

Public Hearing

before

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

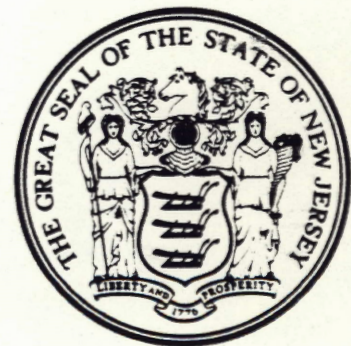
"Violence and vandalism in the public schools"

LOCATION: WWOR-TV Channel 9
New Jersey Room
Secaucus, New Jersey

DATE: April 12, 1994
1:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblyman John A. Rocco, Chairman
Assemblyman David W. Wolfe, Vice-Chair
Assemblyman Steve Corodemus
Assemblywoman Marion Crecco
Assemblywoman Barbara W. Wright
Assemblyman Raul "Rudy" Garcia



ALSO PRESENT:

Speaker Garabed "Chuck" Haytaian
District 23

Kathleen Fazzari
Office of Legislative Services
Aide, Assembly Education Committee

Hearing Recorded and Transcribed by

The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
Hearing Unit, State House Annex, CN 068, Trenton, New Jersey 08625

JOHN A. ROCCO
Chairman

DAVID W. WOLFE
Vice-Chairman

STEPHEN J. CORODEMUS
MARION CRECCO
BARBARA W. WRIGHT
WAYNE R. BRYANT, ESQ.
RAUL "RUDY" GARCIA



New Jersey State Legislature

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, CN-068
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0068
(609) 984-6843

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Assembly Education Committee will hold a public hearing on the subject of Violence and Vandalism in the Public Schools. The hearing will be held on Tuesday, April 12, 1994 at 1:00 - 3:00 P.M. in the New Jersey Room at WWOR-TV, Channel 9, located at 9 Broadcast Plaza, Meadowlands Parkway, Secaucus, New Jersey.

The public may address comments and questions to Kathleen Fazzari, Aide to the Committee, or make scheduling inquiries to Bernadette Kmetz, secretary, at (609) 984-6843.

All persons who are testifying should submit 15 written copies of their testimony. Persons who are not presenting oral testimony may submit 15 copies of written testimony for consideration by the committee and inclusion in the record.

Assistive listening devices available upon 24 hours prior notice
to the committee aide(s) listed above

Issued 3/31/94

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ASSEMBLYMAN JOHN A. ROCCO (CHAIRMAN): The meeting will come to order. Could we have a roll call, please?

MS. FAZZARI (Committee Aide): Assemblyman Garcia?

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Here.

MS. FAZZARI: Assemblywoman Crecco?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Here.

MS. FAZZARI: Assemblyman Rocco?

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Here.

I think Assemblyman Corodemus is on his way up.

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: Yes, he's coming up.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: He should be here with us shortly.

To welcome us here today, Ms. Penny Pinsker.

P E N N Y P I N S K E R: (witness missteps) Thank you Mr. Chairman. I love to make an entrance. (laughter)

Thank you all for coming. It's WWOR's great pleasure to have a second Assembly hearing on education held in this building. Today's topic is extremely important to all of us, so we hope this will be a very productive hearing. At 3 p.m., or shortly thereafter -- when this hearing is finished -- we will be offering a small reception in the outer area. I hope that you will be able to stay and have something with us.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and carry on.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you very much, Penny.

I might state that when we were here last year we did a forum -- not a forum -- basically an Assembly Committee Meeting dealing with business and how we can connect business with the schools in the State of New Jersey. It proved to be successful. We did have some legislation result from it. Today's issue, basically on school violence, we hope will have the same results. We are, obviously, in a time when that is a major concern to parents, as well as students, and the professional community. How we can best resolve the issues? What type of legislation would be most helpful to the schools

and to the Department in aiding them in dealing with this major issue that confronts us in our society today?

I don't want to use this to have legislators just -- on this kind of Committee, myself included -- use it for a platform to give a big speech at this point. Suffice it to say we want to hear from you. We want your input, and we need your input in order to devise the legislation necessary.

So, without further ado, we will start with the-- Well, let me introduce the Committee first. I'll start with Marion Crecco on my right.

Marion, do you want to tell us what district you're from?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Yes. I'm in the 34th District, which is part of Passaic and part of Essex Counties.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Steve?

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: Yes, I'm Assemblyman Corodemus from coastal Monmouth County, with three special needs districts school systems in that legislative district.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Rudy?

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Hi. I'm Assemblyman Garcia. First of all, I'd like to welcome all of you to Hudson County. I represent Hudson County, and I'm a member of the 33rd Legislative District Assembly team.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: I represent Cherry Hill -- Camden County in general -- and look forward to hearing all of you and what you have to say. Hopefully, it won't get too repetitious on some of the issues.

So, without further ado, let's start with the Speaker of the New Jersey Assembly, Chuck Haytaian, a longtime colleague of mine and one who has been a friend of education in every way imaginable. Chuck has always been there when we needed him for the issues dealing with education. Chuck.

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the Committee for allowing me, as an ex officio member

of all committees, being Speaker, to sit here -- for a short time, unfortunately. But I'm here to listen, as we all are. I think we have legislation that we are proposing.

Violence in the schools is an area that a number of you are probably more informed about than we could ever be. So what you have to say is going to be important to all of us in formulating legislation, maybe making changes in some legislation that has been presented already, and trying to curb the violence and vandalism that we find occurring among our youth.

Juvenile crime is escalating; crime in schools and vandalism in schools is escalating, and to be very honest, we have to put a stop to it. I hope that through legislation and discussion we can do that. I truly believe we can, and I hope that will be the conclusion of testimony that you have prepared for us, as well as the bills that we have to act on through the Assembly and the Senate.

So, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for holding this hearing here, and I thank Assemblyman Garcia for welcoming us to Hudson County. This is a county that I have gotten to know very well lately, and I intend to keep on coming up here, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: You're always welcome.

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Without further ado, let's get to the Commissioner of Education in the State of New Jersey, a longtime friend here with us today, Dr. Klagholz.

COMMISSIONER LEO F. KLAGHOLZ, Ph.D.: Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman Rocco, Speaker Haytaian, and members of the Assembly Education Committee.

I appreciate this opportunity to comment on the issues of violence and vandalism in the schools. The problem of school violence and the related problems of drug abuse and

property destruction by students are growing throughout the nation. In fact, the magnitude of the problem is such that the nation's governors, the Federal administration, and more recently, the Congress have been prompted to address it through the national education goals -- the goals that are being set by the Federal government, in conjunction with the States, for education throughout the country. One of the eight goals included in the recently enacted Goals 2000 legislation is that which states, "Every school in America will be free of drugs, alcohol, and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning."

In New Jersey, the Department of Education is required by law to gather information from school districts on reported incidences of violence, vandalism, and substance abuse among students. These data are far from perfect, and in some cases, they may actually be misleading. However, the data are sufficiently accurate to provide a general sense of trends that exist.

Substance abuse among students remains a problem. Last year, New Jersey school districts reported 881 occurrences of drug use and 360 instances of drug possession or distribution. Yet the number of reported instances of substance abuse among students has actually declined slightly and consecutively over the last three years.

I would note that New Jersey has undertaken a major, concentrated effort in recent years to address that problem in response to the Comprehensive Drug Reform Act of 1987.

Reported incidences of vandalism, too, appear to have leveled off. Yet approximately 11,000 such occurrences have been reported by schools in each of the last three years. The problem of school violence -- the topic of today's hearing -- on the other hand, seems to be growing. The number of violent acts by students, as reported by schools in the State, has grown steadily over the past three years from 17,414 to 21,937.

While three years ago schools reported 187 incidents of assault with a weapon, they reported 602 such incidents last year.

In response to last year's data report, the Department of Education, under the auspices of the State Board of Education, formed a task force on school violence and vandalism. The task force was chaired by Dr. Philip Geiger, Superintendent of the Piscataway School District. The membership was comprised of parents, students, teachers, school administrators, staff of various state agencies, representatives of education associations, and law enforcement officials.

The task force reported its findings and recommendations to the State Board in January. The Board then directed the Department to begin analyzing the task force report and propose specific actions that would need to be taken.

I expect to receive the staff analysis in a few weeks, and I anticipate presenting the State Board with a plan of action at its public meeting on June 1. Department staff are analyzing recommendations that the task force advanced in seven general areas.

Those recommendations include:

- 1) To involve parents and community organizations in efforts to prevent violence and vandalism in the schools.
- 2) To modify policies at the State and local level in order to strengthen the ability of school officials to address problems when they occur.
- 3) To engage educators in professional development activities that will provide them with approaches to preventing and remediating violent or chronically disruptive behavior.
- 4) To structure schools in ways that encourage positive student behavior and discourage destructive behavior.
- 5) To modify instructional practices that may diminish student self-esteem or promote bias or conflict.

6) To develop programs to help students acquire constructive academic, social values, and behaviors.

7) To better define the problem by improving the quality of reports on violence, vandalism, and substance abuse.

Again, I'm waiting completion of staff analyses of these recommendations before formulating a position and reporting back to the State Board.

However, I do have certain general predispositions:

1) I believe, and therefore, I think that today's topic is very timely; that our primary emphasis must be on the problem of violence. That is the one that appears to be growing most rapidly, and it is particularly insidious because it involves innocent victims.

2) I think that we need to view the problem of school violence as one that involves the competing rights of individual students. Those students who commit acts of violence or severe and chronic disruption have a right to receive help and obtain an education. At the same time, responsible students, those who do not commit such acts, who attend school to learn, and who may be forced into an unsafe environment by compulsory education laws, also have rights. In particular, as the national education goal indicates, they have an absolute right, I believe, to an environment that is free of drugs, alcohol, and violence and offers a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

3) School is one of the places where young people commit acts of violence. However, schools themselves, by and large, are not themselves the source of student violence, nor can schools alone be expected to resolve the problem. Rather, problems of violence and vandalism originate in our broader society, and all societal institutions share responsibility for addressing those problems. In my view, primary among those institutions is that of the family. Parents must be encouraged and helped to be responsible and accountable for the social behavior of their children.

Once again, I appreciate this opportunity to share my thoughts -- which are very preliminary at this time -- on this very important subject. I'm joined by Tom Rubino, who, in the Department, directs the student services area in which our initiatives are housed. He and I would be pleased to answer any questions or receive comments at this time.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Rudy did you have some questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: No questions, I just wanted to make a brief comment.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Speaker and members of the Education Committee, Commissioner Klagholz, and most importantly, all of you. Thank you for taking part in this very important public hearing.

Instituting the kinds of controls that are necessary to control violence, vandalism, and drug abuse in our public schools is my top legislative priority. As you recall, I was one of the first members of the Legislature to call for tough measures addressing school violence and the alarming number of guns in our schools.

I am pleased to announce that with the help of the Chairman, the members of the Education Committee, and Commissioner Klagholz, a few short weeks ago this body reported a measure that I sponsored -- Assembly Bill No. 183 -- which would address the rising incidences of school violence and vandalism. I stated at that meeting that no single measure will ever adequately address an issue of this magnitude. However, I know that with the help of the members of this Committee, under the leadership of our Speaker, and working with Dr. Klagholz, the Education Commissioner, that additional measures will result, and we will be able to formulate a package to once and for all try to curb the rising incidence of school violence.

I also sincerely hope that as a result of this hearing, through your testimony and your input, we will be able

to gather new ideas and really find a way to address this problem. So, I, for one, am really looking forward to hearing from all of you and urge those watching at home, as well, to contact us with their ideas. Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you, Rudy.

Mr. Speaker?

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: Mr. Chairman, Commissioner -- and Leo has been a good friend and a very able administrator -- one of the major problems that I see in violence and even criminality with youth is the inability of our system to come to a parity situation in educational opportunity. I say this in this regard: A student who goes to Morristown High School -- which is one of the 10 best in the country, as I found out -- and a person who goes to the Newark school system-- We may have, and we're trying to achieve parity in funding, and I'm not talking about that, and, in fact, you'll see that in Newark you might have more State aid than you have in Morristown. But there is, I believe, a lack of parity in educational opportunity.

The facility that a person goes to in Newark is not conducive to learning: the roof may leak, there may be problems in the building itself, even teachers may not want to be in the building. Whereas, you go out into Morristown High, for instance, as an example, or Hackettstown High, or Cherry Hill, or wherever, it seems that the parity in educational opportunity is quite different. I think that in the long-term -- and I'm making a statement that -- that the long-term will curb the kind of violence and criminality that we're seeing.

What can we do in the short-term, Leo? Mr. Commissioner, excuse me. What can we do in the short-term?

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: I agree with your observation, first of all, and I think that we've invested money in the system. Even in your example, our estimation is that Newark is now, financially, at 97 percent of parity. So we've got the

finances; what we don't have, again, is a level playing field beyond the finances.

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: True.

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: It's not level in the broader environment of the communities. The cities are different from the nonurban communities and in the school system. I think what we have to do in the school system, in the Department of Education, is to set our sights immediately on a plan for systemic reform of the education system, to provide the better -- best -- much improved ways of using the money that we have, to provide equal opportunity. Although, I'd say at the same time, we still will have an unlevel playing field because of the circumstances in the communities in the broader environment.

The schools, I think, can play a role there. They are the place, after all, where the students gather and where the children are that need the help. But, again, I think that's going to take a collaborate effort of many institutions, including families. The schools can't provide both academic instruction and also eliminate all of the problems of society that might inhibit the students' ability to learn. It's just not realistic. I think the danger of assuming that the schools alone can do that is the schools will become not a solution but the carpet under which we sweep the problems and sit back complacently and assume that they're being addressed. When really -- and realistically -- they can't be addressed that way.

So we will move aggressively on a plan for using the money to provide educational quality, but it's still going to be an unlevel field unless we can address problems -- inequities of communities -- as well.

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: How about the bill where we provided moneys for classrooms? Is that being implemented? I

think it was \$310 million, was it not John -- Mr. Chairman -- that we implemented last year through the economic recovery fund?

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: Yes, targeted directly at classrooms.

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: Targeted directly?

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: Yes, indeed.

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: It is.

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: That's one of the things we need to do not just with specially targeted money but with all of the money that's going into public education -- \$12 billion dollars including State, Federal, and local contributions.

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: Yes, I think you ought to repeat that, because I think it's important that this Legislature has committed that kind of money.

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: Absolutely.

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: I think that's very important, \$12 billion.

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: Twelve billion dollars in Federal, State, and local-- The four plus billion dollars that comes in State funds to schools represents more than a quarter of the State budget. We're number one in per pupil spending, etc. What we need to do is to make sure that more of those moneys go directly into the classroom or directly to services for children. I think that's not happening to the extent that it could. We will have a range of, for example -- to use a very specific example -- schools that have two vice-principals, schools that have seven or eight vice-principals, you know. How much of the money is going to administrative over structure, vis-a-vis the classroom?

I think another thing is regionalization of services that cuts across municipal boundaries, thereby bringing services to students in an equalized way that they might not already have.

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Assemblyman Corodemus, do you have anything?

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: No, thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Assemblywoman Crecco?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: No. I just want to say thank you to the network for inviting us here. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for having Mr. Speaker and having the Commissioner here; this is what we need. We will get the input from various areas of the community and go from there. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: As far as I'm concerned, for the Commissioner and for members of the Committee, there is a psychologist out there who has a program called the Maslovian Hierarchy of Needs, which basically states that you have to have food, clothing, shelter, and a safe environment before you can get to the most important part of learning, which is at the top of the pyramid.

Obviously, I don't think there has been a time in history when that has been more acute than it is right now, Mr. Commissioner. You know, we all went through the Ed. Courses and the Ed. Psych. and the rest of it with Maslow but, I think, truthfully, at this point we're saying, "Is there a safe environment?" If there is not a safe environment, then we can never get to the top of the triangle which is real education and quality of life.

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: I agree we're not--

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: We have to work on that base.

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: We're not meeting the national goal of a safe environment for all students. It's a complicated issue, and we won't get to academics in an effective way unless we provide -- meet those basic needs.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Yes, if a student is in-- I've taught for many years -- as you have, Mr. Commissioner -- you know if a student is worried about how he's going to get home

without getting beaten up on the way home, obviously, he's not too concerned about "five times four." You know, it's "how do I get home safely" that becomes a priority.

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: That's right.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: So, you know, just a thought: I think we really have to make a concerted effort in this area of violence and concentrate this Committee in that area.

Steve?

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: I may just take my opportunity back, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: Before the Commissioner departed--

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: I was surprised that you let him go.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: I was waiting for a good question.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: It's not often that we get the Commissioner here, now take advantage of it.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: I understand, Commissioner, that there are some incentives and, perhaps, even some early opposition to some type of an objective reporting criteria of the performance of the schools on a statewide basis. I think the private sector might be doing an end runaround that whole controversy by developing their own forum, I understand. I was speaking to some business people in the real estate community last week, and they are preparing their own objective review of schools on a system-by-system basis -- you probably know this already. This information will be made available to parents who are shopping for new homes. Of course, parents shopping for homes who have school-age children have one major concern, and that is the ability of their children to get a good education.

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: So I'm hoping we can all work in that same direction to get a program that, we feel, will be responsible and objective in reporting.

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: Assemblyman, we need to do that. It's good for the public to have as much information as possible and to use it for parents to select a school is fine, but it doesn't get to the problem.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: No, you're right.

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: It doesn't solve the problem. We've got to pin down our reporting mechanisms -- our data gathering mechanisms -- so we're better able to identify and define the problem and, therefore, address it.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: Right.

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: That's in our plans.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: Good. Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Okay. Thank you. Any other questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: I'd just like to say for the record, sometimes, when we compare the amount that's spent on different school districts -- for example, Morristown and in Newark-- We just can't compare dollar figures to dollar figures, because there are many other problems that the school children in Newark, the administrators, and the people in those districts face that are not faced in Morristown. I could say, for example, in Union City -- which I'm much more familiar with -- that sometimes when we compare dollars to dollars, we're not really getting a true picture of how much is actually being spent on the instruction of that child, because a lot of that money may go into special needs children, problem children, or, sometimes, just on helping to better the facilities; because, in most cases those school districts are faced with older facilities that are in need of repair. So, just in terms of dollars to dollars, I don't think those are the actual numbers that we should be looking at.

Secondly, I would just like to say that I'm very glad that the Commissioner answered the question -- the last question -- about having parents or real estate people give, "Oh, this school district is better than the other one," because what we have to do is really create opportunity in all school districts -- or at least that should be our goal -- and work to create true equality throughout the State.

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: I agree with your comments on both counts. In fact, I think in New Jersey-- I hate to blame the judicial branch, but we've been focused pretty exclusively on the issue of dollars, and you're right, there are other considerations that are probably far more important than that.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you very much, Mr. Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER KLAGHOLZ: Thank you, Assemblyman Rocco. I appreciate the opportunity.

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to give up this seat to the person who should be rightfully sitting here.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Assemblywoman Wright.

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: Assemblywoman Wright. Thank you for the opportunity.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Will you join us, Barbara?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for coming today.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: This won't be your last trip to Hudson County.

SPEAKER HAYTAIAN: No, it sure won't.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: We welcome Assemblywoman Wright with us.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: At this point, we will go on with the agenda.

Ms. Gail Hecht, Director, Student Personnel Services, East Orange School District.

G A I L H E C H T: Good afternoon.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Good afternoon.

MS. HECHT: My name is Gail Hecht, and I am the Director of Student Personnel Services for the East Orange School District, as you know.

East Orange is located in the east central portion of Essex County and is approximately 3.9 square miles. The population of East Orange is 77,140, with 12,000 students attending its schools. Eighty-three percent of the population is African-American. Twenty-one percent of all families receive public assistance; 15 percent have incomes below the Federal poverty level. The overall crime rate for East Orange was 115 per 1000, as compared with 97 per 1000 for the county.

The high incidence of interpersonal violence and aggressive behavior within the municipalities has been a clear concern. The teen death rate in East Orange is 57 percent higher than the State average of 7 per 10,000, ages 15 to 19. Two thousand six hundred fourteen juveniles were taken into custody for such crimes as: burglary, rape, threats, robbery, aggravated assault, gun possession, and possession of controlled dangerous substances.

During the 1992-'93 school year, there were 3502 duplicated incidences of suspension -- 1 to 5 days in duration -- which translates to 22,000 hours of lost instructional time. One hundred fifty-eight students, grades 3 to 12, were referred for possible expulsion for infractions ranging from possession of weapons to physical threats and assaults on other students and staff.

The city's school system has made significant strides to turn the pathos of violence into the ethos of prevention. Under a small grant funded by the State Department of Education, district staff were trained in anger management and nonviolent, culturally competent curriculum to minimize a student's risk of being victimized by violence, or worse, to become a perpetrator of that violence.

Other innovative programs in the district include: peer mediation centers; alternative education programs; an Institute for the Development of the Black Male and Female; comprehensive counseling services; a very strong collaboration between the East Orange Municipal Court and the East Orange School District to ensure that parents are held accountable for the actions of their children; FamilyNet, a Phoenix program to support disaffected students, and a numerous amount of after school programs for temporarily sheltered students.

This list is not meant to be exhaustive, for despite all our efforts, violence in our schools remains a serious concern.

An East Orange School Task Force was convened to review school district policy and make specific recommendations.

I would like to conclude by sharing those recommendations with this group that require interventions beyond the locus on control of the local school district. I initially indicated to you that 158 students were referred for possible expulsion. However, it should be noted that only very few cases culminated in a Board of Education expulsion hearing.

I speak from firsthand experience, because I conduct the preexpulsion hearing process for the district. In the past five years, the number of students recommended for expulsion has tripled, and the infractions have become far more serious in nature.

The mandated Child Study Team evaluation prior to a recommendation for expulsion often results in classification, thus making the student ineligible for expulsion. Additionally, this process now forces the district to incur extensive costs to educate these students within our already austere budget.

Codes must be reviewed and revised to ensure that violent students can be excluded from the school setting. Home instruction parameters must be reviewed to include students on suspension and expulsion. Funding must be provided for expansion of innovative, alternative education programs.

I developed the conceptual framework and implemented our district's alternative education program with seed money from the State Department of Education. It's an exemplary program. Highly disruptive students who were considered throwaways are now successfully attending some of the most prestigious colleges in the country.

We need a middle school alternative program desperately, but budget cuts preclude its development at this time.

The current facilities approval process must be reviewed, because this process breeds obstacles which often negate the use of alternative sites as school settings. Within the small 3.9 square miles of East Orange, I visited and tried to obtain approval for 36 sites for our alternative education programs. Each was deemed unacceptable for various and sundry reasons ranging from halls which were one foot too narrow, to doors which were in the wrong place; costs of renovations became prohibitive. Alternative programs need alternative facilities.

Finally, the State-mandated reporting violence and vandalism form -- which Dr. Klagholz alluded to -- should be revised and streamlined to ensure a commonality and clarity in the definition of terms and elimination of redundancy such as: When is a fight considered a gang fight and when is a fight between three or more students just a plain fight? I struggle with that every time I go to report.

I thank you for the opportunity to share a piece of East Orange with you and seek your help to stem youth violence,

because many of the factors that contribute to our students' propensity to use violence are within your and my power to change.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you very much. We have some questions for you, Gail. One question I have that, I think, is at the heart of much of what we do: Disruptive students or violent students -- most of it occurs, we know, in the hallways between classes; however, on occasion you do have disruption in the classroom, and we know what impact that has on the other students. To what extent do you think that we ought to expel or to get out of the classroom setting those students that are disrupting the learning of others?

MS. HECHT: I think it's important that you consider such a recourse. Just yesterday, I had a student who brought a 17-inch knife into the classroom. The reason shall remain nameless -- he could not decide; the mother did not know. Certainly, that disrupts the classroom.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: It would get my attention.

MS. HECHT: It definitely got mine, too. I had to have two security guards from the East Orange Police in my office while I was conducting that hearing. I don't feel comfortable in that kind of setting--

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Absolutely.

MS. HECHT: --and I've been in education for 22 years.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Absolutely.

MS. HECHT: This was far more serious than I've ever been exposed to. Normal academic dysfunction, I think, can be coped with in alternative programs. We've developed some of the finest, and people from California and Hawaii have come to visit my programs. It's when the violent student walks into the building that teachers become frightened. We have no control.

In my speech, I talked about a parent survey that said 47 percent of parents are dissatisfied with the school setting; 64 percent of our teachers have said the same thing. I think you need to focus on things that are beyond our control. We'll try and focus on the things within our domain.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: A number of the things you mentioned, including the facilities -- I've been talking to the Department for a while in regard to trying to provide-- We know that -- Paterson, East Orange apparently, as well -- that it's difficult to get a site that you can work with, without complying to more rigorous codes. If we can get some modifications of that, and we are working on that and will continue to do so. I have other questions, but maybe rather than dominate--

Steve?

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: Mr. Chairman.

I enjoyed listening to your testimony, Ms. Hecht.

