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PUBLIC HEARING

before .

ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

ASSEMBLY BILL 2928

(Establishes an eleventh grade high school graduation test)

April 14, 1988
Cedar Ridge High School
Old Bridge, New Jersey

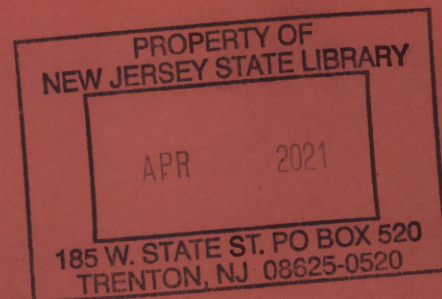
MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblyman Joseph A. Palaia, Chairman
Assemblyman Joseph M. Kyrillos, Jr.
Assemblyman Gerard S. Naples
Assemblyman William J. Pascrell, Jr.

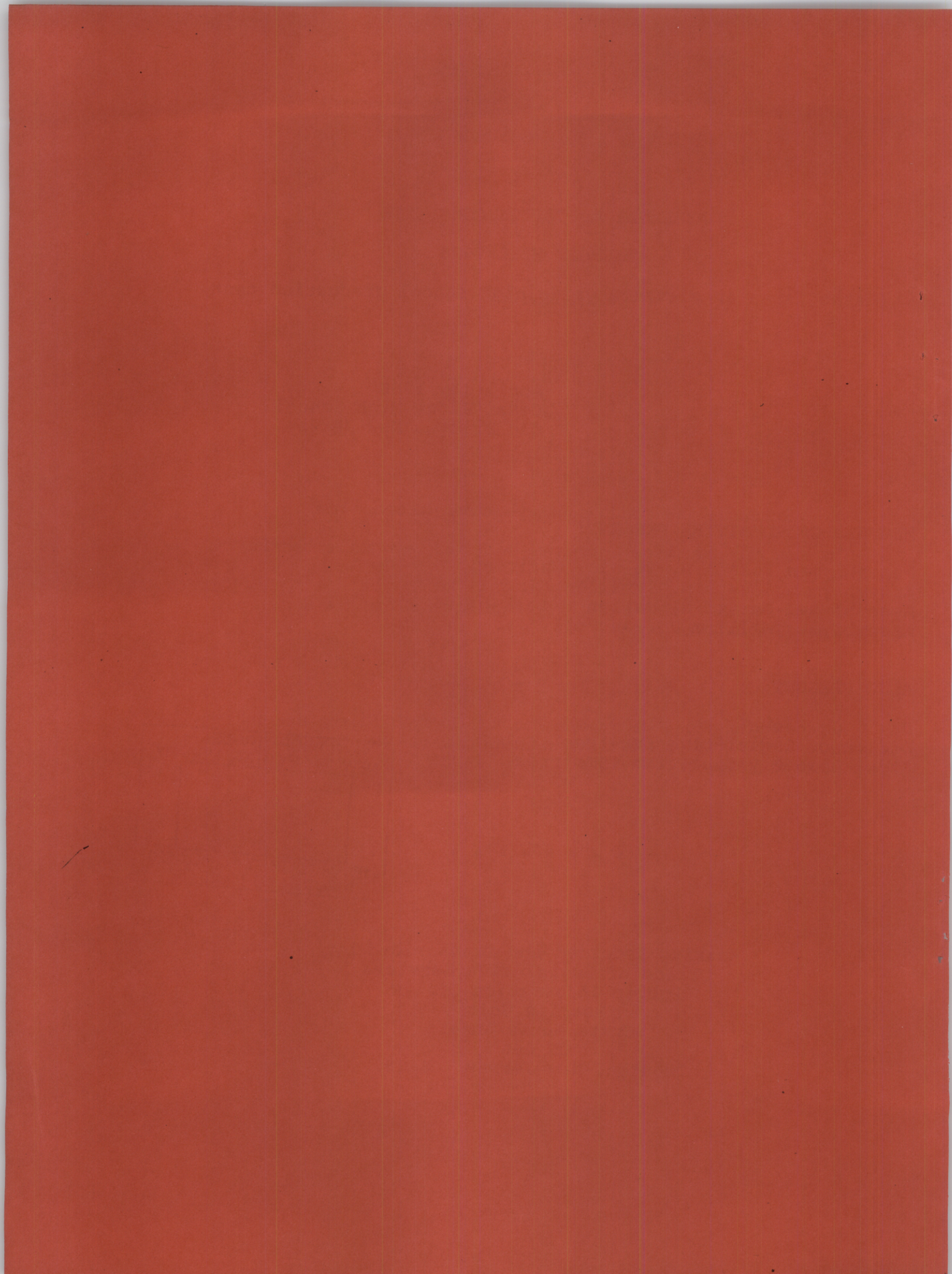
ALSO PRESENT:

David J. Rosen
Office of Legislative Services
Aide, Assembly Education Committee

* * * * *



Hearing Recorded and Transcribed by
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State House Annex
CN 068
Trenton, New Jersey 08625





New Jersey State Legislature
ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE
STATE HOUSE ANNEX, CN-068
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625
TELEPHONE: (609) 984-6843

PALAIA

eth E. Randall

irman

M. Kyrillos, Jr.

S. Naples

m J. Pascrell, Jr.

March 25, 1988

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

on

Assembly Bill No. 2928
(sponsored by Assemblymen Kyrillos and Villane)

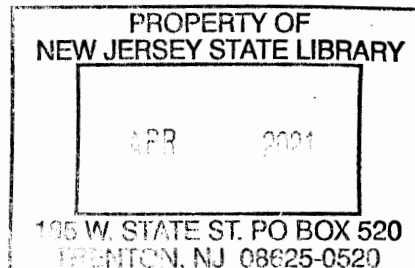
Establishes an eleventh grade high school graduation test.

The Assembly Education Committee will hold two public hearings as follows:

Thursday, April 7, 1988 at 10:00 A.M. in Room 341 of the State House Annex, Trenton, New Jersey.

Thursday, April 14, 1988 at 1:30 P.M. in the Library, Cedar Ridge High School, Route 516, Old Bridge, New Jersey.

Anyone wishing to testify should contact David J. Rosen, aide to the committee at (609) 984-6843 and should submit copies of their testimony to the committee on the day of the hearing.



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED APRIL 18, 1988

By Assemblymen KYRILLOS, VILLANE, Assemblywoman Smith,
Assemblyman Bennett, Assemblywoman Farragher,
Assemblymen Palaia, Doria and Pascrell

1 **AN ACT** establishing an eleventh grade test for high school
graduation, amending and supplementing P.L. 1979, c. 241.

3

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the*
5 *State of New Jersey:*

1. Section 3 of P.L. 1979, c. 241 (C. 18A:7C-3) is amended to
7 read as follows:

3. For any student who does not meet the State and district
9 examination standards for graduation by the end of [tenth]
eleventh grade, the local board of education when appropriate
11 shall provide additional remedial instruction specifically directed
toward mastery of those proficiencies identified as necessary for
13 the awarding of a diploma which may include but need not be
limited to an extended school year, extended school day, or
15 additional school years.

Any twelfth grade student who does not meet said
17 requirements but who has met all the credit, curriculum and
attendance requirements shall be eligible for a comprehensive
19 assessment of said proficiencies utilizing techniques and
instruments other than standardized tests, which techniques and
21 instruments shall have been approved by the Commissioner of
Education as fulfilling State and local graduation requirements.
23 (cf: P.L. 1979, c. 241, s. 3)

2. Section 4 of P.L. 1979, c. 241 (C. 18A:7C-4) is amended to
25 read as follows:

4. All students who meet State and local graduation
27 requirements shall receive a State endorsed diploma; provided,
however, that the Commissioner of Education shall approve any
29 State endorsed diploma which utilizes the comprehensive
assessment techniques as provided in section 3 of [this act] P.L.
31 1979, c. 241 (C. 18A:7C-3).

EXPLANATION—Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the
above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined thus is new matter.

