
Committee Meeting

of

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

*“The Committee will receive testimony from invited guests
on the benefits of preschool and other high-quality early education programs”*

LOCATION: Committee Room 6
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: September 21, 2015
10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator M. Teresa Ruiz, Chair
Senator Shirley K. Turner, Vice Chair
Senator Peter J. Barnes III
Senator Diane B. Allen
Senator Michael J. Doherty



ALSO PRESENT:

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*Senate Majority
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*Senate Republican
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Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, PO 068, Trenton, New Jersey



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New Jersey State Legislature

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COMMITTEE NOTICE

TO: MEMBERS OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FROM: SENATOR M. TERESA RUIZ, CHAIRWOMAN

SUBJECT: COMMITTEE MEETING - SEPTEMBER 21, 2015

The public may address comments and questions to Anita M. Saynisch, Erin M. Basiak, Committee Aides, or make bill status and scheduling inquiries to Marguerite Tazza, Secretary, at (609)847-3850, fax (609)984-9808, or e-mail: OLSAideSED@njleg.org. Written and electronic comments, questions and testimony submitted to the committee by the public, as well as recordings and transcripts, if any, of oral testimony, are government records and will be available to the public upon request.

The Senate Education Committee will meet on Monday, September 21, 2015 at 10:00 AM in Committee Room 6, 1st Floor, State House Annex, Trenton, New Jersey.

The committee will receive testimony from invited guests on the benefits of preschool and other high-quality early education programs.

Issued 9/14/15

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SENATOR M. TERESA RUIZ (Chair): Good morning, everyone.

I'll kindly ask you to take your seats.

Roll call.

MS. SAYNISCH (Committee Aide): Senator Ruiz.

SENATOR RUIZ: Here.

MS. SAYNISCH: Senator Turner.

SENATOR SHIRLEY K. TURNER (Vice Chair): Here.

MS. SAYNISCH: Senator Barnes, substituting for Senator Beach.

SENATOR BARNES: Here.

MS. SAYNISCH: Senator Allen. (no response)

Senator Doherty.

SENATOR DOHERTY: Here.

SENATOR RUIZ: (off mike) One second.

Sorry, I wanted to be sure -- I didn't have my glasses on at the right time. But we do we have a great guest joining us here today, and I want to give a warm welcome to Governor Jim Florio. (applause)

In addition, joining us-- I know that one of my counterparts over on the Assembly side -- I can't see where she is -- Assemblywoman Mila Jasey, who joins in efforts for early childhood, is here as well. (applause)

And there is a group of phenomenal students who are referred to as *Under the Dome* -- I actually use that term quite often myself when I'm traveling down the Turnpike -- and they're from Montclair State University. So, welcome. (applause)

I want to welcome everybody back. It's interesting how we kind of start our calendar here in Trenton the same way that school starts. So for anyone who's listening, to all our great teachers in the State of New Jersey and to all of our school children -- I wish you great academic success in the 2015-2016 school year.

Having this discussion today really fills me with great excitement. I know firsthand, as a preschool teacher -- and this was pre-Abbott, and I wasn't licensed -- but it was in a daycare setting, and I had glorious 4-year-old children and I taught them every day. It is so phenomenal to have a young man or woman come in, day one, not knowing the English language and then all of a sudden, during circle time, have them raise their hand and answer a question; that just floors you -- like this (gestures). That when I taught those children and explored different items in the curriculum -- that if I could have taught them Mandarin Chinese, they would have learned it. It was my inability to do that. When we think about the State of New Jersey, we have phenomenal programs in place, but can we make them even better? States across this nation are exploring math concepts, and there are researchers who are currently saying that preschoolers can learn more math than they are usually taught. These are brain researchers. When we think about New Jersey, we think about really good, phenomenal early childhood programs -- like those in the City of Newark that get nationally touted. We forget that there's a lot of research behind the 0-to-3, and the development of an infant's brain, from prenatal-- And that when we think about New Jersey, we have to stop talking about K-12, and we have to start thinking about the development of the student from 0 to 16. And that means access to high-quality prenatal care; access to

high-quality daycare centers; access to high-quality universal preschool programs; access to high-quality, full-day kindergarten in the entire State of New Jersey; access to high-quality public school classrooms -- and beyond, to high school, and to college, and to career readiness.

We need to really start thinking creatively in ways that we haven't thought of before. And I want to share, actually, something that comes from a report from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. And we have a representative from this national organization who will be joining us later today. And it says, "The research behind these outcomes show that the early childhood period, birth to age 5, is a time of rapid brain development and that hundreds of new connections in the brain form every second. Early experiences play a large role in determining how brain connections are formed, and this wiring becomes a foundation on which all later learning is built. The stronger we create the foundation for these children, the better the investment is, and the less we will have to pay out in services."

And I know that the biggest question on everybody's brain is-- There isn't a lack of will in the State of New Jersey; we know that we want to expand, but we need to figure out a way to fund it.

I am not naïve to that. New Jersey is creative about thinking of referendums that protect our open spaces and environments; we've developed corporate business taxes to keep and attract big business in the State of New Jersey. We've asked philanthropic funders to explore different options for programming. And what I'm saying is, we have to do all those same things for the expansion of early childhood. Explore the option of a referendum; think about a piece of legislation that diverts CBT tax for the expansion of kindergarten and early childhood programs; encourage

philanthropic funders to come in and make huge investments. Because we know what we do well, but we must expand it and make it greater.

But yet, there's still some low-hanging fruit that we can approach and take care of in its immediacy. The Department of Children and Families is the one that provides the licensure for our providers on the State, and yet it's the Department of Education that oversees all of these programs. The Department of Human Services provides the funding for wraparound in our childcare centers for before- and after-care, and yet it's the Department of Early Childhood in DOE that oversees all the programmatic dollars.

I mean, there's a huge list of central intake -- Project LAUNCH -- all these resources in different departments that should all get streamlined under the Department of Early Childhood -- and I'm looking at you guys -- in DOE so that we have a one-stop mechanism and we're using every resource at our disposal to continue our programs. Why haven't we asked questions like, "Can we draw down on the Department of Health's funding for 0-to-3, you know, high-quality daycare settings?" It is a matter of health; it is a matter of brain development.

We continue to discuss investing in infrastructure, providing tax credits to businesses for job creation. But we must have a broader, more serious discussion about investing in the greatest asset in the State of New Jersey, and that's our children.

I hope today's discussion will be filled with a lot of information -- some that we do know, some that we will learn of today. But the key focus is just to -- under this great capitol dome, in the greatest state that we know exists in this country -- shed light on one of the most important

critical issues, and that's the expansion of universal preschool programs -- not how we know it, but how we can develop it.

So thank you for joining us today.

First, I'm going to ask the Department of Education to come forward. And as they're making their way forward, we do have a long list. I will be grouping some stakeholders together, and I ask you, then, to keep within the timeframe that we discussed late last week. I know we might go over, but I really want to get to everyone.

E L L E N W O L O C K, Ed.D.: I want to thank you for having us here today.

I am Ellen Wolock; I'm the Director of the Division of Early Childhood Education. And I'm here to tell you about our preschool program.

Today I'm going to tell you about the current status of our program. I'm going to talk about the key elements, and quality, and how we ensure continuous improvement. I'm going to take you inside our preschool classrooms so that you can see some kids in classrooms. I'm going to talk about the impact of the program, and also what's next.

The mission of our Division is to provide educators with the tools and the support to create high-quality early childhood programs that maximize children's learning and development in all domains.

The preschool programs for this school year have 35 fully funded districts -- those are the 31 former Abbots; plus Little Egg Harbor, Fairfield, Woodbine, and Red Bank; and there are 7 charter schools. Most of them are in the former Abbots, and there is one in Red Bank. We're projected to serve 45,875 3- and 4-year-olds. And in addition to those 35

school districts, there are also 112 districts that get a little bit of State money for preschool; 95 of those districts serve 8,127 4-year-olds in mostly half-day programs, and a handful of 3s. And 17 school districts will serve 2,300 4-year-olds as part of the Federal Preschool Expansion Grant by the end of the grant. And this is in a full-day high-quality program.

The budget for the former Abbotts and the four additional school districts is \$611 million. The total budget for the partially funded districts is \$44.5 million. The budget for the Preschool Expansion Grant is \$17.5 million. And funding is based on enrollment projections, and these are the base per-pupil amounts for the former Abbotts (indicating PowerPoint).

Both the former Abbotts and the Preschool Expansion Grant districts have these key quality components: They have a certified teacher and an assistant for a class of 15 children, and they have developmentally appropriate comprehensive curricula. So we have High Scope, Creative Curriculum, Tools of the Mind, and Curiosity Corner. We have good district/provider collaboration; 56 percent of our children are served in community-based provider settings, and 44 percent are served in school-based settings.

We have full-day, 180 days a year. We have coaches for in-class follow-up at a ratio of 1-to-20 classrooms. And these coaches provide supports for teachers on key professional development. Sixty-two percent of our preschool children with disabilities are included in gen ed classrooms -- and that's really much higher than the rest of the state. We have supports for home languages of English learners. We are starting to see some dual-language classrooms. We also have supports for preschool

children with potential difficulties -- we have pre-intervention and referral staff that work with teachers to address and prevent challenging behaviors.

We also have supports for families -- a parent involvement specialist and family workers. And we have fiscal specialists who work with the providers.

The brains of everything we do can be found in our preschool program guidelines and our code; and, of course, our teaching and learning standards describe what children should know and be able to do by the end of the preschool years.

We have a professional development structure that equips key staff with tools and information -- and these are the key staff that come together each year and provide support in their districts.

These are the five levels that are used for measuring and guiding improvements: Child, Classroom, Site, District, and State. At the Child level, we have screening upon entry to the program and ongoing performance assessment to inform instruction. At the Classroom level, we have structured classroom observation instruments and curriculum-based fidelity instruments that coaches use to help teachers improve. At the Site level, recent for us is *Grow NJ Kids*, and that's an agreed upon set of program and learning standards across our four agencies that oversee early care and education programs.

At the District level, we have a Self-Assessment and Validation System that measures and assesses each of the program components. And at the State level we keep an eye on the data, such as the inclusion data. We have external classroom evaluations and we analyze the results of the SAVS.

I probably want to speed this up, I guess, right?

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes.

DR. WOLOCK: Okay. (laughter)

SENATOR RUIZ: In a nice way.

DR. WOLOCK: Okay. So maybe we could skip to the good part.

SENATOR RUIZ: I want to see the kids.

DR. WOLOCK: Okay, all right.

So just know that we have 10 early childhood specialists who work with the districts to help them improve their quality.

SENATOR RUIZ: Now, you did make mention of one thing. There is a dual immersion -- an early childhood program.

DR. WOLOCK: Yes.

SENATOR RUIZ: Is the Department continuing to explore -- even if it's just for pilot -- some of the high-quality providers doing very groundbreaking initiatives? For instance, when I was in Seattle visiting with NCSL, there was a big headline -- and I touched on it in my opening remarks -- about the way some sites were -- and I don't want everybody to gasp -- but they were utilizing algebra. Obviously, not the way we know it, but with beads and how math is so critically important to the development of the brain, particularly in those stages. I was just curious: Does the Department of Early Childhood continue to -- not something that we can lay out across the state, but so that we have assessments to say this works and we should continue to expand those programs?

DR. WOLOCK: Yes, absolutely.

SENATOR RUIZ: Okay.

DR. WOLOCK: And you'll see pictures of that.

SENATOR RUIZ: Okay; continue.

DR. WOLOCK: But first let's talk about how we do with all of this good stuff. I pulled out the results of our early childhood environment rating scale to show you the trajectory. So 1 is really, really bad -- really inadequate -- and 7 is excellent. And a 5.0 is associated with learning benefits for children. And NIEER comes out each year and conducts observations on a random sample; last year there were 300. So you can see the progress, over time. So we started very, very low and have gradually been increasing. And you can see that there's a little dip in 2014, and that was because of change in the personal care subscale. But we've since recovered.

So let's go inside the classrooms -- the good stuff.

If you go in our classrooms, you'll see warm and responsive teachers who are enhancing children's social skills, enriching their vocabulary. You'll see teachers sitting on the floor with the kids; you'll see teachers in small group time, also individually interacting with them.

You'll see classroom centers that are designed for preschoolers, that are organized to promote each learning domain. You can see that, here, there are lots of interesting objects to compare and weigh.

You'll see experiences that -- you'll see children having experiences that develop independence and self-regulation, like family-style meals. And not only are family-style meals good for developing independence, they're also a time to practice social skills and language development.

You'll find organized activities that promote listening, speaking, and reasoning skills.

You'll see children practicing writing skills in meaningful ways. You will not find worksheets in our classrooms.

You'll see children problem solving and experimenting with mathematical concepts. Here you see children experimenting with different attributes, with different types of blocks.

You'll see inviting places for children to try out their emerging literacy skills. In this classroom, you see soft places to sit, you see homemade books, big books, books in different languages.

You'll see engaged families. So not only are there volunteer opportunities in our classrooms, but there are also resources like lending libraries and workshops. And if parents want to, they can join the Early Childhood Advisory Council and become decision makers.

So how do the kids do? What's the impact?

NIEER -- The National Institute for Early Education Research -- started, in 2005, to follow our children. And they compared samples of children who attended the preschool program and compared them to those who did not. And they retrospectively looked at the State test scores using NJ SMART and also performed a battery of measures on 5th graders.

At kindergarten entry, the achievement gap was cut in half for the preschool attendees -- with two years having twice the impact of one. Differences between attendees and nonattendees persisted through 5th grade; there was no fade out. Also, children who attended preschool were three-quarters of a year ahead of those who did not attend, in 5th grade.

And there was a significant reduction in both grade retention and special education rates.

So this year's focus -- we're going to implement our quality rating improvement system -- Grow NJ Kids. While we have very good inclusion, we're going to try to provide better supports for children with disabilities by implementing individualized education plans in a more developmentally appropriate fashion. We're going to go deeper with instruction. We're switching to a new edition of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale because it does a better job of zeroing in on both mathematics and language arts practices. We're also going to be helping the Preschool Expansion Grant districts implement a high-quality program. And we do have plans to work with NIEER to continue following the children. Right now, the kids are in 9th grade; and NIEER's planning to look at how they did in 8th grade.

SENATOR RUIZ: Ellen, don't leave -- because I may have a question for you.

DR. WOLOCK: (off mike) Okay.

SENATOR RUIZ: Actually, I'll ask you now, and then I'll ask my colleagues if they have anything specific.

I'm up on your Grow NJ Kids website. Do we offer this in other languages?

DR. WOLOCK: No.

SENATOR RUIZ: I would ask that DOE make all this information to parents as easily accessible as they possibly can.

In addition, this kind of reminds me of-- I don't know if you've looked at the California initiative, *First 5*, 0-to-5. And it's this real

interactive website. When I was on it, somehow -- I guess through cookie tracking -- it got my information. And these are things that I think do not cost a lot of money. But for parents who registered through any one of our sites -- whether it's a child provider site, or a family that's getting SNAP, or any kind of government assistance -- if we can track their information. There was a baby who would come on and remind me, "Did you read to me today?" There are different things that we can be utilizing -- technology -- just to really think creatively, which is low cost to the State, but that can engage families in different ways. Other states also have a prescription book drive for doctors in the state, where, in addition to -- when a family goes in to see their pediatrician, they might get a prescription for antibiotics if the child is sick; they also get a prescription to be sure that that family is reading to the child.

What I'm saying, is we-- Even though that may sound crazy, we need to really encourage our families who are not as aware of the fundamentals of reading and the impact that it has. So I would just ask the DOE to consider expanding its Grow NJ Kids site so that it is more consumer-friendly for parents. And if there's a way that we can send reminders and different-- When you sign up for an exercise site, they'll ask you if you ate well for the day. I mean, little things like that, that cost absolutely no money.