MS. HECHT: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: Is an event such as bringing a weapon -- 17-inch knife or a handgun -- in your school, is that grounds for immediate ejection from the school? What is your procedure in your school, the depth -- the severity of that type of an incident?

MS. HECHT: That is grounds for immediate removal from the school; however, before you can do that, our school district holds what is known as a preexpulsion process, to ascertain whether that is an appropriate action, because only the Board of Education can expel a youngster. However, with the student who carried the knife, I did recommend expulsion.

Let me clarify that. The code mandates that prior to expulsion, a Child Study Team evaluation is conducted on that youngster.

I can almost guarantee that youngster is going to become classifiable, and, as such, that removes him from the

expulsion process. So now we have a student that has become classifiable: it could be emotionally disturbed, it could be neurologically impaired, it ranges the gamut.

Many of us would become classifiable in the process of an intense Child Study Team evaluation that now removes him from the process of becoming expelled. We are forced to incur expenses upwards of \$24,000 to educate this child, who had no regard for the 12,000 students in the district, brought a knife to school, and is now a part of our special education population.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: So it's not necessarily a deterrent?

MS. HECHT: We can't get beyond the Child Study Team process, and that is one of my recommendations. Review the code; make it easier for us to remove those youngsters that have little to no regard for getting an education, but come to school to sell drugs, to do other kinds of mischief, and create havoc for the students that really want to learn.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Who determines the code, this code you're talking about in the school?

MS. HECHT: Oh, it's written in Law and Code. It's in title 18A.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Oh, all right. Well, it's a lethal weapon. The law is no one can go walking around -- that's against the law also. So I think we should really look at that also, because it's contradictory to the law.

MS. HECHT: The law-- The code says that you have to evaluate a child prior to expulsion because the behavior that he or she exhibited may be the result of a handicapping condition and that's what happens.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Oh.

MS. HECHT: Believe me, it doesn't help the East Orange School District to remove the very small percent -- the

1 percent or 2 percent -- that are really creating havoc for our school. We want to learn; we have teachers who want to teach.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Oh, absolutely.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Okay, that's very important.

Rudy?

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Mr. Chairman, and Ms. Hecht, I would just like to inform you that one of the things we're working on -- I have some amendments to my bill that I'm going to be reviewing with Assemblyman Corodemus -- is to allow immediate expulsion, with home study, pending the outcome of the expulsion review.

That was one of the recommendations made in the report of the Commissioner of Education, and one of the components that will comprise part of Assembly Bill No. 8183. I'll be working on that with Assemblyman Corodemus, so that's a very good idea.

MS. HECHT: That's very important.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: I also would like to ask a follow-up question. One of the measures is for in-school community service, maybe not for that type of violent offender, but certainly some children that commit less serious offenses. Sometimes -- from what I've learned, and I've seen throughout the school districts in Hudson County -- the students view expulsion over suspension as a vacation or as a way out of school. So, if we could make them responsible or accountable in some way or through community service, would you feel that would be an appropriate means of addressing or, at least, trying to let them be a little bit more accountable for their actions?

MS. HECHT: I don't only feel that's appropriate, Assemblyman Garcia, we do that in the East Orange School District. We have seven levels of infractions. We have community service not only for the student but for the parent,

as well, if the infraction warrants it. We have in-school kinds of community service that range from tutoring the homeless to cleaning up the outside of the building. We really feel that's important. We try not to suspend, but ultimately, you reach a point where your safety becomes foremost in your mind and you have to.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: And the well-being of the rest of the students.

MS. HECHT: Correct, and staff as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Barbara?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Through you, Mr. Chairman. Since you've given us such an excellent example of how the system works, I wondered if you-- What grade is the student in that you were discussing with us earlier?

MS. HECHT: The one with the 17-inch knife? A second-year freshman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: So you're saying that, I guess, we need to look at the overall classification system? How could a student-- Has that student been in your system for the last nine years?

MS. HECHT: This student happens to have spent his whole elementary and middle school experience in Granada and came over.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: So he's only been with you for a short time?

MS. HECHT: For two years.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: I was trying to figure out how he missed the classification system for nine years. So he's new to our system, then?

MS. HECHT: He's new to our system. We have a good number of bilingual students coming in from Haiti and--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: I can understand. Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you very much, Ms. Hecht.
We will go on to the next presenter.

MS. HECHT: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Meanwhile, our Vice-Chair, David Wolfe, has arrived.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Welcome, David.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: We have next, Burnett Davis.

BURNETT A. DAVIS III: Thank you, Mr. Chairman,
for allowing me to speak before your Committee this afternoon.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Our pleasure.

MR. DAVIS: My name is Burnett Davis. I'm a Teacher Assistant at Elizabeth High School, Jefferson House. I'm in charge of the in-school suspension program.

Violence in today's schools has reached an epidemic proportion. Education cannot flourish unless our students feel that they are in a safe learning environment. Young people must be shown, however, that there are ways to solve their difficulties other than resorting to violent acts. Conflict resolution, building positive self esteem, tolerance of others, manners, parent/child conflicts, peer leadership, and overcoming obstacles are a few areas that can be incorporated in every school's curriculum.

Respect for oneself and the ideas of others must be instilled at an early age. There are many reasons why there is violence in our schools: the lack of alternative school programs, insensitive teaching staffs, and no multicultural curricula all contribute to the violent atmosphere in our school system.

But I feel that the most important component that gives violence free reign is the lack of parental involvement. Parents must hold administrators and teachers accountable for their children's education. It is the responsibility of the

parent to make sure the local school meets the needs of their children and prepares them to compete with their peers upon graduation. I have seen students that have been promoted to the high school level that could barely read, write, or do simple math computations.

How can parents sit by and let these things happen to their children? Parents must step forward and demand superior instruction for their children and support school boards and instructors in delivering this education. If parents voice their concerns, they will be heard by their local school boards. We cannot expose our children to violence in our schools. Parents must take more interest in their children's education. Working with teachers and administrators, parents can help make our schools a safe place to learn.

I would like to ask if there are any questions that you might have?

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: I'll take care of that. Thank you.

Assemblywoman Crecco.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: That's good. You're right insofar as the responsibility of the parents to see that the schools do help their youngsters, but what about the responsibility of the parents at home and before, and when the youngster goes to school, places a twofold responsibility? What do you consider we do? How do we work with these parents who are not responsible?

MR. DAVIS: What we have to do is set up workshops for them. Where there are mandatory workshops these parents come to school or come to a particular location where they are taught how to parent. One of the problems that I see in Elizabeth is that we have so many young parents, and they do not have the parenting skills. So what we have to do, if it's possible, is to teach them how to be responsible and how it is

important for their children to get a superior education, so that they can compete with their peers upon graduation.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: I noticed--

I'm sorry. Are you through, Assemblywoman?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Yes, thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: I noticed that you're a Teacher Assistant. What basically do you deal with, discipline or--

MR. DAVIS: Yes, with the in-school suspension program in Elizabeth. What was happening there was a great number of young people were being suspended for five and ten days. With the consent of our Superintendent, Thomas Dunn, we set up an in-school suspension program as opposed to suspending these young people for this period of time.

They will be sent to an in-school suspension program where a curriculum would be developed -- where the teachers could give them their assignments, or I would give them assignments in math, social studies, English, and reading. This way, they will not fall behind in their studies.

I think it's very important to understand, too, that once a young person is suspended for five days, if they're going to go to a school that is really doing relevant things, it's very difficult for them to catch up on their assignments. If you're suspended for five days, really, it's very difficult for you to excel to get into that situation.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: You have an in-house suspension in a room within a--

MR. DAVIS: Within the school, yes. It's very secluded; it's very quiet. I've found that the young people that I deal with really do well in that environment, because there are no outside distractions. I try to tell them -- I do tell them -- that there are no big shots or anything like that. They are there for a particular reason, and I'm going to show them that they are able to learn and to do well. They can. What I would like for them to do is to go back to their

regular school environment and do the same thing. But some of them do better in the in-school suspension program than they do in their regular classrooms because of the different distractions; I remove these distractions from them in the in-school suspension program.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: So you feel you're more focused. You're almost like a self-contained classroom, as opposed to the--

MR. DAVIS: Going to classes, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Once again, we know that most of the problems occur in halls and in going between periods. Do you think that type of style -- with the students all together, maybe a self-contained environment at the secondary level -- has some possibilities?

MR. DAVIS: Well, again, I think it depends on the teacher also. A teacher would have to consent to be there. See, I'm the one that developed the program. I tell them-- Some of my colleagues say, "Well, why would you want to spend all day with these types of young people?" I say, "Because I want to be there." When you bring that type of attitude into a program, the program is going to be successful.

Being self-contained? For some students, yes, I think that would be an answer. I don't know whether or not it would be the answer for everyone. But one of the things, as far as a school has to do, is to meet the needs of the students. If meeting the needs of the students means that a teacher or teachers stay in one particular room with these students being self-contained, then so be it, let it work. I think you have to give every opportunity to the student to excel.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Any other questions from the Committee? (no response)

Thank you very much.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Mr. Layton Swinney, Director, Security Services, Newark Board of Ed.

Welcome.

L A Y T O N S W I N N E Y: Good evening, Mr. Chairman and Committee. My name is Layton Swinney. I'm Director of Security for the Newark School System. I welcome this opportunity to speak before this Committee because, too often, people on my level don't get a chance to voice their opinions about a lot of things, as many of the other educators do.

I have a feeling, as Director of Security, that much more is needed in the way of including all staff people and students into the educational process. All districts must give consideration to the development of operation strategies. An important consideration is understanding that while the school is a learning institution it is in no way a penal colony and must also focus on prevention, as well as education. Punishment and detention are secondary considerations.

Security plans should focus on two objectives: people who are authorized to be in the school building, and people authorized to be in the building but are in an unauthorized location.

The first objective can be effectively dealt with by requiring schools to adopt a policy of applicable laws regarding trespassing, loitering, and other similar violations.

The second objective becomes more difficult for school administrators and security personnel to achieve, because of the vast number of reasons that students are out of the classroom during instructional periods.

To name a few: students don't like lunch; schools have too many teachers absent and the use of substitutes; students late for class and being locked out by teachers; students not properly scheduled; students whose agenda is to socialize in

school and not go to class; students who dislike particular classes or teachers; students who are always late for school.

The administrator who believes that they can correct these types of conditions without full cooperation from the entire staff, instructional and non-instructional, is not facing reality. There must be preventive and educational strategies to reduce the number of students that are falling into the aforementioned categories.

Some suggestions: organize administrative review of the total staff as to operational roles; support the components such as teachers, security, guidance counselors, school aides; and administrative staff should be used to strengthen and enhance the safety and security program of the school. Too often, instead of a coordinated effort, there is a separation of tasks with each component attempting to satisfy the individual concern rather than the school's overall security and safety objectives.

This deficiency can be readily corrected by the principal meeting jointly with the components, directing the school organizational goal and objectives, and requesting the components' unit to join in a coordinated effort to enhance the safety and security program.

Advertise: Use visual guides and aids, and prepare positive messages and signs for display in prominent locations throughout the building. Many students will respond to written rules and procedures when reminded repeatedly. There is also the value of the school policy, rules, and regulations when prominently displayed on a daily basis, rather than when an infraction is committed.

Identify: Identify hardcore violators. Few schools have difficulty identifying the core group of daily cutters and problem students. Too many schools, when dealing with this hardcore group of students, use a revolving door process of in-and-out of the principal's office.

Many rationalizations are given to this process: full parents' response to our assistance, limited suspension procedures, exceptional staff efforts need to correct, and it's everybody else's job.

The administrator who sits with staff and formulates policies for handling security and safety problems will find the labor worthwhile in getting staff to believe the school is controlled, relay a message to students that rules will be complied with, and an increased feeling of safety and security throughout the building.

Prioritize: In today's climate of budget cuts and personnel shortages, the administrator's task of getting the job done becomes an enormous challenge. The administrator faced with security problems must, out of necessity, prioritize the security effort within the constraint of the budgeted personnel. The identification of most ingredients -- conditions, coupled with prioritized and coordinated response by staff -- can reduce big problems into smaller ones. Results, even when incremental, can achieve positive results in the work, performance, and morale of staff.

The above recommendations are not a cure-all, but will enhance the relationship between the administration, teachers, and support staff to the point where everyone will feel a sense of belonging and a sense of security within the school.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you very much. Are there questions from the Committee?

Rudy?

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Mr. Swinney, I have a question. Do you believe that school ID badges-- If we require every school to draw up and have an ID badge for all its students, it will help keep out those children who are not part of that school?

MR. SWINNEY: Badges are very necessary, especially on the secondary level, so that, you know, everyone will be identified coming in, and badges are checked, etc.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Secondly, do you feel metal detectors would decrease the number of weapons coming into our school system?

MR. SWINNEY: It plays a part in it. Metal detectors are only as good as, I guess, the people that are manning them, and it's a deterrent. It's not a foolproof mechanism, as you know. We have people getting through airports and other places with metal detectors. It is a deterrent.

For the good students, you don't even need metal detectors. But you have that, you know, percentage that you need metal detectors and everything else to really ensure that those youngsters who are coming to school for an education get an education in an environment which is conducive to learning.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: So, if someone using the metal detectors is conscientious, you would feel that that would create a safer atmosphere in the school?

MR. SWINNEY: I think so.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: What about the problem -- it seems as though there's a lot of traffic in the halls. Is that a major problem in terms of identifying who is in the facility?

MR. SWINNEY: Well, the traffic in the halls -- most schools have a certain amount of time for students to pass from one class to the other. Any students in the hall after that period of time either don't want to go to class or just want to be socializing in the hallways, and that has to cease. Another reason is that a lot of the students are let out of classrooms for numerous reasons.

We are dealing with secondary schools where a youngster has four or five minutes between class periods to stop off at the rest rooms, to go to their locker, whatever.

After that, there's no real need for a student to be in the hallway, unless he has a medical problem or to go to the bathroom, which creates another problem for security staff.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: The hall monitors aren't able to control that?

MR. SWINNEY: Hall monitors are there to put the kids in the class, but then you get the kids who are going to be 15 to 20 minutes late everyday. When they go into the class, they're going to disrupt the educational process that's already ongoing in that classroom.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Okay, thank you.

Assemblywoman Wright?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It's obvious to me that schools in Newark have different kinds of problems. We had the Newark arts students at the Assembly -- I don't know maybe two weeks ago -- singing for us, sharing some of their program there. Are the problems of security based on certain geographic parts of the city? I'm fairly familiar-- I have spent a fair amount of time at the College of Nursing at Newark, and so I did a lot of community visiting. Is it geographic? I mean, are some of your schools -- do they have fewer problems than others in terms of security?

MR. SWINNEY: Yes, and it's for a number of reasons. Some of our schools-- We're not a suburban school where we have a one floor, laid-out building, where we have two and three miles where maybe we can put a school -- I mean acres, that we can put a school on.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Yes.

MR. SWINNEY: We have four and five floors in some of our schools; therefore, it's going to create more of a problem than a school that is one story, whatever. So, therefore, it requires more security personnel, which has become another burden on the local school districts, because that has taken away from the educational process, too -- from the educational

side by supplying this support staff to make sure that the buildings are safe for the youngsters to come and go.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: My question kind of is, can you think in your mind -- because you obviously direct all of the security -- is there any school that has minimal security problems in the district?

MR. SWINNEY: Yes, we--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: And what's that? How does that happen?

MR. SWINNEY: Well, it depends on the administration in a lot of the cases, how they deal with the student population.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: I see.

MR. SWINNEY: And the cooperation amongst their staff. So, therefore, that school will get along far better than a school who has maybe a good administrator, but some poor support staff.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: I see.

MR. SWINNEY: So, therefore, you need more security to offset that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Thank you.

MR. SWINNEY: You're welcome.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you, Mr. Swinney.

Ms. Hillman-Jones, Assistant Superintendent, Newark.
Welcome.

G L A D Y S H I L L M A N - J O N E S: Good afternoon.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Welcome.

MS. HILLMAN-JONES: Chairman Rocco, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Gladys Hillman-Jones. I'm from the Newark School District. I'm taking it from just a slightly different perspective. Daily, we hear about school violence. Further, we realize that schools simply mirror the face of society. Rather than reiterate the problems that we all know

only too well -- relative to youth and violence -- I'm simply going to share a few thoughts that might edge us closer to the solution.

First, adults must show young people greater respect and teach them to interact with each other and with us. We must show kindness and recognize, as well as respond to the kindness of others, especially our youth.

We, the adults, must provide young people with healthy outlets for their energy, their recreational and athletic involvements, after school programs, boys and girls clubs, youth centers, and other organized programs. Our youth need the guidance and support that directed programs can provide. We must also teach our young people the reality of cause and effect, action and reaction, and you reap what you sow. They need to learn early in life that certain actions bring about certain consequences.

Finally, we must teach our children how to resolve conflict, how to negotiate, and how to solve their problems without violence. We can no longer assume that they were taught somewhere and should know better. We must take the time to teach them and teach them well, because our lives might depend upon it.

Thank you.

Questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you.

Questions from the Committee?

MS. HILLMAN-JONES: I was told three minutes, so I made it 2.5. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Good. Well, you're an Assistant Superintendent, how long have you been at Newark?

MS. HILLMAN-JONES: I've been at Newark for -- this is my 31st year. I've been at the Board since last July 1.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: That's a good period of time. How have you seen violence change -- vandalism change -- in the system?

MS. HILLMAN-JONES: Well, as a practitioner -- principal, to be specific -- I have seen it change in the sense that much of what young people do, as I said, mirrors society. They're terribly involved in trying to impress each other.

Consequently, whereas maybe when we were younger we would hit someone or punch someone, they don't resolve problems like that, because many of them spend so many hours in front of the television set that they try to imitate many of the things that they have seen. It's almost like they see happy violence on television, and so, in their own interactions with each other, they imitate.

But over the years, what have I seen? I've seen it go from punching and hitting, or simply name calling, to promising that I'll get you later, and going for older brothers and sisters, and on occasions involving a weapon.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: So you do, as I do, feel that TV has contributed to some of this increase?

MS. HILLMAN-JONES: I definitely feel that way. I intentionally didn't raise it because people constantly say, "you're always blaming the media." But one of the schools that I'm responsible for is an alternative school. In talking to the young people there, as well as another school that I have -- that's one for youngsters who return after they have dropped out -- these young folks will tell you that television plays a great part in their life.

I guess I was thinking in terms of the recreational aspect because of a conversation with a young man less than 10 days ago. I said to him, "What is it that you want from school? You dropped out once; you came back; you dropped out again. It's obvious to me that you want something, because you keep coming back to school. You're 18 years old now."

He said, "I want to learn, but I also want some recreation. I also would like for us to have" -- he specifically said, "basketball." "I also would like to know that there are people in the school who care about me, and I found some," he told me, because he was very pleased with the principal, who took the time to listen to him. He said, "We need to learn, but we also need to have some fun."

If he's saying that at 18, the babies certainly need it too. We know good and well that when we're dealing with the young people who are older, the problems oftentimes have set in.

We've got to also think prevention. We've got to think about those young people who go home at night and no one is there to greet them. They have the latchkey, as we say, with the key tucked under their shirt.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Sure.

MS. HILLMAN-JONES: So they go home, and even though Mom may have told them not to watch television, because no one is there, what do they do? They turn on the television set. Needless to say, we all know with some of the talk shows, some of the graphic-- I'm not a TV person -- what do you call them, these little shows you turn on every day?

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Oprah?

MS. HILLMAN-JONES: Soap operas. Yes, as I said, I've never really been much of a TV person except for the news. But soap operas, and when these young folks watch this, believe me, it escalates. It not only escalates in the sense of violence, but the violence can be an outgrowth of maybe an imitation of the sex involvements that they witness in the girlfriend/boyfriend kind of interaction, which then goes to the next level, he said/she said, and a fight erupts. So it oftentimes escalates the violence, starting with something that might seemingly be very insignificant to us.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: I'm in agreement with you. Thank you very much.

Oh, I'm sorry. Rudy, you had a question?

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Is there any type of alternative dispute-resolution curriculum implemented now in Newark?

MS. HILLMAN-JONES: Yes, through our Guidance Department, but that is something that we're underlining. We're going to be more or less spreading out a bit more not only in our secondary schools but-- You need to take a very hard look at that population beginning in grade five.

I don't know if you're aware of it, but there's something that happens between grade four and grade five. Third grade is a transitional year; you're probably aware of that, but after they go into fourth grade, they feel terribly grown up. In fifth grade, not only do you see the social problems, but academic problems also begin to show.

So the negotiation has to begin at a very early age. We've been waiting far too long, far too long. Our youngsters are so capable. So, you know, if you start with kindergarten in the school, that's where it needs to begin. If you have a preschool program, that's where it needs to begin. But the negotiation is critical. Young people at the early stages are very open to learning about how to resolve problems with role playing. They see it as fun, but it becomes a part of their life space.

I just couldn't afford to leave this table without telling you that working in Newark is not what many, many people think it is, because the children are just children. They're marvelous, but what they need is for us to recognize the good in them. You know, young people are whatever we tell them they are. So, if we constantly harp upon the negative side of life and tell them they're bad, they will show us just how bad they can be.

On the other side of that coin, though, when you approach them, even if they don't know you -- and I have six high schools to deal with, and those young folks, when I walk into that building, they don't know me from Adam's fly. But go up to them and simply say, "Hello." It can be a 6-foot-5-inch young man or a young lady -- we've got some healthy ladies -- but the bottom line is, it's how you say what you say. When you say, "Hello, how are you? You're a very handsome young man, what year are you," they will respond. "How do you feel about school;" they will tell you the truth. They will tell you the truth: if they like it; if they don't like it; or if they think people are unfair to them. All of these are pieces that move us toward what eventually becomes violence in schools.

Young folks really love school, or they wouldn't keep coming back. But we, the adults, have to really take another look at ourselves. We also have to think in terms of the parental piece. I was so happy to hear the gentleman from Elizabeth mention that, because we must teach parents how to approach the schools.

Schools can be threatening places in urban areas. They can be wonderful places. When I say threatening places, I don't mean places of fear. I mean, when parents come into the environment, oftentimes school people are not as polite to urban parents as they should be. So the parents come with a defense mechanism, "In the event that you are rude to me, I will be ready for you." So there are a lot of pieces that are in this puzzle. But trust me, all of these years have been very rewarding and happy years for me. I enjoy what I do; I make no bones about it.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Wonderful. We thank you.

MS. HILLMAN-JONES: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Ms. Victoria Gary, fourth grade teacher in East Orange.

V I C T O R I A L . G A R Y : Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: I'm also a former fourth grade teacher, and I would like you to know that. (laughter)

MS. GARY: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Committee members. My name is Victoria Gary, and I'm a fourth grade teacher in the East Orange School District, where I have taught for eight years. Throughout my teaching career, I have witnessed and been personally affected by violence. As a kindergarten teacher, I have seen children exhibit patterns of violence in their social play. Some incidences were accidental, but many of them were provoked encounters.

Many of these children share similarities in their social behavior because of their environment and upbringing. Many are unable to follow simple oral directions because everything has always been done for them. When placed in a situation where they were unsure of themselves, they would become frustrated and act out this frustration by kicking, shoving, or withdrawing entirely from the situation. They also found functioning in a group activity difficult, because of their lack of interaction with other children outside of the classroom.

They were taught to defend themselves physically instead of looking at possible options to their actions or others acts towards them. They had one set of rules at home, another to abide by in their outside environment, and another at school.

Are they being bombarded by too many rule discrepancies, or are they having difficulty transferring identified rules from situation to situation? It is my opinion that a major contributing factor is that their early childhood developmental years lack consistency, especially in their child rearing. This deficiency promotes the decline of growth in their self-esteem.

Now, as an elementary school teacher, I see how the role of the classroom teacher is changing. We are asked to assume more responsibility for our students' behavior in and out of the classroom. The fundamental lessons are being taught more so by the teacher than by the parent.

Urban schools provide breakfast and lunch programs for most children. Now, in my district, the recreational program offers a dinner program and closes at 8 p.m. What responsibility do we leave the parent? It is my assumption that society has decided to relinquish the responsibilities of parenting to the teacher or educational facility as these education programs create even a bigger wedge in the parent/child relationship

In 1992, I was assaulted by a third grade student in my class, simply because I didn't respond quickly enough to his request for help. The child had visited his father over the weekend, who is serving a jail sentence. Seeing his father in this environment unleashed anger and disappointment in him, but unfortunately, he had never been taught to express these feelings verbally.

Many incidences of violence go unreported by teachers for various reasons. Some are resolved with the help of coworkers. Other incidences aren't reported because, in many situations, it is viewed as a reflection of the classroom teacher's management skills.

Now that I have identified some of the concerns I have, is there some prescription that I can create to help save our educational facility from further destruction? I would like to make the following recommendations to the Committee for consideration:

- 1) The creation of a developmental preschool/kindergarten program, whose curriculum would be implemented in the urban schools, which would allow children

the opportunity to be exposed to more success in their early years.

2) For a mandatory program for parents who receive Aid to Dependent Family support. They would attend an instructional program every two weeks, where they would be taught key words, phrases, and procedures used by the classroom teacher in their child's grade level.