1 Local districts may not provide a high school diploma to
2 students not meeting these standards. Any out-of-school youth
3 or adult age 18 or over who has otherwise met the district
4 graduation requirements but has failed to earn a State endorsed
5 diploma may take [a basic skills] the graduation proficiencies test
6 which has been developed and administered under the auspices of
7 the Commissioner of Education. Upon passing this test, a State
8 endorsed diploma will be granted.

9 Each board of education shall provide, in a format approved by
10 the Commissioner of Education, a performance transcript for
11 each student leaving secondary school.

(cf: P.L. 1979, c. 241, s. 4)

13 3. Section 6 of P.L. 1979, c. 241 (C. 18A:7C-6) is amended to
14 read as follows:

15 6. In the school year which begins in September [1981] 1993,
16 and annually thereafter, the State graduation proficiency test
17 shall be administered to all [ninth] eleventh grade pupils and to
18 [all other high school pupils who have] any eleventh or twelfth
19 grade pupil who has previously failed to demonstrate mastery of
20 State graduation proficiency standards on said test. The mastery
21 of proficiencies required to fulfill local graduation standards shall
22 be determined as appropriate under local board of education
23 assessment plans.

(cf: P.L. 1979, c. 241, s. 6)

25 4. (New section) The Commissioner of Education shall develop
26 and administer to all eighth grade pupils in the school year which
27 begins in September 1990, and annually thereafter, a test to
28 assess progress toward mastery of State graduation proficiency
29 standards. For any student not meeting established examination
30 standards, the local board of education shall provide for
31 appropriate remediation in areas of demonstrated deficiency.

32 5. This act shall take effect immediately for the purposes of
33 planning and development; however, sections 1 and 3 shall not
34 take effect until July 1, 1993 and the graduation standards
35 provided for herein shall only apply to pupils who are enrolled in
36 the eighth grade during the 1990-91 school year and scheduled to
37 graduate from secondary school at the completion of the
1994-1995 school year.

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STATEMENT

3

This bill establishes an eleventh grade test as a requirement for high school graduation. The new graduation test would be given to eleventh graders beginning in the 1993-1994 school year. Pupils who fail to meet the standards could retake the examination in the eleventh grade and again in the twelfth grade. The test would, therefore, first apply to students who are scheduled to graduate in the Spring of 1995. The ninth grade proficiency test will continue to apply to students scheduled to graduate prior to the spring of 1995.

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EDUCATION

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ASSEMBLYMAN JOSEPH A. PALAIA (Chairman): Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to welcome you to this session of the Assembly Education Committee, at which time we'll have a public hearing on Assembly Bill 2928, sponsored by Assemblyman Joe Kyrillos and Assemblyman Anthony Villane. Before we open it up to the witness list that we have before us, Assemblyman Kyrillos would like to make an opening statement.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Should we hear David's official statement first?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes, go ahead.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: For the benefit of those that don't know the bill.

MR. ROSEN (Committee Aide): Assembly Bill 2928 establishes an eleventh grade test as a requirement for high school graduation. (interrupted by school's paging system) We're in a school.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Darn it. I wish it was me. I was hoping they were calling me, but they weren't.

MR. ROSEN: (continues) The new graduation test will be given to eleventh graders beginning in the 1993-'94 school year. Pupils who fail to meet the standards can retake the examination in the eleventh grade, and again in the twelfth grade. The test would, therefore, first apply to students who are scheduled to graduate in the spring of 1995. The ninth grade proficiency test will continue to apply to students scheduled to graduate prior to the spring of '95.

Under the bill, beginning in the 1990-'91 school year, students will be tested in the eighth grade to assess their progress toward mastery of State graduation proficiency standards. Remediation will be provided for students who fail to meet the examination standards in that test.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you, David. Assemblyman Kyrillos?

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I get into my statement, let me welcome the Committee members for the second time -- Assemblyman Smith did earlier for our Education Committee meeting -- to the 13th Legislative District, and to Old Bridge. I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for having one of our hearings on this important bill here in Old Bridge, at Cedar Ridge High School, and in our district.

The bill that David Rosen just described is in my opinion one of the most important bills that the Legislature is going to debate in the current session. The Governor, in his January State of the State Message, called for us to "raise the bar" our students must hurdle in order to graduate from a New Jersey public school, and this bill embodies that proposal.

It's a very simple bill, and it makes only two changes in the law; but those changes are very far-reaching. The bill amends the existing high school graduation standard by moving the current High School Proficiency Test from the ninth grade to the eleventh grade, and it also establishes a so-called, "early warning test" in the eighth grade. The eleventh grade exam will test a higher level of basic skills than the current exam. The eighth grade test will alert school officials to potential problems that a student may face in passing the upcoming eleventh grade test.

And I don't think it's an understatement to say that the new basic skills test is really crucial to the future of our children and our State, and to our society. It really identifies those skills which educators deem are crucial to a person's survival in our society. They're very fundamental.

Now, the point is underscored by articles and news reports that I've seen through the years and recently. NBC has run, and is running, a very impressive series of reporting segments this week. The Trenton Times last week had an article quoting an editor with "Fortune Magazine," who pointed out that there is a crisis facing the American business community. She

noted that as many as 30% of the nation's working age people will be unemployable by the turn of the century because they don't have enough education to perform competently in the workplace. She went on to say that out of a recent group of applications to New York Telephone Company, 84% of the applicants flunked a basic skills test.

Her remarks are echoed by the Chairman of the Xerox Corporation, David Kearns, who has noted that the cost to industry in re-educating our workers in basic skills, he estimates to be about \$2 billion every year.

Now, as legislators I think we have a responsibility to the children of our State, at a minimum, that they have the basic skills necessary, the fundamental basic skills necessary that they need to survive in our workplace and in our society.

Unfortunately empirical indicators point to basic skills deficiencies in the graduates of our New Jersey high schools. The State Board of Higher Education recently issued a report which showed that the level of basic skills for freshmen entering New Jersey colleges has not increased in over 10 years. I find that alarming.

Over the last 10 years New Jersey's economy has changed from an industrial base to an information and communications base. If our children are not provided with basic skills, they won't be able to compete politically, economically, and socially in this more complicated society.

I think Assembly Bill 2928 represents an effort to ensure that our children have those basic skills, Mr. Chairman. I look forward this afternoon to hearing, as we did last week in Trenton, from the comments of educators and parents and business leaders and community leaders. I'm impressed with the witness list that we have today, and looking forward to hearing what they have to say. Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you, Mr. Assemblyman. I'm going to take the prerogative of the Chair to call on a couple of students first, who have asked to speak. Is Patricia Taylor here?

PATRICIA TAYLOR: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Patricia, would you come forward please and give your testimony. It's a pleasure to have you here. Just have a seat.

MS. TAYLOR: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Identify yourself, tell us where you're from, what grade you're in, or what you do.

MS. TAYLOR: I'm Patricia Taylor. I'm from Laurence Harbor.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Laurence Harbor?

MS. TAYLOR: I'm in eleventh grade.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Good. What school do you go to?

MS. TAYLOR: Cedar Ridge.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Cedar Ridge, right here. Good.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Nice to see you.

MS. TAYLOR: Thank you. I just don't think it's fair because, like, I'm in basic classes, and on the math part they have algebra, and in all my classes I never even saw it before. And then I go there and I try to do it and it's very hard. My teachers, we never get around to it. I never even saw algebra before. And then when I'm sitting there doing it, trying to do it, it don't make sense to me -- a lot of the stuff on there.

And then in the reading part, I'm in skills English, and I try to read them words, half the words I can't even pronounce. They just make it kind of hard. I've been taking it for three years now. I haven't had a lunch this year because I'm trying to pass it, and it's very hard and I can't. I keep trying.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: All right. Patricia, in other words, you're relating to the test itself and the ingredients of the test, that you feel are much too difficult for some students to even comprehend.

MS. TAYLOR: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Therefore, not giving you an opportunity, even though you're working as hard as you possibly can. Correct?

MS. TAYLOR: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes. Anybody care--

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Patricia, you never had algebra?

MS. TAYLOR: No. I never took the class because I don't know it. Okay? I'm in basic math.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Yes, it's awfully hard to pass questions on a test that relates to algebra, and you've never even had the class. It's not fair to you.