DR. WOLOCK: We can explore that -- yes.

SENATOR RUIZ: Okay, thank you.

V I N C E N T J. C O S T A N Z A: So, to everybody's delight, my remarks will be brief.

Senator Ruiz and the honorable members of this Committee, thank you so much for having me here.

As a former kindergarten teacher myself, I feel like we're modeling fantastic transition practices here, where the kindergarten teachers are talking to the preschool teachers. And speaking of transition, here we go.

I'm the Executive Director for Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, which provides a blueprint -- an architecture for prenatal through age 8 services in the state--

SENATOR RUIZ: Great.

MR. COSTANZA: --as well as the Director of Primary Education, which covers kindergarten through 5th grade programs. All of that work here -- I think especially with the Office of Primary Education -- is kind of summed up here. When I hear your comments about doing algebra, it certainly warms my heart. When I think about the work in my home district, with celebrating the robotics team, I see young adults who are playing with ideas, tinkering around with things, sometimes eating pizza -- definitely not doing worksheets. And when I'm talking with our Superintendent, I remind him that that's what a good kindergarten classroom looks like.

And that's easier said than done. So the question is: Well, how do we help practitioners, really, to create those kinds of classrooms as soon as children walk in the doors? All of the work of the Office of Primary Education, and many of the activities in the Early Learning Challenge, are really couched around that we shouldn't wait until children are 14 to be interested in these ideas.

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes.

MR. COSTANZA: And fortunately, there are many initiatives in the Department of Education where we ensure that they do not.

Yes, if you could help me with the transitions; again, good modeling of transition practices here. (referring to PowerPoint)

So what are some of the benefits of kindergarten itself, let alone full-day kindergarten? Another -- use this to lay on what is the mission of the Office of Primary Education. I think very much what I take to be the mission of my career -- there are these two concepts: academic rigor on one hand, developmentally appropriate practices on the other hand. Unfortunately, they are seen as divorced concepts. The work that we do in support of districts throughout this state is to fuse both of these together. It's to ask the question, "Well, what does rigor look like to a 5-year-old, to a teacher of 5-year-olds?" And how do we make sure that that's age appropriate, because simply saying harder -- doing things harder is not better. The districts need a lot of support in that. And that's certainly what we do here -- fusing academic rigor with developmentally appropriate practices.

So what is it the profile of kindergarten looks like in New Jersey? I've been at the Department of Education for six years. Here, I'm showing a profile of four years. We've seen a steady uptick of districts that are moving to full-day kindergarten programs: in 2011-2012, approximately 70 percent; up now to 85.5 percent. The story here is, regardless of the district type -- half-day, full-day -- most of which are offering a full-day program -- we take it to be our responsibility to make sure that we are providing the appropriate supports, regardless. Because there are children

in half-day classrooms, in full-day classrooms, teachers -- and they all need to be supported.

So here's one initiative that I'm going to talk to you about that fuses the work of the Early Learning Challenge. Kindergarten Entry Assessment -- which is a project in the Early Learning Challenge -- is also instrumental in the work of Primary Education. Now, you might have noticed the assessment environment over this last year was a little anxious. And I could speak to that, as the father of a 9-year-old -- an 8-year-old at that time -- who took a State test for the first time. There is an anxious environment.

This is a voluntary initiative, and here I have year one participation; we're in year two, which I will share with you. The fact that we have so many folks who are participating in this just shows how much assistance we have been providing to districts -- and not just talking about ways to strengthen data collection for young children; we're really taking a strong, strength-based professional development approach.

So here is a performance-based assessment system that kindergarten teachers use for the first seven weeks of kindergarten, where they collect all kinds of information on children. You'll notice here social/emotional development. Even folks who are critical of the assessment environment are so because they say, "Hey, we need to get much more of the profile of what's important to young children and families," and that's something that we help educators throughout the state to do.

In year one, we helped teachers collect social/emotional information, literacy, and math. Teachers participating in year two will expand to the cognitive domain, which gets at things like persistence,

problem solving, perseverance. Nobody has to raise their hand if they know adults who need those skills helped a little bit as well, and we're certainly helping 5-year-olds with that.

If you could go to the last slide that I have -- what I want to share with you is, again, to make the point that our support with this professional development approach is not just rolling out, "Hey, let's do another assessment initiative," but "Let's address a question the districts have: How do we look at children as they enter kindergarten, and then support growth and development throughout the year for teachers and children, with developing goals and monitoring them?" The fact that, in year one, we start with 200 teachers; and this year, in year two, we're expanding to 520 teachers; 29 districts expanded to 51 districts-- The only thing that we ask districts to do in order to participate in this initiative is to attend our kindergarten seminar, which is a seminar on best practices in the kindergarten year. And we really help folks to not just hear my words of fusing academic rigor with appropriate practices, but really to see: Here's what it looks like in classrooms.

And in closing, I'll say this. We talk a lot about transition *into* kindergarten, which we obviously ought to do. There is a lot less conversation on transition *out* of kindergarten. This is tied to many initiatives that we have in 1st through 3rd grade. And I'll say I look forward to being before the Committee and sharing all of the wonderful things that we do to support the rest of the primary years as well.

And thank you very much for your time this morning.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

Kindergarten is awesome. New Jersey doesn't have full-day kindergarten across the board. I know that some of our stakeholder groups are going to talk about some of the obstacles -- facilities. I just would encourage -- and you don't need to respond to this -- but we have to move forward so that there is a kindergarten slot for every child in the State of New Jersey. It is 2015, and it doesn't make sense to me that we still have districts that only offer half-day. First, as an academic resource to that child, since we have seen from your presentation the ability to really develop that little human being into its potential greatness. But more importantly, also to create interventions early on that really help get out of a potential IEP scenario -- if it's something that can get addressed early on.

But we're a country that's changed our family structure. Not only is it an academic resource, but it's a family necessity as well. So then you have families that work, and a half-day kindergarten is not conducive to that household structure.

Senator Doherty, I think you have some questions.

SENATOR DOHERTY: Yes, thank you. Thanks, Madam Chair.

I had a question on the briefing; it was on page 12 of the first briefing. You talked about differences between attendees and nonattendees -- were maintained through the 5th grade; Page 12 of your handout.

DR. WOLOCK: Okay.

SENATOR DOHERTY: So what happens after 5th grade? What about 7th grade, 10th? Do these differences still exist, or--

DR. WOLOCK: We don't know yet. But I think that we're going to look at that. So we're going to look at the difference-- Now the kids are in high school, so we're going to look, retrospectively, at 8th grade.

SENATOR DOHERTY: So there's no data after 5th grade that's available?

DR. WOLOCK: Well, it's all part of our longitudinal database system. So we have it; NIEER is going to look at it.

SENATOR DOHERTY: Well, what-- Are there any initial conclusions from the data that you have collected after 5th grade? Are differences -- do they still exist all the way through graduation from high school?

DR. WOLOCK: Well, that's what we're going to look at when we -- we're going to use our NJ SMART data system to look at the differences -- if the differences continue to be significant.

SENATOR DOHERTY: So there's just no data?

DR. WOLOCK: No, the data is in our data system.

SENATOR DOHERTY: Okay, so what can you tell me about the data that you've collected?

DR. WOLOCK: Well, we don't have it yet.

SENATOR RUIZ: Senator, they have the data; they haven't formulated the -- I'm not a science person, what would you call it?

DR. WOLOCK: Well, we haven't done the research -- we have the data; it's sitting--

SENATOR RUIZ: But the research is not developed.

DR. WOLOCK: It's sitting in our longitudinal data system. But NIEER is going to analyze it for us this year.

SENATOR DOHERTY: Okay, so we're still waiting. The jury is still out on that.

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes.

DR. WOLOCK: Yes.

SENATOR DOHERTY: Okay.

SENATOR RUIZ: Well, the jury is out -- I'm sorry, because I have to chime in -- the jury is out to see what it shows in 8th grade. But if you look at the 5th grade numbers, you already see what it does for a positive impact already--

DR. WOLOCK: Right.

SENATOR DOHERTY: Yes.

SENATOR RUIZ: --in 5th grade.

SENATOR DOHERTY: Sure. Well, I understand--

DR. WOLOCK: I mean, other studies have shown that the impact fades out. But ours did not show that at all. So at least it persisted through 5th grade.

SENATOR DOHERTY: Okay, yes. That was something I was interested in, because I have read some reports that, at some point, any additional benefit eventually does fade out. So by the time you reach a higher grade -- say 8th grade -- a student who attended preschool and a student who didn't attend preschool -- there are actually no discernable differences between those two students as far as their academic abilities and level.

DR. WOLOCK: Well, because it's pretty remarkable that it persisted through 5th grade -- so we'll see, when NIEER analyzes the information, if it continues to persist.

SENATOR DOHERTY: Okay.

You know, we spend hundreds of millions of dollars on preschool and, obviously, you folks are supervising and overseeing the management of this program. I just wanted to bring a couple of things to your attention to get your feedback. Because I think fundamentally the government needs to treat all citizens equally -- you know, the equal protection clause in the Constitution. I think we're supposed to treat everybody fairly. And there are a couple of issues I'd like to bring to your attention -- that I think there's manifest unfairness that's going on here in the State of New Jersey. I think that we certainly have poor students, and they should have resources. But we also have communities that have actually done very well recently -- many of them in Hudson County; two that come to mind, Hoboken and Jersey City, are doing extremely well. And I heard a radio ad the other day about how Jersey City has one of the largest percentages of college graduates; a very young, vibrant community with all these multi-million dollar condos going up. Just a new one for \$750,000 per unit is going up.

But, you know, I happen to represent a suburban and rural district that has beleaguered taxpayers with very high property tax bills. Because, as you know, how do you fund your schools? Through the property taxes. And the less State aid you get, the higher the property tax bill. So it's not unusual for many of my constituents, many suburban and rural communities that have middle-class homes -- \$400,000, \$500,000 -- they're paying \$15,000 and \$20,000 a year. West Orange -- we've all heard the horror stories about West Orange. People living in \$350,000 split levels

paying \$20,000 a year. I don't even know how people can not go crazy paying that much for that simple of a house. But it happens.

But I think there are some communities that have really come back. And my disappointment is that the State of New Jersey and the Department of Education has allowed an unfair situation. I'll just give you an example. I represent Hackettstown; Hackettstown is a middle-class community. According to the most recent census, the per-capita income in Hackettstown is \$29,000 per person. And it doesn't have 3- and 4-year preschool that's paid for; it's not an Abbott or a former Abbott district; it has 100-year-old school buildings in town that are functioning very well, just fine. It doesn't get any of the additional school aid from the State of New Jersey.

On the other hand, Hoboken, according to the most recent census-- Hackettstown is at \$29,000; Hoboken is at \$69,000 per capita. The mean family income in Hoboken is over \$100,000 a year. So Hoboken -- it's more than double per capita income. Now, people would say, "Well, gee, which town is the Abbott? Which town has 3- and 4-year preschool?" And they would probably be really shocked to find out that Hoboken is "the Abbott or former Abbott," whatever you want to call it. Hoboken has the 3- and 4-year fully funded preschool. So you could be a Wall Street executive, and before you hop in your limo and go to your job on Wall Street you could drop your child off at 3- and 4-year preschool paid for by the taxpayers of Hackettstown -- who don't have that.

SENATOR RUIZ: Senator Doherty, I'm just going to-- I don't know if you have a direct question--

SENATOR DOHERTY: Yes.

SENATOR RUIZ: So if you can get to that.

But the purpose of this hearing is precisely what you're talking about -- is expanding our programs. And not to lose sight of -- couching one population against another -- preschool programs were, in their initial phases of development, to continue to answer the gaping question that we have in New Jersey: How do we bridge our achievement gap? We have to be sure that we take care of those children most in need so that they're graduating at the same pace as their counterparts -- wherever they are in New Jersey.

But today we're talking about specifically what you're saying: How do we take these high optimal programs and expand them everywhere? You cite Hoboken, and I know you're referring to the school funding formula. In its initial phase, Hoboken was a different community than what it is today -- something that perhaps should get addressed; not being that we're going to figure it out today in this Committee hearing. But let's not forget that there are children in Hoboken -- there were many Latino families and African American families that needed to utilize those early childhood programs so that they could have a step ahead to gain success.

SENATOR DOHERTY: Okay, thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

So my point is that I've been very disappointed in the State of New Jersey and the Department of Education -- to actually not recognize this changing economic and demographic situation that's occurring in the State of New Jersey. Where we have now communities that have totally recovered, such as Hoboken, that are so hot that business owners have to move out because they can't pay their rent anymore -- I've heard all kinds

of stories -- and the State of New Jersey seems to be aware of this situation -- the Department of Education -- yet what have you done to update the program to make sure that-- I'm sorry; I represent my constituents. They've sent me here to Trenton. And as far as I see, they're just getting the wrong end of the stick here. And the State of New Jersey is aware of this issue, yet refuses to do anything about it.

Could you address that, please?

DR. WOLOCK: I actually can't address that, because-- I could get back to you and find out what we're doing to address that. But I don't have an answer for you.

SENATOR DOHERTY: So this is--

DR. WOLOCK: I mean, if it were up to me, we'd provide the program in every community.

SENATOR DOHERTY: Well, yes, if there was unlimited--

SENATOR RUIZ: Senator Doherty, we know that what you're trying to address is changing the school funding formula. And that would be the business of the Legislature and not the Department. So something perhaps that -- you may want to come up with a bill if you have the solution for it, but it is not the focus of our discussion today.

SENATOR DOHERTY: You know--

SENATOR RUIZ: So I am going to -- if you have any additional questions, or if there is any information the Department can forward to the Committee members that will help to answer the Senator's question, that would be helpful. I do recognize your point of view; that's why we're here today. How do we expand these high-quality programs to every district so that every family has access?

SENATOR DOHERTY: And, you know, I think this is a very legitimate point I'm bringing up, Madam Chair, because--

SENATOR RUIZ: It absolutely is, but the Department doesn't have the answer. And I'm just going to move on to the next panel, because we have so many people, Senator.

SENATOR DOHERTY: So you're not going to let me ask questions--

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes, you can continue to ask--

SENATOR DOHERTY: --to represent--

SENATOR RUIZ: I'm sorry; I thought that was your last question.

SENATOR DOHERTY: No, it's not.

SENATOR RUIZ: Okay, go ahead.

SENATOR DOHERTY: No, it's not. And I think-- You know, I'm sorry; I've been sitting here in the Legislature for 15 years. These are people from the Department of Education, Madam Chair, and I have a right to ask them questions about this program. You may not like the questions, but I have a right to ask them.

SENATOR RUIZ: Don't judge-- Senator, I'm going to ask you, because this is my Committee and I am the Chair. I have given you enough time. We have a list of speakers that runs the gamut of over 20 individuals. If you have questions, please ask them directly so we can move on to the next panel. If it's something that they can provide to you in writing later, so that we can move forward--

And, of course, as a Senator, you always have every right to reach out to any department in the Administration and have your own meeting at any time.

SENATOR DOHERTY: The next issue involves the ability of these communities that are receiving the 3- and 4-year preschool funds to raise their own revenue locally. And I would like you to address this issue. It was pointed out by Matt Boxer -- who has now moved on to State Comptroller (*sic*) -- about some of the tax abatement programs in the State of New Jersey which directly impact what properties are on the tax rolls for collecting aid and school taxes, and what properties are not.

According to Mr. Boxer, and I'll just -- this is-- The biggest example that he raised, "Jersey City has given away over \$2 billion of tax abatements." And according to Mr. Boxer's report, when you give away a tax abatements the municipality collects tax revenue, the county collects 5 percent of what it should, and the schools collect nothing. So the schools are getting nothing on these tax-abated properties. And according to Mr. Boxer, Jersey City could be collecting \$120 million more a year to fund its schools, but they've decided not to.