3) A self-esteem committee created in each school that would devise short-term programs that would address academic behavioral needs of students.

4) Administrative rap sessions between students and their principal.

5) The mass recruitment of males -- especially black males -- in the teaching field, to begin at the high school level to elicit college bound seniors to the benefits of teaching.

6) The creation of an adoption program by State, city, and law enforcement officials, where each would adopt a school and make once-a-month visits to establish an open dialogue with students and hear firsthand how they think and feel.

In Africa there is a saying, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." We must begin to ask our children for their insight into the minds of our youth. So that the term used by John Singleton, in his movie, "Boyz n the Hood," "increase the peace," will not just be another slogan.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you very much, Victoria.

Questions from the Committee?

Mr. Corodemus.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: What was your objective in having members of the law enforcement community come to the schools and speak to the children? Is there any specific message you would expect them to deliver?

MS. GARY: Well, first, I find that the children in my community -- where I'm teaching -- always express the fact that they're never approached unless it's in a negative situation. One never says for instance-- My predecessor mentioned, before me, that people don't have a tendency to be kind, to be respectful, to reach out, and just say hello. It wouldn't hurt the children to be approached in that fashion. Instead they are approached by, "What are you doing?" They don't see law enforcement in the positive light that it could be viewed as. So I thought that once a month, if they got or received one law enforcement official in their school, where they could relate to them--

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: Just to break the ice.

MS. GARY: They deem these people as unapproachable. It might be able to break the ice, as you just mentioned, so they'd feel more comfortable talking to these people.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Assemblywoman Wright.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Just a follow-up on that Assemblyman Corodemus comment and your response. Do you have D.A.R.E. in East Orange?

MS. GARY: We had D.A.R.E., yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: You don't have it now?

MS. GARY: Well, we have it for the upper grades. Third and fourth -- I'm a fourth grade teacher, we didn't receive D.A.R.E. The fifth grades and the sixth grades received it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: So you're saying really then that we need to bring programs like D.A.R.E. in at the earlier--

MS. GARY: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Prior to fifth grade, which I think-- Is it fifth grade where D.A.R.E. comes in?

MS. GARY: Yes, that's the grade that we received it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Because I know we are having a lot of success in our district with the D.A.R.E. program.

MS. GARY: Well, in our school we have created a lot of successful programs, two that I am chairing right now.

One is called, I Spy, where we note a child that has a behavioral problem, and we record weekly the success of that child. At the end of the month, the principal hands out gold seals to the children who were successful in maintaining a certain behavior. It can be just a very simple behavior like, "Johnny will sit down in a chair and do his homework or his class work." We've received success there.

I'm very proud of the program that we have at our school which is a tutorial program called Big Brothers/Big Sisters. We have sixth graders, fifth graders, and those fourth graders who are identified by their teachers as being academically capable of being tutors for the lower grades.

We have seen that even on the playground, when there are disputes, the children will walk over and say, "Don't do that. You know what the classroom rule is. You know what the school rule is." So we're getting a reinforcement. The children, in all fairness, love it. They love having another child direct them or to help them with their work. So I'm very proud of those two programs that we do have in our schools.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you, Victoria, you're obviously a dedicated teacher, and we appreciate your input.

Ms. Angelica Santomauro?

ANGELICA M. SANTOMAURO: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Assembly.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Good afternoon.

MS SANTOMAURO: You are a bunch of white dots in front of my eyes right now, from looking at this white light for about an hour now. My name is Angelica Santomauro, and I'm the Director of the America Labor Museum Botto House, a National

Landmark, which is in Passaic County; however, I'm a resident of Hudson County.

Today, however, I am presenting my testimony as a former elementary school teacher, who has taken time out to reflect upon 14 years of teaching from a mandated curriculum guide: A guide which teachers are literally forced to follow so that their students could pass a standardized test as a means of making a school district look good. I can tell you from experience that, unfortunately, in many school districts test scores are the bottom line.

My particular area of concern is social studies, because in this subject teachers hold up role models for students to emulate. We might as well put the word "saint" in front of such historic figures as Christopher Columbus, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln, and we might as well say that the American Revolution and the World Wars were playful jaunts on the battlefield.

The problem is, we're not telling it like it is. We're either teaching our kids about these pure, infallible heros, many of whom happen to be white males or professing that war is just an acceptable historic event. We never mention the human frailties of these heroic leaders, nor do we spell out the atrocities of war. Instead, we continue to sugarcoat the horrific acts of our forebears and blatantly avoid the truth. Kids don't hear about past mistakes, so yesterday's heros just keep reappearing with different names and different faces. Wars just aren't going away; in fact, they're going on right in the schools.

This is a time in my own life that I feel very fortunate. Now, as the Director of the American Labor Museum, I have the freedom to create my own educational programs. Unfortunately, like our country, the Museum was founded on violence.

Back in 1913 the violence on the streets of Paterson, created by a massive silk strike involving more than 25,000 silk mill workers, drove the strikers to the Botto House in Haledon. There, they were able to meet peacefully without the brutal force of interlopers. The strike went on for six long months, finally ending with great losses on both the sides of the workers and the owners.

Now, when kids enter the Botto House, they hear about the anger, the rage, the violence, the sorrows, the losses, and the problems of the day. They are encouraged to discuss, negotiate, communicate, and exchange thoughts with one another. They soon discover that no matter what the topic of conversation, there will always be differences of opinion. It's a given. But with exercises in conflict resolution, they learn to respect the thoughts of others without forcefully imposing their own ideas.

Ladies and gentleman, I am suggesting there is a real connection between what we teach our children and the people they turn out to be. We've got to reevaluate the curricula, the books, the programs, and the extracurricular activities in the schools. We've got to present human role models to our kids, not superheroes who never told a lie, or whose worst mistake was chopping down a cherry tree. When students begin to understand that heroes are really human, they may discover -- as Mariah Carey so beautifully sings it -- the hero that lives within themselves.

When they find that hero, they begin to realize their own potential, then growth and development begins. Students accept themselves and others, realizing that we're not all the same. But you know what? It's okay. When the discovery takes place, the peace and harmony will just happen, and violence in the schools will be a part of history.

My request is that you, the legislators, help those of us in education. We need your cooperation in passing

legislation to provide enough funding so that schools can update their curricula and offer the programs so desperately needed. The programs that teach kids to work and play together without any hostility.

Thank you very much for your attention.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you, Angelica.

Are there any questions? (no response)

Thank you very much.

MS SANTOMAURO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Ms. Gail Siggelakis? I'm sure I'm not pronouncing that correctly.

G A I L S I G G E L A K I S: Siggelakis. (indicates pronunciation)

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: Siggelakis. (indicated pronunciation)

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you, Steve. I appreciate that.

Fifth grade teacher. Gail, all right, I also taught fifth grade. (laughter)

MS. SIGGELAKIS: I also taught kindergarten. I'm a fifth grade teacher from East Windsor, New Jersey.

It seems that the cover of every journal that crosses my desk these days is about violence. In the March 1994 issues alone: "NEA Today," the National Education Association magazine was entitled, "Enough: Fighting School Violence Means Taking on Guns"; the "NJNEA Reporter" read, "Violence in the Classroom," with daggers and guns pictured; "Education Week" focused on, "Taming Aggression in the Young: A Call to Action"; and just today I received, "Junior Scholastic," with a timely cover story, "Teen Violence: What can Students, Schools, and Governments do to Combat this Problem?"

The journals recommend steps that educators can take now as preventative measures. From preschool on, we can teach our children conflict resolution skills; skills that enable

children to work out their differences peacefully and respectfully. They need to learn to respect themselves and others, to see that it's possible to settle conflicts without force, to disagree without using violence.

I have been effectively using such a program for the past nine years at the Perry L. Drew School in East Windsor, New Jersey. The program, based on the book, "Learning the Skills of Peacemaking," by Naomi Drew, has been recognized as an outstanding curriculum in New Jersey schools. The author and I were awarded a 1988 Teachers' Governor's Grant Award to make an abridged version of the program available statewide.

The complete program works on building self-esteem, acceptance, an appreciation of differences in self and others, and communication skills. Today, I'd like to highlight one of the communication skills, conflict resolution.

Through a simple and specific six-step method called the win/win guidelines, students learn to work out their problems so both parties feel their needs have been met in a win/win solution.

Crucial learnings through the process are:

- 1) People need to cool off, to diffuse their anger before they're ready to work out their problems.

- 2) How to communicate effectively through the use of "I" messages, in which each person states his or her point of view without any put downs. This method of communicating opens the way for mutual problem solving.

- 3) Reflective listening, saying the other person's point of view, so he/she feels understood and can begin to realize that his or her point of view is not the only side to the story. I've attached the complete guidelines.

- 4) In order for conflict resolution to be effective schoolwide, the approach needs to be used at every level beginning with the principal. Teachers need to be thoroughly trained and committed to using it in their lives. We are the

models to our students, and our actions and words speak loudly.

I have been moved to tears, over and over again in my classroom when my students respectfully use "I" messages in their disagreements with me.

5) Children learn what they live. Parental involvement is crucial; parents also need training in the win/win guidelines. They are kids' most important models. Unfortunately, most adults have never been taught how to work out disagreements. We all repeat or learn from our experience or lack of it. The win/win approach makes parenting easier, and when children learn the same approach to problem solving at home and school, it becomes a natural part of life.

6) Lastly and most importantly, children need to be taught conflict resolution skills from preschool through college and beyond. Year in and year out, week in and week out the skills need to be practiced and applied. Conflict resolution skills are violence preventive skills that can be used and must be used all through life.

The Centers for Disease Control has issued a statement that conflict resolution should be taught as preventative education at every grade level.. I propose that we take this recommendation to heart, and as of 1996 -- or as soon as possible -- we make conflict resolution skills as much a part of our K through 12 curriculum objectives, as reading and writing. If our kids can't get along, how can they learn?

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you.

Any questions?

Mr. Corodemus.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: Ms. Siggelakis, I can't see any downside to teaching this program, and it seems like a good -- it's a foolproof logic to defusing a situation. But I'm more interested in what precipitated the need for teaching this

course? I don't know, I can't speak for you, you're younger than me, but when I went to school, we didn't have this conflict resolution curriculum.

We had to work out our problems, otherwise, we faced disciplinary proceedings -- which I took very seriously, and my classmates did -- either through the schools or ultimately our parents. Why now do we have to have this? What caused this void between when I went to school and what's happening right now with violence in the schools? If you can answer that? It's a big question.

MS. SIGGELAKIS: I've been teaching for 20 years and one of-- I've taught from kindergarten through fifth. One of the things I've always observed is that fights, disagreements, and conflicts are just part of what happens between all people, but between schoolchildren, often they don't know how to resolve these conflicts. They bring it into the classroom, they retaliate -- it could be two weeks they're angry.

Now I work in a suburban district. We haven't seen some of the more serious violence that I'm aware of, especially at the elementary level; however, the fact that children have these conflicts-- They call each other names. They start calling each other's mothers names. They may not be as serious as the problems, but it always-- It impairs their learning.

So, in my own explorations in education, I learned of conflict resolution nine or ten years ago. I've studied it. I've applied it. I see it as something very effective. I think that none of us were taught how to work out differences. We all just hit or miss, try to do our very best. I think the methods that I use are an approach that really works, and it's-- I don't know if I answered that.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Assemblywoman Wright?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm very proud to welcome Ms. Siggelakis here today.

MS. SIGGELAKIS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: She is a member of my school district in East Windsor, and I visited her school. The point I wanted to raise that occurred to me as some of the earlier speakers were speaking, was -- and Rudy might want to respond to this -- the theme of multiculturalism and the student who brought the 17-inch knife. The question I'm feeling and what made me think about it when Gail came to testify, is that at their school -- and I don't know if she's involved -- there is a multicultural day or luncheon that I attended last year.

We have some degree of multiculturalism even in the suburbs, and they focused on that. What I'm thinking, as I hear some of the people testify, is the fact that some of what we're talking about is cultural norms, too, in the sense that, maybe in Haiti you can take a 17-inch knife to the class. (laughter)

I mean, okay, what I'm questioning is: Where does multiculturalism come into the discussion? Is that a reason that we have to focus more on parenting and learning win/win, because people are approaching the social setting from different cultures? So the norms when you have a more homogeneous society, or population, or neighborhood every-- I mean, if you live in an Italian neighborhood like we have in the Burg, in Trenton, I mean, everybody knew what the norms were. But as the cultures change, and as they become more diverse, is that some of what we're dealing with here? That's a sense I'm getting as I hear the speakers talking. Rudy's shaking his head, so--

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: No, no. I just, for the most part, think that in all cultures there's a certain parental nurturing of their children. I think that goes throughout all cultures, and I think, as far as I'm concerned, my own culture and so forth.

However, what I do see in a lot of the urban settings, and especially new immigrant groups, is that people are out

working. I think it was true beforehand, and while people are out working, sometimes they don't have the time. Sometimes the parent is out of the household and is not there to take care and play that active role with the student, because he just doesn't have the time, because they're out trying to make a living or trying to improve their social condition.

That's why, I think, it's important to have those Head Start programs -- those preschool programs -- to be able to have the school try to help, interact, and work the child along -- while sometimes, as well as now, the new phenomena, and I don't think it has to do with just culture--

But I think there are a lot of independent, single-parent households, and many of those times, those parents are also out working. So I don't think it's so much a question of culturalism or the social norms of the different countries, but just the realities that are being confronted today by a lot of these parents.

Going back to Angelica's testimony, I think that does play a little bit in terms of culturalism. A lot of the role models that we have in our textbooks are certainly just of one particular group. They are really not as diverse as maybe they should be. Sometimes the children need to see someone who's more like them succeed. Someone who's like them in their color, or the way they look, or their surname, doing well. By doing that, that may also help -- bringing in some positive role models.

But, in terms of that question of the parents and what different nationalities and stuff: I think it's just today's -- what people are confronting today in the workplace, and so forth, more so than different backgrounds or beliefs. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Assemblyman Wolfe.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Yes, I-- The previous speaker, Angelica?

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: You also talked about conflict resolution. You mentioned a book title, "Learning Skills of Peacemaking" by Drew and Siggelakis?

MS. SIGGELAKIS: Naomi Drew.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Are you also one of the authors?

MS. SIGGELAKIS: Naomi Drew wrote the book, but I field tested it for her.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay, I was very impressed that not only you but also Ms. Gary spoke about problems but, also, gave us some possible solutions to those problems. I would like to ask -- since there was so much discussion on conflict resolution, and I know the Legislature is very concerned about State mandates -- is part of the elementary curriculum at all concerned right now with conflict resolution on a statewide basis that you know of or is it just within individual districts?

MS. SIGGELAKIS: I don't really know on the State level.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Right.

MS. SIGGELAKIS: I know in our districts, there are objectives for communication skills.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay.

MS. SIGGELAKIS: This does fit under communication skills, but I think it needs to be even more spelled out as conflict resolution.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you.

MS. SIGGELAKIS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: We appreciate it. Maybe you can send us a copy; we'd appreciate that.

Ms. Lynn Woods, a Special Ed. Teacher at Perry Drew School in East Windsor, as well. Good afternoon.

L Y N N W O O D S: Assemblywoman Wright, I believe that the luncheon you were speaking about was the Global Cafe Program that I developed at the Perry L. Drew School.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: It was for Special-- I couldn't remember.

MS. WOODS: Yes, it was.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Thanks.

MS. WOODS: But anyway, today, I would like to suggest that there are many causes of violent behavior. I believe one such cause is frustration caused by academic failure. This frustration may build, year after year, and is often vented through violent behavior. I believe that an important solution to this problem is prevention. We need to reach students before their frustration escalates to the point of physical aggression aimed at others.

What can we do for these kids who are failing academically and have such low self-esteem? There are many things. I would like to name a few that I believe can be effective.

First, every child needs to be treated as an individual. That is the philosophy behind special education, and it can be practiced in the mainstream classrooms as well.

All people need to feel important and have self-esteem to be successful. By acknowledging the differences in learners, we accomplish this goal. Some students may never be able to achieve the level which we expect. This must be acknowledged by the teacher, expectations need to be changed, programs adapted, and support provided.

One way to adapt programs is cooperative learning. This is an excellent way for students to be important as individuals and as a member of a group. The cooperative learning model can be used in all subject areas. Each person in the group is responsible for a specific job. One person may record the information for the group, another may have the

responsibility of making sure everyone understands the directions and so on. The important thing is that the group cannot function unless the individual parts are working together.

After-school tutoring and homework programs are essential for providing extra support for students. To do this we need to reach out to our communities. These programs may be run with volunteers such as senior citizens or those who have been assigned community service.

Community members may be involved in other ways as well. For example, several of my students play football and other sports through the town's athletic association. One coach had expressed his concern about the violence in our schools. He decided that any of his players who have been in trouble due to violent behavior will miss two practices. If a player misses a certain number of practices, he or she cannot play the next game. I have found that this is much more effective than missed recess.

I have also heard of programs where teenagers have been teamed up with physically handicapped students. Tough kids who may have failed in school have found that they can be caring individuals. The teens discovered that someone looked forward to seeing them. They were, indeed, important to someone. Sometimes, knowing someone with different challenges makes you appreciate what you may have taken for granted.

Most communities have some kind of special school for the handicapped, and some form of work-study program could be set up to allow students to earn credits for working at the school.

Parent involvement and parent education are also important aspects of prevention. Our school is currently using the F.A.S.T. Program. F.A.S.T stands for Families And Schools Together. It is a prevention program for elementary school children who are at risk for school failure, juvenile

delinquency, and substance abuse in adolescence. The program involves the schools, non-profit health services, agencies for substance abuse, and the families of children.

One reason that the program is so successful is it empowers the parents to their relationship to the school, as well as to their children.

On a much smaller scale, there are things we can do in our classrooms to make all students feel special and important. In my class, I give out Peacemaker Of The Week Awards. The students know that I am watching for any kind of peacemaking behavior. For example, helping another student with class work or walking away from a fight. I mount the award and sign it with a special message for the student, and I encourage the class members to do the same. Even my toughest student will remind me if I have not selected anyone for the award yet.

As an educator, I know how overwhelming the demands are, but as teachers we have the opportunity to affect many lives. We need to teach our students that one person can make a difference. We need to teach all our students that they are important people who can make a difference in their own lives and in the lives of others.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you, Lynne.

Are there any other questions for Lynne?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Can I just make-- Do you want to go ahead? I just want to make a comment.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: That's all right.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Go ahead, Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Your last statement about teaching the students; would you suggest that we teach the teachers, and as the teachers know this they will, within their work, do this with the children -- work with the children?

MS. WOODS: Yes, I think we definitely need teacher in-service. I know that we are also using the in-class instruction model in our school, which is where the special ed. teacher works with the regular classroom teacher, so that these kids are not pulled out for special ed. but can remain in the regular classroom. I think a lot of times I hear regular ed. teachers say, "But you're special ed. You're specially trained." I think we do need to get to the mainstream teachers and give them some training.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN CRECCO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Barbara?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, if you would just indulge me, one more comment? It's just significant to me that the name of this school is the Perry Drew School. I just want everyone to know that this Perry Drew was the head of maintenance, I believe when I was in high school or was on the staff. I believe he was honored because of the role that he played in that role.

Since we were talking about heroes before, Perry Drew was just like you and me, maybe even a more simple man. It was because of what he gave to children, I believe, in our school, in that school district -- I was in the high school there at the time, and went to school with his children -- that he was honored. I just thought that since we were talking about heroes this afternoon-- Perry Drew was not the superintendent, he wasn't the George Washington of Hightstown or East Windsor, but he was a father of children in that school, who devoted his life to some part of the school environment.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: That's wonderful, really.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: I just think it's significant that you should be from that school today.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Very nice.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Thank you for coming.

MS. WOODS: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you, Lynne.

MS. WOODS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Dr. Venable, Superintendent, Trenton School District.

Welcome Dr. Venable.

B E R N I C E P R O C T O R V E N A B L E, Ed.D.: Good afternoon and thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Good afternoon.

DR. VENABLE: Mr. Chairperson, and members of the Committee, I'm very pleased to be here. My dear friend from Newark gave me her two minutes. Thank you very much.
(laughter)

It's good to see you. I have a condensed version of what I presented to you earlier. I'm going to race through this, but I have a very important message, I believe, to bring forth to you today.

My name is Bernice Proctor Venable, and I am the Superintendent of the Trenton Public Schools in Trenton, New Jersey. Ours is an urban district of approximately 13,000 students of varying backgrounds, attending the district's 23 schools, grades K through 12. Currently, the district is over 90 percent minority, with 72 percent African-American, 19 percent Latino-American, and the remaining population includes Caucasian and Asian students.

Like most urban districts, we are faced with the complexities of the times and realize that the societal issues and conditions are truly our concern, and like it or not, we are expected to address all of them.

We have a growing number of homeless students which has changed, dramatically, within the past four years, from 90 in 1989 to about 350 today. At the same time, we are serving an ever increasing population of students who are emancipated, in other words, living on their own. Of the total student population, about 75 percent of them are eligible for some type

of public assistance. Many emanate from single-parent homes or homes where there are no parents at all.

Contrary to popular belief, our schools are still standing, most of our teachers are teaching, and the majority of our youth do come to school with a desire to learn. They are learning. We have many problems facing us, and we are addressing those problems. Our top priority is the safety of our young people, our staff, our community, and facilities.

In the time allotted I wish to comment briefly about the manner in which we in the inner city are portrayed in the media, which helps to reinforce the myths that, I believe, impact legislation.

Second, I want to give you a view of the student incident-related statistics within our district, where we are in terms of the presence of violence, as well as our new and revised policies and procedures to address this issue.

Third, I will point out the cost for the district's security measures.

Finally, I will share some of the recommendations we have brought forth for your consideration.

Historically, the coverage of inner city school districts has been one-sided, an oversimplified portrayal of the urban youth -- particularly the violence and the crime-laden experiences they witness daily, rendering them in an aura of desperation.

But who cared? Article after article, news broadcast after news broadcast, indicate we do not know what we are doing, or we are doing nothing about the growing violence. The fact is, we are doing something. We are finding that there is a small percentage of youth who are violent and commit violent acts. This gets widespread media attention. Most of our young people have aspirations and dreams, but, daily, encounter some form of violence which continues to obfuscate their ability to

get an education. For this, we must focus on those who cause the problems in the first place, as well as the outside forces that perpetuate them.

I know you do not direct the media -- particularly print media -- but if you continue hearings or forums such as this, you will get a greater insight about what is occurring. Violence and related problems are not isolated to urban centers. In this school year, we have learned of a variety of incidents in suburban districts, from a drive-by shooting to a major drug bust, yet, those districts are not written off as total failures.

The young people today are telling us something, and we need to listen. Recently, we administered a series of student surveys. I will report on the one administered in the fall -- involving about 100 high school seniors. The most interesting finding: while the majority of those surveyed felt safe, they perceived that they would be happier and learn more if they felt even safer. Coupled with that, about one-third of the seniors said alternative schools would be best for making schools safer. They also reported a need for metal detectors and increased security personnel, and, by the way, these students wanted the security personnel in uniforms and trained. I was happy to hear the gentleman from Newark talk about security earlier.

On another occasion, a middle school student wrote to me and called on me to do something. She said, "Do something more." We have begun to reexamine our policies and how we carry out our procedures, for what is being done is not as effective as it should be. We now have a new policy for random search with metal detectors and a revised policy for suspension and expulsion. I might add, it's mandatory expulsion for carrying weapons.

Our reporting system has been fine-tuned and includes a dual notification to police and the district's central

office. The procedures also require completion not only of the mandated vandalism and violence report but also four other reports. The local statistics do clarify what is at issue. When we closely review the month of March, for instance, in terms of total incidences, there were 166 instances involving a small percentage of the student population from elementary to high school. When we teased back the data, we had a clearer view of what those incidences entailed.

We are seeing trends which will help to guide our action in planning for the future. Out of 166 total incidences, 74, or 45 percent, were either assaults or threats; 34, or 20 percent, vandalism, and another 34 percent -- I'm sorry 34, or 20 percent, were for fighting; 16, or perhaps 10 percent, were for theft. Additionally, we had 8 out of 166 incidences, or 5 percent, involving weapons of some type.

We define weapons in accordance with Webster as, "An instrument used in offensive or defensive combat." We consider weapons anything used with an intent to do harm or bring injury to another. The range of weapons, by the way, goes from Binaca mouth spray, Clorox, mace, broom handles, to carpet cutters and knives. I might point out, no use of firearms or drive-by shootings have occurred.

When we reviewed our suspension rate for 1992-'93, we found a decline in the out-of-school suspension in all of our schools over the 1991-1992 year by approximately one-fifth. However, for the in-school suspension -- which is on the rise-- We have made a concerted effort to increase our alternative approaches through strategies and programs for the middle schools and the high schools. I will say the middle school level is where we see the greatest frequency of violent acts at this point in time, more so than the high school.

We know, of course, that more alternatives are needed including the temporary -- and I repeat, the temporary -- removal of students with behavior problems to another location.