MS. TAYLOR: No, it's not.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Anyone else have any questions for Patricia?

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: I was going to say pretty much what Joe said.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yeah, I would think so too. Patricia, you have to understand something. These hearings are held just for what you're bringing out here, so we as a Committee can review it and take it back to the Department of Education and say to them, "Look, when you're drafting this, you've got to have some realistic questions on there that at least relate to some of the students."

MS. TAYLOR: Yeah, because the students that are in honor classes, they go in there and it's, like, the easiest test they ever took; but what about us in basic skills?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes, that's true.

MS. TAYLOR: It's hard.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: I have a question real quick. Would a lot more kids be here, or are you just a little less shy?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Are you representing a group, or just yourself?

MS. TAYLOR: They would come. I didn't even know about this. My teacher asked me to come.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: That's good. We love to have you.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Have you talked to a lot of kids about this?

MS. TAYLOR: Well no, not really. I just found out about it.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Do they feel the way you do?

MS. TAYLOR: Yeah, pretty much--

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Because we want to know if--

MS. TAYLOR: --because they're still trying to pass it too.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you Patricia. Okay, let's go on to our next speaker, who will be Peter Mosley. Peter, are you here? It's always nice to get a refreshing point of view from the people who have to live with these things that we put forward. Peter, have a seat and identify yourself please.

P E T E R M O S L E Y: My name is Peter Mosley. I live in South Amboy, and I'm in eleventh grade.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Go ahead, Peter.

MR. MOSLEY: The math part, there's a lot of problems on there -- like she said -- I don't understand, I haven't even seen before, especially with geometry.

And for the reading, I think the stories are too long. And as she was saying, there's a lot of words in there I haven't seen before and I can't even pronounce. The stories are very boring. They are. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: I always found them to be that way too, Peter.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Yes, I have a question for Peter.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Assemblyman Pascrell?

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Thanks for coming before us. I am deeply appreciative of that. Let me ask you a question about these tests in general. Is this a valid criticism of the test, that rather than attempt to put a time limit on when people or how people can answer questions, would it be a better idea, if you really want to test for skills and the development in certain areas, if we give people more time to answer questions? Under the gun of time, what's proven?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: In other words, do you have enough time to complete the work that's been assigned there? If you had more time could you do better?

MR. MOSLEY: No, I think we have enough time, because I finished it 10 or 15 minutes before the thing's over and I go over it.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: So you had enough time?

MR. MOSLEY: Before the test is over and I then check over it.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Okay, Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: You mention geometry, did you ever have a course in geometry at the school?

MR. MOSLEY: No, I never even went over it.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: What course are you in? What particular curriculum, course of study, are you enrolled in?

MR. MOSLEY: Algebra I-- No, not even. CP II.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: No, college prep, business, what have you?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Basic skills?

MR. MOSLEY: No, I'm not in any.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: You're not in any particular program?

MR. MOSLEY: No. Oh yeah, I have a math lab, but we haven't gone over some of the problems on the test.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Okay. Any other questions for Peter?

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: What do you mean, Peter, you haven't gone over some of the things that are in the test? Are you saying-- And I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, and stop me if I am. Are you saying that we should gear what happens in the classroom to that test?

MR. MOSLEY: No, I'm saying that all of the problems that are on the test you should show us how to do, a lot of the stuff.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: That would help, I guess. It would be very helpful, wouldn't it Peter?

MR. MOSLEY: There were a lot of charts on the test that we haven't gone over.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: There's a lot of charts on the--

MR. MOSLEY: We don't do that many charts in math, and there was a lot more charts on the test this year than there was in previous years.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes, Gerard?

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Pete, a question: Are you in both basic skills math and reading?

MR. MOSLEY: Yeah.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: How long have you been in each?

MR. MOSLEY: Since I've come to Cedar Ridge, ninth grade.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: And you're in eleventh grade?

MR. MOSLEY: Yeah.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: And you're in an eleventh grade-- Now I want to phrase this here, because some different districts require different certification for basic skills teachers. Give me an example of some of what you're studying in basic skills math. Take a typical problem.

MR. MOSLEY: Word problems we do.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Well, which would test your ability to convert fractions, decimals, percentages?

MR. MOSLEY: Yeah, we do that.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Would you get into how to figure a property tax rate out, or the cost of something on the stock market or something like that?

MR. MOSLEY: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: You wouldn't get that deep?

MR. MOSLEY: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you, Peter, for coming before us. We appreciate it.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Thanks Peter. Nice job.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: You know, when we get to Dr. Bloom, you know, you're going to be explaining some of that. You know, seeing that we had that testimony now, would you rather come on now or would you rather wait? You'd rather wait? (affirmative response) Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Mr. Chairman?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: I had a question to ask.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: When the Department and the Commissioner were formulating the rationale for moving the test from the ninth to the eleventh grade, did they in fact discuss this with teachers and students who are involved in the test?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Well, I think I'll have to wait to hear from Dr. Bloom to give us that--

A S S T. C O M M I S S I O N E R J O E L B L O O M: Well, I can respond to that.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: All right, this is Dr. Bloom now.

MR. ROSEN: Joel, I'm sorry. Could you come to the microphone so that we can get it on the record?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: You have to speak into the microphone, Joel.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: I think some of that is explained in the previous material we submitted. When we did the research we requested position papers from about 15 associations, including all the major associations in the State as well as some of their affiliated associations -- English teachers' associations, math, social studies. Most of them submitted. In addition to that, we invited all other, and any other, public parties who were interested in submitting written responses to us, written comments to us, to do so. And we did get some additional materials mailed to us, letters, other reports, concerns raised by students. So yes, that was--

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: So the answer to your question is that, yes, you did get some testimony from teachers, but you really didn't get testimony from students? When I say testimony, it's in the broad sense of the word.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: No, no hearings such as that. Absolutely not.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Don't you think that's important?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Yes, it is, and we have done that in the past.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Why wasn't it done in this case?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: No, you didn't let me finish answering.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Oh.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: It was done in the past as far as when we've gone in and done training of teachers, we've then gone into classrooms. When we've done training of teachers to have the students perform better on the tests, we then interviewed students, asking them about the test, taking their input on the test, how well the new materials prepare them -- the student booklets you'll see again in some packets that you'll be getting later on. We have materials we prepare especially for students. We take their feedback. We've taken

their feedback about the test, pieces of the test as well as the idea of moving some of the test. We've done a number of field tests where we've asked them about the element of time, as you have raised, and they have given us the same answer as you heard earlier. They have enough time. So we've done a number of steps, surveys, interviews, studies, follow-up evaluations, over the past three and four years, and we did likewise in preparation of writing this. Did not hold public hearings, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCARELL: Well, I wasn't suggesting that that was the only way to get student input, is to have a public hearing.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCARELL: I mean, two students don't make us knowledgeable of how students feel, although they present us with how they feel individually, which is significant. But it would seem to me, if we're going to make a change of a test that students need to be interviewed, and I'll bring this up later, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Okay. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Joe?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes?

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Dr. Bloom, one quick question. When I posed the question to Peter whether figuring out a property tax rate -- a house is assessed at this that and that, the rate is \$5.42 -- a stock market problem, and one other thing I mentioned, they were all from a Winston eighth grade textbook. I taught eighth grade math. Does it surprise you that a kid in eleventh grade basic skills hasn't learned those particular skills?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: No, it doesn't surprise us. I'm sure you can find there are many other students who haven't learned those skills by the eleventh grade.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: All right. In order to bridge that gap then, Joel, let me ask you this question. Will the new test encompass those skills in order to be able to cause a kid to figure a tax rate, tell what a stock would be on the market, another one would be the volume of a cylinder -- which would really be the basis of solid geometry, but it's in an eighth grade book, talking about volume?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Two of the three kinds of examples that you just cited are on the HSPT now. Those kinds of examples would be continued. Those are the kinds of examples that are very practical, very applied, to which the skills they learn in math they should be able to apply by the time they're in the eleventh grade.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: The reason I say that-- I found some old tests I had given a couple of years ago, and I went over them with my own teacher, who was a teacher under me when I was principal. I would have gotten about a 55 on it today, I'll admit quite frankly.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you. Thank you, Joel. We'll bring you back for further testimony.