And the thing that I find most disturbing is, when Jersey City gives away tax abatements--

SENATOR RUIZ: Senator Doherty, I have to ask you -- we're talking about preschool programs.

SENATOR DOHERTY: This is going--

SENATOR RUIZ: And you're talking about tax-based, critical issues that we can potentially discuss in another committee. We should have Treasury and each of those governments here.

SENATOR DOHERTY: You know--

SENATOR RUIZ: This Division, this Department--

SENATOR DOHERTY: You know, this is not, this is-- You're not letting me--

SENATOR RUIZ: Sir, I'm calling you out of order. (raps gavel) This Department does not have the ability to answer the questions on behalf of Jersey City.

Thank you very much.

Thank you, Department of Education. I apologize for that series of questions. If there's any information that you can provide to the Senator, we'll gratefully accept it.

Next, I'm going to ask the Advocates for Children of New Jersey, Cecilia Zalkind, Executive Director; joined by the National Institute for Early Education Research, Mr. W. Steven Barnett, the Director, to join me.

C E C I L I A Z A L K I N D: Good morning.

SENATOR RUIZ: Good morning.

MS. ZALKIND: Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify at this important hearing.

It's very exciting to see the Senate Education Committee talk about the issue of early education.

Steve and I have resolved this, and he told me I could go first; so I'll begin.

I have submitted my testimony, and I am just going to summarize what I have submitted to you, in the interest of the many speakers who come behind me.

As you know, I'm Cecilia Zalkind; I represent Advocates for Children of New Jersey; we're a statewide child advocacy organization based in Newark. Ensuring that every child, from infancy to age 8, has access to high-quality early learning has been a long-standing priority for ACNJ.

Excuse me; I'm having a little cough.

SENATOR RUIZ: There's water.

MS. ZALKIND: And Senator Ruiz, I was really happy to hear you talk about the importance of the continuum of early education. As we look at filling in pieces of the system, it's very important to keep in mind the needs of other children.

We know, and you'll hear it today from many speakers, that a strong early education gives children the best start towards success in school and in life. What happens in these early years impacts the rest of their lives.

This is no exaggeration; you said so yourself, Senator, when you started this morning. There is so much evidence -- scientific, medical, and developmental -- about the importance of the early years, starting in infancy. This is the time when the brain grows faster than any other time and it sets the foundation upon which all later learning, behavior, and health depends.

Parents, of course, are their child's first and best teacher. But almost 70 percent of New Jersey parents with children under age 5 work outside the home. They rely on childcare, not only to work, but to provide the high-quality early learning experiences they know their children need.

But quality childcare is expensive, especially for infants and toddlers. It can cost a significant percentage of a family's income. This is a

challenge for all families, but even greater for low- to middle-income families. And quality can be very hard to find -- again, especially for infants and toddlers.

A recent study by NIEER evaluating infant/toddler programs in New Jersey raises some serious questions about the quality of care for young children at the time when quality matters the most.

There are some changes on the horizon; you heard from the Department of Education. Thanks to some Federal grants, New Jersey is piloting some exciting ways to improve childcare quality. New Jersey also received an Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership grant, which has the potential to take an important first step at improving childcare for infants and toddlers. While the lessons learned from these efforts can help inform future policy -- and they will -- they will take several years.

From our perspective, we do not need to wait for these results to take action. There's one thing that we think we can do right now. We can make sure that more children benefit from our nationally recognized, high-quality, successful preschool program. New Jersey literally has the best preschool program in the country. We receive calls -- really, almost weekly -- from states that are now catching on to what we're doing in New Jersey, to ask about how they can provide preschool like New Jersey has.

As you heard from Ellen Wolock this morning, it has a high-quality standard, small class size, well-prepared teachers, partnerships among school districts, Head Start, and child care. And I would stress that partnership-- We believe strongly that this is a critical element to quality. All these systems have to come together, and also provide a program that is successful for families.

It includes 3- and 4-year-old children, ensuring two years of high-quality experience, which in itself makes a difference in preparing children for school. It is offered to children in the poorest communities of the state so that children who need it the most can access it. And it has a proven track record of success -- which I'm sure you'll hear over and over this morning, but certainly from Steve Barnett.

So what's the problem? We have a great program -- it simply does not reach enough children. Since 1999, we know that thousands of low-income 3- and 4-year-olds in the former Abbott districts have started school on the path to success because they attended State-funded high-quality preschool. For thousands more, however, these programs remain out of reach. Almost one-half of low-income children in New Jersey live outside of the school districts funded to provide preschool. For these children, a zip code continues to determine whether they can benefit from the strong start that preschool provides.

This, however, is a problem that we can solve. In fact, the solution already exists. The 2008 School Funding Reform Act called for expanding high-quality preschool to more low-income children across the state. But it has not been funded. In the meantime, thousands of children have missed out on their opportunity for starting school, with a greater chance of long-term educational success, because quality preschool was not available to them.

It is time, Senator, as you have said, to make preschool a top priority and take the first step toward expanding it to more children. As you will hear from many witnesses today, preschool is an important investment -- not only in the future of our children, but of our state. It

sounds trite to say that, but it's really true. That's why ACNJ is very proud to support Pre-K Our Way, and to continue to voice our support for preschool expansion and a comprehensive system of early education for all children, from infancy to age 8.

I'm going to stop here and just share something that happened last week, and then turn it over to Steve.

I had the opportunity last week to visit a high-quality preschool program in Elizabeth. It's an excellent program with a proven track record of success. And it's always nice, as an advocate, to be in programs with very young children.

I went to the 3-year-old class. This was the first week of preschool, so you can imagine things were a little chaotic, I know a little overwhelming. But what made the deepest impression on me were the differences that you could already see among the children in the classroom. Some were prepared, some were interested in reading -- they asked me to read a book to them. Too many were already behind. Their language skills were poor; they didn't talk at all. They have never held a book. The idea of two-way communication was something they had not experienced. They had trouble simply communicating. Many of them could not interact with each other.

But to me, this group of 3-year-olds is lucky, because preschool will make a difference for them. Without preschool, they would start kindergarten that way, already behind, when the stakes are higher and the remedy much harder.

I also had an opportunity to talk to a parent whose child just started in the program. She had to return to work when her child was an

infant, and she told me about her struggle to find childcare. She knew what quality was, but could not afford it. She described going to work every day -- she cried, actually -- knowing that her baby was in a program that was not meeting her learning needs. But cost drove her decision. She could not afford a program she wanted for her child.

She also described how happy she was when her child turned 3 years old and could attend a State-funded preschool. She was grateful to live in a community where high-quality preschool was available for her child. We need to make sure that more children in New Jersey have an opportunity to start school with this strong foundation for success. And I think this hearing today is an exciting first step toward that.

So thank you, Senator Ruiz and members of the Committee. And ACNJ -- this has been our commitment since the court first ordered the State to implement well-planned, high-quality preschool. And we would be happy to work with you in the future on this.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

Are there any questions? There's one.

Before I turn to Senator Turner, I would just note, anyone who's listening, ACNJ always puts out these reports -- semi-, or twice a year, depending on the subject matter. So easy to understand and digest data that gets formulated probably on very high-level matrices.

But I want to thank you for the work that you do.

Senator Turner.

MS. ZALKIND: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR TURNER: Thank you, Chairwoman.

Welcome.

MS. ZALKIND: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR TURNER: It's great to see you again.

You mentioned the high-quality preschool care that we have here in New Jersey. But I think one of the problems that I've seen -- in my District, anyway -- many parents want the high quality, but they can't afford it. It's affordability. And so many mothers now are saying, "It doesn't make sense for me to work, because by the time I pay for child care, I don't come out anywhere near what I need to pay my expenses." So I'm just wondering how can we not just provide the quality of care that we all want, but how can we make it more affordable so that parents will be able to work at the same time and have the peace of mind knowing that their children are going to be well cared for?

MS. ZALKIND: Well, Senator, I think that is such a good question. We certainly get many calls on that; in fact, about a month ago, we got a call from a young mother who was looking for child care. She got a job and was looking for child care so she could work. She did not qualify for a State childcare voucher because her income was slightly too high -- it was just a little bit over the level. And in the end, she had to turn down the job and not work because she couldn't find child care.

I think that's a significant issue for our State, and it impacts on low-income, middle-income families as well. We have an opportunity -- the Federal government just reauthorized the Child Care and Development Block Grant which provides Federal funding to help support low-income families with child care. I think it's an opportunity for our Department of Human Services, and advocates, and providers, and the communities to get

together to talk about how can we help improve this, how can we reduce the cost. I think it's an enormous challenge. And, of course, it's something that's going to involve State funding in the long term.

And as Senator Ruiz said when you started out: We're talking about preschool, but there are other issues as well -- child care, infant/toddler care. Maybe it's time that New Jersey makes early education a priority for funding as well.

SENATOR TURNER: I thank you.

Our Chairwoman spoke to the need for full-day kindergarten. That's a big issue when it comes to affordability, because so many parents cannot send their kids to just half-day kindergarten and work. Because the next question is, "Well, what am I going to do with my child the rest of that day?" They certainly can't take off from work to take care of the child.

And then, of course, they incur additional expenses for an afterschool or a half-day program in a daycare center, or having someone else take care of the child until they get finished at work.

So that's a great need, as the Senator said. We need full-day kindergarten.

MS. ZALKIND: I would agree. I think when we look at a comprehensive system, kindergarten has to be part of that equation. You can't have full-day preschool and have a child go to a half-day program.

SENATOR TURNER: Right.

MS. ZALKIND: It was encouraging to see the increase in the number of districts that are providing full-day kindergarten already; close to 85 percent. We need to reach that 15 percent.

I think, Senator Ruiz, when you started out -- it's not an issue of lack of knowledge, or commitment, or support. It's an issue of funding.

SENATOR TURNER: I think the studies also show that if we can ensure that a child is reading on grade level by the time they're in 3rd grade, they are more likely to succeed in school and we will reduce the dropout rate. Because so many of the students who I have known over the years -- generally, if they cannot read, that's when they're going to be more likely to drop out of school. So if we can put -- if we can spend more money on the front end of life, we can reduce it on the backside of life. And we're being penny wise and pound foolish if we don't realize that. We would save so much in terms of remediation and also in terms of social services, as well as the judicial system and incarceration. Because I'm sure if we took a survey in our prisons -- so many of the people who are incarcerated in our prisons are those who more than likely dropped out of school and do not have a high school diploma.

MS. ZALKIND: Yes. Senator, we had an opportunity -- some board members of ACNJ and staff -- to visit the Essex County Detention Center a number of months ago which, like the rest of the Juvenile Justice System in our State, has undergone a dramatic and very positive change. They have an outstanding school there and Superintendent. They were so impressive. And I asked the teacher, "Well, does everybody come in at the same level? How do you deal with kids who are not reading at high school level?" And she said to me, "Reading at high school level? We have young people who come in here who can't read at all." And I think that's what you're talking about.

SENATOR TURNER: Exactly. Thank you.

MS. ZALKIND: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you; thank you, Senator.

W. STEVEN BARNETT, Ph.D.: Good morning.

SENATOR RUIZ: Good morning.

DR. BARNETT: Thank you for allowing me to speak to you this morning.

Steve Barnett; I'm an economist; a Professor at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey; and Director of the National Institute for Early Education Research, often called NIEER.

I've been conducting research on early childhood programs for over 30 years now; I published the first study on the economic benefits some 30 years ago -- 1985, actually. And I am pleased to be in a state that's made substantial progress in providing early education of high quality. And I will talk about why that high quality is important.

The research as a whole shows that not only do we have these short-term impacts from preparing kids for school and to be better readers by 3rd grade, but that there are long-term impacts on educational, social, and economic success. These include higher achievement on test scores, decreases in the need for special education and grade repetition, increases in high school graduation; also decreases in behavior problems, delinquency, and crime -- as we have just discussed. And all of those things contribute to increased employment, higher earnings, a decreased welfare dependency; and also we find decreased engagement in risky behaviors like smoking, drug use; and even improvements in health behaviors.

Now, all of those things are important for quality of life in the community and for the lives of individuals, but they also matter a lot for

State government. And as I'm sure you all know, State government faces significant financial challenges: the cost of schooling, the cost of social services, the cost of the criminal justice system -- and, not least, healthcare costs.

So you have, in the case of high-quality preschool education, a program that addresses all of those issues in the long-term. So something has the potential not just to improve the lives of children and families in New Jersey, but to decrease the long-term costs of State government, at the same time, that eventually yields increased tax revenues because citizens are more productive.

Preschool is not a panacea; it's not going to solve those problems all by itself. But it makes a dent in them and it's, therefore, one of the things that needs to be in your portfolio.

Now, it's important to understand, as we look across all of the evidence about the long-term impacts of preschool programs, that we've learned several things. First, all programs are not created equally. Some programs have bigger impacts than others. And second, long-term impacts are virtually never as big as short-term. And if they're not very big in the short-term, they're going to be vanishingly small in the long-term. So it's important to have programs that produce big, long-term impacts.

What kind of scale are we talking about? Well, if we really have high-quality programs, they have the potential to close the majority of the achievement gap at kindergarten entry, and about half of it long-term, by itself. That's a pretty big deal.

What did we learn from the research, more generally? Beyond this, that if we want to have these high-quality programs, they have to

emphasize intentional teaching, individualization and small groups; and both of those things require strong teachers who are adequately supported.

We've also learned that every year matters. Yes, the 3- and 4-year-old years are important; but so are the years before 3, and so are the years after 3. You have to pay attention to every year if you're going to have success.

Now, having said that, the key to this, though, is that these programs are really of high quality. It's important to understand that this generally does not happen. Across the nation, only about a third of the centers that serve 4-year-olds are good or better. The quality of care for younger children, children under 4, is even lower -- so there are fewer good programs for them. And if we look at the difference between public sector and private sector, we find something that's not always the case, but certainly is very true in preschool -- that private programs have lower quality than public. We have a real problem here. Parents have a very difficult time discerning high quality; they have a very difficult time affording high quality; in fact, we have a market where poor quality drives out good.

If we look at what the public sector does, in terms of directly funding programs -- like the State-funded preschool in New Jersey, Head Start programs -- we do see higher quality. But when we turn to the childcare subsidy system, we see that the subsidy system -- the way that it's currently structured -- can actually drive parents toward lower-quality services. And so we may actually be harming children -- nationally; I'm not speaking about the way subsidies work in New Jersey, per se.

I provided a chart in your handouts that shows you how the quality varies, as well as access to preschool programs for 4-year-olds by parental education. You can see, nationally, it works just the opposite of what we'd like. That is, if your parents are high school dropouts, your chances of being in a high-quality program are less than 1 in 10. If they have graduate degrees, it goes up substantially -- but it's still only a third. And so we see across the whole spectrum of family background in the United States we have a need to provide access -- to improve access to higher quality programs.

Now, if we then look at infant/toddler care, I've got another diagram there that shows you our study of 511 classrooms statewide. You can see there's some good news and some bad news. The good news is, there's not a lot of low-quality centers; only about 1 in 10, although, really, we ought not to have any. But there also is not a lot of good quality -- so only about 20 percent.

Well, we know we can change this. This is basically the situation we have with preschool programs in the Abbott districts. You've already seen from the State Department's presentation how that has changed over the years. So New Jersey has a proven approach. With the preschool reforms that came in with the former Abbott districts, with high standards and adequate funding, the entire distribution of programs was shifted up.