I could go on and talk very much about our at-risk teens that we have, our new security officers, and the fact that we have reconvened a staff of people who we call at this time our Safety Task Force. But I want to stress the importance of one thing that we're doing, and that is that we are bringing the community together. We're asking them to help us by shoring up safe corridors and playground areas around our school. These are volunteers. We're asking for males, primarily, to help us, because we recognize that they are the ones who are going to help us to increase the fact that there are going to be a safe places around our schools for our children.

We have also increased the funding for conflict resolution and leadership activities, including peer leadership, as well as mediation. All of this is costing us money. I have included for you a listing of what that money is going to. When it comes to security, it is well over \$2 million. With a very, very, tight budget, this is impossible for us to continue. We need you to demonstrate your commitment to make schools safer for all of us.

I, therefore, in closing, strongly urge you to take a look at all of the listing -- you do have the listing in front of you -- but for the purpose of the audience, I will point out a few of these. I am stressing that you take a good look at the Violence and Vandalism Prevention Task Force report -- that is the one that was completed not too long ago -- especially items F and G. I think that is important, because it talks about programming. It talks about reporting of the violence in the schools. I also would hope that you would increase funding for peer leadership, mediation, student mentoring, conflict resolution, you name it, because it's going to be very, very, important, as well as the training for staff for holocaust and genocide awareness prevention. That is critical.

I believe that you need to support the conversion of the State's largest high schools into smaller houses. This will bring a sense of community to youth. I am saying that because I have just recently returned from the American Educational Research Association Convention. They stressed the fact that we need to bring more of a community inside of these larger schools. We need to make these schools smaller, and it is -- obviously you've heard this -- smaller is sometimes better.

In the case of high schools, that may be the case. I know this for sure: I have a high school with 3000 students. We need to take a look at gang psychology and understand the amount of support school districts will require to ward off early enough -- and some have already indicated this today -- as early as kindergarten.

We need to ward off the proliferation of the lure for gang membership. Some of these youth are potentially great leaders, and we need to understand that. I would think it's critical that we talk about this, and it really bothers me because this is something that we haven't done before.

We have seen Hands Across New Jersey for everything else. I think it's time we have a Hands Across New Jersey for an end to violence this spring. I would hope that you would help us by eliciting support from parents, ministers, rabbis, priests, community leaders, and the private sector to help.

I'm also indicating here that I seek support for collaborative measures for alternative programming for our students -- county and regional. We're doing that in Mercer County already.

I am not an advocate of boot camps. Boot camps have their place, but we need to spend more time and resources on the preventative side. I believe that we need to keep schools open longer and later, for the mere fact that we can raise the student's level of performance, and at the same time, we can

fill the void that sometimes helps to get them into trouble. I think we need to stiffen penalties for repeaters and give incentives to the students -- and there are many of them -- who do well. We need to help them. Of course, we need to demonstrate leadership and a commitment to a violence free environment. I believe that we need to ensure automatic protection for teachers and students on the school grounds at all times.

In closing, I want to say that with regard to the record keeping and recording this needs to be computerized around the State. If we have disks for statewide budget information, we should have a similar capacity to facilitate direct, instantaneous reporting and provide parents and school authorities with immediate feedback about children's behavior. I am telling you I have parents who tell us, "Oh, the children get to the mail." They don't know what's going on. The administrators get upset with the parents. We need to do something about providing immediate feedback, and maybe the computer will help us.

There is also the need for a statewide network for juvenile offenders. I support efforts for a reform of the State's network. I believe that it's long overdue.

Finally, I want to make it very, very clear we must strategize for a great war on violence. The stakes are very high, and emergency preparedness will be needed to do the job that must be done. We need parents, school people, as well as the entire community. I believe that it is significant to us if legislators are involved in this and the private sector to join hands all over the State to wipe out violence wherever it is.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you, Dr. Venable. You have a huge task as Superintendent of Trenton; there's no doubt about it. It's a large district. I'm happy to hear you say

many of your students are interested in working hard each and every day. I think that's true as I go around the State. But there are, you know, the percentage that poses the problem and then generates the media attention that we have today.

In dealing with that small number, you know, whether 5 percent, for instance, in your survey indicated that they had used guns or some kind of knife or whatever-- You've indicated -- you do have suspension for that?

DR. VENABLE: Oh, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Not expulsion, just suspension?

DR. VENABLE: Well, we have a new policy now -- I should add that it is an amended policy -- because we've always had a policy of suspension and expulsion like all of the districts around the State. But what we are doing now, we've made it very, very clear that we have a mandatory expulsion for people carrying weapons with the intent, obviously, to harm.

We also know that this triggers a lot of study on a particular student. You just do not automatically expel anyone's child. It is a matter that is a very serious one, because I'm not in the business of putting them out of school. I'm in the business of keeping them in school. Expulsion should be a rarity, no matter where.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: What other suggestions do you have for the 5 percent, 10 percent -- whatever that number may be in terms of--

DR. VENABLE: I believe that we--

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: --the disruption of the learning of others, I guess is the--

DR. VENABLE: I believe that we need to remove them from the environment. I believe that we need to have alternative programs. I think that our quest right now, in Trenton-- As one of the centers in Mercer County, we have collaborated with all of the other districts to come up with the RFP for a grant, which would provide us with an alternative

school for county students, who, for whatever reason, have found time to just misbehave when other children are trying to learn.

Our students will tell you in a minute, "Yes we may have problems, but the problems are nowhere near what has been reported."

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: That's good to hear. Questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: I live in Union City, New Jersey, and we have one grammar school that houses 1600 kids. I think it's the largest grammar school in the State. There are around 30 kids or more per class. I was just wondering what you felt was an appropriate number of students in an urban setting to have in a classroom?

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Class size?

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Class size.

DR. VENABLE: Are you ready to hear this? As far as I'm concerned-- Because it's like a geometric progression when you talk about the children, that's why I mentioned the demographics because these children come from -- they emanate from homes that are nontraditional, but we're seeing that also in the suburban communities. I believe that a middle school of any location, but especially in the inner city, should not have more than maybe 400 or 500 students in the building. At the same time, as far as the classes are concerned, 18 to 20. I repeat, 18 to 20.

That's necessary, because we're talking-- We already heard a young lady speak of the situation with special ed. students. We need to take that model and make our normal students a part of that particular model. Obviously, we could not afford to do something like that, but we will need to do something soon, because we are in, really, a very, very serious situation, that is, large middle schools. The biggest problem I have right now happens to be the frequency of violence that occurs in my middle schools, then it goes on to the high

school, if it's not abated. If you're going to have a middle school the size of 1600 students, you're creating your own situation.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: I agree with you. I was with the principal last night. We were struggling to find money and a location to build a -- desperately need to build another school. I was just -- he doesn't know what to do anymore--

DR. VENABLE: I would hope you all-- We're looking to you. I would really hope that you would look at the possibility of providing the grant entitlements -- this was done once before -- to add to the facilities in the urban centers or to at least repair the facilities.

We have received one of those grants. We're expanding an elementary school. It won't be a large number of students coming into that wing, but we have made good use of the money. I would hope that this is something that can be done in the future.

I have a high school that needs to be cut down. It is just too large. My students are telling me on a regular basis that they're sick and tired of a high school with 3000 children, because the few who make trouble can cause havoc for everybody, and they do.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: I'd also like to say that another one of your comments was interacting the parents and the school through a computer. We're also fortunate enough-- Fortunately, we have that school that's 1600 school children. We also have a brand-new grammar school, which we built to accommodate some of those students, but not enough. It's called the Christopher Columbus School.

DR. VENABLE: I've heard of it.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: We did a model project with Bell Atlantic, where not only do all the students have computer terminals in the school--

DR. VENABLE: They have them at home.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: --they also have them in the home. So I was talking to him, as well. The teacher leaves comments for the parents on the computer.

DR. VENABLE: On the computer.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: So when the parent gets home-- Sometimes they get home late at night and don't have a chance to go in and discuss directly with the teacher but will have a message on the computer. The parent can write back to the teacher and take care of the situation or praise the student for whatever happened in the classroom. So I think you're right on target on that.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Dr. Venable, you know, there will be a bond issue out.

DR. VENABLE: That's wonderful.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Right now it's about \$250 million. I have it -- I'm working on it now. That's in our list of bills to tier in the future, but we certainly know that facilities are a critical problem.

DR. VENABLE: That is.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Especially in the special needs districts and there is a focus on that.

David?

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Yes, Dr. Venable, thank you. I just have two questions, both involve parents. Do you believe or feel that parents should in some way be held accountable for the actions of their children while they are in the schools?

DR. VENABLE: Absolutely. As a matter of fact, on the middle school level, just a year-- Prior to our early warning testing, we got parents involved by asking them to sign contracts. I believe the parents should be so much involved in schools they almost need a course like a parent university.

Because we do not have a traditional situation in this country anymore. I don't care how much money you give us, and I don't care how many great strategies we have, you name it,

unless those parents are right there with the educators, it is going to be very, very difficult to move an educational agenda forward.

We have to have the parent involvement, and we need it now. We needed it a long time ago. Of course, we had it, maybe, in the suburban communities, but even in those communities you're finding more and more people working. They are not home. They are not involved with the children at school, and it's now beginning to show up in the test results. It's beginning to show up in the overall behavior of the children. They are just going out of whack. We have to bring it all back.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: I was approached by a teacher in a Monmouth County urban school requesting that legislation be introduced that would increase the financial penalty for parents of truant students. Do you feel this is something that would help out in the schools?

DR. VENABLE: That might help scare some people, but I know parents you can't scare.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Right.

DR. VENABLE: I mean, I don't have to tell you, I can name about five that, right now, if they walked in, they would scare you. Nothing you can do about penalties will do a thing with those parents. But I'm telling you that the majority of the parents of the children who normally come to school, if they knew that their parents were backing them up--

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Right.

DR. VENABLE: --they would definitely do better in school, yes. The bottom line is that we have to do something. As far as the penalty being increased, I don't know if that will do a lot.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay, thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Dr. Venable.

DR. VENABLE: It's good to see you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: We do appreciate the efforts that you've put forth in the Trenton School District, in Mercer County.

Assemblyman Wolfe did tick off a thought for me. Just in the press in the last two days, former Governor Tom Kean talked about -- he testified in Washington about whether or not children should continue in families where there are problems that appear to be insurmountable, in the sense of these children's well being. I'm a great advocate of the home as the basis for growth, support, and development.

(portion of testimony lost due to technical problems)

DR. VENABLE: Of course, DFYS is responsible for overseeing students or children who are not able, for whatever reason, to be with their families. We do, as I indicated before, have a lot of homeless children; a lot of emancipated children; a lot of children who do not want to live with their folks anymore; and the other, vice versa, the folks don't want to live with the children. So we have that kind of a situation.

But I would hope that New Jersey, since it's a leader in so many other things-- I would hope that New Jersey would take the lead in going into what is called "seamless education." Get these kids early -- as early as preschool, if not sooner -- and keep them right straight through. Make sure that they either go to work or they go onto college, but no one hanging on any corner. That means keeping the schools open longer in a lot of places.

With other states, we're finding that the schools have become the safe havens or the shelters. I just found out that there are some schools now that are thinking about staying open until 2 a.m. in the morning, in the inner city, because they know that if they don't stay open, those kids are going to hang out there on the street. Obviously, that's not necessary in

every community, but where it's necessary, I think it needs to be funded. I honestly believe that's the only way we're going to turn this around.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Dr. Venable, on that train of thought, do you think there's a place for residential settings?

DR. VENABLE: Remember I said, "I'm not interested in boot camps."

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: No, I'm not thinking boot camp. Let's say on an elementary level, bringing the child in early to a residential setting.

DR. VENABLE: If it's primarily to ensure that they're going to improve the academic level of the child?

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Oh, absolutely. Sure.

DR. VENABLE: If that's the case, I could see that happening, because I know that we have some children out there who are eating out of garbage cans. They have no place to go, and all they do is carry their book bag around and around and around until the next morning to go into school. They are doing that, and it has become a reality in a lot of cities and in a lot of the older suburban communities. Don't forget the older suburban communities, because they are--

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: I plan to pursue that a little bit more.

DR. VENABLE: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Maybe I'll be back in touch with you, in regard to--

DR. VENABLE: Okay. And I just-- I was so bold, I brought with me one of the latest editions of the high school newspaper. I'm going to leave it with you. I'm going to start it over here with Ms. Wright. There's a letter that a student wrote about what she feels about how Trenton Central High School really is existing on a daily basis. You need to see -- read what she is saying, because it's very interesting and I

think it speaks well for a lot of the urban centers. Many children are learning.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Oh, there are many, many students, no doubt about that. We appreciate it, Dr. Venable.

DR. VENABLE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: We have Ms. Mary Bennett, Principal of Malcom X Shabazz High School. Welcome.

MARY G. BENNETT: Good afternoon. My name is Mary Bennett, and I am the Principal of Malcom X Shabazz High School, in Newark. I have 1300 young people. My population is 95 percent Black, 5 percent Hispanic. I have been the principal, proudly so, for five years.

I think the topic that you're addressing today is one that is most definitely in need of being addressed, and the people need to look at it collectively.

The violence that is talked about in today's society is not just talk; it's unfortunately a reality. I am not suggesting, by any means, that there is a violent episode in my school or every other school on a daily basis. However, the constant threat of violence erupting is a daily reality in my school and in so many other schools across this country.

Educational research, for decades, has focused on the importance of school climate. There is no shortage of studies that clearly show that schools must be places where teachers can teach and students can learn. Establishing and maintaining a safe and orderly school climate in today's society is a major challenge every day.

Schools are reflections of society. Violence in society has escalated. Consequently, the murder rate, rates of assaults, robbery, auto theft, and most other crimes have increased significantly during the past five to ten years. Therefore, what we see in schools, in terms of violence, is a direct mirror to what's going on outside the building.

Students bring into school so much of what they see outside of school. The staff of a school must constantly be on alert to try to keep outside problems outside. One of the most prevalent types of violence, in my building, is the violence that begins outside and then is brought inside. Why? Because our school is the community high school. So you have young people who have disagreements, and some of these disagreements occur over the weekend.

We find ourselves confronted on Monday morning and throughout the week trying to address them. Unfortunately, when they occurred in the community, no one there addressed them. Parents, whose homes are often difficult to manage and whose lives are, in many instances, filled with many trials and tribulations, try to calm the violence for the moment and really don't consider the impact it's going to have on the school when it arrives on our doorstep.

As part of the school's alert for violence, security measures are attempted. This includes unarmed security guards; we have a walk-through metal detector; we have hand-held metal detectors, and, periodically, we inspect book bags and purses. While none of these measures guarantees that no weapons will enter the building, we do hope that it lessens the fear and anxiety that our staff and our students have, and, thereby, allows them to focus on what school is supposed to be.

I must stress that there is a sacrifice for these attempts to maintain a secure environment. My instructional staff has had to yield time, because it takes time to check 1300 young people one way or the other. However, they are supportive and the students are supportive. Although they know it's not foolproof, they feel that it's worth it to try to maintain that we are in school to learn, and we should not be worrying about guns and knives.

What I'm finding most troubling at this point is the verbal, emotional, and mental abuse that young people inflict

upon one another. It has never been easy to be a teenager, but right now, the peer pressure that the young folks live under and function under seems to dominate so much of their lives.

They're very, very concerned about their peers thinking they are men and women. You'll have young people who are friends joking one minute, then suddenly the joke turns ugly and they're combatants. While they are combating each other, there will be others standing by encouraging them or, in some instances, joining in. That's a very distressing and very unhealthy situation. But it does, as Ms. Hillman-Jones indicated, reflect what they see: television, movies, etc.

We need to do a lot of things. I've heard some very good suggestions here. We've tried some things at Malcom X Shabazz High School; we have not found the solution. This year, I have some students who are working -- a small group of freshmen -- working through learning how to use conflict mediation strategies, but they're freshmen. Freshmen, traditionally in the high school, are the low people on the totem pole. It's hard to get upperclassman to listen to them seriously, but these young people have learned some strategies that they're working with, with one another that I hope, over time, will prove positive.

We need to reach out into the community. Definitely, we've got to work with community agencies, with churches, with whomever has resources and a willingness to help us help these young people.

Staff development: Real staff development is critical. The teachers are the people who reach the students on a daily basis. Therefore, if they are better equipped; if they've been trained in conflict mediation; if they've been trained in cooperative learning; if they've been trained in those strategies that they can draw upon to help young people, it might better equip them to solve a disagreement, less with anger, less with hostility and more with thought, and walk away

with what the one young woman referred to as a win/win situation.

It's a challenge everyday to work with the young people. But I don't think there's any challenge greater, because, if we don't take care of them today, they won't be prepared to take care of us tomorrow.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you. Before we get into any questions, would you like to have your students come up and join you?

MS. BENNETT: Surely. I have two students with me, As Samad Harvell and Stephen Wilson. As Samad is a junior and Stephen is a freshman.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Okay. Would you like to come up and join Ms. Bennett, maybe bring another chair up there as well? Maybe we can reserve the questions until the two students have completed-- Why don't we start with Steve Wilson, first. Welcome, Steve.

S T E P H E N W I L S O N: Thank you. My name is Stephen Wilson. I'm a student at Malcom X Shabazz High School. I'm in the ninth grade.

My topic is, we have nothing to do but commit crimes. Violence is a very important issue. It is a result of all the negative things that are going on in the schools and streets of the city of Newark.

You asked about preventing violence in the schools and streets. Well, here's how. School is like a tree, and violence is a branch. To stop the violence, you cannot cut away the branch and think that the tree will not grow another branch. It will grow one that is bigger and stronger than the one you cut away. You have to get to the root of things: the root of crimes, the root of drive-by shoot-outs, drug addiction, etc. As a result, you will have more students at school and off the streets.

You must destroy the violence branch, which is getting to the root of why some students come to school to sell or take drugs; why some come to fight; some come dressed to impress; and why some lack self-discipline and have little interest in school.

The poor black people have no positive role models. The only role models are the drug dealers. No one is there to discipline us. Everyone is always saying we need self-discipline, but the young black man cannot have self-discipline if we don't have self-discipline at home.

People are always criticizing us, saying we have nothing to live for. If we are called nothing and live in nothing, how do you expect us to be someone, when we have no one?

It is sad because they are always telling us, don't get caught up in the statistics. But when you are born in the city, you are already caught up in statistics. The question is: How can you get out of statistics? The answer: There is no way out, but to give them a lot of activity programs.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you, Stephen, very good.

Mr. Harvell.

A S S A M A D H A R V E L L: Good afternoon.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Good afternoon.

MR. HARVELL: My name is As Samad Harvell. I'm a junior at Malcom X Shabazz High School in Newark, and this is how I see violence in school:

Every morning students report to school, which should be a place for learning and opportunities. But senseless violence throws a wrench in its works and stunts the development of tomorrow's youth; therefore, causing attendance to worsen and an increase in high school dropouts.

A student should only have to worry about maintaining his or her grades when attending school. Instead, they become victims to unnecessary overexertion of force applied by other

students who have no respect for education or school authority. The aggressive attitudes of these students are usually provoked by sometimes minute and trivial situations. These minute and trivial occurrences happen at the students' homes or out in the streets and are brought into our schools.

The students are only products of their environment, which, in my case, is Newark. Newark is a fast-paced city that is moving in an upward direction and is, once again, demanding its respect. The only way for the people, who are the products of their environment, to keep up is to stay one step ahead and try to rule the environment, as individuals and as groups.

Unfortunately, but true, deaths occur as a result of violence in the schools, and as more violence occurs in schools, we not only hurt ourselves but tomorrow-- In order to assure ourselves a worthwhile tomorrow, we should direct our aggression not in violence but in an effort to conquer our education. So, when it is time for us to rule the world, we can do it the way that we want to do. By doing this, we will indeed reflect our motto at Malcom X Shabazz: "Education is the key to success."

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you, Mr. Harvell.

We'll have the questioning now. Why don't I just start off and--

Can you tell me, basically, as you go through your classes everyday, Stephen, and the students basically-- As you go through your classes every day, is it hard for those students who are really trying to get an education, working hard at it, attending all the classes-- I mean, do you get some heat from the other students, as to the fact that you might be too concerned about education?

MR. WILSON: Yes. As you are in your classroom, doing your schoolwork or whatever, there are a lot of knuckleheads out there talking and slowing the class work up. That's less

education for you, because they're trying to get them more discipline, instead of giving us education.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: So a lot of class time, instead of working on a subject matter, might be spent just getting students under control before the teacher can begin?

MR. WILSON: Yes.

MR. HARVELL: It's also hard for a student that's trying to focus on his school work to maintain his concentration when the student who is being disruptive is a student that is feared throughout the school, a student that belongs to a gang--

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Sure.

MR. HARVELL: --is known for beating up other students in the school. So, you know, when the teacher-- The teacher is trying to gain control. The teachers sometimes have to watch themselves for what they say to that student and others, to keep situations under control, because some of the things that happen in school -- it's just uncalled-for, unneeded and should be stopped.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Do you think with a student like that, after 3 or 4 serious situations, that expulsion would work? I mean, just get them out of the school environment?

MR. WILSON: Permanently, yes. It will work for the student-- It will work for the students who want to learn, but then what about the students who have no self-discipline, who don't have help at home, what about them? Do we just kick them out of the schools and let them be nothing?

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Okay. Let's say after three or four warnings for some serious offense, don't you think that's enough to give them the message?

MR. WILSON: Yes, that is enough to give them a message.

MR. HARVELL: But when a student has nothing to aim for, you know--

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: So he has no major goal--

MR. HARVELL: --no major goal--

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: The person that's expelled is then--

MR. HARVELL: --no father, no mother to look up to, no one to set an example, or for that fact, a standard. You know, students just act on instinct. What they see and what they are involved with in the streets, they bring it into the schools and try to make themselves comfortable in a place where they're not accepted, you know, as like they would be accepted out in the streets.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: That's a good analogy. As a principal, and I hate to tell you this, but I was also a principal for a number of years-- (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: What haven't you done?

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: What haven't I done?

You know, I know how tough it is to keep the schedule going, to know where everyone is, and to try to deal with security as well -- who is wandering the halls and what's going on in the school environment. You know, that's an extremely difficult task, to say the least, as well as carry on the educational program, but are there any suggestions in regard to the disruptive students?

It seems to me, as we talk to superintendents in urban areas -- and I grew up in an urban area, you know, I'm very familiar with it-- I guess my question is: We have such a small group that's posing -- seems to be posing -- the major problems within the school environment, the real question is, when do we deal with these students? When do we say, "This is it; we've had enough; our backs are against the wall at this point"? Maybe expulsion is necessary. Maybe residential situations are necessary for disruptive students. Is there anything that comes to your mind as to how we would deal with those students that are just interfering with the learning of others?

MS. BENNETT: We have an alternative high school in Newark. When I have a youngster who has either brought a weapon to school or has approached a teacher in a threatening manner -- and the teacher is willing to follow through and document what has occurred -- then I can request placement of the student there. It's a small school. It has a limited enrollment. Consequently, there are only so many young people who can be placed there, and they tend to go and stay for one or two cycles and return.

What I've watched, over my tenure as a principal, is that many do well in that environment because it is small, it's contained, they don't have the physical plant. My building covers a full city block. In the old building, which was built in 1914, there are four floors and two basements. In the new building, which opened in 1976 -- that's the addition -- it has three floors and two subbasements. So I mean, there's a lot of space to work with.

You have a situation where some students go there and do well, and while they're gone whatever element of disruptiveness they brought to my building is no longer there, but there does come a point in time when they come back. I think what we have to look at is there are some young people who simply do not function well in large environments; however, they function very well in small environments. If they function well in small environments, those environments need to be shored up. They need to be able to finish out their education there, because, like Stephen said, I'm not a proponent for putting young people on the street.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Right, right.

MS. BENNETT: But at the same time, I can only sacrifice so much of the education of students who want to learn, to those who want to be disruptive or have other kinds of problems. There are young people who have a host of problems that I'm not prepared, at Malcom X Shabazz, to handle.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Right. It seems to me that when we build new schools, as we begin to build more and more schools in the urban settings, we ought to look at a smaller size, 700 or 800 as opposed to 1000 or 2000.

MS. BENNETT: Ms. Wright asked Mr. Swinney earlier, "Were there some schools that have fewer problems than others?" Most definitely the magnet schools in Newark: These are schools where youngsters take tests to get in and know that they have to maintain proper behavior and good attendance to remain there. They have far fewer problems, because they know if they do not do what they need to do, they will be returned to their home school.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: But does that pull out the role models from your school or from other schools, because of their--

MS. BENNETT: To a degree, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: --because they're in the magnet schools?