At this time I would like to have Peter Delaney, the Principal of Madison Central High School, to come forward. I know you have a busy schedule like everybody else, and we'd like to get you to hear your testimony.

PETER DELANEY: Thank you, sir. First I'd like to state that I am in favor of outcome testing. I think that the institution of HSPT has made all of us in public education focus and do a better job.

I believe, however, that if we are to require all students in public schools to meet a particular proficiency, then the Department of Education in the State, and the funding agencies, must address the variables that doom certain students to lack of performance. The public school system can take some responsibility because of curriculum. We as teachers and

principals can take some responsibility for the failures of certain students to do well on the High School Proficiency Test. But I believe that the larger variables as to why kids do not do well must be addressed also.

For us to in a Pollyannic fashion assume that every single kid is going to be able to pass basic geometry and basic algebra, and by the State Department of Education saying that because the test exists, it is so -- that is, the natural conclusion will be kids will pass -- is not enough.

All of us, when we were in school, know that there are a large number of people who did not pass tests, who were not proficient, who dropped out of school, and who functioned on the edge of what we would consider to be bare subsistence in education. We have to eliminate that, but the public school itself by outcome testing, will not do that job totally. So we must address the problems in addition to what the public school can handle. I believe we should stay with outcome testing. We should make sure, however, that we realize what high school kids -- and we have a broad range in universal education -- are capable of.

I trust everyone in the room heard the two students and heard them well, because we have here the young lady who wants to pass. The young lady you could tell wants to do well, and the young lady by far is not stupid. She has developed various intelligences, some of which are not measured on the HSPT.

So should we stay with the HSPT? Yes. Should it be the eleventh or the ninth grade? Frankly, I don't care, as long as we can identify the kids early, and as long as we can provide for remediation if necessary prior to the taking of the eleventh grade test, and as long as it is not just an exercise in futility; and that when the time comes for it to be a true test, we can look on it and say that if a kid does not pass it, it's because we have failed the kid in some way.

Right now, if a kid does not pass the test, I will not personally accept responsibility for every kid who does not pass the test. For some, it is our responsibility in public education; not for all. We have to reach a point where, if a kid fails, we in public education can accept the responsibility for all. That means eliminating all the other variables in society that do affect the kid taking and passing the test. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you, Peter.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Mr. Chairman?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes?

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: A question through the Chair. Mr. Delaney, you mentioned two times in your presentation, variables. And then you said the Department should address them. What are the variables you're talking about, and how should the Department address them?

MR. DELANEY: Okay. I think the equality of educational opportunities, especially in the younger grades, should be addressed. I think that the State Department, although it may not have total responsibility for social concerns, should use its influence where it can; and it should also be cognizant of the social factors that influence a kid's not performing well in school, when it does require that all kids perform well. If the research -- and I know Dr. Bloom has examined the research-- Students who have poor self-images, students who do not have the support of the so-called nuclear family structure, those kids may do well on the test, but statistics would show that they are fighting against odds greater than the kid who comes from situations where he has those support services. So, I think we have to recognize all of that.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: In 1990-'91, the Department is going to administer a basic skills test in the eighth grade. They say they're going to identify those students who are needy

before they get into high school. Would you agree or disagree with this statement: It's too late by that time, probably, and that what we should be doing is focusing in the earlier grades, regardless of whether we're talking about testing or curriculum development, or what have you? Agree or disagree, and why or why not?

MR. DELANEY: Okay. Sort of yes or no?

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: No, no, and why or why not?

MR. DELANEY: I understand. I think the earlier you can identify a problem, the more success you can have in remediating the problem. I don't think testing kids in the eighth grade is a bad idea, because if we can identify the kids then, at least we have the formative high school years to do something about it. I do agree, however, that there should be ways to identify those kids earlier, and to have prescriptions for those kids earlier. But I also would have to go back and say that the school alone is not going to be able to do it, and other agencies would have to-- It has to be a total effort.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: The urban superintendents seem to feel that the eleventh grade tests or the ninth grade tests is one of the reasons why more people leave school. And that if we give the test -- I'm not quoting them now -- that we give the test in the eleventh grade instead of the ninth grade that, you know, 60% of the students that are going to drop out have already dropped out; if not literally, then figuratively. Do you accept that?

MR. DELANEY: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Anyone else care to question Mr. Delaney?

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Yes, a question about the eighth grade test, and if I misinterpreted the Commissioner, Jeanne, please correct me. But I heard the Commissioner say, in referring to the eighth grade test, use the word "gatekeeper."

Do you feel that the eighth grade test should be gatekeeper in nature of sorts, a combination, or what?

MR. DELANEY: I'd have to ask for a definition of the "gatekeeper" term.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: To go on to the next grade.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: To open the gate to go on to the next grade.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Right, gatekeeper.

MR. DELANEY: Oh, I see. And that if a kid failed the eighth grade test--

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Well, he used the word "gatekeeper" and I don't know-- How do you feel about it? Do you feel it should be a gatekeeper test?

MR. DELANEY: No, I don't. I think that if that is the case, if we accept that, academically we may say that is correct, and then the kid would have to be remediated before he goes on, then we'd have to look at what are high schools for? Are we going to have 16- or 17-year-old kids in the eighth grade, or do high schools have other roles to play in educating kids? I certainly would not say that a kid be kept ad infinitum -- or eternally -- in the eighth grade until he passes the test or drops out. No, I personally would disagree with that.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: How long have you been principal at the school?

MR. DELANEY: This school I'm in now?

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Yes.

MR. DELANEY: Eight years.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: At Madison High School?

MR. DELANEY: Yes, Madison Central.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Four years ago your kids put on a tremendous show at the School Boards Association. You have some very talented kids.

MR. DELANEY: Thank you, on their behalf.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Anyone else? (no response)

Thank you, Mr. Delaney, for coming down.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Thank you, Peter.

MR. DELANEY: Okay, thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: We'll go to the top of the list to Joe Zemaitis, the President of the New Jersey School Boards Association.

J O S E P H A. Z E M A I T I S: Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, before I begin I think most of you know Jeanne Reock, Senior Associate Director of our Governmental Relations Department, who is with me this afternoon perhaps to respond to some questions that you may choose to ask.

My name is Joe Zemaitis, and I am President of the New Jersey School Boards Association. On behalf of New Jersey's 612 school boards, I would like to express my appreciation for the opportunity to appear before you to share our concerns about proposed changes in the administration of the High School Proficiency Test.

The issue before you today is indeed a weighty one. It will have a dramatic impact on the lives of thousands of students, and to a lesser extent, their parents and future employers. It will alter high schools in a significant way, and will affect the public's perception of the public schools.

As the representative of the 612 school boards in this State, NJSBA is intensely interested in this issue. We have been studying the Commissioner's proposal, which was released to the public six weeks ago, and will be taking it to our board of director in late April for the development of an Association position on an eleventh grade graduation test and an eighth grade early warning test. Therefore, my comments today on this particular proposal could be subject to revisions at a later date.

With that caution, let me say that I believe NJSBA will support placing the graduation test at the eleventh grade,

with an early warning test at the eighth grade, provided that certain serious concerns are addressed. Let me specify these concerns and suggest how they might be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

But first, I would like to give the rationale for supporting an eleventh grade test. Such a test would be more reasonably related to the competencies a pupil will need when he/she graduates and enters either the world of work or post secondary level study. A test given in the ninth grade obviously cannot evaluate the higher level skills that are developed during the high school years. While it may be a good test of the basic skills learned in elementary and middle school, it is not a high school graduation test in any true meaning of the term.

It is important that our high school graduates demonstrate the skills necessary to be productive workers and responsible citizens in our ever-changing society. Certainly critical thinking, reasoning, problem-solving and decision-making skills are essential for all. According to the Commissioner's proposal, these are the additional skills that an eleventh grade test would encompass, or would assess at a higher level of difficulty than the current HSPT.