So these are largely the same places; it's a public-private program. Two-thirds of the kids are served by private providers contracting with school districts. They're often the same teachers, but the State has enabled them to go back to school and get a higher education and provided

the coaching they needed to be good. And so quality improved in both public and private providers, and we have high quality in these preschool programs for both public and private providers. Test scores increased -- at least through 5th grade -- and you heard earlier that we plan on looking through -- all the way through 8th grade, which is as far as the kids from these programs that we've been tracking have gotten, so we won't be -- we can't look at 9th and 10th grade until they get there. So that's a long time, but it takes 13 years for them to get to 12th grade. So it's going to be a long time before we get to the end of the line.

I think it's important to know that two years, beginning at 3, have twice the impact of one year at age 4 on achievement tests; the grade repetition and special education were cut by a third; that the State Legislature's own plan to implement this on a larger scale statewide was never implemented. And as Ceil said, we have an opportunity to move forward, based on plans that the Legislature has already approved, to make this happen for more children in the State of New Jersey.

Now, I've had an opportunity to look at what would be the fiscal consequences for the State budget. I can't look at -- I don't have the data to look at what would all of the economic impacts be: What would the impacts be on the criminal justice system; what would the impacts be in terms of increased revenues from increased earnings? But I can tell you what the impacts would be on the cost of education in the long term. So if we're looking up to, say, 2030, you'd see that the costs of K-12, net of the cost of providing Pre-K to every 4-year-old under 200 percent of poverty in New Jersey -- the net impact would be an \$850 million reduction in what we spent each year on K-12. That's after paying for the preschool program.

So take-away lessons: High-quality early care and education benefits children, and families, and taxpayers. Unfortunately, most children nationwide and in New Jersey do not attend good programs, and some are even in harmful programs. We know how to do better; New Jersey has a successful model. It simply needs to be expanded.

In the long term, the State will pay less each year for education if it invests in quality pre-K to get kids off to a better start so we don't need to keep paying for failure.

So as I said before, every year matters. Even if we do this in pre-K, we can't take our eye off the fact that every year matters. The State will still need to pay attention to improving infant/toddler care and making sure that every year of education, beginning with kindergarten and thereon, is also of high quality.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you so much.

Questions?

Senator Barnes, and then Senator Turner.

And thank you -- Senator Barnes is substituting is for Senator Beach today. Thank you for joining us.

SENATOR BARNES: Thank you, Madam Chair, for having me.

Mr. Barnett, describe specifically what a high-quality program would be.

DR. BARNETT: Well, there's a short answer to that question. We determine high quality by going in and observing the interactions between teachers and children; the content that's going on; the way

teachers are interacting; the way children are using materials. And so, the one way we determine high quality is simply by doing this observation and looking at: Are they doing the things that we know lead to learning gains, to gains in development, to improvements in children's behavior?

The longer answer is -- so then you have to look at, what do programs need in order to do that? And the core of that is good teachers with small classes. Because you have to not teach to a class, you have to teach to each individual child. And that means you have to know each of those individual children very well, and you have to have the command of the knowledge base of child development and of teaching in order to know how to respond to each of those children's needs.

Then you need a structure that supports that. And that's one of the things the State of New Jersey does very, very well. You heard about it this morning from the Self-Assessment Validation System that each teacher uses to assess what she does, all the way up onto the State level of evaluating statewide. How well are we doing in providing these programs? What are children learning? What are teachers teaching?

SENATOR BARNES: I meant a little bit more specifically. So in other words, if a student -- let's say K-5 -- is learning math, and science, and handwriting, and English; what specifically is being taught in a high-quality program?

DR. BARNETT: Well, what's being taught in a high-quality program are the foundations for language -- so rich vocabulary, very important. Teachers are not talking about *yellow* flowers with even preschoolers; they're talking about *forsythia*, and children know what that word means and what it refers to. It's a rich conceptual understanding of

the world that goes with that big vocabulary. So that brings in not just literacy, but also science and math -- the fundamentals for understanding the physical world.

It is also the fundamentals of literacy -- understanding what a book is, how it works, how letters and sounds correspond. One of the interesting things I find-- Just to give you an example of one of maybe a thousand things a good preschool teacher needs to know: If you take this cup and you hold it up like this (gestures), you turn it like that, upside down, you put it on its side -- it's still a cup, right? And until you get to school, everything a young child has seen is like that.

Now you give me the letter *b*. And I put it there, and they tell me it's a letter *d*. I put it down in a different way; and you tell me it's a letter *p*. What's with that? Most adults think it's cute -- that kids reverse their letters. But they don't understand why children are doing that. So a teacher understands why kids are doing that and which kids need to learn, in which ways, not to do that -- that it's only a *b* if it faces in a particular way. And if you turn it around, it is a *d*, it is a *p*. There are a thousand things like that.

It's also about learning to control your own emotions; to recognize when you're getting angry and to be able to control that. It's about learning to pay attention when somebody else wants you to pay attention -- not just when you want to concentrate on something. That's an important skill for learning how to read, but it's also an important skill for staying out of trouble with the law. Good preschool programs do something called *Plan-Do-Review*. So kids actually have to make play plans; to represent on a piece of paper -- now they're going from actually physically

doing something to representing on paper a plan, their ideas, and what they're going to do. They do it, and then they come back, and then they reflect on, "Well, did you do what was in your plan?"

So this learning -- to take personal responsibility, learning to think before you act, learning to make a plan -- is really important for the rest of your life. It's important for your personal decisions, for managing your own money. What's one of the main reasons people get arrested? They didn't think before they did something. They certainly didn't have a plan well thought out, and reflect about what was going to happen after they did that.

So it's social and emotional; it crosses over. But it's all cognitive in a way; it's all about the brain. So this full domain -- I mean, this full range of domains that includes all of this -- that's in a good preschool program. And again, that goes back to having good teachers, adequately supported; small classes; a coach who comes and helps you figure out when you're not getting this right, or when you have a really difficult child -- why you're not getting it right, and what that child, in particular, needs to get back on track to being a success.

SENATOR TURNER: Thank you.

I agree with most of what you've said. That's the definition, I guess, of a high-quality preschool program. But I think the highest quality program would be a partnership between the teachers and the home -- the parents. And I think that's the most important ingredient in this formula because you can see it -- the difference. For instance, in the City of Trenton, where so many of the parents haven't completed high school themselves, many of them are not reading anywhere near 4th or 5th grade

level. And they're the ones who you need to get involved in the education of their children -- teaching them to read. I think so many parents who are in the lower income status don't realize the importance of reading to children when they're very early in life. They need to have access to books in the home, and so many of them do not have books in the home. And that would be a head start for all of them if the teachers would work with the parents and explain to them the necessity of reading, and how they need to reinforce what is being taught in the classroom.

DR. BARNETT: I think that that's exactly right. And the high-quality programs we have in New Jersey have a big influence and are mandated by the State to engage in exactly these ways with families. And it's a two-way street, right? So teachers have to know their kids. One of the best ways to know the kids is to talk to the parents about their kids -- because they know them; they've had them for far longer than the teacher has.

But it's also this -- as I said, it's a two-way street; you're exactly right about the parent engagement with the child. One of the programs that we've studied, called *Virtual Pre-K*, is about sending things home to the parents; sending books home in a child's backpack is one of the things you can do so that you get those books in the home, and they are the books the child's reading in the preschool. And the child pulls the book out of the backpack and says, "Read to me." It's reading on demand, if you want, and it's demand from the child, because they're not getting tired of reading that book, and they absolutely want mom and dad to read it with them.

SENATOR TURNER: Well, one of the things that we have tried, to support reading here in the City of Trenton -- where we had four

libraries that closed, and we have one main library now that's open. It makes it more difficult for children to have access to reading material and books. So what I've been doing this summer is putting -- establishing libraries in our housing projects, that there will be an opportunity for young children, in particular, to have access to books and begin to read as early as possible. And I think that's what we need to do -- is get books into the homes of every child -- whether the parents are buying them. Many of them cannot afford to buy books for their kids. If they can't get to the libraries, if they're closed, they can't borrow books so that their children will have access to reading. And we all know reading is fundamental.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

Next, I'm going to ask Pre-K Our Way -- I know that you'll be joined by several members, and if they can introduce themselves; along with Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, Council for a Strong America -- Josh Spaulding, with Chief Abbott from West Orange.

And again, I'll remind everyone who is presenting today that we are at 11:30; we did start at 10:30 -- we're only an hour in. But if you have long presentations, to just summarize them and all Committee members will have an opportunity go through the text.

Mr. Spaulding and the Chief, I'll ask you to take the mike first.

Thank you.

CHIEF JAMES ABBOTT: Thank you, Senator.

Good morning, and thank you for allowing me a few minutes to speak.

My name is James Abbott; I'm the Chief of Police in West Orange. I've been with the West Orange Police Department for the better part of 37 years; and two decades, almost, as Chief.

I'm also a member of Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a nonprofit, nonpartisan, anticrime organization of nearly 5,000 sheriffs, fellow police chiefs, prosecutors, and crime survivors nationwide, including 44 members here in New Jersey alone.

Our mission is to take a hard-nosed look at research on what it takes to keep kids out of crime, and then educate the public and policymakers on that research.

As a Police Chief, it is my job to do everything possible to protect the public. Arresting individuals who commit crimes is one way I do that. But I know from my personal experiences that we can't simply arrest, prosecute, and incarcerate our way out of crime problems. We have to implement strategies that keep people from turning to crime in the first place.

Education needs to be the focal point of that strategy, so I commend you for focusing on access to quality education throughout the state. On a personal level, my wife and I really value quality education. My wife is a school teacher in a public school, and we made sure that we sent our children to preschool.

I feel fortunate, though, that we were able to pay for preschool on our own. I know that not every family can afford to pay for preschool, and I have seen what can happen when a child does not have access to a quality preschool program early in life. Oftentimes when we arrest an 18-

year-old, he already seems like a hardened criminal; it seems too late. We need to intervene early to keep kids on the right track.

When we arrest an 18-year-old, more often than not we refer to him as a *youthful offender* and that person is already lost to the streets. But when you read it in the newspaper, you think it's a first-time offender because he has no prior arrests. But that's not really truthful; it's the fact that the juvenile records are sealed -- as they should be -- but you don't really get the full picture. That kid started out in grammar school being a lookout for drug deals. By the time he was in his early teens, he was carrying the gun for the drug dealer. By the time he was in his late teens -- prior to 18 -- he has already committed a couple of armed robberies. He spent time in the youth house, and now he's finally going to jail. But when you read the newspaper, you think that's that person's first interaction with the law enforcement community, and it's really disingenuous to have anybody think that. We've already lost that kid to the streets.

Nationwide, 7 out of 10 inmates in State prisons don't have a high school diploma. As I think about the individuals we arrest on the street, I can see the pattern of events that led to their arrest. As I said, they've struggled in school; some who cannot read or write end up getting frustrated and dropping out. While we arrest well-educated people, there's an undeniable link between dropping out and future crime.

We know from research that investments in high-quality early care and education programs put kids on a different course and provide them with a foundation for success right away.

I am happy to say that we do have good things happen in this state. The Legislature has invested in high-quality preschool, and we are starting to see the results, as law enforcement agents.

The research that shows the long-term successful outcomes includes programs like Chicago Child-Parent Centers and Perry Preschool, where children who are given access to early programs were significantly better off than children who were not given access. Children not served by the Perry Preschool program were five times more likely to be chronic lawbreakers by age 27 than those served.

The children given access to Chicago Child-Parent Centers were 20 percent less likely to be arrested for a felony or be incarcerated as young adults, compared to those who did not participate.

Children not served by the program were 70 percent more likely to be arrested for a violent crime by age 18, compared to those who were in the program. We're starting to see similar results to Chicago's program here in New Jersey. Not only are the children served 31 percent less likely to be placed in special education than the control group and 40 percent less likely to be held back in school, they're also far ahead in math and reading than those who did not participate.

The researchers noted that those results are on par with the results from the Chicago Child-Parent Centers, so we're expecting large reductions in crime as these children become adults. And a well-respected independent cost-benefit analysis of more than 20 different preschool studies showed that preschool can return, on average, a profit -- economic benefits, minus costs to society, of more than \$26,000 for every child.

Early interventions for our at-risk children, wherever they live, are part of the solution in fighting crime; and all children benefit from getting the right start in life. In order to prevent more crime we should provide access to high-quality preschool to more children across the nation, and especially here in New Jersey.

I used to joke with our former Superintendent of Schools at graduation. We would say, "Some go to Yale, and some go to jail." While I realize that not every child can be destined for Yale, no child should be destined for jail.

Thank you for all that you do, as legislators, to promote this. And please continue to prioritize early education.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

I want to thank Josh for bringing you, Chief, today. Liz, who is the Committee Aide, and myself were afforded the opportunity to be part of NCSL's Early Childhood (*sic*) Fellows. And one of your counterparts in Seattle gave the opening remarks to that conference those two days. How compelling the numbers are; the evidence is there. I said it in my opening remarks, and Senator Turner echoed them later; it's something that we have conversations on all the time: It's time for us to make the investment on the proactive side, instead of paying for it on the end.

I just want to thank you for your commitment and your efforts.

I also want to ask the organization if I could just see this. If you have additional copies of-- And what I'm holding up here is a phenomenal piece of reading material -- and it's the report, again, by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids -- so that all my Committee members can have access to it.

JOSHUA SPAULDING: Absolutely.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

M. BRIAN MAHER: Good morning. My name is Brian Maher; I spent most of my adult life in Port Elizabeth and Port Newark running Maher Terminals, which we sold in 2007.

I want to thank the Committee for taking the time this morning to hear testimony on this very important subject.

People are always asking me, "How did a guy who spent his whole career in the marine terminal business in Port Elizabeth become interested in early education?" The answer is that, like many people, I am concerned about the growing income disparity, the shrinking middle class, and the lack of opportunity for upward mobility of financially disadvantaged and working-class people. I also share the concerns of businesses -- that the future workforce will not have the skills necessary to fill the needed jobs.

While there is disagreement as to the cause of the current situation, and certainly disagreement as to the economic and fiscal policies necessary to improve it, most people agree that a strong education system in New Jersey is an essential ingredient to any solution.

While I was the Chairman and CEO of Maher Terminals in Port Elizabeth, we invested in educational programs that provided young people, particularly disadvantaged youth, with enhanced educational opportunities. After selling my company in 2007 I resolved to use my good fortune to address the growing economic inequality, and decided that education was the best way to have a significant, long-term impact.

As I researched what works in education, it became clear that high-quality preschool education programs were a proven way to improve educational performance throughout a person's academic career, and thus enabled children to have much improved opportunities for success in high school, college, and life.

My first direct investment was to partner with the Ironbound Community Corporation in Newark to build an integrated, high-quality, 0-to-5 learning center. I provided the capital funding; the program is owned and operated by the Ironbound Community Corporation. Using Early Head Start and the pre-K, 3- and 4-year-old program funded by the State, this center now demonstrates the power of early education in preparing our youngest citizens for success in school and life.

The lessons learned at the ICC Early Learning Center led me, along with many others, to undertake an effort to make 3- and 4-year-old preschool programs available to more children. Former Governors Tom Kean and Jim Florio, along with other civic and business leaders, have come together to create a nonprofit advocacy effort to expand these high-quality preschool programs across the state.

The effort, Pre-K Our Way, is working with communities, and hopefully with you, to build support for this expansion.

Luckily we do not have to invent a new pre-K, as we've been listening to this morning. We already have it. My colleagues, Dr. Steve Barnett and Ceil Zalkind, have shared the success of the New Jersey program. Particularly compelling is that New Jersey has developed a proven model that is the envy of the rest of the nation.

However, New Jersey's leadership in providing high-quality pre-K programs is limited to only a select number of districts. Thousands of children are missing out on high-quality preschool simply because they live in the wrong zip code. The Legislature recognized this deficiency by passing a 2008 law designed to expand the program to approximately 90 additional school districts. It was never funded or implemented.