MS. BENNETT: To a degree it does. We do not get the mix of students that we would like. But that's not to say that I don't have some highly motivated, highly academically-oriented students. But by the same token, just by virtue of the existence of the magnet schools, which do what they're supposed to do-- They have a very concentrated focus on college preparation, where my school is a comprehensive high school. We do offer college prep courses, but not to the degree that one of the magnet schools would do so.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: It seems the ongoing theme basically with disruption -- a disruptive student is -- that's the person they have to deal with later in the day. I guess one of the comments was that individual is trying to feel comfortable in the school environment when they're not or to make that environment as disruptive as possible, so he feels

more comfortable. I think that's something we have to look at very carefully, that very small group.

Steve did you have a question? I know you have to leave.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman, I have to leave early, but I just wanted to thank the Principal and her two students for coming.

You know, you two folks are like our windows. We don't often get the opportunity to actually talk to the students in this situation. I compliment you. You sat there very quietly through two hours of testimony, and that's not always easy.

But I just wanted to ask you a question -- your opinion. I don't know if you want to speak on behalf of all your friends and classmates at school. If I could paint the picture of a situation for you, I'd like to know how you would react to it?

If, in addition to your regular school hours -- let's say 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. or 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. or whenever you go -- you had additional hours or activities at the school, such as an after-school program where you could play some type of sports, maybe even having a dinner meal served there, and perhaps some activities after that into the late hours -- I don't know about 2 o'clock in the morning, but until 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock -- how would you two guys react to that, and how do you think your friends might receive that?

MR. HARVELL: Me, myself when the bell rings, I'm ready to go home. I don't want to stay there any more. I served my time; I'm ready to go home. (laughter) But for some people, some students that I know, it would provide a place better than what they know after school.

Because I have friends, close friends, who don't attend school for reasons of not having a place to stay or place to get themselves together in the morning, and that's

just-- I guess the school, later hours or extracurricular activities at the school, will provide a better place or a better situation for a student to get into, instead of the streets after school.

MR. WILSON: I live on a block where you have to walk behind cars to make sure there are no drive-bys coming by or nothing. So mainly, after school, I stay indoors. I get into a lot of activities, a lot of sports, and a lot of things that can keep me off the streets. Because the streets-- The streets are influencing a lot of kids to do a lot of things. So mainly, I do a lot of things, a lot of positive things to keep me off the streets, so when I get home, all I have to do is take my shower and go to sleep.

But yes, it should be. There are a lot of things out there, but for the kids who are not capable of playing sports, who are not good enough, there should be more opportunities for them, because there are some people who are not talented enough to play basketball or football or any other kind of sport.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Steve, Mr. Chairman, if I may, I just want to give you a little bit of my own experience. I grew up in a single-parent household, and I grew up in Union City. When I was in grammar school, there was a program called Afterschool Day Care Program. I don't know if it was in all the schools throughout the State, but this program had not only recreational activities, but they had ceramics, they had rooms where you could go in-- I learned how to play the violin; they taught how to play instruments. They had all different extracurricular activities. I know for me, my mom wouldn't get home till six, so I would stay in the school from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., and it was certainly a place that really helped me and really helped my friends when we were going through grammar school. So I think those types of programs are essential and desperately needed.

ASSEMBLYMAN CORODEMUS: Excuse me, Mr. Chairman, thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Thank you, Steve.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you for being with us today, Assemblyman Corodemus.

Ms. Bennett, is that one of your students? (indicating member of audience) (negative response) I was going to say we'd like to hear from some of the women, maybe about-- (laughter) We know what the problems of the--

MS. BENNETT: Female students?

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: --male students are. Do you have any insight for us in terms of the female students?

MS. BENNETT: The female students, I find, have the roughest transition to high school in their freshman year. I have young ladies right now, who are freshman, who are fighting still -- they can't quite remember what the first fight was about, and they were in sixth grade. It's a very, very long-standing feud mentality with many of the female students. The fellows, depending upon where they live, depending upon their affiliation in the community, can sometimes have a disagreement with someone, and it's over.

But with the girls, they tend to harbor it a bit more; it doesn't seem to die out as easily. I've watched this grow more with the freshman girls over the last three years, than I had seen in the two years prior to that.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Does it seem to you that female students are more physically violent, now, than in the past?

MS. BENNETT: The female students do a lot of screaming, screeching, pulling hair, and pulling clothes. The blows that they land are not as lethal, usually, as those that the young men tend to inflict on one another, but they're definitely sincere about being angry for much longer periods of time. They're not interested in conflict mediation no matter

how hard you try. Oftentimes that goes back to a whole lot of other things in their backgrounds.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Okay.

Barbara?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: I just wanted to ask the students if they could give us one or two things that have made a difference in their lives, and the reason that they're here telling us about how to avoid violence? What has impacted-- How have you been helped to grow in a healthy way? What is it about your growing up that made a difference?

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Good question.

MR. HARVELL: The first thing that made me want to be different from everybody else, as far as violence and wasting my time being at school, was the death of my mother about two years ago, when I was a freshman. You know, I see my surroundings, and I'm having a hard time coming up in this situation. It's a mess. I would like to call it other than the situation, because it's worse than a situation. It's garbage, really. What I have to come up and see.

I want to provide a future for myself, and one day have a son. I don't want to have him come up in what I had to come up in. You know, something a little bit better, something to say, "Well my father did a little something for me. So this is going to make me want to do a little something for my next generation to keep things going right."

Because the streets are nowhere to be growing up, especially if you plan on being something. Things happen, freak accidents, I mean, stolen cars -- children -- little children getting run over. I mean, this type of stuff happens everyday. I have to keep my little sister in the house. She can't go outside because stolen cars shoot through my block -- which is not really a street it's like a pathway for people to walk with benches -- but stolen cars shoot through there, you know, running from cops and stuff, man. It's been two or three

occasions where there have been kids outside and, you know, on a couple of occasions, kids have been hit by stolen cars. So, you know, just me wanting to provide something better for the next person. You know, that's just maybe one--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Do I hear you saying that your parents then have had a great influence on you and your goals?

MR. HARVELL: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: How about for you, Stephen, is it?

MR. WILSON: My mother had a great influence on me too. She died in December. But it was a lot of things. A lot of people have influenced me to do things. I had positive role models. A lot of cops, State Troopers, role models, who took me out and did a lot of things with me, spent a lot of time with me. But I was also into ABC Tennis, which kept me off the streets a lot.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: A tennis program?

MR. WILSON: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Have you, both of you, grown up in the Newark school systems?

MR. HARVELL: Yes.

MR. WILSON: All my life..

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Okay, that was the other thing I was going to ask.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Well, thank you very much--

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: A question.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Okay Rudy, one last one, because we're trying to finish by 4 p.m., and we want to get to the rest of the speakers.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Just quickly, when you're in the classroom, can you tell which teachers are more concerned about you through their efforts and the work? Does that make you perform better or worse, depending upon how much the teacher is directly interested in you?

MR. WILSON: Yes, I could tell a big, big difference. When you ask a teacher a question, they'll answer you and their response is real quick. If a teacher dislikes you or doesn't like what you do, they'll ignore you or "ig" you. That will make you feel uncomfortable in that class, and make you, like, kind of fail that class. But if a teacher is interested in your work and shows appreciation, then that makes you get better grades.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Did you want to respond to that?

MR. HARVELL: Teachers' attitudes vary. It all depends on who is in the classroom at that time, you know. I'll take a math class, for instance; a teacher can sit there and repeat the same problem eight times. When she gives us the same problem as a quiz, "Take out a sheet of paper, we going to try this." You know, it's still somebody -- or four or five students that say, "I don't know how to do this. You're not teaching this right. You don't know what you're doing."

When you tell the teacher that she doesn't know what she's doing, she's going to take it well, "All right, I don't know what I'm doing, so you get up here and teach the class." So the teacher just gets an attitude to the point where, "If I can't teach you-- This is my job here. I'm going to get paid regardless. You know, if I sit here for 40 minutes or if I teach you something for 40 minutes, I'm going to get paid at the end of the week, or whatever." So, you know, the teachers, it all varies.

Some teachers have a way of relating to the students through a sense of humor, or for that fact, a strong attitude. Like, if you get smart, "You're bad enough to kick my butt, then get up and do it." Sometimes that's what it takes or sometimes, you know, just a teacher who you can talk to other than being, "Well, why did I get an F?" If I can go to my teacher and chat with her for a minute and see my problems and see what I can do to better myself. Then it all helps.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Great, I think you've given us some good insight. We appreciate it very much. Thanks for bringing the students with you. (applause)

MS. BENNETT: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: We are running out of time so if the remaining speakers would be brief. I'm not trying to cut anybody short here, but--

Welcome.

ROSEMARY BROOKS - BITTINGS: Thank you. First of all, let me say thank you very much for inviting me. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in front of you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: It's a pleasure to have you here.

MS. BROOKS-BITTINGS: My name is Rosemary Brooks-Bittings. I am a teacher in the History Department in the Irvington School District. Our school population at the high school is about 3000 students, but the population was designed for 1800.

I've been a teacher for more than 15 years and have witnessed acts of violence increasing in the school each year. Students have become violent with each other, their teachers, and other personnel. While few guns and knives have been found in the building, we know they are there, as they are in schools all over the State.

At the end of last school year -- while waiting for a pizza delivery for my students -- I witnessed something that would change my life. I witnessed a child, across the street from the school, being macheted.

I watched in horror as one student after another struck this child repeatedly. I ran in the building screaming, "Call the police," and was able to get help for this child. Thank God the student was not killed, but that situation was the last straw for me.

I had long talked about how something had to be done to address violent students and, thus, keep the rest of our

students safe. But then, I knew I could no longer wait, that I had to do something before it was too late.

So, after attending the legislative weekend in September, I decided to write a bill that would provide protection for our kids and school personnel, while also giving the violent student a real chance for rehabilitation.

I sought the help of Senator Ron Rice, a Democratic Representative from Essex County, who has been a longtime supporter of education. Together, we fine-tuned this legislation that would allow us to take back our schools and ensure our students and their families that getting a good education is the only thing they need to be concerned about in our schools.

The bill will remove violent students, those who carry weapons, etc., from the schools and place them in an Alternative School Program, thus, allowing two things: One, our students to be in a safe school environment and the violent students to get help for real rehabilitation. I am proud to announce, with the efforts of Mayor Steele of Irvington, we will be starting a pilot program.

The problem: Violence has become pervasive in schools, leading to a direct and negative effect on the learning processes. This is happening in all school settings, from the urban public systems to the most exclusive suburban, private and public schools. No longer can it be taken for granted that school is the safe haven where students can enter to learn in safety and comfort and then depart to become a viable component in society. Fear is becoming an everyday experience for the average school student.

The three R's are no longer the major concern of pupils and/or personnel. It has now become the four R's: It is now reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic, and risk. Children cannot effectively learn where they do not feel safe and secure.

Our statement is we must return to top priority the education of our students. This means removing the one element that most threatened the process, the risk of violence.

Some of the key elements of the alternative setting -- which is what this bill addresses -- would be strong counseling components. What we're recommending here is an alternative school setting, one that would be set up in every district. Now, it does not mean that every district has to have a program. The district can elect to go to the county level and perhaps place a violent student there. There are several programs that are operating in and around the New Jersey area right now. One of which I'm familiar with, on the campus of, I believe, Upsala College, that works very well.

What the bill suggests is that every district identify a program, a place where they might send their violent offenders. The idea is very simple. If you have a child in school who is violent, who carries a weapon, or uses a chair or something of this nature to inflict positive and very harmful influences on other people, that person needs to be removed immediately, to ensure the rest of the students, personnel, and whatever, will remain in a safe environment.

The program says that as soon as this happens, the child should be removed, waiting or pending a hearing in court. When the child goes to court, the judge will be informed of the fact that the child will be placed in the Alternative School Program. The judge will inform the student of this, thus allowing him or her the opportunity to have success in that program, rather than return to something like a youth house.

If the child enters the program and violates any of the rules of the program, the child must return back to court, and at that time be told by the judge that they have violated the only opportunity between having the youth house and having a program that would turn their lives around. Then they fall

back in the hands of the judicial system. If the child is successful in the program, the child will receive counseling, as well as being evaluated by the child study team.

It is my opinion, and also the opinion of many others, that any time a child enters a school building or any other place for that matter, for the main purpose of incurring violence -- bringing a gun or any other weapon -- there is usually something else that is wrong, something emotional. So therefore, I feel it is absolutely necessary, in that small setting, that the child be evaluated. In most cases, one will find that there actually was something that stemmed this particular tide. With good evaluation and follow-up, most cases may be turned around. What we're looking for is for that child to return back to his school setting, rehabilitated, because they have been evaluated, and they have gone through the main system.

We're also asking as a follow-up, too, the child, at some time, returns before they're officially installed in their school to talk to other students in that school who are at-risk, so those students can understand what happens when you put yourself in a situation where you allow yourself to become violent and hurt yourself and other people. We feel this would be a very good deterrent for other students who may think about this.

If the bill is passed -- I won't say if -- when the bill is passed, and we hope that would be very soon, each child, student, parent, personnel, and whatever, will know about this bill. My feeling is that most students, for fear of this reprisal, will decide that it is not worth it for them to bring any kind of weapon into the school building, thus allowing our schools to operate in the safe manner for which they were designed in the beginning.

I'm very happy to also see that the violence and vandalism report -- that was headed up by a person who I had

the opportunity of sharing a program with on Channel 9 -- also says alternative schools would be the way to go. I did not know this when I sat down and wrote the bill, but I'm very happy to see that we are in align with each other.

Thus far, the bill is in its final writing. It will be given a number and introduced at the next session. I ask and urge all of you to take this, read the legislation very carefully, and then to support it, because we are looking for fast passage of this bill.

Every time a student is violently assaulted or school personnel are violently assaulted or worse, we know that the time is long past when we should have had a stopgap measure. We feel that this bill does this and does this very effectively.

It should also be known, too, that every district will have the leniency to design the program to meet their needs. You may have some districts that only have maybe two children a year that might be violent or have a need for this, where you'll have another district that might have 25. So, therefore, the flexibility is built in.

The idea is that we need removal of these students immediately. We need them to be addressed by professionals that can help them while they still receive their educational training. This is not a punitive measure. They will be in school. They will be receiving their education just as if they were in their regular school program, but in this particular setting, we're expecting no more than five students per classroom, which would give them the individualized attention that they so sorely need.

In closing, I would just like to say that I see myself, as Chaka Khan said, "I'm every woman." I see myself as every woman who has a child in the public school venue, who wants to feel that their child is safe attending school. I see myself as every student who wants to bring books, not bullets,

in their school bags, so that they can feel safe from other students who may want to inflict harm on them. I see myself as every teacher, as every principal, and every school personnel, who want to see our schools run safely, both for ourselves and for our students.

I thank you all for your time and your attention. I hope that you will give some very serious in-view to this particular bill.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROCCO: Thank you very much. I appreciate your testimony.

I must go. David Wolfe, our Vice-Chair, will take over with the remaining speakers. I think there are only about four or five at this point, David, so thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you.

Does anybody have any questions of the speaker? (no response)

Thank you very much.

MS. BROOKS-BITTINGS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: The next speaker is Mr. Kenneth Hamilton, Vice-Principal of Hubbard Middle School in Plainfield.

KENNETH R. HAMILTON, SR.: Good afternoon.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: How are you doing?

MR. HAMILTON: I am a recently appointed school administrator in Plainfield, New Jersey -- in a middle school, grades seven and eight.

The number of acts of violence is increasing all around us. It is not an urban problem; it is not exclusive to lower socioeconomic areas; it is not limited to a certain ethnic group. It is something we all have to be concerned about.

I had worked in Newark for 10 years prior to coming to Plainfield. I have worked as an administrator in two youth emergency programs for children five to eighteen years old. I

also serve as Deputy Director for a transitional group home for adult males who have been incarcerated for a variety of offenses. I mention my experience because I have had the opportunity to work with virtually the entire spectrum of children from disaffected families. In some instances, I have served three generations in some capacity or another, which indicates to me that the problem is a regenerating one.

I think that there are many reasons for the steady increase in school violence. I am aware that psychologists and sociologists have recognized that families vary in their effectiveness at raising children. I am sure that we can all agree that dysfunctional families are a factor that leads to juvenile delinquency and violence. I see the problem stemming from the fact that a significant proportion of students do not seem to recognize the legitimacy of the rules governing the schools' operation, and, therefore, violate them frequently. A large majority of students defy the authority of teachers and other staff members charged to enforce them.

Oftentimes, students get the impression that there are no rewards for abiding by rules and regulations. It's disheartening that those students who present problems in our educational system are the ones who get the attention, while their counterparts virtually fall through the cracks. We need more alternatives, that's the bottom line.

We are, in many instances, limited as to what we can do in dealing with inappropriate behavior, and the students know it. Part of the problem lies in the fact that so many things children should not be exposed to are presented every day on television, as previously mentioned. The language, the violence, and sexual nature of today's television and radio programs are deplorable. We have too many social forces in competition with what the schools are trying to do.

Education is a long and tedious process, and our children are being raised to want immediate gratification. We

have to find a way to engage our children in long-term thinking. We know that most of our parents genuinely want what is best for their children, but the conflict exists when we can't come to terms on the way to go about accomplishing these goals.

While there are no easy solutions, we can begin by attracting more competent people to the teaching field. There is no reason for teachers to be regarded any less a professional than lawyers or doctors, because the three fields are dedicated to improving the quality of life. We need to empower teachers more by giving them the right training to educate the myriad of children whom they are responsible to deal with every day.

We must, therefore, recognize that each child is distinct, and that most of the children in our schools can function in a structured environment but lack the motivation or the reason to see beyond today. Many of our children, in their innocent ignorance, make impulsive choices without any regard for the consequences of their actions.

I urge you to begin to look at what the system is not doing. Keeping more children in school who do not want to be there interferes with the current system of traditional learning. Consequently, functional illiteracy is rampant. We need the laws to reflect the times. The compulsory school attendance law ties our hands in dealing with students who are extremely disruptive and exhibit violent behavior.

We need the community and the business industry to become more positively involved in the educational process. Presumably, if parents are more closely involved in the educational process, they could strengthen the academic influences of their children's teachers.

In reading an article by Jackson Toby in the winter edition of "American Educator," he indicated that in Japan teachers give grades that employers and colleges scrutinize

very closely. Japanese students are very concerned about the favorable attitudes of their teachers. I understand that the Japanese culture is very different from the American culture, but the culture of success and failure is a universal one.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you, Mr. Hamilton.

Does anybody have any questions? (no response)

Thank you very much.

Caroline Jacobus, Director of Research, New Jersey Commission on Sex Discrimination in the Statutes.

C A R O L I N E W. J A C O B U S: Good afternoon, Assemblywomen and Assemblymen. Thank you for the opportunity to be here.

My name is Caroline Jacobus. I'm Director of Research at the New Jersey Commission on Sex Discrimination in the Statutes.

Recognizing the epidemic levels of violence throughout American society and the pivotal roles that the schools play in molding the coming generation of citizens, The New Jersey Commission on Sex Discrimination in the Statutes commends the Assembly Education Committee for addressing the complex and distressing issues of violence and vandalism in the public schools by holding these hearings.

The Commission would also like to take this opportunity to publicly commend the efforts of the New Jersey Department of Education, Violence and Vandalism Prevention Task Force to examine the issues of violence, vandalism, and firearms in our schools today.

We have already shared much of the content of our testimony today with Dr. Phillip Geiger, the Chairperson of the Violence and Vandalism Prevention Task Force. However, as the Commission was established to study existing discrimination both in the State statutes and in the broader functioning of New Jersey's institutions, and as the originators of numerous

bills which seek to remedy the inequities and violence against women, which are so prevalent in New Jersey, it is incumbent upon us to point out a major limitation in our societal definition of violence, and more specifically, in its understanding of what constitutes violence in the schools.

A national study on violence in the schools released in December '93 by Metropolitan Life said that more than 10 percent of teachers and nearly one-quarter of students reported having been victims of violence in or near their public schools. Another 1994 study by the National School Boards Association reported that 82 percent of a representative sample of urban, rural, and suburban schools reported an increase in school violence in the past five years.

Their definition of violence focused on incidents of assault and battery, the carrying and use of weapons, the selling and use of drugs, and the destruction of school property.

The response by schools included the increased use of drug sniffing dogs, metal detectors, and locker searches; as well as the adoption of disciplinary procedures and programs designed to remove disruptive students from the classrooms; increased consequences for the parents of disruptive students; and programs aimed at teaching students alternative ways to resolve disputes instead of resorting to violence.

Like these national studies, the 1994 report of the New Jersey Department of Education, Violence and Vandalism Prevention Task Force outlines the current status of violent behaviors in New Jersey's schools and sets out the Task Force recommendation for addressing this violence. But like the national surveys and studies that have preceded it, the Violence and Vandalism Prevention Task Force report virtually ignores the most prevalent and long-standing forms of violence in our schools: gender violence, as seen in sexual harassment in the school setting by peers, faculty, and staff, and

physical violence against female students by boyfriends and male acquaintances.

It also fails to discuss the key role of school personnel in perpetuating these forms of violence by condoning them. Until educators, legislators, policy makers, administrators, students, parents, and social scientists learn to classify the sexual, physical, and emotional assault of students as violence, and until all educational personnel address sexual harassment and violence against female students with comprehensive and active steps, schools from elementary through university levels will be the training ground for perpetrators of gender discrimination and violence against women. The root causes of violent behavior, which are taught in the home, will continue to be passed from one generation to the next.

Violence against females in school takes place within a societal context which not only tolerates the dominance of men but which actively supports -- through its religious, political, military, and media institutions -- the traditional socialization of males to exercise power and control over women, while enforcing a gender stereotype of acquiescence, passivity, and subservience for women. Despite the move for social and legal equality for women, the conscious and unconscious biases of these gender stereotypes still exert a powerful force in our society.

Perhaps the most tragic and costly effect of this gender inequality is family violence, believed to be the most common crime in the nation. Over 50 percent of all women, of varying ages and backgrounds, will experience physical violence in an intimate relationship, and for 24 percent to 30 percent of these women, the battering will be regular and ongoing. It's estimated that the cost to the nation of domestic violence exceeds \$15 billion to \$20 billion per year.

Even more alarming, studies have shown that young males who witness family abuse are more likely to be violent themselves. There is a correlation between growing up in a violent home and juvenile delinquency. Thus, the cycle of violence which begins with the sexual and physical abuse of women is transmitted down through the generations and ripples out beyond the nuclear family.

The unfair treatment of women in our society is taught in our schools not only in the form of gender inequity in curriculum but in pervasive patterns of bias in teacher/student interactions and expectations. These patterns and practices are well-documented in, among other studies: "Shortchanging Girls, Short Changing America" in a 1991 nationwide poll, and the 1992 AAUW Report: "Has School Shortchanged Girls?"

Equally disturbing, schools are the arena where females and males are taught, by example, that males can do what they want to females and no one will stop them.

The 1993 nationwide study by Lewis Harris and Associates for the AAUW, entitled "Hostile Hallways," surveyed over 1600 public school students regarding the prevalence of sexual harassment in American schools. They found that 85 percent of girls in grades eight through eleven reported being subjected to unwelcome sexual behavior in at least one instance in their school lives. Fully two-thirds of the girls said they were harassed often or occasionally; one-in-three girls reported being sexually harassed often, compared to fewer than one-in-five boys.

Girls were significantly more likely than boys to have experienced almost every type of sexual harassment examined in the study. Of those girls harassed in the school, one-in-four was targeted by school employees. In a 1992 study of more than 4000 readers of "Seventeen" magazine, 89 percent of girls in grades two through twelve said that they had been the target of unwanted sexual comments, gestures, or looks, and 97 percent of

the harassers were peer males. Nearly 40 percent of those responding said that the harassment took place on a daily basis.

Harassment is a form of physical and emotional intimidation. The negative impacts of harassment of girls are severe. In every case, they were significantly greater for girls than for boys. In the AAUW study, one-third of the girls did not participate as much in class discussions after they had been harassed, and another third did not want to go to school afterwards. A recent study of sexual harassment in New Jersey's public schools undertaken by the Women's Studies program of Rutgers University has gathered convincing data on the prevalence of sexually harassing behaviors in our school's educational systems.

School employees often ignore or trivialize sexual harassment. When boys taunt girls with sexually demeaning slurs, teachers turn a deaf ear. When boys rub up against girls and grab their breasts, teachers and administrators pretend not to see. In some schools, boys pull down girls shorts, lift up their skirts, or thrust hands inside blouses and up skirts in what has been termed "gender terrorism." When girls go to teachers and administrators with complaints of sexual harassment, the majority of schools have no official response. According to the nationwide "Seventeen" survey, girls are either not believed, or they are simply told that "Boys will be boys."

By supporting a societal system of gender dominance of males over females instead of demanding gender equity, the educational community in New Jersey is condoning the violence which must ultimately enforce that dominance. The acceptance of such abusive behaviors by adults and the fear of retaliation are only two of the deterrents to reporting the many incidents of harassment which occur every day, in every school in New Jersey.

Physical violence against female students is on the rise in all grade levels and into the college years. A 1992 study by our commission staff found that 70 percent of school administrators and family life instructors, in a random sample of New Jersey high schools, indicated some awareness of violence between boyfriends and girlfriends in their schools and a general belief that such incidences are under reported.