The real issue with the HSPT is not so much the grade level at which it is given. The real issue is how difficult the test should be. The two issues are of course closely entwined. Obviously, an eleventh grade test will be more difficult than a ninth grade test, and it should be. But what do students really need to know in order to function effectively as citizens, workers, and consumers? How will both the necessary skills and the degree of skill mastery be determined? Who will make these important decisions?

According to the Commissioner's proposal, he will establish statewide committees of educators and business, industry and company representatives, to identify these

skills. Then committees of math, reading and writing teachers will develop test items based on the skills. Passing scores will be based on teacher consensus concerning what constitutes student mastery in each of the skill areas. When this process was followed in the development of the current HSPT, the State Board of Education, acting on the Commissioner's recommendation, established the passing score on each test. It might be a safe assumption that the State Board will again be the final decision maker.

NJSBA has three primary concerns. The first is to ensure that the eleventh grade test accurately reflects the skills necessary to function politically, economically, and socially, in a democratic society, which is the basic intent of the T & E law. Our second concern is that adequate time must be allowed for schools and students to prepare for the new demands. Third, is the necessity for the State to provide sufficient resources, both financial and otherwise, to enable schools to prepare students for success on the test.

On the first issue -- the level of skills -- NJSBA supports high standards for New Jersey students, and we support, as we have in the past, a State testing program to ensure that those standards are met before a student can graduate from high school.

However, we have a serious concern about raising the bar too high, too fast. While there are many benefits from higher standards, there is also a price to pay. Wisdom lies in setting standards that accurately reflect society's demands and moving toward those standards on a timetable that makes it possible for all students to reap the benefits and few to suffer the negative consequences.

Before the Committee releases this bill, we ask that you get answers to some basic questions about how well students are doing on the current HSPT, as well as what impact the test has had on the dropout rate. We believe there is conflicting

data on these issues that indicate the problems might be greater than the Commissioner's presentation would lead you to believe.

Consider this information: New Jersey students have not yet mastered the current HSPT, still a relatively new test. Almost one-third of the ninth graders statewide failed to pass the test last year. Over one-half of urban students failed. Yet these figures apparently don't tell the whole story. The true situation appears to be even worse. More than a year ago, Dr. Philip Burch, Rutgers University's Bureau of Government Research, released an astounding study that showed great discrepancies between the number of ninth grade students registered in certain school districts on the last school day in September -- the official counting day -- and the number who took the HSPT some six months later. Curiously, the differences were very slight in suburban districts, but in urban districts they tended to be very high. Here are some of the figures for the 1986 HSPT test date. The percentage represents the percentage of students enrolled in the ninth grade in September, who did not take the HSPT later that year:

Asbury Park	-	49%
Jersey City	--	42%
Atlantic City	-	30%
East Orange	--	43%
Passaic	---	21%
Paterson	--	17%
Newark	----	29%

When Dr. Burch looked for the same phenomena in '84 and '85, it was much less pronounced. In Asbury Park, for example, it was 6% and 21% respectively. Yet, in the first year of the HSPT the percentage of lost students more than doubled. What happened to these kids? Why didn't they take the test? Did they drop out? What would the failure rate look like if their scores had been included? Is the true picture of

student performance on the HSPT in certain districts even worse than officially reported?

Other questions need to be asked, as well, questions about the true dropout rate. Can we truly say that the HSPT has no impact on dropouts? The Commissioner says there has been none. He says we have a dropout rate of 4.5% and holding steady. But what about our cities? What's their dropout rate? Nationally, it runs close to 50%. Is New Jersey really different? I would suggest that a close examination of the dropout rate in urban areas is needed before decisions are made concerning the HSPT.

Again, I must cite Dr. Burch for research in this area. He has reported great differences between the number of students enrolled in the ninth grade in our major cities and the number of twelfth graders graduating four years later. He found dropout rates as high as 40 and 50% in some places. Following a cohort of students, as he has done in painstaking fashion, is a far more valid method of calculating the dropout rate than simple to rely on district reporting, which misses many students, including those who leave for the summer and never come back. As the educators who are working with Kodak/Eastman to rescue the schools in Rochester have emphasized, any school reform movement must have accurate baseline data, especially dropout rates, so that the impact of the reforms can be known and evaluated. New Jersey needs to do some work on defining its dropout problem and solving it.

Is there any relationship between failure on the HSPT and dropping out of school? Commissioner Cooperman says no. Yet national studies have shown that academic failure is a significant reason for dropping out. Failure to pass or even come close to passing a graduation test, can reasonably be understood as a form of academic failure and a prime reason for students to give up on school altogether. If the graduation standard is raised too high too fast, we believe the dropout

rate will increase significantly, and some of our neediest students will lose the value that schooling brings to their lives. As I'm sure you are aware, dropouts exact a heavy toll from society. They are the unemployed, the welfare recipients, and, in many cases, those who crowd our courts and correctional institutions.

The adverse impact on the student of failure at the eleventh grade would be even greater than failure at the ninth grade for two reasons:

First, there would be relatively little time left for remediation, only three semesters.

Second, the student would be at the legal age for leaving school, and many may choose to do so.

It may be that the phase-in period for the new test should be longer than the Commissioner has proposed in order for schools to alter curriculum at all grade levels and for students to learn the higher order skills that will be tested. The phase-in process is critical because if it is done right, students will have had sufficient opportunity to develop the skills through their regular curriculum. They will pass the test at eleventh grade, and remediation will not be necessary. If the phase-in is too rapid, many students will be thrown into remedial programs, which, as an educational approach, is far more costly and less effective than doing it right the first time through the regular curriculum. But that takes time. Schools need time to make changes; students need time to learn.

I have talked about an appropriate standard and adequate phase-in time, now I want to elaborate on our the concern: the resources that are necessary to make sure that our students can reach these higher standards.

First, we need a good early warning system so that schools can identify the students who are most likely to fail the graduation test and provide them with special assistance early on. The present system of State-determined passing

scores on commercial standardized tests used in grades three to eight needs to be re-examined. Those commercial tests and the State-determined passing score are a critical early warning system. These tests are used to determine whether students need compensatory education. Yet there is considerable debate about whether five different commercial tests can adequately forewarn of potential failure on the HSPT, and whether the passing scores set by the State are really valid. The tests should be carefully examined to see that they are doing the job adequately.

In addition, an assessment program needs to be developed for the ninth and tenth grades to identify students who may have passed the State test at eighth grade, but who then fall behind and may be at risk of failing the eleventh grade test. An effective warning system in the high school years is critical because very little time remains for remediation when failure isn't known until midway through the eleventh grade.

Second, the State needs to provide sufficient compensatory education funding to successfully remediate all students at all grade levels who are at risk. The current system does not do that; nor does it provide sufficient dollars for intensive summer programs, which have shown good results, but are costly. Other special approaches, such as after-school homework assistance programs and Saturday classes, also need to be provided and funded.

Third, the State Department of Education needs to offer massive technical assistance to districts in gearing their curriculum and their instructional materials towards the new test. The State should also provide training to high school staff in the teaching of the skills that will be tested.

The next two or three years will be critical in setting the future course of education in New Jersey. Once the legislation is passed and the plan for development and

implementation of the test goes into effect, many decisions will be made, and many activities must take place both at the State and local district levels that will determine whether the new graduation test will be a plus or a minus for New Jersey's students.

Because of the great importance of this legislation, we propose that it be amended to require that the Commissioner present a report to the Education Committees of the Legislature three years after passage of the bill. This report would describe the skills to be tested, the standard of performance required to pass, and the projected impact of these on the students and schools. The report should describe the progress being made to align curriculum with the skills on the new test, and should detail the Department's assistance to school districts in this respect. Some indication of the projected rate of student failure should also be included.

Such a report is particularly appropriate given the responsibility of the Legislature for funding compensatory education and the direction linkage between the State standard for graduation and the level of compensatory education funding. But even more than that, the Legislature has the ultimate responsibility for providing a thorough and efficient system for free public schools. We believe that you would want to remain close to what is happening in regards to the test. That, to a considerable degree, will define what education is about in New Jersey.