This is not a Democratic or Republican issue. Pre-K is supported by members of both political parties in New Jersey and across the nation in so-called *red* and *blue* states, such as Georgia, Alabama, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. Even during the most difficult economic times in recent memory, states across the nation are investing in expanding pre-K because they have determined that it is critical to their future economic and social well being. The leaders of these states are saying what our Governor Tom Kean says: "This is what works. If there is anything that you felt that is a magic bullet, it is pre-K education."

I'm not talking about expanding childcare or daycare. I'm talking about expanding high-quality pre-K programs that already exist in the state, a program that has proven to produce better education outcomes. Public education, at all levels, is an investment. The educators and all the research say it should start at age 3, not age 5. I submit to you that anyone who has spent any significant time with young children knows that they are learning and absorbing at an incredible rate long before they reach age 5. My personal experience with my own five grandchildren has provided me with a front-row seat to watch their development at a very early age. Every child is born with that promise; the question is whether New Jersey will

make good on its promise to help more 3- and 4-year-olds reach their full potential.

Do we have the will to step up and finish the job by implementing and funding the law that is already on the books? Will we offer to children and families across this state the opportunity to be prepared for school and ready for success? We believe now is the time to say “yes” and take action to expand pre-K in New Jersey.

Thank you for your time.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

RUTH LOPEZ PIATT: Thank you, Senator.

As a first generation American, it is an honor and privilege to speak here today, truly.

My name is Ruth Lopez Piatt from Vineland, New Jersey. Dr. Wolock, Dr. Barnett, Ms. Zalkind, Mr. Maher -- and soon, Ms. Anderson-Towns will be testifying -- have testified to the real and lasting effect preschool has on education and school achievement.

I want to spend my time addressing access to affordable, high-quality preschool programs for all families in our state. The Jersey preschool program is unique because it is implemented as a mixed delivery system throughout public school districts. It effectively utilizes private and community preschools to best suit local needs. In fact, this law calls for just such a delivery system -- a delivery system that utilizes existing facilities like my own, with experienced faculty to successfully fulfill community needs.

This law has the foresight to see the value of private preschools partnering with the public educational community to become a part of a larger mission in reaching and teaching more preschool children, and in

strengthening the local tax base that builds up the local economy and educates the local workforce.

I am a private provider with over 30 years of experience -- I'm a small business in Vineland, New Jersey -- who works at New Jersey's public preschool program to bring high-quality care and instruction to more 3- and 4-year-olds. My school, Little Lamb Preschool-Keener Kids, Inc., has been partnering with the Vineland Public Schools for 16 years. Daily, we educate 90 preschool students in our six pre-K classroom facility. Each classroom has a teacher with either a B.A. and/or master's degree in early childhood education.

Yes, I'm a private provider of a public program. My preschool is providing a needed service to my community. As such, I employ 24 local residents, engage with local businesses. Example: A janitorial cleaning service, a local landscaper, the local vendor for our children's hot food program. We use a local printing company. We buy from a local hardware store. We use a local electrician and plumber for our building needs. All to provide services to our school. Those businesses and I all pay taxes. The taxes we pay go back into the city and State budgets, which help our public schools, roads, and local fire and police departments.

We are a revenue-producing entity within our city and State due to this law.

While I manage my business as a business, I am fortunate to get up every day and know my business is providing high-quality preschool services to Vineland's youngest citizens. When my students leave our center to begin their K-12 school careers, I know they're prepared for school and ready for success. There are many private, community-based and

public preschool providers in our state. Despite our diversity, we all have the same goal: To make sure all children have access to high-quality preschool.

Vineland's mixed delivery system has a proven track record -- that private and public preschools can put their personal agendas aside to improve the culture of the community. And I want to say, I have a lot of support in Vineland, and also from the Administration, Department of Ed. I have to tell you, in 2011, I needed to make a phone call on a Friday night, after 4 p.m., to Dr. Wolock's office -- and she's here today; she has no idea that I'm going to mention this -- I needed help. I called her -- I got somebody's secretary -- and she took my phone call on a Friday night at 4 p.m. and she resolved the issue.

This is a mixed delivery system supported by the Department of Ed, supported by the Senate, by the budget, and it helped me, as a small private provider, to make my school stronger and better.

Many providers don't need to generate or seek new business. Many have families on waiting lists for services. Unfortunately, for many parents, preschool is unaffordable. There are more children in need of high-quality preschool than there are preschools to serve them or programs that working families can afford. Many children come from families where parents work two or three jobs to make ends meet. Their parents may not have the time, resources, or education to provide the early learning all children need. Preschools like mine provide these families and their children with a free, six-hour educational program that ensures they will not be left behind.

But it's not just about access; it's about access to high-quality programs. Quality is the top concern for preschool providers who care about their children and families. Quality is why I chose to be a private provider of the New Jersey's public preschool system. Our school is able to offer more services and help more children due to this law.

SENATOR RUIZ: Ms. Piatt, I'm just going to ask you to sum up your comments.

MS. LOPEZ PIATT: I sure will.

SENATOR RUIZ: If you have written testimony that you can share with the Committee members, we'll take that as well.

MS. LOPEZ PIATT: The last thing I want to share is, as a small business owner, the value of this law does match good business practices. It develops a positive culture; has a strong vision and mission statement of meeting the needs of all children; has standards of excellence -- degreed staff implementing best practices, and also a discussion of ideas between the private and public educational sectors; and has a high educational yield along with qualitative research to prove the value of the dollars invested.

What is needed now is your leadership, and it's also your influence. That's what we need now.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

Again, I'm just going to remind everyone that we'll take all of your written testimony. Please summarize any of the key points that we haven't heard today.

Welcome.

LYNDA ANDERSON - TOWNS: Good morning. It is an honor to be with you today.

My name is Lynda Anderson-Towns; I'm the former and just recently retired Principal and Superintendent of Woodbine Elementary School in Cape May County -- and what I consider one of the fortunate four preschool expansion school districts.

I served at Woodbine for nine years; I devoted my entire career of 34 years to education in Morris County, at Dover High School; Cape May County, at Middle Township; Lower Township -- Maud Abrams Elementary School; and finally, Woodbine Elementary School in Woodbine School District.

I'd like to give you a firsthand account of what it's like to have New Jersey's high-quality preschool program in my school district -- for my community, and especially for families that I encountered that struggled to make sure each one of their children and families have that opportunity to achieve the American dream.

Today, Woodbine Elementary School is the pride of our community. However, when I arrived, it wasn't that way. Our school has a diverse population with many children from hardworking families. While their parents may not have as much as others, they have just as much desire to see their children do well in school and to succeed in life.

Preschool is very expensive. Cape May County is an affluent district that -- you know, Woodbine seemed to be somewhat out of the ordinary. We did, of course, have many children when I began who arrived at school with significant disadvantages because their parents couldn't

afford preschool. And that, of course, had them to arrive at kindergarten and beyond unprepared.

Woodbine struggled because too many of the children arrived with a gap that the educators, and the students, and their parents just could not move beyond in the years that followed. We found that kindergarten -- which needed to be springboard and not an effort to teach children how to swim -- actually spent a lot of time catching up.

As an educator, I can tell you that quality preschool is essential for building the early cognitive and character skills that enable lifelong learning. On the first day of kindergarten, basically all of my teachers could identify which children had experienced preschool, and which children had not. Most of those who had were attentive and ready to contribute, ready to build their literacy and numeracy skills.

Fortunately, New Jersey has one of the best preschool models in the nation -- and our school was lucky enough to get it. And I'd like to digress as well. I was a part of that full opportunity to get all of the training from the New Jersey Department of Education that prepared us to be an expansion school district. I can tell you -- and I continually say this -- as a former Superintendent, that it really was one of the best training programs I ever encountered. It included training for even the leaders. If you were not an early childhood leader, it trained us. It trained everyone in the program. A superb job, and I worked with the Department of Education many years. It was the best training ever.

We adapted those State preschool standards to serve the local needs of our children and families. And we maintained the high preschool standards that the program requires. And truly, for Woodbine, it was the

turning point. Today, Woodbine School District educates over 90 percent of the community's preschool-age students in programs that we share with children in grades kindergarten to 8th grade. So we have been fortunate enough to see many of our children now reaching 6th grade and 7th grade. And what we have been able to see is that we've added advanced classes along the way because of the impact of our pre-K students coming to kindergarten ready to learn.

Educators and parents in our community and beyond saw the progression of learning, and the shared socialization, and the growth in each child from pre-K and kindergarten; and our transition teams, that continue that dialogue of, where are the children now and where do we need to take them?

So the introduction of the high-quality pre-K showed real improvement all the way through to the middle school, and fundamentally changed Woodbine's academic performance as well. We continue to see our kindergarten children come in with dramatic increases in language proficiency, writing skills, number recognition, and awareness of social skills.

It was a strong start-up. It persists through the elementary grades. It helps improve quality instruction at the middle school level. We have seen teachers move them forward and take a great deal of time bringing them up to speed. In addition, Woodbine Elementary has had time to identify students with special needs. And, as a Superintendent, one of the areas that I continually become aware of -- because I've seen an increase in it -- is the number of students who are falling within the realm of special needs. I can share with you, having a preschool program allows us

to identify earlier, put forward interventions earlier, and remediate. It has made a great difference.

The success benefits the child, their future, classmates, and the community at large. It gives our parents confidence that the public school still remains the best choice for their children -- something that they feel great value in.

Our school district had a large number of families who chose to homeschool their children and send them to private schools. We saw those students return to Woodbine School District beginning with a quality pre-K program. That firm start brought them back to a district -- that they previously had made another choice to send their children to.

They move into our district; they become a part of the Woodbine community; and we provide that great start. We feel we're closing that achievement gap; we're investing early; we're working to provide them with quality preschool. I do consider Woodbine to be quite lucky to have implemented it. But it does sadden me to think the future of too many children still depends on luck.

Visuals -- if you would like to view Woodbine's video -- and it's very short -- I just so encourage. You'll see it's so much an active state; we are so very proud of it. Please visit www.prekourway.org/videos. Our success story is not limited, and does not need to be limited, to our community. We are, in Cape May County, the only district that has full-day pre-K. And it is quite the envy of the county.

But with your leadership we can replicate that story, and expand our success, and share it -- which we so hope that we will be able to do.

I urge you, expand New Jersey's pre-K program to more 3- and 4-year-olds; we know it works, and it's time to put it to work for more children -- not just in Cape May County, but all the counties of New Jersey.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

I want to make note that Senator Allen joins us this morning.

To the members from different aspects -- I want to thank you all. I think from a school that saw the benefits, the tangible real results of introducing a high-quality preschool program, what it did to reduce -- what the interventions allowed, to reduce long-term expenditures on the end; Mr. Maher, for your investment in the City of Newark, for bringing another side to this, and that's from your business perspective -- the impact that early childhood programs have, and your personal stories as a grandfather; and to the private providers' side. We see it, when the Abbott decision was rolled out, that we relied on a lot of private providers to do that kind of partnership; and it's something that we should continue to grow so long as the beneficiaries are every child in the State of New Jersey.

Any questions or comments from members? (no response)

None.

Thank you very much.

I'm going to ask NJEA to come up next, joined by-- Is Nana from the Early Childhood Newark Public Schools here as well?

F. NANA OFOSU - AMAAH: (off mike) Yes.

SENATOR RUIZ: And Melanie from New Jersey Association of School Administrators. If there is enough room, I'll ask you to join.

Thank you very much.

M A R I E B L I S T A N: Good morning, Chair Ruiz, and good morning everyone else.

SENATOR RUIZ: Good morning.

MS. BLISTAN: Thank you so much for having us here.

I do want to punctuate everything that everyone has said prior to me regarding preschool education. It is extremely important. And I'm also going to put a plug in for *Classroom Close-up*, a television program that I am hosting. We won our 14th Emmy on Saturday night, showcasing a preschool program for handicapped children in Hoboken.

SENATOR RUIZ: Great.

MS. BLISTAN: But I also want to add that that is part of the equation on early education; the other part is full-day kindergarten, as you noted, Chair Ruiz. About 87 percent of our school districts have full-day kindergarten, and that is wonderful. But we cannot stop until we have 100 percent.

My name is Marie Blistan, by the way, and I am a classroom teacher. I've spent a little over 30 years in the classroom, and I've had the good fortune of teaching students from kindergarten up through 12th grade. Much of that time was spent with students in Special Education.

So I speak to you not just as the representative -- the Vice President of NJEA -- but also as a practitioner.

And I will tell you that the statistics to support full-day kindergarten over half-day are astronomical. They are significantly different in the academics that the children will absolutely encounter. But also their attendance rate in later years increases, as well as the connection with their social, emotional skill development.

One of the interesting things that I see as I travel around the state between a full-day kindergarten and a half-day kindergarten is the amount of focus on the program. So in a half-day program, obviously you have, maybe, two-and-a-half hours with those children. A good part of that is spent taking off their coats, getting them situated, and then putting them back on. But I say that to you because there is a heightened focus, of course, on the academics in literacy and math because of needs of this 21st century. But when that happens I find many school districts in the half-day program eliminate the music, the art, the phys ed, and the play. And I want to emphasize *play*, because play is just as important as any of the other subjects.

And so, I ask also for your support to continue to push for full-day kindergarten. Any of our teachers and any of our paraprofessionals will tell you, they can tell the difference immediately--

SENATOR RUIZ: Absolutely.

MS. BLISTAN: --between a student who has received full-day kindergarten, and half-day kindergarten. I call it, truly, leveling of a playing field. And our parents -- and I think you noted that as well -- they are looking for their children to get the best education, but they're also looking for security and nurturing at the same time.

And I also want to say, Senator Turner, you also nailed it on the head -- that one of the key components of both preschool and kindergarten is that solid connection with the family. And I will tell you, I have seen that exemplary program in both Long Branch and in Gloucester City -- just two of them, off the top of my head.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

And Marie, thank you for your testimony. I know that you all are pressed for time. But what a great resource early childhood is for all teachers, even a high school teacher -- and the impact that it has--

MS. BLISTAN: Exactly right.

SENATOR RUIZ: --so that teacher can move forward with their agenda for that year. And so there are many different avenues.

Thank you for you testimony today.

F R A N C I N E P F E F F E R: Sure. I would just like to add-- I'm Francine Pfeffer, Associate Director of Government Relations.

And my son is at half-day kindergarten this year; he just started. And I'll just add to boost what Marie just said. He has recess scheduled once a week; once every six days because they're on a six-day rotation. And I know his kindergarten teacher is wonderful. She said she's holding on to play; she makes sure they have 25 minutes of it every day. And she takes them outside, other than the one period of recess. But on the schedule, because of the necessity to boost kids and get them ready for Common Core and all of that other stuff, he has recess, officially scheduled, once a week; once every six days. And so the play part is so important, and if they had a full-day program, they would have so much more time for that.

SENATOR RUIZ: And just for a particular note: Someone alluded to -- I think it was Cecilia -- visiting one of the first classrooms on the first day of school. I will tell you that first week, for any early childhood teacher, is extraordinary because the first hour is sometimes just getting kids off of the doors (laughter) to get them acclimated to the setting, because it's extraordinarily emotional. And, you know, as an adult -- the

parents who sit in their cars oftentimes just, you know, crying, the same way that the child is, because it's the first time of that separation.

But time is so critically important. So the child gets acclimated, but that there is time for academics, for music, for play, and for sharing because of the development. It's full impact for the development.

Thank you very much.

Welcome.

MS. OFOSU-AMAAH: Hello; good morning, everyone here, ladies and gentlemen, honorable guests of the Senate Committee.

Thank you for inviting me to be here today. I am Nana Ofosu-Amaah, the Executive Director of the Newark Public Schools Office of Early Childhood. And I come here -- I've been with the Newark team since February of this year. I come, actually-- Prior to that, I was in the New York City Department of Education, where we had over 55,000 children in pre-K -- but half-day pre-K.