Reports or observations of dating violence ranged from grabbing, pushing, and hair pulling, to slapping, punching, kicking, and rape. Responding school personnel indicated that most girls accept the abusive behavior, feel responsible for the abuse, and many students see this type of abusive behavior at home, implying that they accept it as normal for this reason.

The study further found a reluctance on the part of school officials to intervene in incidents of dating violence among their students, or to educate students about the problem due to negative responses from students and parents. The majority of schools surveyed did not deal with issues of sexual assault prevention in health or family life classes, and of those which did, the information was usually offered late in the high school years.

When boyfriends or former boyfriends stalk, bruise, and batter female students, whether in the school or outside, school officials, too often, view this as a private problem which the girl must deal with herself, thus, supporting these batterers-in-training.

Dating violence and acquaintance rape are viewed as somehow less violent or less damaging, simply because the female knows the attacker. National data shows that one-in-four female students reports having been sexually assaulted during her college years, and 80 percent of the attackers were known to the victim.

In recent years, students subjected to sexual harassment have been able to seek redress from unresponsive

schools by bringing suit against boards of education for their failure "to provide an educational environment conducive to learning," as well as suing the harasser. It is neither the student's nor the parent's responsibility to stop the harassing activity; it is the school's legal responsibility.

Increasingly, as schools are held liable for sexual harassment of students, failure to take appropriate actions to address or prevent sexual harassment will lead to complaints to the State Department of Education and to costly legal actions. But lawsuits should be a last resort, not the only recourse for victims of harassment.

Sexual harassment in schools is explicitly prohibited as a form of discrimination under Federal Title 9 of the Education Amendments to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Commission has recommended that New Jersey have equally explicit prohibitions against sexual harassment in the educational setting and the avenues of redress be expanded to encompass individual rights of action, rather than having to wait for adjudication by the Commissioner of Education and the Administrative Law System before seeking remedy in the courts.

All New Jersey schools should be required to have written sexual harassment policies, which are actively communicated to students, faculty, and staff; as well as defined, effective, and speedy grievance procedures; strong procedural protections for complainants; peer support groups; counselors trained to help victims of harassment; and required training for teachers, administrators, staff, and students on how to recognize, deal with, and prevent sexual harassment in the school setting.

Further, all schools should have easily accessible information and resources for children who may be living in violent homes and acting out because of that influence. Target funding to provide videos, workshops, and speakers for student programs dealing with dating violence and sexual harassment in

the schools has been shown to be effective. The verbal and physical harassment of students are so commonplace in our schools because it has been accepted for so long as a part of growing up.

It is because women are allowed to be characterized as objects to be dominated by men that the current violence against women in schools and throughout society is viewed as an inevitable problem or even as a prerogative of males. Sexual harassment and sexual assault are a means to exert power. They are not expressions of romance or lust. If violence expresses power effectively for boys in intimate relationships, we should not be surprised that the same boys use violence to express power in other interpersonal relationships or against the dominate culture. If boys can be boys when they mock or grab at girls, then no one should be surprised if they continue to be boys by committing further acts of vandalism and violence.

The failure of our educational system to openly and uniformly condemn sexually, physically intimidating, and abusive behaviors lies at the base of much of the violence in our society. I urge you to fully examine the role which sexual harassment and the abuse of female students plays in the larger picture of violence in New Jersey and to develop legislative remedies which specifically deal with sexual and physical harassment in the school setting.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Ms. Jacobus, do you have formal recommendations for legislation?

MS. JACOBUS: We can prepare those for you if you'd like them. We have set out the general recommendations that we have here.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay, good.

MS. JACOBUS: The major problem seems not to be that schools don't tend to have policies -- though many don't have policies -- but that even when schools do have policies,

they're not actively disseminated, nor are they actively supported by the administration.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you very much.

Ms. Paula Niven, a social studies teacher from Brick Township High School -- my hometown, my legislative district, my high school, taught my two kids, good teacher. Okay, go ahead. (laughter)

PAULA NIVEN: That's all true, thank you.

Good afternoon, my name is Paula Niven. I speak to you today not only as someone who has faced a terrifying incident in the classroom but also as someone who has spent 26 years teaching the students of Brick Township High School. One of my students came into my class with a loaded shotgun, purchased on the street the night before. He held myself and 21 students hostage with that shotgun. I'm not going to share with you the details of that incident because they're not important.

What is important is how our society has come to accept violence, why violence is seen by children as an acceptable choice, and what we, as adults, are going to do about it.

Schools seemingly face the daunting challenge of being responsible for everything, yet, we, as educators, cannot succeed without the help of students, parents, and the government. You cannot legislate student commitment for me, and you cannot legislate parental involvement for me. Instead, you could assist me and my colleagues by making the best efforts to improve the education system in New Jersey, not through investigation and prosecution of children.

As the Legislature considers several measures to combat school violence, I ask you to seek remedies, not retribution. I ask you to act in hope, not fear. I ask you that the Legislature make the State a safer place. I would tell you to focus your energies and our State resources on

improving our educational system. This is not done by mandating a curriculum or through new testing standards, but instead providing the resources we need.

The solution to violence is not to make our schools into secured camps. I don't want metal detectors in my school. I don't want guards in my school -- although I recognize the need for them in some places -- but rather make our schools community centers, to provide a safe, healthy environment beyond 3 p.m. and also when the school is in session.

In 1990, homicide was the second leading cause of death for teenagers aged 15 to 19, suicide was third. We have obviously failed to provide a safe, healthy environment for children. Where do we begin? First, by recognizing that our children do not come from the traditional family those of us over 40 remember.

If the single-parent family trend continues, half of all the children in the United States last year will live with a single parent by the time they are 18. There is little adult supervision; there are few adult role models; and there are a lot of hours in the day. Our schools provide the most important opportunity young people have to learn, to grow, and to flourish. We cannot deflate our vital system of opportunity into a system of punishment.

The resources of this State could be spent in a battle against our students or in a battle for our students. The Legislature should endeavor to make our schools a comprehensive resource, where the community can access information and services that will benefit us all.

The walls are already in place -- the school building -- let us open these buildings to provide the community with access after the classroom hours. Let us provide family and peer counseling, recreation, supplemental instruction, making the school a true community resource.

What if my student could have walked into our school at night and found a counselor to talk with, rather than be out on the street buying the shotgun he used to hold the class hostage? The solution lies not in the mandates from the Legislature but in the spirit of the community. Raising children is a community responsibility.

When society's ills are discussed, our schools have been portrayed as both the victim and the accused. Schools cannot substitute for active, interested parents, nor can we completely shield children from the dangers and temptations of the world. What we need to do is offer them the challenges and opportunities, because they are our hope for the next generation.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you, Paula.

Mr. Dennis Fyffe, Principal of the Sayreville High School. Looks like he's got two assistants here.

D E N N I S F Y F F E: We're coming up.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Mr. Bert Ammerman, Principal, North Valley Regional High School, also Demarest; and Ms. Debbie Cosgrove, a counselor and advisor, registered attorney with the State of New Jersey.

D E B R A J. C O S G R O V E, E S Q.: We're all here on behalf on the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association. This issue is of critical importance to our members. I wanted to bring you two principals who have been dealing with it directly over the last few years and let you hear their experiences.

MR. FYFFE: I'd like to start out with a response to a great question that was asked earlier in the day by Assemblyman Corodemus, in response to the presentation by the teacher from East Windsor on what's different-- What's so different today?

I'll do that anecdotically, very briefly. I remember listening to someone talking about the good old days when he

was a student. He won an award. That night his teacher called his house and got his father on the phone. When the father picked up, the teacher said, "Good evening, this is Mr. So-and-so, John's teacher." Dad said, "Thank you for calling, I'll take care of it," smacked the kid, and it was over.

That's a rather extreme or severe way to talk about trust and support for schools. But contrast that with the recent conversation in my office, when I'm looking at a student who stole a pair of pants from another student at school, who is wearing the stolen pants in my office. I'm discussing the case with his mother, who said, "He didn't steal them; he took them." There was some nuance that was able to let her support that kid and to make excuses for that kid.

I would just finish answering that early question with, "Everybody's got an attorney." I can't tell you how tired I am about hearing how often I'm going to get sued. I don't count any longer.

My name is Dennis Fyffe. I've been an educator for 24 years. I've been an administrator for 15 years. I worked as a vice-principal in Summit; I worked as a principal in Moorestown, in Burlington County; and for the past 5 years, I've been principal at Sayreville Memorial High School in Middlesex County.

One of the things that we hope to do today is bring what we also feel is important to this session which is a suburban perspective. The first thing I would like you to hear very loudly and clearly is, Sayreville is a very nice, relatively stable community -- middle-class community. If you walk into my high school on any given day, teachers will be teaching, students will be learning, and the halls will be empty.

We are very much under control. Okay. We are not an out-of-control situation; however, we have had some incidents which are very significant in the life of the school --

potentially, very dangerous. I'm going to share them, not because the anecdote is important, but because the response to those incidents is what I believe the Assembly has to hear about.

Two years ago, I got word, slightly before the close of school, that there was a student with a handgun. I went to the second floor with my vice-principal, removed that student, took him to an empty classroom, and in that empty classroom I removed a .22 caliber handgun and a .38 caliber handgun, and my job changed forever.

One week later, on a Friday afternoon, I was told we had another gun. I discounted it, thought it was a copycat rumor. I called the police to let them know and forgot about it. I came in Monday morning and got confirmation that there was a second gun; this one was a starter pistol. It couldn't hurt anybody, but it was there. At 11:00 the same morning, I got a rumor of a third handgun in a week and a half.

I called the police, removed the student from the class and discovered, in the principal's office, tucked in the waistband, a .22 caliber handgun. It was a trauma for our district.

Let me tell you what has happened. Forget the starter pistol -- special education student -- not a real weapon. Of the other two cases, after two years, no one has ever contacted me to say, "This has gone to court and this is what happened." No one has ever contacted me. That tells you that I never got to talk to a judge.

What occurred was that the student with the .22 caliber handgun received one year of probation. A student who entered my building with a .22 caliber handgun and a .38 caliber handgun got a year of judicial deferment -- okay, deferral of disposition. What that tells you is the kid was told, "Keep your nose clean for one year and the charge goes away." The .38 and the .22 never existed.

I have a lot of trouble with that. It was just okay. What really bothered me is when the first incident happened -- and this was a freshman with two handguns in my building -- the kids all said, "Nothing's going to happen. It's a first offense." They were right and something has to change.

This past October, six months ago, the principal at South River High School was assaulted. He was punched in the face not by an angry student in an emotional rage but by a kid who the night before said, "I'm going to school tomorrow and I'm going to deck that guy."

A premeditated assault on a high school principal in Middlesex County. How did the courts deal with it? The principal was never called or consulted. The principal never appeared in court. A plea bargain was worked out between an assistant prosecutor and a defense attorney. They went to the judge. The result of that assault against the principal of South River High School was probation and a \$25 fine. That is an outrage.

In the not-so-distant past, the vice-principal at Spotswood High School in Middlesex County was assaulted on the last day of school and knocked unconscious. He now suffers -- a couple of years later -- a permanent disability due to a neck injury. It will never get better. The student who assaulted that vice-principal received probation. That's an outrage.

Something has to be done if you want a safe school to provide protection not just for students -- and that's our critical concern -- but for those who have the responsibility to protect those students. I can tell you that in the last couple of weeks there was a drug raid in my building that resulted in five arrests. I am not optimistic about what will happen to those students.

That was on the 30th of March. On the 31st of March, three 15-year-olds, from East Brunswick -- another fine Middlesex County suburban community -- were caught in my

parking lot driving an automobile. Needless to say, the fifteen year olds did not have a driver's license. What they did have on the 31st of March was a loaded .22 caliber handgun, in my parking lot.

They were taken -- it was late in the day -- to the juvenile detention center; they were on the street the next day. It was okay to bring a loaded .22 caliber weapon to my school. I don't like it. I take exception to it. Something has to happen.

What happens when you go to court? Apparently, many judges don't take us very seriously. I can tell you, from my personal experience, what has happened in substance abuse cases. The legislation, I will tell you, is magnificent. It says in the legislation, written in New Jersey, that these are mandatory penalties, not subject to judicial discretion. And you know what happens? They get ignored, and you need to know that. The language is wonderful, "Mandatory penalties not subject to judicial discretion."

Now, I will point out to you that if you are an assistant prosecutor or a prosecutor in Criminal Court and you're unhappy with the judge, you have an appeals process. You can take that beyond that judge. If you're an assistant prosecutor in Juvenile Court and you're unhappy with the conduct, behavior, or decision of a juvenile judge, you're done. There is no appeal process in Juvenile Court. That needs to be fixed.

The last thing I will tell you, just as an example, on not imposing penalties -- and I find this so absurd I have difficulty understanding it: One of the mandatory penalties is suspension of a driver's license. I, personally, have had students found guilty of substance abuse offenses who have not lost their licenses. It's one of the most painful things for a teenager. It costs the State nothing. There's no salary for a probation officer, there's no follow-through, you simply notify

DMV. Can you explain to me why a judge would not pull a license? I don't think so, but that's what happens.

I'd like to conclude my remarks with a couple of very specific recommendations:

First -- this one is a little broad; it's the best I can do with it -- there needs to be, as soon as possible, some resolution of the problems with the juvenile justice system. It's a joke; the kids know it. It needs to mean something.

Second, I would like to support, in concept, Governor Whitman's proposal to lower the age for juvenile confidentiality. We need to know; parents need to be embarrassed; the information has to be out there. If you can't go to 12, make it 14. There are very serious crimes being committed by teenagers. Keeping that information from us handicaps us terribly, and we lose the potential deterrent value.

Third, parental responsibility for juvenile crimes has to be increased. When it begins to cost money, when it begins to be a real penalty for parents, I can guarantee you some adolescent behavior will change.

Fourth -- and this is very specific -- there should be strongly recommended or mandated joint police/school training. We did this in Sayreville, very successfully, following the handgun incidents. Let me tell you what happened. I'm not a cop, and I'm not an attorney. I went to college to be a teacher; I became a principal. When I got the first two handguns in the second floor of Sayreville High School and finished with that in my office, I sat down and wiped the sweat off my brow and said, "Dennis, you just made four important mistakes and one or two of them might have cost you your life or gotten you hurt. You did it wrong."

At my request, the Sayreville police department -- which has a fabulous relationship with us and is very supportive -- set up a training program with all administrators

and some volunteer teachers that included: what are the laws relating to search and seizure, warrantless search, and substance abuse. What are our emergency procedures, so, I know, I can get a police officer at that building. We now have a code -- the last thing you want to do is have it go over the radio and the entire town -- that there's a gun in Fyffe's office at the high school. You got the rumor mill going in no time.

We have a code. If it goes out, the police are on my doorstep in a flash. You need to work those procedures out. You need to learn -- and I say this with the saddest of feelings -- how to do a body search if you can't get a cop there right away and it's urgent -- how to do one safely. It was a sad day in the basement of the Sayreville Police Department, when I had to practice that on a cop who had hidden 13 weapons, but it's a skill I now need to know.

I think that's the kind of thing that schools and police need to be talking about. I think that we ought to make sure that that happens in some systematic way.

Finally, one of the things I learned in the basement of the Sayreville Police Department was how to handle a handgun safely, if I have to take it from a student.

Fifth, procedures should be mandated which will improve communications between schools, judges, and prosecutors. The conversation is minimal. The conversation with judges almost nil. Judges have to understand the consequences of the decisions that they are making. They have to understand that a \$25 fine and probation for a premeditated assault on a principal cannot be tolerated. There has to be some way for judges to be required to sit across the table from us -- as you're doing today -- and listen to the kinds of things that we have to say.

Finally -- and this is the simplest one and probably the easiest to do -- I think we need sample policies. I looked

around for weapons policies after the first gun incident. There aren't a lot out there. We're in very good shape now, in certain areas, but they're not out there. Those are my six recommendations.

I would like to conclude with just one comment, because it scares me a little that this one may go legislative, and that's metal detectors. Please tread very carefully. I work in a high school with 90 doors -- 90 of them. You can lock them all but the front one, and any kid who is inside can open one and let somebody in. It's not real tough to take a weapon and toss it to the second floor.

I can tell you that would be catastrophic. The basis is excellent, and I think there are districts that would benefit, but please don't burden all schools with such a requirement. I see that as a real negative problem for my day.

Thank you very much.

B E R T A M M E R M A N: My name is Bert Ammerman, Principal of Northern Valley Regional High School, Demarest. I think I bring a different perspective than anyone who has testified before you today, in the three hours that you've listened to the testimony.

I'd like to give you a little background as to why it's a different perspective, then give you some examples of why our concern is so strong here between Dennis and I tonight, and then give you three simple recommendations that, I think, can effect positive change immediately.

I have been principal for four years at Northern Valley, Demarest and for the last three years -- two of the years -- our school was recognized as one of the top schools in the State of New Jersey by the National Secondary School Recognition Program. We're an affluent district.

Just four weeks ago, we were recognized as one of the top 50 public schools in America by "Redbook" magazine. Just two weeks ago, we were on the front page across America -- some

of you might have read it -- six model students, for the conspiracy to buy a handgun, of which we now find out that three will be found innocent, and maybe, at best, one-- It was sensationalism on the part of the press and the Bergen County Prosecutor, but it opened my eyes to some of the issues.

I'm also, personally -- for the last five years -- the President and now Spokesman for the Victims of Pan Am Flight 103, the family group that has affected legislation in Washington and in dealing with Washington, D.C. So, I know the legislative process, and I've testified in front of the Federal government. I know the frustrations as a legislator in trying to get legislation passed.

We got the Aviation Security Act passed in 1990, after we had to finally put pressure on President Bush and also Senator Wallop. It was the Aviation Security Act of 1990, and Senator Wallop put an amendment on it that no trucks should be weighed in Wyoming. So we know the process, and we know the difficulty that a politician has and, I know, even the Assembly or the Senate to get any legislation passed. I'd like you to keep that in mind when I make my recommendations.

I want to make a statement. The juvenile justice system is in disarray. It is chaos. It is inadequate. I would also like to say that DFYS is unable to handle all of the concerns that are thrown upon them by the Legislature and by society, and in some cases, they are inept.

The school has been asked to take over the role of the parent. It has happened over the last 15 years: sex education, drug education, AIDS, violence in the schools, the single parent, the dysfunctional family. Teachers are starting to say, "I thought I got my degree to teach. I didn't know I was supposed to become a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist." So there is a feeling within schools, "What else are you going to blame us for?"

Based on that factor, I want to give you a couple of examples from an affluent school district that has nowhere near the problems that you heard from some of the other people, and I applaud all the individuals that tried to express, in a sincere way, their concerns. If you tried to develop a bill on the three hours of testimony you heard here today, I would love to see what this thing is going to look like, because you can not solve all the issues that were talked about. Also, I was under the impression that we were testifying on violence in schools.

Many of the situations that were discussed today by the people testifying and you asking questions, are being done by a lot of schools. Intervention and prevention, that's not the issue today, as far as I see. The issue is the violent student, that small percentage that, no matter what you try to put out, they do not respond to. What are we going to do to them and for them?

Two years ago, I got information that one of our students was selling LSD. I got it from parents calling in. We did a locker search. We found nine tabs of LSD in the locker. I thought this was a perfect time to give a clear message to the school that this is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in our system.

I brought the police in, we brought the young man down. We called his parents. He was read his rights. He was handcuffed and taken out of the school. A clear message that day flew throughout the school within about 10 minutes. There was concern, and as one of the teachers kiddingly said, "There must be a lot of lockers being emptied today." The sad commentary -- and it follows up with what Dennis was talking about, and as legislators you've got to deal with this -- that kid beat us back to school the next day. He was in homeroom and I had teachers coming down screaming, "What are you doing?" I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "He's back."

Fortunately, we caught him. So I immediately suspended him for 10 days. A maximum penalty to give a message that if the system doesn't care, we want you to know, we do. We wanted to help the young man. It wasn't a situation that we were trying to expel him and his parents. But the juvenile justice system gave a clear message to Northern Valley Demarest students that day. It's okay to have LSD in your lockers. It's okay to sell, because it's not important.

Two weeks ago, with the six students that were arrested for the conspiracy to buy a gun, we had the media all over campus. We were on the front page of the New York Times. We had parents-- I had to meet with the staff at 7:30 in the morning and try to tell them what I knew -- I knew nothing. I had to have an assembly with the students and try to caution them, then, I had a two and a half hour briefing with the officers.

If I asked on six different occasions, "What is our problem, so I can now try to deal with it?" I was told six times, "You don't have a problem. There was no problem at this school. We don't know why this took place." Finally, after the third or fourth time, the superintendent and I said to him, "Why are we doing what we're doing." He said, "You guys got a bad hit for sensationalism. You have to deal with it."

So I had to have an open meeting with the parents, about 80 parents showed up. This is a very clear message I hope you get, because I think a lot of people in the Legislature are not aware of this; I wasn't, until I went through this process. One of the parents, after a two and a half hour intensive meeting, said to me, "At least, Mr. Ammerman, tell me that if you have a child that tries to enroll in our school that's convicted of serious crimes, you'll reject him."

I said, "I'm going to give you a better scenario." I picked another community very close to us that was affluent. I

said, "That kid was arrested and convicted of sexual abuse, selling drugs, possession of a handgun, and gambling. His parents wanted to give him a new environment, so they called friends -- not relatives -- they called friends to sign an affidavit and take over the guardianship of that child." I said, "Not only do I have to accept that child, I never knew he was convicted of those four offenses." Because in the juvenile justice system, we are never told about the offense, and as Dennis just said, "We are never told what the final result is."

So I was at a major press conference with all the major media people and parents, and they are saying, "What are you going to do to these students? You know who they are."

Twenty years ago, when I was in school -- and 20 years ago, as an administrator -- I would have called those parents in, sat down with the kids, maybe I would have disciplined them, but at least I would have tried to help them. Not today, because if I called you in, Mr. Wolfe, and you were the parent of that child and I said, "We know that your child was arrested for that handgun." And you were the one parent that was the courthouse lawyer that Dennis is talking about, you would say, "Mr. Ammerman, where is your evidence?" I would say, "I know." "Where is your evidence?" And I say, "We are not allowed to have it." "Well, so, Mr. Ammerman, I'm going to sue you for slander."

And in the whole process that takes place, who is the only one that loses? The principal, in trying to help and deal with it. Therefore, the schools can't do anything, unless they are the ones that identify and apprehend the student on their campus. Any juvenile case off-campus, the schools will never know that that took place. So we are having kids walking through schools throughout this State that very easily have been convicted of very serious crimes, and the school is not aware of it.

So what are my recommendations? Three very simple ones, because I follow the philosophy that's kept me out of a lot of trouble: keep it simple, stupid. By doing that, you can effect a change.

I think the State of New Jersey has to give a clear message -- one message. Because I heard, I think it was Assemblyman Corodemus, ask a very sincere question -- but then I thought I was going to be a hockey official -- at the beginning of the testimony, "Is a 17-inch knife serious." So, if we find a knife, we'll measure it. If it's 16 and three-quarters, it's a misdemeanor; if it's 17 and a quarter, it's serious. But then the court -- the lawyers are going to say, "Let's see your ruler." Then we're going to be involved in court cases. So you find yourself involved in this litigation and due process situation.

I agree with Ms. Niven. I thought her testimony was superb in us following it, because she's right on in many of the aspects. If the Legislature would pass this legislation, I think you would go a long way to helping all of us.

One, simple possession of a handgun and the juvenile is convicted: they no longer can ever participate in a normal public school setting. The State of New Jersey gives a clear message to its citizens and to its educators: Handguns in New Jersey schools is not a second chance offense -- anything else, a second chance. I believe in that, everyone can make a mistake.

I think if the legislation didn't get involved in the penknives and stilettos and what is a knife-- Handguns conviction: you no longer can ever be allowed to participate in the normal public school setting. You are allowed an alternative education. I do not agree with Assemblyman Rocco for expulsion. They're entitled to an education and there are enough alternative programs. If the State wanted to fund that -- alternative programs for those violent crimes -- you would

be going a long way to getting the most bang for your buck. Don't just mandate programs; that's going to waste money.

Two, parents have got to be held financially responsible for their juveniles in convictions -- fines. Tie together a juvenile offense and a fine for that parent. If the child is convicted, a fine for the parent. I agree with someone who testified before -- one of the superintendents -- when she said, "I've got five or six parents that wouldn't faze in the least." That's true. But there's a lot of parents that all of the sudden would say, "Wait a minute. If I'm going to be fined 250 bucks, my kid's not going to do it again, because it's coming out of my pocket."

Because one of the six boys that was arrested lasted six weeks in our school, he is a serious juvenile offender. He's in Georgia now. I chased him for the last three months, over our campus, five times, to keep him off our grounds, because I knew he was a problem. He no longer went to our school. The officers came in. I filed five criminal trespassing complaints against the kid. The police said to me, "Bert, why are you doing this? Nothing is going to happen. They're going to slap him on the wrist. This is a waste of time."