In summary, NJSB supports the idea of a graduation test at the eleventh grade, with a warning test at the eighth grade, but we have a number of serious concerns surrounding this move. Therefore, we ask you to hold the bill until the Committee determines the impact of the present test on dropout rates -- especially in urban areas -- and until you can explore the issue of the lost students, those who apparently never took the HSPT, to determine whether student performance is improving

as rapidly as the Department indicates. Furthermore, we propose that the bill be amended to require the Commissioner to report back to the Education Committees of the Legislature in three years concerning the new test skills and standards, including projected failure rates and impact on students and schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these comments. We will be communicating with you later in April after our board of directors has taken a formal position on the eleventh grade test.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Any questions from the members?

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Joe, real quick here?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Assemblyman Naples?

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: I glean from what you said, and if I am in error in doing so please correct me -- I'm sure you will-- Did I understand you to say that in effect the State Department of Education should send materials which would enable local school districts and classroom teachers in the final analysis to teach the test better? Are you advocating the teaching of the test, to come right down to the--

MR. ZEMAITIS: To teach the skills. I don't think we're advocating teaching the test, but teaching the skills that are required for the testing of those skills.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Well, I've always felt that a test of any kind should be an instrument to examine the extent to which a student has learned that which has been taught, teaching a broad spectrum. And any test, whether it's standardized, whether it's a teacher made test, pop quiz, what have you, should examine the extent to which a kid learned anything in the classroom. It should be a result, in other words, and not a cause of something. There's a fine line, Joe, that bothers me, between teaching of skills and then going into the actual teaching of the test. That's the one thing that bothers me about standardized tests in general. I've always

had that concern, and a lot of educators share my concern. Okay, you clarified it.

MR. ZEMAITIS: As you're probably aware, there's been a great deal of curriculum realignment going on around this State and within districts, to realign curriculums so that kids will be better prepared to take the current HSPT test, to instruct on those skills in the early grades. That's been going on. We think there could be a greater effort. We think there can be a greater expenditure of not only funds, but of technical assistance through the State Department; putting districts in touch with one another so that they can work on developing these kinds of things.

Some thing that struck me when the two young people appeared before you earlier, and I hope that I didn't misread what they were saying -- and I recognize that they're in basic skills classes, etc., and they're making a monumental effort on their part to attempt to pass the test -- but it also struck me in some of their comments that they haven't been prepared for the test. Some of the comments were very clear that--

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: For the test or--

MR. ZEMAITIS: For the skills to be tested.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: --or taught what was on the test. This is the point that eats away at me when it comes to testing.

MR. ZEMAITIS: For the skills to be tested.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Okay. Assemblyman Pascrell, and then we'll go to Assemblyman--

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: I have one more quick question, Joe.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: One more question, sure Gerry.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Do you ultimately feel that in this test content tests should be administered, to come right down to the point, a la the Regents in New York? That question

was posed of the Chancellor of Higher Education last week, Dr. Hollander. Can we teach basic skills in a vacuum? Ultimately will it not develop that we have to examine the content areas which are the end result of learning basic skills, or should be the means by which they learn through basic skills?

MR. ZEMAITIS: Jeanne?

J E A N N E R E O C K: There may be some overlap, but there is certainly a broad difference. For instance, in the sciences, that's a content area, and as such is touched by the Regents.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: I know that, but eventually do you favor it?

MS. REOCK: We, as an Association don't have-- Well, actually we do have a position. We haven't reviewed it recently, and we might do that if it comes alive. But we think that the State should test in the skill areas only, reading writing and math, but not in the content areas. That should be left to the local districts. I know that the Commissioner is considering a whole issue of course proficiencies which are currently set at the local level, and we are starting to review that issue ourselves, in anticipation that perhaps he will make a recommendation for State-determined course proficiencies. Even that, I'm not sure that that's the same as content areas. I'd have to see how he spells that out.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Fine line.

MS. REOCK: You know, it's another fine line. The skills of writing for instance, you can write in many different content areas. So what we are supporting is the skill of writing which can be applied in many ways.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: That's what I mean.

MS. REOCK: In math there is a lot of alignment I think between the content area and the skill. That I'm not sure I see a great distinction.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: But you learn math or reading itself, and math and reading are skills and subject matter at the same time, and that subject matter is used in concert with other areas, core areas. Okay? I mentioned before a mathematics problem on how to figure a tax rate. You say to a kid, "The true value of a house is so many thousands of dollars, the rate is this and that, what's the mass quarterly tax bill?" You throw a curve at him, "quarterly tax bill." The kid has got to think. He's got to understand the terminology there. He's got to understand some local government. You're talking about a core area there. Ultimately, if we're going this far, should we not look at a Regents type test? Let's get right to the issue.

MR. ZEMAITIS: Can we avoid that by saying that we have no position on it?

MS. REOCK: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Fine. If you'd rather wait, I understand.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Now we have Assemblyman Pascrell, and then we're going to go to Assemblyman Kyrillos.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Dr. Zemaitis, I think this is a very balanced report you've given to us.

MR. ZEMAITIS: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: I listened to you very carefully, as I do each person that comes before us. I'm interested in the essential qualities of a test rather than the quantitative ones at this point. I'm not convinced that an eleventh grade test is going to have any appreciable change on the quality of education in the State of New Jersey. I'm not convinced of that. I want you to know that.

Let me ask you a question. Do you think that the eleventh grade test, as it's being proposed, will increase dropouts?

MR. ZEMAITIS: I think we have indicated that in the testimony this afternoon. It seems that that's a very real possibility because you will be administering a test at the grade level at which students will be able to drop out of school because of age.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: It seems to me that's a pretty heavy statement you've made. And I think I'll be looking at it as we go along in these hearings. I thank you.

MR. ZEMAITIS: I appreciate it. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Assemblyman Kyrillos?

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too think it was very balanced testimony, and I appreciate it. A number of your suggestions I want to look at very closely. I also appreciate your pointing out that the two students that we heard from earlier, quite obviously were telling us that they hadn't been prepared for those skills that we in New Jersey feel are basic.

MR. ZEMAITIS: Or at least they felt they weren't.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Or they don't think they have been. We don't want to teach the test. I don't think it's wrong to teach to the test. If we identify those skills that are key, are crucial, in our opinion, we should teach those skills; and in that sense, teach to the test.

I know I'll have some questions for Joel Bloom when he comes before us from the Department of Education, relating to the dropout rate. I'm not so sure that one test is going to influence the rate of dropouts in New Jersey, and I take it from what you said in your testimony and from Assemblyman Pascrell's question that you do. I'm curious. The left school percentages that you quoted, do you have any feel for what those percentages were, what they looked like, before the HSPT was implemented? I'm wondering if they were very similar.

MR. ZEMAITIS: They were not, apparently.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: They were not.

MR. ZEMAITIS: I think we point that out. Do you have that?

MS. REOCK: No, that was on the number of kids who did not take the test.

MR. ZEMAITIS: Right, who did not take the test. We don't know the reason for the--

MS. REOCK: We don't have that kind of data yet, and Dr. Burch is working on some later data now. We need to be in touch with him, and I would hope maybe the Committee would take advantage of his work, to see whether he could discern over the time period that he's done this.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Could I just follow up on that question? Excuse me, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Yes, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Just one second. On that same vein, for example, in my district I see in Asbury Park there is a 42% dropout -- or non test -- between September. When finding out that figure, there was no follow-up, no reason why the 42%? Nobody asked the city or the school district?

MS. REOCK: Dr. Burch met with, I believe the Commissioner himself and several other members of the State Department of Education about a year ago, and presented the data. Now, perhaps they've done some follow-up. I don't know. He did not take that as his role.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: I think, as both the Chairman of the Committee and one who represents that district, I would like to know the reasons. I mean, to say 42% is nice, but the thing is, I want to know hard core reasons. Where are those 42% of the students? Where were they? They didn't drop off the face of the earth. They are somewhere. Maybe there's a logical explanation from the people in Asbury Park. They are always very cooperative. But I think we will be following up on that aspect, at least in that one particular district that I represent. But we'd like to know -- as Assemblyman Pascrell

and I were talking about it -- you have some large numbers here dealing with systems throughout, and we'll be following it up. I'm sorry, Assemblyman. Go ahead.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: That's okay. To follow along on that vein, I think to put those numbers in the proper perspective we need to have the follow-up work of Dr. Burch so we can isolate whether it indeed was the test that forced those students not to be there. When he does come up with them, if he doesn't send them to me, I hope that you will -- and to the other members of the Committee -- because I think they're very important. Thank you.