As you know, the New York City Mayor -- and I was part of that initiative before I left -- was focused on making sure all children had access to high-quality pre-K, full-day. And I must say that we spent a lot of time talking about what was happening in New Jersey; some of my colleagues were teachers in Newark. And we spent a lot of time talking about what the quality of pre-K is in Newark. And pre-K is across New Jersey, especially in the former Abbott districts, and we were kind of envious of that.

So I'm really thrilled to be here today.

I want to start with just the research -- and I think I've heard a lot today, from all who have been here today, and I think we all know the

research about what happens to children when they're born, what happens to their brain in terms of brain development. Knowing that the highest rate of brain development happens up until the child is about 5 means that we must, must, must expose them to high-quality experiences to support that brain development as well.

I also want to share that we also know that by kindergarten -- as the researcher says -- half of the achievement gap is there. I think that we also know that research demonstrates the long-term and short-term benefits of pre-K. Children have better academic performance in their early grades; children are more likely to graduate from high school and retain employment; children have higher earnings as adults; they will have fewer criminal justice system interactions. I was quite pleased to see the Chief here today.

And I just wanted to also talk about the fact that the research shows how important pre-K is, especially full-day pre-K. In Newark today we have over 6,300 children in pre-K -- in our full-day pre-K program, and pre-K 3- and 4 settings across the district. And as we shared, as well, we have pre-K programs in our private provider sites, in our schools with Head Start and non-Head Start programs across the City of Newark. So we give families an opportunity to have various options and choices for them, so that they can put their children in a pre-K program from the age of 3.

Upon joining the Newark team, and kind of reading more and learning more about the New Jersey case and being a resident of New Jersey prior myself, I really was floored by the care given in this state to the structure and the components put together for the programs that we have in New Jersey today -- at least the one in Newark.

We have Early Childhood nurses -- and I want to make this a key point -- something we did not have in New York City in our private provider sites. We have Early Childhood nurses going around each site making sure children's health issues are being addressed.

Without having that, without a child being able to see correctly, without a child being able to hear, without a child having the support from a medical perspective, imagine how -- can we imagine what would happen if they can't access that learning, they can't start that process?

So I just want to make sure that you are having that nursing piece. And having the nurses has been so critical for our program -- what I've learned in the few months.

As has been shared as well, having Master Teachers going to each classroom to support our teachers and assistant teachers in making sure that all our children have access to learning-- We have about 30 percent or more of our children are English Language Learners, so having the Master Teachers have the expertise to go into the classroom to really support our teachers with strategies is also critical.

Having the Preschool Intervention Team has also been really critical to make sure that our children are getting the early interventions that they need. And I have many cases of sitting with a Preschool Intervention team member, a family, a private provider site, family worker -- trying to strategize with this family about how to support their child's challenging behaviors. And I have many, many examples of that to share; and it's a phenomenal piece of our program as well.

Our collaboration with our Special Education Office has been critical as well -- and that you see, as was mentioned, over 60 percent of our children with IEPs are in inclusive settings. They are in the least-restrictive environment -- which again the research supports as being best (indiscernible).

Our Family and Community Engagement team is really responsible for, again, looking at how do we engage families at this stage when children are starting their schooling. It's critical to get families to start to engage in their children's learning now, so that they can carry that forth with them.

And certainly, our Operations and Fiscal team making sure that our dollars are spent where they need to be.

And again, I have to admit -- again, this is where I call my colleagues in New York City and kind of brag about the quality that we have here; and compare ECERS scores, and then talk about how we're doing really well with high numbers based on the NIEER reports that we've seen. And again this is something I brag about, being here in Newark now.

I also want to talk about not just what happens in the classroom, but the impact we're having on families. Last spring I was walking through one of our Early Childhood schools, and I remember seeing a mom there very often -- she comes often. She volunteers in the school. And she ran up that day and kind of gave her family advocate a hug, and said, "We did it." And I was looking, and I said, "Well, what happened?" She said, "I got a job. And thanks to the family advocate being there she made sure that I knew how to write a resume, I knew how to interview for a job. I now have a job."

So giving families opportunities for high-quality, full-day pre-K really gives them an opportunity to go back to work as well.

Another piece that I wanted to share with you this morning: We have what we call our *Family Academy* -- it's something we just started this spring -- where we bring families together almost every Saturday for about four months; we give them information -- everything from training on CPR, how to engage in children's learning, a myriad of topics. And at the graduation ceremony this June, I remember this father -- he was the lone male in the group this year of 20 parents -- Mr. D. He said, "You know, this is the first time I've graduated. This is the first time I've actually completed something." And then he went on to share information from the Hart and Risley study - about the *30 Million Word Gap* -- and I was floored. I was floored that just by sharing a snippet of research, this father mentions the research in his graduation ceremony discussion and says, "Now I know how I need to start talking to my children. Now I know that I need to use a more varied vocabulary when I'm speaking to my children." All because, number one, you invested in the Newark program. You invested in us being there for families, and for children, and for teachers. You invested in us to be able to make this change in this father's life. So we will continue to do this work.

But again I also want to echo that we know what the research says about high-quality early childhood education. And I want to make sure that every child in New Jersey also gets an opportunity. And I wanted to share the story with you because we do affect lives of families, and I know this father was ready to bring more fathers into the sessions this spring, and I'm excited for that.

So again, the question is: How can we expand what we're already doing, and how can we expand what is the envy of my colleagues in New York City (indiscernible)?

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you so much.

Does Newark currently have the largest preschool program in the state? Do you know?

MS. OFOSU-AMAAH: I think so, yes.

SENATOR RUIZ: Yes, we do.

MS. OFOSU-AMAAH: Yes, we do; yes.

SENATOR RUIZ: And the best. (laughter)

Melanie, thank you.

M E L A N I E S C H U L Z: Senator Ruiz and members of the Senate Education Committee, I'd like to, first, thank you for deciding to have an entire Committee meeting on a discussion on early childhood education. It's vitally important for us to hear from our colleagues and I learned a lot here today, as well as I'm sure you have.

NJASA and its members have made access to universal pre-K and full-day kindergarten a priority in our 12-step plan, known as *Vision 2020*. And I know Senator Allen was with us last week when we were talking about that at a Joint Committee on the Public Schools meeting.

Kindergarten is perhaps the year when children arrive at the most varying levels to school. A class can be made up of children who have gone to a high-quality preschool on a full-day basis since they were about 6 months old. Some will go to preschool at age 3, and then only part-time; and some have not attended any preschool.

For some children, even maturity is a factor when they arrive.

If you just stop to think about this, we can begin to understand why full-day preschool -- at least for the ages of 3 and 4 -- is not only important in the 21st century, it is vital to launching a child successfully into the education system.

That said, I would like to introduce two educational leaders who are with me today who cannot only articulate this to you, but also demonstrate what happens when children arrive in kindergarten without having had some of the same experiences as their peers.

Dr. Rocco Tomazic may be a familiar face to some of you. He has made presentations to various legislative committees in the past -- both of the Education Committees, as well as the Budget Committees. Dr. Tomazic leads the Freehold Borough School District.

And along with Dr. Tomazic is Randee Mandelbaum, who is a kindergarten teacher at the Freehold Learning Center.

Both of these educators have extensive experience in early childhood education. I believe that their story could be replicated around the state, and I know that you will find it both interesting and informative in the work that you are doing.

Thank you so much.

R O C C O G. T O M A Z I C, Ed. D.: Thank you, and good afternoon, Senator Ruiz.

We're going to pass around some material that I'm going to be referring to.

My name is Rocco Tomazic; I'm the Superintendent of Schools in Freehold Borough. And Randee Mandelbaum, one of my kindergarten

teachers, is here with me. And we want to give you a perspective this morning from practitioners.

In the interest of time, I'm going to skip over some research that I have documented in my comments that you could refer to later. And I want to go right into our main point, which is to share with you some work that Randee's students did just a few weeks ago -- where she has organized it such between, on the left side, students who did not have any pre-K, and those on the right who did.

So with that, I'll introduce you to Ms. Mandelbaum.

R A N D E E M A N D E L B A U M: Good afternoon, Senator Ruiz. Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

My name is Randee Mandelbaum, and after teaching kindergarten for 20 years I truly understand the importance of children attending pre-K and those who have not. Pre-K benefits children both academically and socially. I have witnessed a difference between children who have attended pre-K and those who have not. I believe the skills they learn in pre-K, provide them with a solid foundation for future learning. Even in the first few days of the kindergarten year, I can identify learning gaps between children with and without pre-K experience.

I would like to share a packet of assessments that I administered to my class the first week of school. I have the children complete a self portrait, writing, and two math assessments. I will administer these assessments each month to monitor their growth and progress. I also use the data from these assessments to drive my instruction and create lesson plans to teach every child at their learning level.

On the first page of the packet, you will notice the self-portrait. It's with two students -- Student *A* and Student *B*. There was a vast difference, as you can see. Student *A* did not attend pre-K, while Student *B* did. As you look through the packet, all the students on the left did not attend pre-K programs, while all the students on the right completed a pre-K class.

Another comparison is on page 4; if you could all turn to page 4. This shows the biggest gap. You can see that Student *G* does not know any letters, cannot write any letters, and does not even know how to write her own name; while Student *H* writes his name and can write most of the letters of the alphabet comfortably.

As you can imagine, I need to differentiate, scaffold, and tier my lessons based on everybody's ability. While I must catch up the children without the pre-K experience, I still need to teach and reach all the children at their levels and challenge the children who have already mastered the pre-K skills. I would not have had this dilemma if all the students had pre-K experience.

There are many other issues that slow down the level of learning in kindergarten during September and October due to children who did not attend pre-K -- and here are just a few, like we just spoke about. Number one is, separation from parent; bathroom routines -- buttoning, unbuttoning, and being independent in the bathroom; sharing one teacher's attention with 25 other children; raising their hand, waiting their turn and not calling out; writing and reading their name; following two- to three-step directions; using a scissor and glue properly; problem

solving; gaining a sense of self; and cooperating and collaborating with their peers.

The children with the pre-K knowledge and experience nearly always come into my class with the essentials -- social, emotional, and academic skills -- ready to launch a successful year in kindergarten.

DR. TOMAZIC: Senator, we'd like to just close with a thought from the Superintendent's chair.

SENATOR RUIZ: I have got to tell you, of all the testimony that we have received today -- I don't know about my Committee members -- but this--

SENATOR BARNES: It makes a difference.

SENATOR RUIZ: This is-- If anybody is looking for proof-- I mean, New Jersey-- We have the evidence. It is our responsibility now to step up our game and find the investment. This is -- it's extraordinary. And I recall this, right? The child who comes in and holds a pencil this way (indicates), versus the child who already knows how to hold it. And I think sometimes we get caught up in thinking of the simplicity of that, but it's extraordinary when you want to get through your day's work. And having to pair off children -- the most advanced to work on their own, the middle of the pack to work with the aide, and then you have to work with those who need just-- And thank you for the work that you do.

I'm sorry, Superintendent. (laughter)

DR. TOMAZIC: I'll just close on that thought. Randee and I were just speaking, and the sad truth is that, by the end of kindergarten, you'll still see a gap in the students because she has to move the students who went to pre-K forward--

SENATOR RUIZ: Right.

DR. TOMAZIC: --and there is still going to be that gap. So the idea is to not have any gap.

The last point from the NJASA members: We, from the Superintendents' seat, we're looking for two things: We want to plan our personnel and our facilities. So anything that could be done with legislation and State planning to make sure that we have a steady fund stream for funding these programs would be greatly appreciated.

We are very pleased that we could share this with you today, and we're open to any questions.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

I just want to note that my colleague from the Essex delegation just stepped through Committee. Good afternoon, Senator Rice. Thank you for joining us.

To the two of you, for the work that you do -- I know that Freehold is a hugely diverse community and that you are meeting the needs of all families. But they do need the support and the resources, and it's now our turn to give that back.

Thank you very much for the work that you do.

DR. TOMAZIC: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, Melanie.

And thank you for joining the Newark Public School family.

MS. OFOSU-AMAAH: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Next, I'm going to ask United Way, Kiran Guadoso -- and I'm sorry if I'm mispronouncing your last name -- United Way of Northern New Jersey, to come up; New Jersey Child Care

Association, and Early Childhood Education Center; and Sharon Seyler, New Jersey School Boards Association.

And I know Lynne Strickland was here; if she'll come forward also -- Garden State Coalition of Schools.

Anyone who's ready.

S H A R O N S E Y L E R: Okay.

SENATOR RUIZ: Just introduce yourself. And again, mindful of the time.

Thank you.

MS. SEYLER: Okay, I'll begin. Sharon Seyler, from the New Jersey School Boards Association.

Members of the Committee, thank you for letting me speak today.

Obviously, New Jersey School Boards Association believes that preschool should be a priority in New Jersey. It's actually an educational and social advantage to children, as it enhances their development. Children with disabilities should be able to take advantage of programs offered, and full-day options should be available for children with working parents.

The Department of Ed should provide boards of education with technical assistance, staff training, and research information. Successful programs should also include the coordination of childhood efforts with the Department of Children and Families.

We also believe that an advisory committee should be put in place to make recommendations to the Commissioner and the State Board

of Education on early childhood policies, programs, and legislation. And we believe that NJSBA should be part of that advisory committee.

Local boards of education should explore options for providing facilities suitable for childhood programs, such as unused elementary and high school classrooms, underutilized public community-based facilities, and shared facilities with other school districts.

We talk about the funding streams; they should be explored through Federal, local, and State monies. This funding should be available to support educational programs and enable school districts to build or renovate early childhood education and childcare programs.

And private sources of funding should also be looked at from education foundations and the private sector.

Public awareness is critical to the advancement of preschool programs, and legislative and regulatory changes should be implemented to facilitate this effort.

And I just want to emphasize that, as an advocate for education, a parent, and also someone who taught preschool many, many years ago, the importance of preschool is an integral part of a child's development -- social and emotional. And I also want to talk about the nutrition element of preschool -- that some of these children who come to preschool are eating, probably, their most healthy meal during that day. So if they can eat one or two meals in school during the day that also enhances their development and their student achievement.

And are we going to talk about the kindergarten, too, as well?

SENATOR RUIZ: Absolutely.

MS. SEYLER: Okay.

So on that discussion, we believe that it's a necessity to have a full-day program where it's feasible. The Department of Ed should provide assistance in converting a half-day program to a full-day program. And I just want to emphasize that as long as it's cost feasible, that that's where the full-day program should be implemented. And that would be a cost per pupil calculation, the same as you would do for grades 1 through 5.

So thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

Red is on.

KIRAN HANDA GUADIOSO: Okay. (laughter)

Good afternoon. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman and Committee members for this opportunity.

My name is Kiran Guadioso, and I'm pleased to be here representing United Way of Northern New Jersey. Prior to joining United Way, I was a founding staff member of New Jersey After 3, a statewide network of evidence-based after-school programs.

Our United Way represents five northern counties, including Sussex, Warren, Morris, Somerset, and most of Essex. We account for 1,700 square miles with 1.2 million residents.

While the perception is often that our region, and New Jersey as a whole, is wealthy, the reality is that we, as a state, are facing a growing crisis with more and more families living paycheck to paycheck, unable to afford basic necessities. That's why our United Way is laser-focused on making sure all residents have access to quality early childhood education for their children, most especially a population we call *ALICE* -- and I think you have, in your handouts, a quick summary of our latest *ALICE* report.

ALICE stands for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed. It's a new way of thinking about what's commonly referred to as the *working poor*. These are folks who go to work every day, often to more than one job, but struggle to afford basic necessities, let alone a \$1,000 or more childcare or preschool bill every month. For us at United Way there's no greater call to action in our state today than to provide access to quality early childhood education.