I said, "It might be to the system, but I've got to let the school know that we're not going to tolerate this kid." He also got arrested for stealing a van. He was also arrested for a firearms possession, but he hasn't done a moment in the juvenile system yet.

His parents are in Georgia. They have never once been brought up on neglect or charges or financial fines. They're not even in our area. The mother flew up to take him out of our system.

When we had the five criminal trespassing summons, when he was held in the Bergen County juvenile system, the Bergen County juvenile system wouldn't tell the Demarest Police

where the kid was so they could serve the five criminal trespassing. So even in the system they're protected. That's got to end.

The third one, which is critical, absolutely critical -- and Dennis touched upon it -- if a juvenile is convicted of a serious offense, and that the Legislature would have to decide -- there could be three or four, not a cadre. For example, marijuana to me is not serious. Cocaine and heroin possession are serious. Sexual abuse, armed robbery, those are serious, serious juvenile offenses. The principal of that district should be notified. The confidentiality is kept. But if I know that I have a kid in my building that has been caught for robbery, when I see him in the hall, I might look twice. When he's hanging around someplace, I might monitor it a little bit more. Right now, the school is being told, "Deal with it." We are not being given any arsenal -- no pun intended -- to deal with this issue.

We ask you to please help us with simple legislation that gives a clear message to the citizens of New Jersey that we take the possession of handguns as a serious offense. There is not -- I repeat, not -- a second chance in that area.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Debbie, thank you for finding these guys. Thank you.

MS. COSGROVE: We've got a million of them.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Do you have any questions? Barb?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: No, I just think the last shall come first, and the first come last. It's just riveting to hear the experiences that you're having. I come from a school district similar to yours, and I know that it doesn't-- Problems are in all school districts, and I think that if we heard any message today, it's that the schools mirror the society we live in.

MR. AMMERMAN: Absolutely. The only thing I would

say, Assemblywoman, is that we're not looking for mandated funding because when you do that -- and I heard it earlier -- you can mandate something that's very important for a certain section of the State, and you're wasting a lot of money for another section of the State. Let the districts come to you and say, "We've got a problem, help us," and then give them all the money they need to solve the problem.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Rudy?

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: I just want to make a clarification, in case there's a misunderstanding with Mr. Fyffe. The bill that we passed through the Assembly Education Committee does not mandate metal detectors in all schools. It only allows them to request funds if they choose to implement those.

MR. FYFFE: Yes. That's great. What happened is I wasn't so much giving you responsibility for an erroneous proposal, as I know what happens--

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: No I just wanted--

MR. FYFFE: I appreciate your clarifying it.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: That's fine.

MR. FYFFE: It sometimes gets carried away, and you move on to the next level. I just wanted to go on record as saying that I think that would be inappropriate. I think funding for districts that can use it and really need it is wonderful.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Okay. I just want to say that you were the principal when two of my cousins attended Sayreville High School.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: I would like to thank both of you for your testimony.

I didn't bring it with me, I came back from North Carolina yesterday. I was on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. There's a local newspaper called the Coastland Times; it's published three times a week. About half of the

paper is about what goes on in the schools and what goes on in court -- who gets arrested for drunk driving. The lead article was about two junior high school girls who were caught fighting in the school.

The girls names were mentioned; their parents names were mentioned; and they both got expelled from school. This was on the front page of the second section of the newspaper, so either they're doing things a bit more radically or seriously in North Carolina than we are in New Jersey-- Maybe some school district or some editor takes a chance and runs a risk, but at least the word is getting out. Things are happening in the schools.

MR. AMMERMAN: To follow up on that, which I think is excellent, the Bergen County Prosecutor put out a press release, and he gave the initials of the kids, which we were told has never happened in the history of Bergen County.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Right.

MR. AMMERMAN: Within 10 minutes, the teachers and the students could put together -- you didn't have to be a rocket scientist -- who the six kids were. (laughter)

Now everyone comes to me parents, teachers, and the media. Reggie Harris from CBS News said, "Mr. Ammerman, come on, you're the principal of one of the best schools in America. Tell me that you don't know who the kids are."

I said, "Reggie, I have an idea who they are. But no one is ever going to tell me officially who they are; therefore, I'm not going to speak to anyone, because I'll be sued."

I said to the prosecutor, "Why did you put the initials in? What were you trying to do?" He said, "Well, we just thought that maybe it gave more to the story." I said, "Well all you did was cause undue stress and irritation for educators, because we can't do anything because our hands are tied."

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Right.

MR. AMMERMAN: If you could tell us who they were, we would go and meet with them. I had one set of parents come in -- and this is the change of the principal's role, which is what Dennis is talking about -- and I had one of the kids come in after I spoke in the assembly. I had to give them their rights before they spoke to me. I said, "You don't have to speak to me. You don't have to give me the information. You have counsel, go to counsel." The parents said, "We owe it to you." They were distraught and we helped them.

The kid -- which made my day, in a very trying day -- he said, "You were fair in the assembly to us. I had to at least be fair to you as the principal." That alone helped. But the situation was, there was alleged information given out. I know three of those kids are going to be found innocent or acquitted, but we will never be given the information. So therefore, legislators, parents, and society are saying, "Take care of it. What's your problem?" We don't even know what the issue is, because no one's going to tell us.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Yes, Barbara?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: I just wanted to underscore the whole discussion about the juvenile justice system that has come through in this hearing today. The Jamesburg Training School is in my district in Monroe Township. I accompanied the Governor recently on her visit there. She did visits throughout the State to the juvenile justice facilities. This is one where students -- where the inmates are incarcerated. She met with a half-a-dozen of these young people. I think that as a result of her work with the Attorney General that -- if you're not aware, this is a high priority for the Governor -- she is totally committed to doing something, at least, to begin with, in terms of the confidentiality piece.

MR. AMMERMAN: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: There is also another bill in the Legislature that was introduced recently -- unfortunately after the murder of little girl in our area -- but I think that we're all on the same page as you are in terms of addressing it.

One of the things that the kids told the Governor is that the kids who are selling drugs in the streets, because they are minors, nothing will happen to them. So it's a big entrepreneurial business.

MR. AMMERMAN: One thing which we did was to talk to one of the Asian detectives on Asian gangs in our school, just to make sure -- because we have a 30 percent Asian population -- of whether we have any problems with being close to New York City. He said, "No, you don't, yet." But it was an interesting comment he made. He said, "The interesting thing with Asian gangs, they incorporate the kids to do all the gang activity until they turn 18, because they know nothing will happen to them."

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Exactly.

MR. AMMERMAN: "But once they turn 18, they stop." It was an eye opener. Also with the kids that are chronic problems, because our society says give them 42 chances-- We all ourselves, we get it. When someone finally means something, kids have said to me, just with normal stuff, "My God, someone actually followed through on what they said."

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Exactly.

MR. AMMERMAN: So the message that is being given to our young people is, "Do whatever you want. If you don't have a guilt trip you're home free. Carte blanche because nothing is going to happen to you." Our testimony is not to fill the jails up, but, I think, if you tie it to financial responsibility of the parents, make one simple message in your bill, handguns are not acceptable in New Jersey; it's out, no second chance.

It's critical, because to go through the process you'd be lucky to catch them the first time. As Dennis said, maybe they'll plea bargain down till maybe they didn't have a handgun, it was a water gun, and someone will go along with it. So you'll never get them twice. So in a handgun situation-- The message went out from the Governor, and we appreciate it -- and from the Assembly and Senate. That's out of New Jersey. You're not doing it here. Our kids are going to get educated. I think you made a major symbolic statement, which can help us to keep education the quality that it is.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you very much.

MR. FYFFE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Mr. Bill Lewis, New Jersey Education Association. Good afternoon, Bill.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Don't read it, Bill.

W I L L I A M H. L E W I S, JR.: I certainly won't. It has been a long, long afternoon. I just want to say to the last speaker that some of the things he's mentioned that need to be done legislatively, I've seen in the draft of a new bill that may have its genesis in the attorney general's office, but it deals with fingerprinting juveniles. It deals with sharing information with school principals, allowing school principals, as appropriately, to share information with staff. So perhaps some of your concerns will be addressed soon.

We've heard today that schools reflect what's happening in society. They certainly do. It's clear that students are afraid in school. They certainly are, and it's affecting their studies. There's lots of evidence to show that. One author says, "The angry young man we have always blamed for crime is becoming angrier and younger." We see that in the news, and we know that is true.

The New Jersey Department of Education Violence and Vandalism Prevention Task Force, which was discussed by

Commissioner Klagholz earlier this afternoon, has lots of information and lots of recommendations that need to be looked at.

The NJEA was a member of that Task Force, and I, personally, was part of that Task Force. We agree that it's the school's responsibility to make school safer for students to learn and teachers to teach. We support the recommendations of the Task Force with only one or two minor objections that are just too minor to mention here.

A large body of evidence suggests that violence is a learned behavior, and that a child's early years, up to about age 8, are crucial in shaping the child's attitude about aggression and violence.

Children copy what their parents do. Children copy what they see and hear. Schools and communities can provide classes in developing parenting skills, particularly among young at-risk parents. In addition, schools can help children learn nonviolent methods of solving problems. There was lots of discussion this afternoon about peer mediation and that sort of thing.

Today, aggression is much more lethal, and guns have a great deal to do with that. Young people can get guns more easily. The NJEA agrees with many researchers that one of the best strategies is to teach children alternative skills for solving problems nonviolently.

If schools are going to be successful in combatting school crime, students must realize that they have a stake in becoming a player, and thereby, they should take an active role.

I watched a program a week or two ago; it was Channel 9. It was "A+ For Kids." One of the speakers -- a teacher that was here this afternoon -- spoke about a bill for alternative schools -- which, by the way, we would support that concept. The Chair of the Education Task force on Violence

Prevention made some other suggestions during the program. They were not well received by the young people -- the students -- in the audience.

It occurs to me that in order to be successful, we need to work with all concerned. It's a mistake to leave out students. They have to feel that they have a stake in what's going on in their high school. So that's something that we need to look at very carefully.

My research indicates that there is a new school curriculum that's described as one that would help students appreciate their vested interest in preventing crime. It's called Teens, Crime, and Community. It's developed by the National Crime Prevention Council and the National Institute for Citizen Education in the Law.

The program focuses on students as victims. Certainly, with the younger children, this is very important. It teaches basic crime reduction and avoidance skills, so they don't get picked up and taken off by strangers. Students also need to get involved in teen projects, and that's part of that program.

Another curriculum that works very well throughout this country and in the United States, Project STAR -- Straight Talk About Risk -- has been tried in middle schools. It started in Dade County, Florida. It has been in New York City, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Oakland, in California. In New Jersey, participating schools include: Atlantic City, Piscataway, Clifton, and Bridgeton school districts.

Of course, the NJEA doesn't endorse any particular curriculum. There is no cookie cutter to solve all the problems, but this serves as an example of the resources that are available to school districts for consideration.

Violence in our schools can no longer be tolerated. It's time to draw the line in the sand that says that our schools are to be safe havens for learning and social development.

Violence and vandalism have escalated to the point where the health and safety of the people within the school are no longer a reasonable expectation. Crime has increased in schools, around schools, at school functions, and on the way to school. The proliferation of weapons, especially guns and automatic weapons, has turned neighborhoods into war zones. Students, teachers, administrators, and other school staff are targets of the senseless brutality.

It is time for the State of New Jersey to accelerate its efforts to reduce crime in the schools and the greater community. All of us make up the State of New Jersey: as individuals, as school personnel, as board of education members, as law enforcement people, as students, parents, shopkeepers, store owners, business and industry leaders, local, county, and State government people. We make up the State of New Jersey.

The schools are a good starting point, because children are here. They are the best hope for change. It is very important that students and school staff have a voice in whatever is done to improve the situation. We must have the support of parents and community groups in order to succeed.

All major efforts by schools to make significant changes will require a commitment of resources. School districts cannot be expected to maintain good programs in the areas of peer counseling, conflict resolution, and others in the face of diminishing dollars. In an environment of increasing costs and diminishing resources, schools will be unable to maintain their current efforts and certainly not institute new programs. It's difficult for students to build self-esteem and to relate positively to the schools when buildings are in disrepair, or art, music, and cocurricula activities are eliminated.

The NJEA supports legislation or administrative code that increases the penalty or upgrades the charge where school

staff persons, acting in the performance of their duty, are assaulted. There is a bill before the Legislature now; I think it's sponsored by two Assemblymen, that speaks to that.

We would support legislation or code that establishes parental liability for damage done by their children. I think that's needed.

We would support, if not the expulsion, the removal of students from schools, when they assault -- when they create assaults on students and on employees, serious assaults.

We would like to see an increase in the probability of juveniles being charged as adults in certain circumstances, in certain instances. We would like to see the increase in the availability of information to appropriate school staff through the principal. One teacher in South Jersey -- I spoke to her on the phone -- she told me about an individual who was convicted of a serious offense, and the student came to her class and she had no idea. She said, "That's not fair; I should know." We agree.

We support the establishment of funding for alternative schools within county regions for students or for students that are excluded from schools.

We need to work on the issue of child abuse and encourage schools to teach parenting skills and conflict resolution.

We support efforts that require local school districts to make alternative programs available to students.

We think this is important, that schools ought to be able to-- Law enforcement and the courts should be able to provide major penalties for persons trespassing in a school building.

I've most recently read about an individual who went into a school building on at least one occasion -- maybe two occasions -- and then allegedly, later on, abducted a

neighbor's child and is accused of killing that child. He went into that school, and not much happened to him as a result of that trespass.

In summary, the NJEA will continue to work to help schools create the best possible learning and social environments. We will continue to be advocates for all children: those who get into difficulty because of their behavior, and those whose rights are sometimes abridged because of the violent behavior of their peers.

We will continue to work with school staff in the area of professional development in classroom management skills, recognition of child abuse symptoms, and the sharing of information and techniques to improve the teaching and learning environment.

Let us all agree to renew our efforts to make schools safer. The NJEA asks that the Assembly Education Committee look at:

- * Commissioner of Education Klagholz's Violence and Vandalism Task Force report and to look to implement some of those recommendations as appropriate.

- * We ask that you support legislation in the areas just outlined in my testimony from the NJEA.

- * We ask you to move with all deliberate speed on legislation to increase school safety; although, after reading Commissioner Klagholz's remarks, I understand he's looking to June for some recommendations from his staff.

- * We ask you to support efforts to provide adequate funding for school programs. How often have you heard that this afternoon, that in order to maintain good programs and put in needed programs, it takes dollars?

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you, Bill.

Any questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: No, I think that we must recognize that perhaps some of those were members of the NJEA who testified here today. I think that their testimony was extremely valuable for me and an important part of the record today.

MR. LEWIS: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: I'd like to thank Bill and the committee and also "A+ for Kids" for sponsoring this.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WRIGHT: Is that it?

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: That concludes our hearing. Drive carefully.

ASSEMBLYMAN GARCIA: Thank you.

HEARING CONCLUDED

APPENDIX

My name is Gail Hecht and I am the Director of Student Personnel Services for the East Orange School District.

East Orange, is located in the east central portion of Essex County, and is approximately 3.9 square miles. The population of East Orange, is 77,140 with 12,000 students attending its schools. Eighty-three percent of the population is African-American. Twenty-one percent of all families receive public assistance; fifteen percent have incomes below the federal poverty level.

East Orange is the second largest city in Essex County. Essex County had the highest rate of criminal offenses within the state of New Jersey at 75,553, as well as the highest crime rate at 97 per 1,000 for 1992. The overall crime rate for East Orange was 115 per 1,000.

The high incidence of interpersonal violence and aggressive behavior within the municipalities has been a clear concern. The teen death rate in East Orange is fifty-seven percent higher than the state average of 7 per 10,000, ages 15-19. East Orange ranked number two in crime in the county and in conjunction with Newark accounts for sixty-five percent of the robberies and seventy percent of the aggravated assaults. In East Orange alone, 2,614 juveniles were taken into custody for such crimes as burglary, rape, threats, robbery, aggravated assault, gun possession, and possession of controlled dangerous substances.

The pathos of violence and stress is also reflected in the schools where we see an increasing number of students unable to deal non-violently with conflict. They strike out at each other and staff because they are unable to positively discharge the stress under which they are subjected.

During the 1992-93 school year, there were 3,502 duplicated incidences of suspension, 1-5 days in duration, which translates to 22,000 hours of lost instructional time. One hundred fifty-eight students, grades 3-12, were referred for possible expulsion for infractions ranging from possession of weapons to physical threats and assaults on other students and staff.

A parent survey conducted in 1993 revealed that 47% do not believe schools provide a safe environment for their children. Administrators and teachers indicate that student behavior demonstrates an apathy toward accepted societal values with "life on the edge" of crime, substance use, careless sexual encounters, and a reverence for things illegally obtained esteemed beyond those earned by merit, diligence, and perseverance.

The city's school system has made significant strides to turn the pathos of violence into the ethos of prevention. Under a small grant funded by the State Department of Education, district staff were trained in an anger management and non-violent culturally competent curriculum to minimize a student's risk of being victimized by violence or worse to become a perpetrator of violence. Other innovative programs in the District include: peer mediation centers, alternative education programs, an Institute for the Development of Black Males and Females, comprehensive counseling services, a strong collaboration between the East Orange Municipal Court and the East Orange School District to ensure that parents are held accountable for the actions of their children, FamilyNet, a Phoenix Program to support disaffected students, and after-school programs for temporarily sheltered students. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, for despite all these efforts, violence in our schools remain a serious concern.

An East Orange School District Task Force was convened to review school district policy and make specific recommendations.

I would like to conclude by sharing those recommendations with this group that require interventions beyond the locus of control of the local school district:

- . I indicated initially that 158 students were referred for possible expulsion. However, it should be noted that only very few cases culminated in a Board of Education expulsion hearing. I speak from first-hand experience because in my position as Director of Student Personnel Services, I conduct the pre-expulsion hearing process for the District. //In the past five years, the numbers of students recommended for expulsion has tripled and the infractions have become far more serious in nature. The mandated Child Study Team evaluation prior to a recommendation for expulsion often results in classification, thus making the student ineligible for expulsion. Additionally, this process now forces the District to incur extensive costs to educate these students within an already austere budget. Code must be reviewed and revised to ensure that violent students can be excluded from the school setting.
- . Home instruction parameters must be reviewed to include students on suspension and expulsion.

- . Funding must be provided for expansion of innovative alternative education programs. I developed the conceptual framework and implemented our District's alternative education program with seed money from the State Department of Education. It is an exemplary program. Highly disruptive students who were considered throwaways are now successfully attending some of the most prestigious colleges in the country. We need a middle school alternative program, but budget cuts preclude its development at this time.
- . The current facilities approval process must be reviewed because this process breeds obstacles which often negates the use of alternative sites as school settings. Within the 3.9 square miles of East Orange, I visited and tried to obtain approval for 36 sites for our alternative education programs. Each was deemed unacceptable for various and sundry reasons ranging from halls which were one foot too narrow to doors which were in the wrong place. Costs of renovations were prohibitive. Alternative programs need alternative facilities.
- . Finally, the state mandated reporting violence/vandalism form should be revised and streamlined to ensure a commonality and clarity in the definition of terms and elimination of redundancy such as, when is a fight considered a gang-fight and when is a fight between three or more students just a fight?

I thank you for the opportunity to share a piece of East Orange with you and seek your help to stem youth violence, because many of the factors that contribute to our students propensity to use violence are within your and my power to change.

A+ FOR KIDS

TESTIMONY

ON

SCHOOL VIOLENCE

BERNICE PROCTOR VENABLE, Ed.D.
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
TRENTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

APRIL 12, 1994, 1:00 PM

SECAUCUS, NEW JERSEY

A+ FOR KIDS -- TESTIMONY

MY NAME IS BERNICE PROCTOR VENABLE, AND I AM THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE TRENTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN TRENTON, NEW JERSEY. OURS IS AN URBAN DISTRICT OF APPROXIMATELY 13,000 STUDENTS OF VARYING BACKGROUNDS, ATTENDING THE DISTRICT'S 23 SCHOOLS, GRADES K-12. CURRENTLY, THE DISTRICT IS OVER 90 PERCENT MINORITY WITH 72 PERCENT AFRICAN-AMERICAN, 19 PERCENT LATINO-AMERICAN, AND THE REMAINING POPULATION INCLUDES CAUCASIAN AND ASIAN STUDENTS.

LIKE MOST URBAN DISTRICTS, WE ARE FACED WITH THE EMERGING COMPLEXITIES OF THE TIMES AND REALIZE THAT THE SOCIETAL ISSUES AND CONDITIONS ARE TRULY OUR CONCERN AND, LIKE IT OR NOT, WE ARE EXPECTED TO ADDRESS ALL OF THEM. WE HAVE A GROWING NUMBER OF HOMELESS STUDENTS, WHICH HAS CHANGED, DRAMATICALLY, WITHIN THE PAST FOUR YEARS, FROM 90 IN 1989 TO ABOUT 350 TODAY. AT THE SAME TIME, WE ARE SERVING AN EVER-INCREASING POPULATION OF STUDENTS WHO ARE EMANCIPATED -- IN OTHER WORDS, LIVING ON THEIR OWN. OF THE TOTAL STUDENT POPULATION, ABOUT 75 PERCENT OF THEM ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SOME TYPE OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE. AND, MANY EMANATE FROM SINGLE-PARENT HOMES OR HOMES WHERE THERE ARE NO PARENTS, AT ALL.

CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF - OUR SCHOOLS ARE STILL STANDING, MOST OF OUR TEACHERS ARE TEACHING, AND THE MAJORITY OF OUR YOUTH COME

TO SCHOOL WITH A DESIRE TO LEARN, AND THEY ARE LEARNING. WE HAVE MANY PROBLEMS FACING US, AND WE ARE ADDRESSING THOSE PROBLEMS.

OUR TOP PRIORITY IS THE SAFETY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE, OUR STAFF, OUR COMMUNITY, AND FACILITIES.

IN THE TIME ALLOTTED, I WISH TO COMMENT, BRIEFLY, ABOUT THE MANNER IN WHICH WE IN THE INNER CITY ARE PORTRAYED IN THE MEDIA, WHICH HELPS TO REINFORCE MYTHS THAT, I BELIEVE IMPACT LEGISLATION. SECOND, I WANT TO GIVE YOU A VIEW OF THE STUDENT INCIDENT - RELATED STATISTICS WITHIN OUR DISTRICT, AND WHERE WE ARE IN TERMS OF THE PRESENCE OF VIOLENCE, AS WELL AS OUR NEW AND REVISED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE. THIRD, I WILL POINT UP THE COST FOR THE DISTRICT'S SECURITY MEASURES. FINALLY, I WILL SHARE SOME OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS WE HAVE BROUGHT FORTH FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION.

HISTORICALLY - THE COVERAGE OF INNER CITY SCHOOL DISTRICTS HAS BEEN ONE-SIDED, AN OVER-SIMPLIFIED PORTRAYAL OF THE URBAN YOUTH, PARTICULARLY, THE VIOLENCE, AND THE CRIME-LADEN EXPERIENCES THEY WITNESS, DAILY, RENDERING THEM IN AN AURA OF DESPERATION. BUT, WHO CARED? ARTICLE, AFTER ARTICLE, NEWS BROADCAST, AFTER NEWS BROADCAST INDICATE WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT WE ARE DOING, OR WE DO NOTHING ABOUT THE GROWING VIOLENCE.

THE FACT IS WE ARE DOING SOMETHING, AND WE ARE FINDING THERE IS A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF YOUTH WHO ARE VIOLENT AND COMMIT VIOLENT ACTS. THIS GETS WIDESPREAD MEDIA COVERAGE.

MOST OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE ASPIRATIONS AND DREAMS, BUT, DAILY, ENCOUNTER SOME FORM OF VIOLENCE WHICH CONTINUES TO OBFUSCATE THEIR ABILITY TO GET AN EDUCATION. FOR THIS, WE MUST FOCUS ON THOSE WHO CAUSE THE PROBLEMS, IN THE FIRST PLACE, AS WELL AS THE OUTSIDE FORCES THAT PERPETUATE THEM. I KNOW YOU DO NOT DIRECT THE MEDIA, PARTICULARLY, PRINT MEDIA, BUT, IF YOU CONTINUE HEARINGS OR FORUMS SUCH AS THIS, YOU WILL GET A GREATER INSIGHT ABOUT WHAT IS OCCURRING. VIOLENCE AND RELATED PROBLEMS ARE NOT ISOLATED TO URBAN CENTERS. IN THIS SCHOOL YEAR, WE HAVE LEARNED OF A VARIETY OF INCIDENTS IN SUBURBAN DISTRICTS, FROM A DRIVE-BY SHOOTING TO A MAJOR DRUG BUST, YET, THOSE DISTRICTS ARE NOT WRITTEN OFF AS TOTAL FAILURES.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE, TODAY, ARE TELLING US SOMETHING, AND WE NEED TO LISTEN. RECENTLY, WE ADMINISTERED A SERIES OF STUDENT SURVEYS, I WILL REPORT ON THE ONE ADMINISTERED IN THE FALL, INVOLVING ABOUT 100 HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS.