MS. REOCK: Okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: If there is no one else, then we thank you for your testimony.

MR. ZEMAITIS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: As usual it was complete, and we appreciate it.

MR. ZEMAITIS: Thank you for the opportunity.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Our pleasure, Joe. Our next group will be the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association. Who will be representing? Art is coming up.

A R T H U R R A N G E S: Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee, I'm Arthur Ranges, Principal of Euclid Elementary School in Hasbrouck Heights, and currently President Elect of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors. I believe most of you know Mr. Walt Chesner, our Assistant or -- what's the exact title? -- Associate Director of the Association. I appreciate having the opportunity to present our views on the bill, which, if adopted, would raise the grade level for administering the High School Proficiency Test from grade nine to eleven.

Since there is a need to test the basic skills, we support administering the HSPT in December of the eleventh grade. By moving the test closer to graduation, it will be possible to test a higher order of basic skills. This will

make it a true High School Proficiency Test rather than one which tests skills developed at the elementary level. I think a lot of us have agree that in the ninth grade you're really testing what they have done in the first eight, which particularly impacts on regional districts.

We agree that re-administering the test three times after December of the eleventh grade will provide students a fair opportunity to pass the test. We request that serious consideration be given to having one of these during the month of August, after summer school. This would give children, the students, a chance to go to summer school, take some of the remedial courses, they could pass the test, go back in September and take the regular courses that they may have wanted, instead of having to go into the remedial courses. Some schools do this now but they can't test, and the kids have a picnic instead. I think if they could pass the test they would be a lot better off.

We support the need to continue the strong efforts being made today in our schools at remediation; to ensure that students who fail to meet the standard of the eleventh grade HSPT will ultimately learn those skills and graduate from high school.

We also support the concept of an eighth grade early warning test to assess students' skills prior to entering high school. We believe such a test will have a positive impact in several ways:

- 1) It will further improve articulation and coordination between elementary, middle and secondary educational programs in the basic skills areas.

- 2) In those districts with regional high schools, it will further improve the coordination with the elementary districts and the regional schools.

3) Vocational school students will benefit since failures at the ninth grade often preclude students from pursuing vocational training. The early warning test at the eighth grade would not be a pass/fail, but rather a tool to determine students' needs as they approach the eleventh grade HSPT.

We do, however, have several concerns about testing in New Jersey. It is time to stop to consider where we are going with testing in our State. We should be asking what are the goals and objectives of the tests; both those administered by the State, and those standardized tests used by all of the school districts.

There are many concerns being raised by educators across the country about the wisdom of teaching to the test, letting the test become the basis of the curriculum, and the negative effects of testing on student and teacher creativity. We agree with the recommendation that a comprehensive study of all testing is needed. Since the HSPT is State law, it is the responsibility of the Legislature to charge the education profession and the Department of Education to search for in-depth answers to problems that are too often glossed over in our rush to improve scores. Time will not permit a full review of the many problems and professional questions inherent in testing. However, leading educators and professionals in the fields of testing are all questioning the misuse and abuse of testing in our schools today.

You have seen the article from The Times on Sunday which goes, "American's Test Mania." I'd like to just quote slightly from it. It says, "Teachers complain they are under mounting pressure to teach to the test, shape the curriculum so the students test well. According to school administrators, scores are being used more as political weapons by politicians, than as barometers of learning. Underlying such complaints is the fear, as well as irony, that the testing explosion may be

undermining teacher professionalism, curriculum improvement, and other goals of the school reform movement that produced it." I think we really have to study where we are going completely with our testing programs. Suffice it to say that better scores do not necessarily mean better skills or better education.

Finally, school districts that are at risk need massive amounts of professional assistance as well as financial aid to help their students. And by professional assistance -- the people who can get in there if there are problems being shown; the educators can right it as far as remedial instruction or program instruction, whatever is needed. Money would help, but we need the professional assistance also. The help must be provided during the regular school day. After school, Saturday, and summer programs, must be available if we hope to provide meaningful assistance to students in those districts. If we can do it that way, they may not have to be taken from other courses. I know of students in high school who can't take basic courses because they have to be in the remedial. This has to be worked out somehow. Such assistance will help them pass the test. Though we can never guarantee equal results, children in such districts should at least have an equal opportunity to quality education. They are not receiving this today.

Perhaps a threshold can be established for each district which, if not reached, would trigger immediate State assistance to improve the district's performance. Again, I'm talking about educational assistance. Of course, an initial step would be to guarantee full funding to these districts so that a stable, predictable base of funding could provide consistency to the effort to improve the learning situation.

In short, what we are suggesting is, raise the standards, but also raise the commitment. There is without question a linkage between the two. Until we start providing

meaningful help for these children, nothing will really improve in the schools. Test scores may improve somewhat, but the numbers will have little meaning or lasting effect on children. We urge you to fully commit the State's resources to raise the basic standards of education in all our schools. Without such a commitment, another test doesn't amount to very much for the students who fail, who drop out, or who are simply unaccounted for in the statistics.

I think you for your attention.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you, Art. Walter, do you have anything to add? (negative response) Good.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: I have a question.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes?

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Let me just preface this. Going up to Montreal one time I stopped off in a little hamlet in New York State, Plattsburgh, picked up a local paper while having a cup of coffee, and one of the councilmen or board members, it doesn't matter which, talked about the very -- I wished I had saved the article -- the very same thing. I remember his words, "We reached the point where we are concerned more with compliance, and worse yet, compliance to the exclusion of education." He predicted that would ultimately happen. Do you think we could be drifting inexorably toward that in New Jersey?

MR. RANGES: Yes. Personally, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: I agree with you. That's the danger--

MR. RANGES: Straightforward answer.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: You can tell this is a very vexing thing with me as a professional educator and as a member of the Legislature. That's the problem, and how do you legislate intellectual honesty along with it?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Anyone else care to question--

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Mr. Chairman?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes?

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: I appreciate your testimony, and heard what you had to say about the level of funding and the kind of money we need to teach basic skills. It occurs to me that we're spending \$270 million across-the-board on the teaching of those skills now. So you feel it's being spent wisely? Is it being spent well? Is it enough? Are you saying it's not enough?

MR. RANGES: I think what we're saying for full funding, if districts can figure out exactly what is coming down the line, they could start these summer programs and the after school programs. Right now everything is within the five or six hours of the school day. A lot of that is because of limited funds. That prevents them from being more creative in going outside of that parameter.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Go ahead.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCHELL: Through the Chair, to carry on what the Assemblyman was asking. Then you're saying maybe school reform is not so much an examination of components like testing, as it is to do with the very structure of the schools themselves, and how we structure time in the schools, and how we structure our curriculum in the schools? I read that article by Fiske in The Times. I think it's a dynamite article. There are a lot of philosophical time bombs in there.

MR. RANGES: Yes, there are.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCHELL: And while your presentation was excellent -- really excellent, I thought -- it's given a lot of food for thought, because it not only brings attention to Fiske's articles, it brings attention to our principals. You have to deal with it everyday. You're in the trenches, we're not. Well, Gerry is in the trenches too.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: I'm in a lurch right now.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCHELL: The commanders in the trenches. But the question goes beyond testing. Testing is one of the pictures on the canvas. And we're taking a look at the total canvas, aren't we?

MR. RANGES: Yes, which is why we say let's look at this whole picture. Why are we testing? What are we aiming it? How are we going to get there?

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: How would you do that? How would you present a comprehensive picture of testing in the State of New Jersey?

MR. RANGES: How would I paint the picture correctly right now, or the way I see it?

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Yes. It's an unfair question to ask you, but do you have an general idea?