Our United Way ALICE report shows that there are 1.2 million households in New Jersey -- that's 40 percent of all households in our state -- that cannot afford the basics of food, housing, transportation, and yes, childcare or preschool. Throughout much of the state childcare and preschool is often the number one most expensive item in a household budget -- often more than housing, and on par with the cost of a two-year college education.

We've heard a lot today already about the overwhelming evidence of study after study that quality preschool is a strong predictor of success in kindergarten. But it's so much more powerful than that. It has far-reaching benefits in shaping our workforce. The evidence says the best predictor for success in college and life is a student's career in high school. But what's the best indicator for success in graduating high school? It's being reading proficient by 3rd grade. And the best predictor for being proficient in 3rd grade is the number of words a child has in their vocabulary at ages 2 to 3.

It's not just the pediatricians, and teachers, and advocates like us -- and many of us here today -- who point to early childhood education as a lynchpin for future success. Corporate execs from all those Fortune

500 companies we have in New Jersey tell us they, too, believe in this in order to produce a highly educated workforce. As Mr. Maher talked about earlier, it's a huge reason why he's committed to Pre-K Our Way.

And if we want to talk about money -- because we know it always comes down to money -- a Nobel laureate, top economist points out that \$1 invested in early childhood education has a \$7 to \$10 return on its investment over a lifetime. Meanwhile, we all know the stock market doesn't often produce at those levels. So I think we can all do the math.

This is why our United Way is so heavily invested in this issue and has been for more than a dozen years now, to the tune of \$1 million a year, currently. First, we were partnering in investment in working with the State's Grow NJ Kids program; second, we invest in teacher education and training to reduce turnover rates -- because teachers matter more to student learning than any other factor in school. Many of our childcare educators are ALICE, and are entrusted with the care of our children at this time of greatest vulnerability and greatest potential.

If I may, I'd like to submit one of our most recent success stories -- I think it is also in your packet: Milagros Castro, Executive Director of El Primo Paso, an NAEYC accredited center in Dover, who attributes one of our United Way scholarships with putting her on the path to rise from Assistant Teacher to Executive Director.

Finally, we also fund \$500,000 worth of scholarships so ALICE families can access quality childcare and education that otherwise would be out of reach.

Ceil Zalkind from ACNJ talked about that mom who wasn't able to go to work because she would have made just a little bit too much to

be eligible for a childcare subsidy. So our dollars are directed at really helping those families that make just a little bit too much.

So that's how our United Way has been investing its resources. And we'd like to see the State consider expanding its investment. Today's centers serving families that are ALICE or in poverty receive just \$26 a day through the State childcare voucher system to educate preschoolers. That's what some of us may spend on lunch today.

Quality childcare and preschool gives parents the peace of mind to go to work and be their most productive. And it ensures that we continue to produce the highly educated workforce that business looks for and expects from New Jersey.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

KATHLEEN FEIGLEY: Hi, I'm Kathy Feigley. I worked in public preschool for many years before starting Kangaroo Kids in 1991. And Kangaroo Kids is a private childcare center located in Branchburg, and we are accredited by NAEYC. And in 2009, we won National Childcare Center of the Year.

So I think you've heard numerous things about the quality and how important it is. I don't think anyone here disputes that. What I have a difference with, in some aspects, is how can it can be delivered. And I think private childcare -- I truly dispute that it cannot be a quality program.

And I love Senator Ruiz's enthusiasm for preschool. I mean, I can see you started as a preschool teacher, because that energy in a teacher is what's most important, I think, in preschool education.

And our children in Kangaroo Kids -- they do sign language when they're in the baby room; they start Spanish at 2 years old; and yes, they do Mandarin Chinese starting at 3 years old. They also learn about geometry when they go on field trips, because they measure the circumference of apples. They make predictions about volcanoes as they build volcanoes in the classrooms -- miniature volcanoes -- but they're still learning, and that's an important aspect.

So the other thing that we provide as a private childcare center is that we provide care all year long, 11 hours a day, so children don't have to be transported to different places. Childcare doesn't exist today without a -- a quality childcare program does not exist without preschool education; it just doesn't happen if you don't have a quality program. Education is all part of the child process.

So one of the things that we do provide-- And the benefits of it are not only that the children are provided by being prepared for the future academically, socially -- and we see a lot of social problems in children now at an older age -- academically and physically; but we also support the families. We talk to those families every single day, when they drop off in the morning and when they pick up. We provide all the resources and support for them that are necessary, 12 months a year, full-time, all day long. And so it provides a lot of consistency, which -- any of you in early childhood education knows that consistency is very important for families and for children.

The four things that I think are most important for a quality program are, number one, our teachers -- teachers who are engaging, teachers who have continuing education training in early childhood

education. They just have in their heart caring for children; they enjoy the smiles of the children. And that's more important, I think, sometimes than the educational components. Yes, they need to know about developmental appropriate; they need to continue their education. But if they don't have it in their heart-- I've had Master Teachers who don't know how to discipline a class. But those who know anything about Latin -- *discipline* means *to teach*, not *to reprimand*. And far too many of our teachers and parents reprimand as opposed to guide and teach children. I think that's an important component that we can provide in private education.

Let's see; I really deviated from where I was going.

I also commend the Police Chief. I come from a long line of police in my family. And yes -- one teacher and one police officer can make the difference in the life of child. And I think that's important that we all work as a team to make what's best for children.

I've heard a lot of talk today about zip codes. One of the things that does exist, thanks to technology-- Now there's a little smart card that-- Some of the parents, who can't afford it, come to our school and they use a little smart card as their voucher, or whatever, that provides assistance for them financially. And instead of having it by zip code, why don't we have it by need, so that the children who need it have this little card and the parents can choose where they want? Because one of the things that parents need is a supportive environment. And some parents want to send their children to a school that's near their work, and other parents want to send to where their home is. And those bonds with families, that support with families that we can provide in childcare centers-- We have a family -- and we have many, many stories like this --

but we have a family that the dad sat in his car and he wrote us a letter, tears streaming down from his eyes the first time that he dropped off his baby. Well, that father -- his boys are both in college now, and he comes back every single year to play Santa Claus for us; his boys are the elves; and his wife comes and takes photos for us. So if that isn't a parent partnership, I don't know what is.

So we can provide that kind of thing through our private childcare setting. I think there are ways to do it if we look at all kinds of options -- all kinds of options for parents so that parents truly have a choice.

I don't think I need to go into the details; I mean, the big four are teachers, environment, curriculum, and parent partnerships. You've heard lots and lots of things today about all four of those areas. I agree fundamentally with all the things that people have said about providing those things. Now we have to have the heart to do it, and we have to figure out creative ways that can really reach the people who need it. Because there's no doubt that quality preschool does make a difference in children's lives.

One area that I think we also need to look at that we haven't really spent a lot of time on -- and that is what's happening in our family daycare centers. Because we avoid looking at that. Right now, they are unregistered, they are unlicensed. I hear that New Jersey is bringing some of them into the fold now, but only by their desire to be involved. And I think if we can -- that's where many of the problems are occurring, and I think there's a need for that. But there has to be some way of making sure, if we truly want quality for all children, that our family childcare centers are

also having quality, and how we can help them to become also quality programs.

There's no question about the parent partnerships. I think Senator Turner talked about that. There have been studies that say that chatty moms have children who score better all the way up to the SATs because they have a richer vocabulary at an earlier age. And there's no question that supporting parents -- and I love your idea about the low-cost, just read to your child today. We talk to parents all the time about that. The best thing you can do -- not load your child with worksheets, and homework, and things like that; but read to your child every single day, and that will make a difference in your child's life. So I think those low-cost ways that you're looking at to make a difference in a child's life go a very, very long way. And the research-- I know (indiscernible) City University has done a lot of research on -- the difference in number of words children learn from a low-income family, as opposed to a family that's educated, is amazingly different. And I think if we can support families in that -- and we do that every single day with parents, and we invite them to be part of our program. They're welcome to come in any day to see what's happening in our childcare program.

SENATOR RUIZ: I'm going to ask you just to sum up here, okay?

MS. GUADIOSO: Okay.

And I guess, really, I've said basically all of it. It's a safe environment, it's high-quality, consistent staff. We welcome you to visit Kangaroo Kids at any time to see a high-quality program in action.

And we truly thank you for your interest in making preschool education an important part of families and children.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you.

If you would just turn your mike off.

Thank you very much.

MS. GUADIOSO: Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Lynne.

LYNNE STRICKLAND: Thank you.

Thank you, Senator Ruiz, members of the Committee for having Garden State Coalition here today.

I have to start off by telling you I was going to have Elisabeth Ginsburg also testify with me, who is our Vice President, and Board President of Glen Ridge Schools. As an example, Glen Ridge School has had pre-K since 1984, and full-day K since 1985. It's a positive anomaly and one that's -- an anomaly, really, to a number of our members too. But she has information attached to my testimony, including costs, and so on and so forth, that will be interesting, I think, for you to look at.

We believe that early childhood education, from the earliest possible level that's needed, is a great value to the well-being and has the promise of life-long opportunity for success of the whole child. It's clear there's no stopping there; let's get going on it. Education, health, and nutritional issues, among others, clearly set the table for the serious and focused discussion you need now.

Where there is particular need and lack of affordability early, we do have concerns about the affordability and need being -- it's not level across the state; there are many varying degrees of need, and program

delivery, and a (indiscernible) as to how it can be afforded in some communities, as opposed to others.

So we want to bring up the point of the need to look at the funding in depth, of how to support and to recognize that one size does not fit all -- and it really won't work very well if we're trying to apply one size fits all to the entire state.

There is complexity of student needs and competition of student needs in overall, education foundation programs, such as special education being one of them. Lack of full-day kindergarten across the board still remains a problem. One in five to six districts don't have full-day kindergarten, and that creates a hole in the process that really needs to be introduced -- and it's an educational hole as it would step forward.

So we have always believed that that has to be addressed. And we've noticed clearly that-- In 2000, I think nearly 48 percent of the districts in the state didn't have full-day kindergarten. That's clearly progressing. But again, the funding, and where we are at this time in our educational life in New Jersey with fiscal support and less fiscal support in many ways -- we can't overlook that. But we want to work on that, no doubt about it. And we look towards things such as blended funding streams -- you've already mentioned those, Senator Ruiz. But expanding on that, from other agencies such as Health, Child and Families, Human Services, and more. We really require serious review and recommendations to how we can implement that into a funding stream that supports the educational needs, as well as all the holistic needs of children starting with -- as you pointed out, from age 0 to 16 has to be looked at; it's very important, and it's the only way to go.

That's basically what I wanted to put forth to you all this morning, and I'm glad to work on it in the future.

Thank you.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much for all of your testimony.

For the last group, I want to ask Mr. David Sciarra, Esq., Executive Director of the Education Law Center; joined by New Jersey Principal and Supervisors Association, who I know will be bringing up a phenomenal Principal with them; and Janellen Duffy from JerseyCAN.

This panel will conclude today's testimony. I don't know if there--

D A V I D G . S C I A R R A, Esq.: Thank you, Senator Ruiz -- Chairwoman Ruiz and members of the Committee. It's good to see you all again.

And I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the importance of high-quality early education and the urgent need to expand preschool programs across the state, as you've heard from a lot of the speakers.

New Jersey is a leader in early education. In 1998, our Supreme Court, in the landmark *Abbott v. Burke V* decision, issued the first judicial directive in the nation requiring the provision of full-day kindergarten and well-planned, high-quality preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds in our most impoverished communities.

This, and the subsequent Abbott VI and VIII rulings, propelled implementation over the last 15 years of what is now widely recognized as the strongest early education program in the nation -- commonly referred to as *Abbott preschool*.

The hallmarks of Abbott preschool, as you've heard, are New Jersey's rigorous standards for high-quality programs, including age-appropriate curriculum linked to the State's K-12 content standards, small class sizes, full-day kindergarten and full-day preschool programs, and certified teachers. Our mixed delivery approach is a model for other states, linking together in-district preschool classrooms, private providers, and Head Start programs to serve over 43,000 3- and 4-year-olds in our high-poverty urban school districts.

Even the Federal government recognized the new ground broken by Abbott preschool when President Obama announced the Federal initiative. In 2013, he based that initiative on our program.

Our success in this program is recognized by you all in the 2008 School Funding Reform Act, which required the phase-in of the Abbott program to all at-risk 3- and 4-year-old children across the state in five years, or by 2014. Also, as has been mentioned before, the success of the Abbott program is based on solid longitudinal research. Data from the APPLES studies has been discussed before -- show that children in the urban districts enrolled in two years of Abbott preschool do better in school, and that those benefits hold through 5th grade -- that's as far they've gone in their research. These children have higher test scores, less grade retention, and, most importantly, reduced need for costly special education services. This research demonstrates that preschool is now an essential resource in the effort to close gaps in achievement among low-income, at-risk student populations in our state.

We should take pride in the Abbott preschool program -- all of us -- but there's much more work to do. First, we still have far too many

children who are not in full-day kindergarten, as we've mentioned. We estimated 25 percent; it was good to see that the State data has that down to around 15 percent. I wasn't aware of that. But there are still a lot of districts that are only offering half-day kindergarten.

The good news is that the SFRA formula, our school funding formula, changed the way we provide a -- for kindergarten, from half-day to full-day. So if you can provide a full-day of kindergarten, under the formula you'll get a full-day funding -- which is an important advance in the 2008 School Funding Reform Act. But facilities-- We've talked to legislators about this in districts across the state, and the real issue is facilities, as the Superintendent in Freehold mentioned.

The issue here is that we've run out of money in the School Construction Fund. All the money for both SDA districts and what are called *regular operating districts* has been depleted now. So when the Legislature considers, as it must, increasing school construction bonds over the coming months, we must make school construction project, aimed at increasing kindergarten from half- to full-day, a top priority for the next round of construction grants. Senator, the problem was, when all the ROD grants used to go out -- billions of dollars of grants to support school construction in the regular operating districts -- there were no priorities for construction projects. It was on a first come, first served basis. When we come back to you and ask you for increasing the bond cap on school construction, for both SDA districts and non-SDA districts, it's time for the Legislature to put in the school facilities law priorities for regular operating districts. And we would think districts that come forward with projects designed to increase classroom space to go from half-day to full-day is really

what we have to do; because it's not just an operating funding issue -- we've solved that with a formula -- it's a school construction issue.

The second is that despite the legal mandate in the SFRA, no funds have been appropriated to expand preschool beyond the 31 urban districts, as you've heard. The five-year phase-in period under SFRA has come and gone and not one new classroom has been funded. We estimate about 48,000 3- and 4-year-olds should now have the benefits of high-quality early education under the SFRA, but they do not.

In our pending court case, which we'll argue later this month, involving rural districts, the New Jersey Department of Education represented in 2009 to those districts that it would fund preschool for 2,000 eligible 3- and 4-year-olds to ensure constitutional education in those districts. These at-risk children are among the thousands across the state waiting for the mandate in SFRA to be fulfilled.

I just want to mention here that this is a phase-in. When you think about the funding, we estimated, in 2008, when this went into the formula, that it would take about \$365 million to expand preschool to another 50,000 at-risk children across the state -- both in the universal districts, and then all the other at-risk kids no matter where they are. By the way, those are -- obviously, these are districts represented by both Republicans and Democrats. So this is a bipartisan issue -- it should be.

That money is going to have to be phased in over time. This program is going to -- the SFRA had five years; it may take six years or seven years. As we've learned from the Abbott experience, you have to build a whole infrastructure of certified teachers, facilities, training, and so forth and so on -- as you've heard. So when you think about funding this

program over the next -- restarting preschool expansion under the SFRA, we have to think in terms of increments over a period of time. It's important that we get started.