THE MOST INTERESTING FINDING WAS THAT, WHILE THE MAJORITY OF THOSE SURVEYED FELT SAFE, THEY PERCEIVED THAT THEY WOULD BE HAPPIER AND LEARN MORE, IF THEY FELT EVEN SAFER. COUPLED WITH THAT, ABOUT

ONE-THIRD OF THE SENIORS SAID ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS WOULD BE BEST FOR MAKING SCHOOLS SAFER. THEY ALSO REPORTED A NEED FOR METAL DETECTORS AND INCREASED SECURITY PERSONNEL. (BY THE WAY, THESE STUDENTS WANTED THE SECURITY PERSONNEL IN UNIFORMS, AND TRAINED.) ON ANOTHER OCCASION, A MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT WROTE TO ME AND CALLED ON ME TO DO SOMETHING. SOMETHING MORE.

WE HAVE BEGUN TO REEXAMINE OUR POLICIES AND HOW WE CARRY OUT THE PROCEDURES, FOR WHAT IS BEING DONE IS NOT AS EFFECTIVE AS IT SHOULD BE. WE NOW HAVE A NEW POLICY FOR RANDOM SEARCH WITH METAL DETECTORS (NO. 5145.12) AND A REVISED POLICY FOR SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION (NO. 5144).

OUR REPORTING SYSTEM HAS BEEN FINE-TUNED AND INCLUDES A DUAL NOTIFICATION TO POLICE AND THE DISTRICT'S CENTRAL OFFICE. THE PROCEDURES ALSO REQUIRE COMPLETION, NOT ONLY OF THE MANDATED VANDALISM AND VIOLENCE REPORT, BUT ALSO FOUR OTHER REPORTS.

THE LOCAL STATISTICS DO CLARIFY WHAT IS AT ISSUE. WHEN WE CLOSELY REVIEWED THE MONTH OF MARCH, 1994, IN TERMS OF TOTAL INCIDENTS, THERE WERE 166 INCIDENTS INVOLVING A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE STUDENT POPULATION, FROM ELEMENTARY TO HIGH SCHOOL.

WHEN WE TEASED BACK THE DATA, WE HAD A CLEARER VIEW OF WHAT THOSE INCIDENTS ENTAILED. WE ARE SEEING TRENDS WHICH WILL HELP GUIDE OUR ACTION IN PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE. OUT OF 166 TOTAL INCIDENTS, 74 OR 45 PERCENT WERE EITHER ASSAULTS OR THREATS, 34 OR 20 PERCENT, VANDALISM, 34 OR 20 PERCENT, FIGHTING, 16 OR 10 PERCENT, THEFT. ADDITIONALLY, 8 OUT OF 166 INCIDENTS, OR 5 PERCENT, INVOLVED WEAPONS OF SOME TYPE. WE DEFINE WEAPONS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH WEBSTER, AS "AN INSTRUMENT USED IN OFFENSIVE OR DEFENSIVE COMBAT", WE CONSIDER WEAPONS, "ANYTHING USED WITH INTENT TO DO HARM OR BRING INJURY TO ANOTHER."

THE RANGE OF WEAPONS INCLUDED FROM BINACA MOUTH SPRAY, CLOROX, MACE, BROOM HANDLE TO CARPET CUTTERS AND KNIVES. I MIGHT POINT OUT, NO USE OF FIREARMS, NOR DRIVE-BY SHOOTINGS HAVE OCCURRED.

WHEN WE REVIEWED OUR SUSPENSION RATE FOR 1992-93, WE FOUND A DECLINE IN THE "OUT-OF-SCHOOL" SUSPENSION, IN ALL SCHOOLS, OVER 1991-92, BY APPROXIMATELY, ONE-FIFTH. HOWEVER, FOR THE IN-SCHOOL SUSPENSION, WHICH IS ON THE RISE, WE HAVE MADE A CONCERTED EFFORT TO INCREASE ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES, THROUGH STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMS, FOR THE MIDDLE SCHOOLS AND THE HIGH SCHOOL. WE KNOW MORE ALTERNATIVES ARE NEEDED, INCLUDING THE TEMPORARY REMOVAL OF STUDENTS WITH BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS TO ANOTHER LOCATION.

WE HAVE INCREASED OUR SUPPORT PERSONNEL, WITHIN THE PAST TWO YEARS, WITH AN AT-RISK TEAM, NEW SECURITY OFFICERS, AS WELL AS A POLICE PRESENCE AT THE HIGH SCHOOL.

JUST RECENTLY, WE RE-CONVENED OUR SAFETY TASK FORCE, AND WE ARE SEEKING PARENTAL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT TO ENSURE SAFE CORRIDORS AND PLAYGROUND AREAS,

AND

WE HAVE INCREASED FUNDS FOR THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES INCLUDING: PEER LEADERSHIP, MEDIATION.

ALL OF THIS IS COSTING US MONEY, AND I NOW KNOW SO MUCH IS DEDICATED TO ATTACKING THE END OF THE PROBLEMS AND, NOT ENOUGH IN PREVENTING THEM.

OUR TOTAL BUDGET FOR SECURITY AS WELL AS ACTIVITIES IS WELL OVER 2 MILLION DOLLARS. REALISTICALLY, WE CAN NO LONGER CONTINUE TO DEDICATE SUCH A LARGE AMOUNT TO A BUDGET THAT IS ALREADY EXTREMELY TIGHT. WE NEED YOU TO DEMONSTRATE YOUR COMMITMENT TO MAKE SAFER SCHOOLS FOR ALL OF OUR CHILDREN, NO MATTER WHERE THEY RESIDE. I THEREFORE HOPE YOU WILL GIVE YOUR SUPPORT, AND

I STRONGLY URGE YOU TO - -

- GARNER SUPPORT FOR RECOMMENDATIONS F AND G OF THE

**"VIOLENCE AND VANDALISM PREVENTION TASK FORCE REPORT",
WHICH ADDRESS PROGRAMMING AND A REPORTING
SYSTEM.**

- **INCREASE FUNDING FOR PEER LEADERSHIP, MEDIATION, STUDENT MENTORING, CONFLICT RESOLUTION, AS WELL AS TRAINING FOR HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE AWARENESS PREVENTION.**
- **SUPPORT THE CONVERSION OF THE STATE'S LARGEST HIGH SCHOOLS INTO SMALLER HOUSES. THIS WILL BRING A SENSE OF "COMMUNITY" TO YOUTH. OUR HIGH SCHOOL HAS 3000 STUDENTS.**
- **REVIEW GANG PSYCHOLOGY AND UNDERSTAND THE AMOUNT OF SUPPORT SCHOOL DISTRICTS WILL REQUIRE TO WARD OFF, EARLY ENOUGH, THE PROLIFERATION OF THE LURE FOR "GANG" MEMBERSHIP. SOME OF THESE YOUTH ARE POTENTIALLY GREAT LEADERS.**
- **GIVE SUPPORT FOR A STATEWIDE CAMPAIGN FOR "HANDS ACROSS NEW JERSEY FOR AN END TO VIOLENCE" THIS SPRING, AND ELICIT PARENTS, MINISTERS, RABBIS, PRIESTS, COMUNITY LEADERS, AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO HELP.**
- **SUPPORT COLLABORATIVE MEASURES FOR ALTERNATIVE STUDENT PLACEMENT, COUNTY AND REGIONAL. I AM NOT AN ADVOCATE OF "BOOT" CAMPS. "BOOT" CAMPS HAVE THEIR PLACE, BUT WE NEED TO SPEND THE TIME AND RESOURCES ON THE PREVENTATIVE SIDE.**
- **SUPPORT KEEPING SCHOOLS OPEN LONGER, AND LATER, FOR THE MERE FACT WE CAN RAISE THE STUDENTS' LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE**

AND CLOSE THE VOID THAT OFTEN TIMES GETS STUDENTS IN TROUBLE.

- STIFFEN PENALTIES FOR REPEATERS, AND GIVE INCENTIVES TO STUDENTS, WHO DEMONSTRATE LEADERSHIP AND A COMMITMENT TO A "VIOLENCE-FREE ENVIRONMENT."
- ENSURE AUTOMATIC PROTECTION FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ON THE SCHOOL GROUNDS, AT ALL TIMES.

WITH REGARD TO RECORD-KEEPING AND REPORTING, THIS NEEDS TO BE COMPUTERIZED. IF WE HAVE DISC FOR STATEWIDE BUDGET INFORMATION, WE SHOULD HAVE A SIMILAR CAPABILITY TO FACILITATE DIRECT, INSTANTANEOUS REPORTING AND PROVIDE PARENTS AND SCHOOL AUTHORITIES WITH IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR. THERE IS THE NEED FOR A STATEWIDE NETWORK FOR JUVENILE OFFENDERS. I SUPPORT EFFORTS FOR A REFORM OF THE STATE'S NETWORK JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM.

IN CLOSING, I KNOW THERE ARE NO EASY ANSWERS, BUT, I AM CLEAR ABOUT ONE THING... WE MUST STRATEGIZE FOR A "GREAT WAR ON VIOLENCE." THE STAKES ARE HIGH, AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS WILL BE NEEDED TO DO THE JOB THAT MUST BE DONE. WE NEED PARENTS, SCHOOL PEOPLE,

LEGISLATORS, COMMUNITY, THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO JOIN HANDS ALL ACROSS
THIS STATE TO HELP US WIPE OUT VIOLENCE, WHEREVER IT IS.

THANK YOU.

BPV/pem 4/12/94

BUDGETED SECURITY COSTS

1993-94

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>COST \$</u>	<u>PERCENT OF SECURITY BUDGET</u>
• SALARIES	1,859,032	91.3
• SUPPLIES	13,000	.6
• UNIFORMS	13,000	.6
• EQUIPMENT	54,000	2.7
• LEGAL FEES	72,000	3.5
• CAR INSUR.	17,500	.9
• OTHER	7,400	.4
• HOME INST.		
• TRAINING		
• COMMUNICATION		
TOTAL SECURITY BUDGET	<u>\$2,035,932</u>	



BOARD OF EDUCATION
MALCOLM X SHABAZZ HIGH SCHOOL
80 MALCOLM X SHABAZZ PLAZA
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY 07108-2729

EUGENE C. CAMPBELL
EXECUTIVE SUPERINTENDENT

MARY G. BENNETT
PRINCIPAL

The violence that is talked about in today's society is more than just talk in our schools today. I am not for a moment suggesting that there is a "violent episode" in my school or every other school on a daily basis. However, the constant threat of violence erupting is a daily reality in my school and thousands of other schools across this country.

Educational research for decades has focused on the importance of school climate. There is no shortage of studies that clearly show that schools must be places where teachers can teach and students can learn. Establishing and maintaining a safe and orderly school climate in today's society is a major daily challenge.

Schools are a reflection of society. Violence in society has escalated. The murder rate, the rates of assaults, robbery, auto theft and most other crimes have increased significantly during the past five to ten years. Consequently, the rate of violence in schools has increased because students bring to school aspects of what they live and see outside of school.

15X

NEWARK STUDENTS LOVE SUCCESS

The staff of a school must constantly be on alert to try to keep outside problems, outside the school. One of the most prevalent types of violence in schools is the outside of school altercations which are brought into the school. Often, with no warning the staff of a school can find itself confronted with a major, violent disruption in school because both parties attend the same school or are friends of both sides and attend the same school.

A part of the school's alert for violence in the security measures that are attempted. This includes unarmed security guards, walk through metal detectors, hand held metal detectors and inspections of book bags and hand bags. While none of these measures guarantees no weapons will be brought into the school, it is hoped that they lessen the fear and anxiety that students and staff have about their safety during school hours.

I must stress that daily attempts to implement security measures impact on the instructional time of the school day. However, my staff is supportive of what has to be done to try to provide a safe school climate.

What I find most troubling is the viciousness and violence (verbal, emotional and mental) that students inflict on one another. Students who claim to be friends and supposedly like one another can go from joking one minute to viciously fighting the next minute. As the two combatants fight, there are times when bystanders decide to jump in and attack one or the other of the combatants. Thus causing an even greater disruption in school and escalating the violence.

When parents and guardians are contacted, far too few have a sense of the danger and threat to school safety that results from a violent incident. There are times when students' families know that their sons and daughters have had a problem in the community. Yet, they decide not to involve the authorities but rather to wait and let school officials handle the dispute. Consequently, the school climate is again in jeopardy.

As a high school principal and an educator who has worked with young people for 21 years, I am very concerned about the violence and viciousness that is prevalent among a small percentage but threatens the safety and well being of all. Schools must be places where the dominant focus can be on teaching and learning. Without some drastic changes that impact on our communities, and the environment in which students live the problem confronting schools will worsen.

To: A+ for Kids- Assembly Testimony

From: Mrs. Rosemary Brooks-Bittings
Teacher Irvington School District
Author of Bill to create Alternative Schools for Violence
Students

My name is Rosemary Brooks-Bittings. I am a teacher in the History Dept. in the Irvington School District. I have been teaching for more than 15 years and have witnessed acts of violence increasing in the school each year. Students have become violent with each other, their teachers and other personnel. While few guns and knives have been found in the building we know they are there as they are in schools all over the state. At the end of last school year (while waiting for a pizza delivery for my students) I witnessed something that would change my life; I witnessed a child across the street from the school being macheted.

I watched in horror as one student after another striked this child repeatedly. I ran in the building screaming, "call the police", and was able to get help for this child. Thank God the student was not killed, but that situation was the last straw for me. I had long talked about how something had to be done to address "Violent Students" and thus keep the rest of our students safe. But then I knew I could no longer wait, that I had to do something before it was too late. So after attending the Legislative Weekend in September, I decided to write a Bill that would provide protection for our kids and school personnel while also giving the violent student a Real chance for Rehabilitation. I sought the help of Senator Ron Rice (D Essex County) who has been a long time supporter of education. Together we fined tuned this legislation

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that will allow us to take back our schools and ensure our students and their families that Getting a Good Education is the only thing they need to be concerned in our schools. The Bill will remove violent students, those that carry weapons and etc., from the schools and place them in an Alternative School Program thus allowing two things: Our students to be in a safe school environment and the violent students to get help for real rehabilitation. I am proud to announce with the efforts of Mayor Steele of Irvington, we will be starting a pilot program.

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The Problem

Violence has become pervasive in school, leading to a direct and negative effect on the learning process. This is happening in all school settings, from the urban public systems to the most exclusive suburban private and parochial schools.

No longer can it be taken for granted that school is the 'safe haven' where students can enter to learn in safety and comfort... and then depart to become a viable component in society. Fear is becoming an everyday experience for the average school student.

The 3 R's is no longer the major concern of school pupils and/or personnel. It has not become the 4 R's: readin', 'ritin', 'rithmetic and RISK.

Children cannot effectively learn where they do not feel safe and secure.

Statement:

We must return to TOP priority ... the education of our students. This means removing the one element that most threatens this process: the risk of VIOLENCE.

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Key Elements of the Alternative Setting

- ... strong counseling component**
- ... utilization of child study teams, as appropriate**
- ... teachers should have seasoned teaching skills**
- ... class sizes should be of a certain ratio to assure successful rehabilitation**
- ... personnel would receive incentives to participate in alternative setting**
- ... criteria for attendance must be developed, addressing such items as attendance, academics, rehabilitative counseling, citizenship, etc.**
- ... one-on-one mentoring should be a part of the program**
- ... community agencies should be utilized as part of the mentoring process**
- ... a system of confidential information flow should be established**
- ... certain measures to help PREVENT future violence/aggression should be incorporated, for example**
 - peer talks and visits are encouraged between alternative school participants and their former classmates**
 - students would go back to their former school setting periodically to discuss why they got into their current situation**
 - visits would be encouraged from 'role models' within the community... especially those who have 'been there'**
 - visits to programs such as "Scared Straight" would take place**
 - the alternative students would be put into the role of talking to and visiting younger people who may need attention, such as those in youth hospital wards, etc.**

Solutions (What the Bill Should Do)

... make the schools a safer environment for students and personnel, by removing disruptive influences

... offer alternatives for students who exhibit violent behavior

... create alternate educational settings to educate students who exhibit violent behavior. This could be a specific school in each district that will house and educate violent offenders. This school may be a part of an existing school and utilize existing school members, OR it could be a new school with totally new personnel and environment. Recognizing that each district is unique, this would be left to the discretion of each school district .

... in no way interfere with the municipality, county or state criminal justice remedies for criminal acts, as they apply.

... provide personnel (especially security staff) with training and procedures for orderly removal of disruptive students. It would also train teachers, mentors and counselors in the handling of specialized problems.

... be viewed as a minimal option, in terms of penalties for student offenders

... provide an interim placement for the student which assures continuation of a student's educational process, until the judicial process is completed

...mandate careful record-keeping which ensures accurate records to follow a student from district to district, assuring that they are placed in an alternative setting for the appropriate time period.

... require the student violent offender to adhere to the guidelines of the alternative program, or be subject to judicial or other repercussions.

... require the student to successfully complete at least one semester in the alternative program, but not more than four years. Subject to review by a panel of teachers and counselors.

... allow for the student to receive a standard diploma upon graduation from the program, which must be consistent with district criteria and guidelines.

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(Contact No)

(201-761-1678)



New Jersey Education Association 180 W. State Street P.O. Box 1211 Trenton, NJ 08607-1211 (609) 599-4561 FAX: (609) 392-6321

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE
ON THE TOPIC OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE AND VANDALISM
PRESENTED BY WILLIAM H. LEWIS, JR.
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
APRIL 12, 1994

Schools exhibit all of the social ills of the community. While there may be some question as to whether violence in the USA is increasing or whether its getting more media attention than usual, it is clear from the literature that the incidence of youth violence has increased.

It is also clear that students are afraid in schools and that their performance in schools are likely affected by this.

A USA Weekend survey taken in September 1993 showed that:

- Thirty-seven percent of the 65 thousand teenagers surveyed did not feel safe in their schools.
- Forty-three percent avoided school lavatories and other "unsafe" areas;
- Nationally, 63 percent said they could learn more at school if they felt safer.

The National Conference of State Legislatures' Criminal Justice expert, Donna Hunzeker, says that "the angry young man we have always blamed for crime is becoming both angrier and younger."

/Continued....

Even though overall rates of crime are down slightly in the last five years:

- The FBI reports that the use of firearms in violent crimes continues to rise among all age groups, but most dramatically among young people; and
- Weapons violations among juveniles jumped 117 percent and murder and manslaughter (non-negligent types) increased by 128 percent.

The January 5, 1994 report of the New Jersey Department of Education Violence and Vandalism Prevention Task Force indicated there is no denying that violence and vandalism is a major problem facing our schools. It occurs in both public and private schools, and in urban, suburban, and rural communities alike, violence has no geography. The incidence of violence and vandalism reported by New Jersey schools has significantly increased in the last several years.

NJEA was a member of the task force and agrees that it is the schools' responsibility to make schools safer for students to learn and for teachers to teach. The roles of school staff, boards of education, parents, students, law enforcement and other community agencies, religious institutions, and all levels of government need to be coordinated to provide the best possible learning environment for all children and youth. NJEA supports the recommendations of the task force with only a few minor objections, too minor to mention here.

Researchers say some of the root causes of youth violence are societal problems such as deteriorating social and economic conditions; family stresses; easy access to guns, drugs, and alcohol; continued exposure to violent images of television, video games, and music.

A large body of evidence suggests that violence is a learned behavior and that a child's early years, up to about age 8, are crucial in shaping the child's attitude about aggression and violence.

Arnold Goldstein, Director of the Center for Research on Aggression at Syracuse University says children "copy what their parents do." Once children learn that aggressive behavior gets the results they are looking for, they are likely to continue to be aggressive. Schools and communities can provide classes in developing parenting skills particularly among young, at-risk parents.

In addition, schools can help children learn nonviolent methods of problem solving so that lethal violence is not their first and only reaction. Harvard University Developmental Psychologist, Ronald Slaby, says that he is not sure that there is more aggression today in the sense of fights and disputes, but the aggression is much more lethal, and guns have a great deal to do with that. Youth can get guns more easily. NJEA agrees with many researchers that one of the best strategies is to teach children alternative skills for solving problems nonviolently.

If schools are going to successfully combat school crime, students must realize that they have a stake in becoming a player and thereby take an active role.

Terry Modglin's article, in the spring 1989 School Safety magazine published by the National School Safety Center in Washington, D.C., discussed a new school curriculum that "helps students appreciate their vested interest in preventing the crime and violence that is affecting them, their classmates and their education." The author points to Teens, Crime and the Community (TC&C) developed by The National Crime Prevention Council and the National Institute for Citizen Education in the Law as one way of promoting the needed environment.

The program focuses on students as victims. It teaches basic crime reduction and avoidance skills. Such classroom lessons motivate the students because it relates to their school and community. Students also get involved in teen action projects.

In 1992, a program was introduced in New Jersey to curb gun violence in schools through peaceful resolutions of problems. "Project Star" or Straight Talk About Risks is for middle school children. The Center to Prevent Handgun Violence in Washington, D.C. developed the program and trains four-person teams from each participating school. The program has been used in Dade County, Florida, New York, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Oakland, California. In New Jersey participating schools include, Atlantic City, Piscataway, Clifton, and Bridgeton.

NJEA does not endorse any particular curriculum in this area, but this curriculum and textbook serve as an example of the resources that are available to school districts for consideration.

Violence in our schools can no longer be tolerated. If teachers are to teach and students are to learn, then schools must be free of the level of violence and vandalism that now exists. It's time to draw a line in the sand that says that our schools are to be safe heavens for learning and social development.

/Continued....

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Violence and vandalism has escalated to the point where the health and safety of the people within the school are no longer a reasonable expectation. Crime has increased in schools, around schools, at school functions, and on the way to school. The proliferation of weapons, especially guns and automatic weapons have turned neighborhoods into war zones. Students, teachers, administrators, and other school staff are targets of this senseless brutality.

It is time for the state of New Jersey to accelerate its efforts to reduce crime in the schools and the greater community. All of us make up the state of New Jersey as individuals, school personnel, local board of education members, law enforcement, students, parents, shopkeepers and store owners, business and industry leaders, local, county, and state government people.

In order to make our communities and schools safer, we will need a coordinated effort on the part of all concerned. The schools are a good starting point because the children are there and they are our best hope for change. It is very important that students and school staff have a voice in whatever is done to improve the situation. We must have the support of parents and community groups in order to succeed.

All major efforts by schools to make significant changes will require a commitment of resources. School districts can not be expected to maintain good programs in the area of peer counseling, conflict resolution, drug and alcohol counseling in the face of diminishing dollars. In an environment of increasing costs and diminishing resources, schools will be unable to maintain their current efforts and certainly not institute new programs. It's difficult for students to build self esteem and to relate positively to the school when buildings are in disrepair or art, music, and co-curricula activities are eliminated.

Districts should be made aware of the availability of any federal or state grant money for the development of anti-violence programs.

The development of a model agreement between the Department of Education and the Attorney General's office is a strong step toward school staff understanding what they are expected to do in certain circumstances such as the discovery of a gun. Policies and procedures are developed in which both schools and law enforcement officials agree to follow. The Attorney General's Education and Law Enforcement Working Group is encouraging schools to include bias crime prevention in their curriculum. Future training will be made available.

NJEA supports legislation and/or administrative code that:

- Increases the penalty or upgrades the charge when any school staff person acting in the performance of their duty is assaulted;
- Establishes parental liability for damage done to property by their children;
- Makes assaults by students on school employees a presumptive basis for expulsion;
- Increases the probability of charging juveniles as adults in certain circumstances of assault in school settings;
- Increases the availability of information to appropriate school staff of juveniles charged, suspected, or convicted of delinquency, especially violent acts;
- Establishes funding for alternative schools within counties or regions for students who have been excluded from school;
- Eliminates child abuse and encourages schools to teach parenting skills;
- Supports conflict resolution, peer mediation programs through adequate state funding;
- Supports efforts that require local school districts to make available alternative programs for students whose behavior is determined to be such that those students should not remain in the regular school environment; and
- Provides for major penalties for a person trespassing in a school building.

In summary, NJEA will continue to work to help schools create the best possible learning and social environment in schools. We will continue to be advocates for all children, those who get into difficulty because of their behavior and those whose rights are sometimes abridged because of the violent behavior of their peers.

/Continued....

We will continue to work with school staff in the area of professional development in classroom management skill improvement, recognition of child abuse symptoms, and the sharing of information and techniques to improve the teaching and learning environment.

Let us all agree to renew our efforts to make schools safer. NJEA asks that the Assembly Education Committee to:

1. Look at Commissioner of Education's Violence and Vandalism Task Force's Report and work with the Commissioner Klagholz to implement those recommendations
2. Support legislation in the area outlined by NJEA.
3. Move with all deliberate speed on legislation to increase school safety.
4. Support efforts to provide adequate funding for school improvement.

DTC:WHL:emg
4/12/94