O'Neal.

Shaquille O'Neal: Thank you Governor, I do think you're cool, very cool. My name is Shaquille O'Neal and I'm a product of the Boys & Girls Club in Newark, New Jersey. When the governor asked me to be part of this program, I told him sure. This facility has helped me become who I am today. I can remember a story one time. I did something crazy like I stole something from the store and my mother came home, and after she disciplined me she said what's wrong with you? And I said I don't like living around here. She looked me in my face and she told me change it. I said you want me to change it? She said yeah, change it. So I said how do I do that Mom? She said simple: you do what I tell you to do. You go to Boys & Girls Club and you work hard. Play hard. You be a leader and not a follower and anything can come true. And I said you know what Mom? I'm going to believe you, and it was the best advice she gave me in my life, and you know I tell children all the time you might not like your situation but only you can change your situation through hard work and dedication, and I think kids look up to me because they know and understand that I speak their language, so I tell them all the time just like I tell my own children, if Shaq can do it you can do it.

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