The last thing I do want to mention is that we still have to redouble our efforts in the 31 urban districts currently implementing Abbott preschool. Some of these districts are not meeting the enrollment target of 90 percent for all eligible children; 21 districts, we estimate, are still not meeting the 90 enrollment figure, including Newark. Enrollments have remained flat in these districts for some time. The barriers are several: flat funding of the formula, obviously, since 2011; a lack of classroom capacity -- again, back to facilities; strained budgets to community provider programs; a halt to new school construction projects; and reductions in mandated outreach and recruitment efforts.

It's also critical that the APPLES longitudinal research, that Dr. Barnett talked about, be carried forward. So we need to make sure that the Department of Education has the funding to continue that research.

So I thank you for this hearing to focus all of us on this urgent issue. And there are three priorities we need to move this issue forward: One is to develop and implement a plan to provide full-day kindergarten for all children in five years, or by 2021 -- which includes raising the bond cap for school construction, prioritizing new classrooms to reach that goal. Two, restart the five-year phase-in. You want to make it seven years -- five years, make it seven years and give yourself a little more time, given the budgetary issues. But phase it in -- begin the phase-in under SFRA. And let's start in 2016. I would suggest appropriating about \$50 million in new

money to begin the effort next year. That will get us moving -- get the momentum going, coupled with the Federal funding that we got.

Third is, I would ask that you request the Department of Education to provide this Committee with a detailed analysis on the barriers in the urban districts to achieving the 90 percent enrollment target; along with a plan to continue the APPLES research, which is so important to keep this program going forward.

By taking these steps, New Jersey can become the first state -- and I want to emphasize, the first state -- where every child in a poor community -- every child in a poor community, regardless of need, and every at-risk child elsewhere across the state, has access to the high-quality early education they must have to succeed in school and life.

In 2000, our Supreme Court was at a crossroads, similar to what we face today. High-quality preschool had been ordered for urban children in 1998; but implementation and funding had not been forthcoming. In directing State officials to get moving on the Abbott program, Chief Justice Deborah Porlitz's stirring words embodied the call of action we need again today. The Chief Justice said, "Another generation of children will pay the price for each year of delay" because, she said, "quality early education does make a difference -- that poor, urban youngsters do better academically when they have participated in enriched preschool programs from an early age."

The Chief Justice also said, back in 2000, that, "Our Constitution requires a thorough and efficient education for all children because we believe that educated citizens are better able to fully participate

in the economic and communal life in the society in which we all live.” I think those words sum it up -- the call to action that we need here today.

And I want to thank you for having me today.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

J A N E L L E N D U F F Y: Good morning, Madam Chair and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Janellen Duffy, and I serve as the Executive Director for a nonprofit education advocacy organization called *JerseyCAN*, which is the New Jersey Campaign for Achievement Now. And as our name suggests, we at JerseyCAN are focused on closing the achievement gap for all students across the state, as well as raising the bar to ensure that they’re truly prepared for college and their careers.

I’ll try to summarize my remarks, given the time constraints here.

Governor Kean serves as the Board Co-Chair for JerseyCAN; and also, notably, he serves on the Leadership Group for Pre-K Our Way, along with Governor Florio. We also have several current and retired New Jersey business leaders on our Board at JerseyCAN who are highly supportive of expanding high-quality early education opportunities.

We launched JerseyCAN almost three years ago, and we did a study to look across the state and identify the most critically needed policy changes to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality education, and graduate from high school ready to succeed in higher education and the workforce. For this study, we interviewed over 70 education stakeholders across the state, including Superintendents, local elected officials, teachers,

parents, etc., and we learned that expanding access to high-quality preschool, particularly for low-income students, rises to the top five priorities for education experts across the state.

We know that several members of the Committee already consider preschool expansion for low-income students a high priority, and I recall working with some of you on the School Funding Reform Act when I worked for Governor Corzine. And the Preschool Initiative included in the School Funding Reform Act was clearly a priority for you.

You've heard the research today from the experts and business leaders regarding the benefits of preschool, and from school district leaders on the immediate impact preschool has had on students in their district. Our recommendation, like so many you have heard from today, is to fund the existing Preschool Initiative embedded in the School Funding Reform Act. As you have heard, this would entail expanding the high-quality Abbott preschool program to 3- and 4-year-olds in about 90 districts across the state, and in making sure that it would ensure that all low-income students across the state have access to high-quality preschool.

As you know, New Jersey is already a leader in preschool when we look at our efforts vis-à-vis those across the country. And we do particularly well in providing access to 3-year-olds, where we're serving about 20 percent of kids at age 3, according to the NIEERS studies -- and that places us fourth nationally on that metric.

We urge the Committee and other policy makers to build upon this leadership, and to move forward with funding an expansion of high-quality preschool so that all low-income students can gain access to these

programs which will have both short-term and long-term effects on their academic performance, and truly on their overall well-being.

Thank you for your time today.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much.

JENNIFER KEYES - MALONEY: Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts with the Committee.

With me today is, actually, a Principal of an early childhood center in East Orange -- Fidelia Sturdivant has not only been a leader in this school but, more importantly, has been a leader statewide and nationally on the issue of early childhood education and its importance. And so we are very pleased to have her actually with us. And I am going to defer most of my comments -- most of my time to her, because I think it's really important for all of you to hear about what makes a high-quality program truly high-quality. What are the nuts and bolts of it that make it drive forward so that kids will see those exponential gains, going forward?

We've heard an awful lot about the longitudinal research today. A lot of my testimony is focused on that. So I am going to digress from my comments and just highlight a couple of items.

One: The importance not just in terms of the shorter-term gains that we see; in terms of limits on grade retention issues, in addition to really seeing issues associated with special education reduced. There was one study out of Chicago that actually saw a 41 percent reduction in the amount of special ed placement because of an investment in early childhood education.

But beyond that, you've heard a lot about the longitudinal gains, in terms of the socioeconomics. And there is a distinct cost-benefit

analysis that really was highlighted a little by Dr. Barnett today; I would urge you to take a look at our testimony. We tried to go a little bit deeper in terms of the early studies, which it turns out have gone on even longer than I've been alive. We've now seen that, in essence, folks who were in the early childhood high-quality programs in the late 1960s are now well beyond 40 and have significant economic gains. And so while, in essence, it may not be a dollars-to-dollars comparison in the short run, longitudinally we see reductions in crime rate, we see benefits in terms of the economics, earning power of individuals; and in the shorter term, really the cost savings associated with making sure that a child is prepared and able to kind of progress through their educational life cycle.

And so with that, I'm going to hand it over to Fidelia, who can talk about what that truly means in a building. And I welcome your thoughts and comments after.

Thank you.

FIDELIA STURDIVANT: Good afternoon.

SENATOR RUIZ: Good afternoon.

MS. STURDIVANT: My name is Fidelia Sturdivant. And Madam Chair, I want to say your comments at the initial start of the meeting touched my heart -- because it reinforced that I'm blessed to be a part of this process.

Having said that, I want to thank you for the opportunity to be here to share my thoughts on the benefits of investing in early childhood education.

Currently I am the Principal of Wahlstrom Academy in East Orange. Wahlstrom is one of a kind; in other words, it was one of the first

schools to open in the State of New Jersey specializing in early childhood education. I'm happy to say that I've been there for a decade and I wanted to be careful not to say how many decades. (laughter) But, a decade.

The overall goal of Wahlstrom is to ensure that every child enters 1st grade with the language skills, early literacy, number concepts, social skills, self-help skills, and self confidence necessary for success in elementary grades and in life. Wahlstrom Academy is more than a school. It is an opportunity for the students to experience the joys of learning. And you might say, "Okay, how do you do that?" Well, McDonalds has a special formula for their sauce; Wahlstrom has a formula for success. And our special formula is: supportive parents, plus highly qualified teachers, plus research-based instructional programs, plus nurturing environment -- which equals academic success.

Wahlstrom provides a learning environment for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students in which each child's intellectual, emotional, and social growth is carefully cultivated and guided.

Our program focuses on five key concepts: one, learning is fun; two, learning is a constructive process; three, learning takes place in the community; four, young children need to be engaged in activities that are developmentally and culturally appropriate; and number five, language and literacy development are the building blocks for cognitive, social, and personal development.

Our full-day kindergarten uses a constructive kindergarten program that includes detailed curriculum. The classroom fosters each child an opportunity for language, cognitive, mathematical, emotional,

interpersonal, creative, and physical development. Children learn basic science and social studies concepts through thematic units.

And we always have to step outside the box. For example, 9/11. This is a time to make it a teachable moment. We had our assembly program, and I asked the parents to dress their children in red, white, or blue. At the end of the program I asked the students, “Well, why are you wearing those colors?” And one of my kindergarten students responded and said, “These are the colors of the American flag.” A complete sentence, higher-level thinking.

Even my building is designed to promote early childhood education. I don’t know if you’re familiar with Upsala College, but my building is on the campus of Upsala College -- which is conducive to learning. And it’s a beautiful place to be, and that’s what we want -- the brilliant colors, the bright colors. It just sort of encourages children to want to come. Sometimes my biggest problem is letting them know it’s time to go home. (laughter) But they enjoy coming.

I want to say that space is important, but also faculty, parental, and community support is critical.

I believe that our formula begins with a collaborative partnership with parents. This process begins even before the start of school, with what we have called a *meet and greet*. Now, I know you all read a couple of weeks ago about the chronic absenteeism problems that are taking place in the State of New Jersey. So this year my meet and greet focused on attendance. And what I did is that I included a Health Fair as part of the meet and greet. So the parents had a chance to visit the classrooms and meet the teachers. But in addition to that, they had

stations to go to, at which they could meet with representatives from Saint Barnabas who talked about allergies and asthma; a representative from ShopRite supermarket who talked about healthy snacks and preservatives; we had people from the Health Center who talked about insurance and immunizations; we had our local nurses talking about the right way to wash hands.

By doing this, what we're hoping for is to ensure that students and families address health issues. By working in a preventative manner with parents about budding health issues, we can help ensure that students are ready and able to learn.

Now, one thing I need to add, as well, is that when the children exited the meet and greet, they walked out with two things: a healthy snack and a book. Because, here again, we're talking about literacy.

The formula continues with my teachers, who are committed to providing the best education possible to our students. I believe in a collaborative team approach; that's why my staff meetings -- we don't call them *staff* meetings; we call them *community leaders* -- and the teachers come together because all of us play an intricate role in ensuring that we provide quality instruction.

At our staff meetings we talk about cross-curricular instruction. So a student may learn about math or literacy concepts in the classroom; but the specialty teachers reinforce those skills. So my PE teacher, Mr. Foote -- as he's teaching the warm-up the children are reciting the alphabet. Now, I don't know about you, but it's difficult for me to do jumping jacks, as well as recite the alphabet as I do those jumping jacks, okay? (laughter)

But he also talks about directional words: throw the ball *over*; throw the ball *under*; move to the *left*; move to the *right*; *forward*; *backwards*.

But let's talk about my music teacher. She teaches classical music, and my children can also sing or scat with Ella Fitzgerald. They know about whole notes, a whole pizza; a half of a pizza, a half note; and quarter notes. But my technology teacher -- I love my technology teacher-- My special ed pre-K class can swipe like a 15-year-old. My biggest problem is that they know how to go into the apps that they like the best before the teacher can give them directions. (laughter)

But in addition to that, my technology teacher-- Last year we started teaching something new that's gone beyond what the curriculum required: We're teaching PARCC readiness in kindergarten. My children need to know how to listen, how to follow directions, and how to close read. So here, again, is cross-curriculum.

As we discussed, we've invested in high-quality curriculum -- but we also use testing as a tool. Now, testing can be viewed as a negative, but not at Wahlstrom. We use assessment to help us direct our instruction. Our students normally fall in three categories: at-risk, some-risk, or no-risk, okay? That helps us determine how to best service them. And I hope someone would ask me, "Well, how can you provide those services to those groups of students without taking instructional time, without additional cost to the parents, or additional cost to the district?" I hope someone will ask me about that.

The formula ends with ensuring a nurturing environment or, what I call, *supportive school climate*. School must be a welcoming, tranquil place, but it also must be structured for student success. Focusing on social

and emotional learning in the early grades helps foster this type of environment.

Now, our work at Wahlstrom is paying off, and I'm happy to say that because I look beyond Wahlstrom -- I look at my District and my intention is to make a positive impact on all the grades. Students who attend Wahlstrom enter 3rd grade reading at or above grade level. And earlier we talked about the impact of 3rd grade -- which is also used to determine the graduation rate. But now, what determines success at the 3rd grade level? Well, that was touched on a moment ago as well. It's the number of words that students know at age 2 and 3. What determines the number of words the students know at age 2 and 3? Quality preschool education -- and before, which are partnerships with our parents.

Now, in 1985 -- and I wasn't going to say exactly 1985, but -- in 1985 I founded a school titled *First Day Care Academy* because I was concerned about preschool education. And I'm happy to say that one of the students -- her father brought her in at 2-and-a-half -- has just recently received her Ph.D. in psychology. So the connection is there. Early childhood education is the foundation of all learning. This should not be optional; it should be guaranteed.

There must be a curriculum; that curriculum must have a formal setting in order for children to succeed in Common Core. Let us not forget about Common Core. And if I may just step out of character, I want to say that Common Core is no joke. It is difficult, but it's not something that children cannot do and cannot learn, and it's necessary.

Early childhood education must be connected to future learning opportunities. School leaders at this level need to know the behaviors that

are appropriate, and developmentally appropriate as well. We need to challenge our students in their early grades, while understanding and allowing for age appropriate behavior.

I could sit and talk about all the fine things that happen at my school, but I think what makes a difference is that partnership that we have with parents, and letting the teachers know that they play an integral role.

And it's about you knowing how important early childhood is, and should continue to be.

I was listening to a report by James Heckman, the Nobel Prize winner, and he said, "What should you invest in, the stock market or early childhood education? Which would have the better return?" And he said, "Early childhood education." Why? "The increase in earnings, the decrease in crime, the decrease in the litany of social problems. So, therefore, early childhood would be your better investment."

I conclude by saying, early childhood education is an investment in our future.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you very much for your passionate remarks.

And so I am going to ask you the question -- very briefly -- if you can answer: How are you doing that? How are you accommodating that whole skill set without driving cost or needing extra resources, and meeting every student's needs?

MS. STURDIVANT: Glad you asked the question. (laughter)

What we do: Three times a week, we provide afterschool tutorial services at no cost to the parents, at no additional cost to the

District. How? Because I have teacher assistants, and most of them have college degrees, and their hours end an hour later than the time the school ends. So I utilize those resources to address the needs, based on the test data that we received.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you. Very much.

Any questions or comments from Committee members?

Senator Turner.

SENATOR TURNER: Yes. Can you tell me what time does your school end?

MS. STURDIVANT: Yes. School ends at 2:30; the tutorial programs end at 3:30. And I start that in October, which is very important. I don't need to wait until December; I can already assess what my students need early in the year. The earlier I start, the better results I get.

SENATOR TURNER: What do your parents do from the time school ends until the parent comes home?

MS. STURDIVANT: Until the child comes home?

SENATOR TURNER: The parent comes home.

MS. STURDIVANT: Oh, okay.

SENATOR TURNER: To pick the child up.

MS. STURDIVANT: Okay. What happens is that, in most cases, many of my students participate in after-school programs. So someone will -- they have transportation services that will come pick them up; some of them have older siblings who will come and pick them up. But, in most cases, since the parents are working, they have after-school programs.

SENATOR TURNER: Okay, thank you.

MS. STURDIVANT: You are very welcome.

SENATOR RUIZ: Thank you, everyone. Thank you for this great testimony that we've heard today. We have a lot of work to do.

The evidence is there; the work is clear. Now we need to figure out how we get to the finish line and invest in the greatest asset: our children in the State of New Jersey.

That concludes today's Committee.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)