MR. RANGES: Right now I think too much that the test -- whether it's HSPT or the second grade CTBSI, or whatever you're using -- is dictating what we teach. I will be honest, in my own school that my curriculum has been readjusted to make sure that whatever is tested -- we use the CTBS -- is taught before we give that test, and the other part of the curriculum that we like to do, is put in after that test. If New Jersey and the papers are going to publish my results, I damn well sure am going to meet that as my minimum requirement. Then I put the rest later.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: You're being honest about that. Let me ask you one other question. How would you see us looking comprehensively at mandated testing in the State of New Jersey? Would we bring in an outside firm to do that, or would we ask the Department of Education to examine themselves?

MR. RANGES: Examine themselves, depending on whether you mean strictly the Department or the professionals throughout the State, whether they be teachers and administrators who are in the trenches -- as you say -- who know what's happening, who knows what is going on, and what they do with these results, how they use them, a lot can be done. I think that's what we have to do.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: See, too frequently it's not the Department's fault. Too frequently the teacher organizations and the School Boards Association, and this organization, speak for those people in the ranks who don't understand that the face of the organization is speaking for the body. You see? And I think that's a serious problem that we have in education today. We don't really talk to students as you saw today. They have a worth of information, and teachers do, and administrators do. And if we get off official positions and get into the nitty gritty, then we're going to have some reform in the State of New Jersey.

Because you know, I've watched and listened to the justification for the MBS test, and before that it was the AEP test, then the Minimum Basic Skills Test, and everything is improving, and all of a sudden the tests look like they're improving, and now we're going to go on to another test. Then when we finally get to the bottom, you know, those figures can mean anything. And yet, we look at the final product, 50% of the students are still dropping out in some areas, 20% are still dropping out; they can't fill out a form, a very basic and very simple form. I don't believe any of these figures. I don't. I was a former educator. And I don't know how we're going to produce some autonomous schools in the lines of creativity where we really have some educational free form in the State of New Jersey, instead a lot of words.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Are we testing on the extent to which kids could pass tests? Are we testing on the extent to which they learn content? Unfortunately it's evolving into the former situation I think here.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Are there any questions?

W A L T E R C H E S N E R: Joe, I'd just like to make one comment.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes, Mr. Chesner?

MR. CHESNER: What's happening with curriculum, I just wonder how many students in the schools-- Their total curriculum is just minimum basic skills. Nothing else that is offered to other students can be available in some situations to those students, because it's minimum basic skills remediation over and over again. I think you saw that reflected in what these students said. It's that same old thing over and over again. How much of that can they take? And what about the other kinds of things that they should be learning about as a part of their total education in the schools? I think a lot of them are being denied that, really, because the test has taken on such importance in the State.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Mr. Chairman?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Assemblyman?

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: I agree with you. There's lots of other things that we ought to be teaching our students beyond the minimum. But we have to at least teach the minimum. I haven't read this New York Times report about "America's Test Mania," and the mentality of teaching the test bothers me as well as some of my colleagues. But I sort of like what Commissioner Cooperman has said when he says, "What gets measured, gets done." I'm curious as to what you think about that statement?

MR. RANGES: You're right. That's basically what I was saying. If the test is going to measure this, I'm going to make sure I teach that. Now I speak also-- My wife happens to be a comp-ed teacher. She's teaching to make sure the kids pass this test also this week. What she really would like to teach some of these children is, how do they balance their checkbook, and a lot of life skills. A lot of these children are not going to go on to college. They're not going to worry about the center of a circle and how to find out the area of that compared to the whole thing and all of the rest. But she is going to that. Maybe what we have to define is, what do we

mean, again, by essential skills? I know by eleventh grade you have somebody taking general math, business math, college math. They're all going to take the same test and have the skills tested?

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: I think with this test, it's not a test to see who can do well in college, or who can do well in high-minded professions, but it's a test that everyone has to be able to master if they're going to survive in this society.

MR. RANGES: I haven't seen the test, so I wouldn't know what's going to be tested.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Well, you know, that's what we're going to have these statewide committees for.

MR. RANGES: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Okay? Thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony.

MR. RANGES: Thank you.

MR. CHESNER: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: I'd like to ask if two teachers are in the room. Is Glen Johnson in the room?

G L E N J O H N S O N: (from audience) Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Glen, do you want to come up now? I thought as teachers I'd like to have you follow into that sequence right there. So we'll hear from Glen Johnson, a teacher at Old Bridge.

MR. JOHNSON: Good afternoon.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Good afternoon.

MR. JOHNSON: As you've just introduced-- I'm Glen Johnson. I am a teacher in Old Bridge, and I am also the President of the Old Bridge Education Association. I appreciate the opportunity that you've provided me in coming forward to present my views concerning Assembly Bill 2928, a proposal which would move the administration of the High School Proficiency Test from the ninth grade to the eleventh.

As you reflect upon my remarks, keep in mind that several hours ago students were in the building just across the courtyard. That building is the library. They were there not using it as a library. They were using it as the optimum testing facility for the HSPT -- High School Proficiency Test. They were there not taking it for the first time, but in some cases for the second, and unfortunately, the third time. For some of these students it will be the last time that they take it. They will drop out.

I have, as you probably expected, listened and read with interest the testimony today, and previous testimony that was given at these hearings; including that of Dennis Giordano, Teachers' Association President, and Saul Cooperman, the Commissioner of Education. Each of their remarks left many things to my imagination. As such, in order for me to better understand it as a classroom teacher, and in order to better understand the impact of the legislation itself, I asked myself a question which I now pose before the panel. If the State changes the administration of the test from the ninth to the eleventh grade, will the "skills" tested be more difficult than those assessed by the current test?

Obviously if the answer to that question were no, the need to alter the date would seem unnecessary. It would, in the final analysis, seem to me to be more of a cosmetic change designed to bring the graduation test closer to graduation, than to test actual graduation skills. Such a cosmetic change might be nice for the public's perception of education, but in my opinion would have a devastating effect on the students and the curriculum of our State's schools.

The other potential answer to that question, the more plausible one, is that skills in reading, math, and writing, will be tested at a higher level. And frankly, since the test is being given at a higher grade, why not a more difficult test? After all, doesn't the legislation provide for a

diagnostic test in the eighth grade, and won't that help students correct their weaknesses?

I think at this point we must enter the world of educational reality that exists today. I am, as I stated, a veteran math teacher of some 20 years. I'm also a father of three children, all of whom are, or will be, affected by the State's testing program. My experiences therefore incorporate my own classroom, as well as my own home.

For over a decade, we in New Jersey have become, without a doubt, test conscious, or should I say, paranoid. That consciousness could be detailed in case study after case study, but would do little, in my opinion, to add to the wealth of knowledge that you already have. The viewpoint, and the impact on the classroom practitioner, however, should be explored.

If we take the legislation on its face, one must assume that little diagnostic testing, if any, takes place currently. Assuming that Old Bridge is not atypical, it is easy to see that such is not the case. Each year, our students from K through nine are subjected to test, after test, after test, with the sole aim of passing the High School Proficiency Test. Frankly, learning become secondary. The HSPT, after all, is the mathematics curriculum. This aim or goal, I would add, was not one that was developed by Old Bridge, but was imposed by the Commissioner of Education through his designee, the County Superintendent. This year alone, I as an eighth grade math teacher have administered the previous HSPT test, issued a differential aptitude test, given a practice California Test of Basic Skills, and next week will give the "real" California Test of Basic Skills. Time permitting, I will give another High School Proficiency Test in June which will precede or follow a final exam that I have to give for the subject matter that I taught during eighth grade.

After each one of these activities has taken place, we have aligned under the supervision and mandate of the Commissioner's office, the curriculum to meet the material covered by the HSPT and any deficiencies our students have had.

Has this served as a diagnosis of weaknesses for only eighth graders? Frankly, every student in every grade throughout New Jersey is tested from the day they enter school, until the day they leave school. Each test, be it a standardized test or a teacher made test, is designed to diagnose weaknesses and measure competency. Unfortunately, consequences of the High School Proficiency Test are far more devastating than any other test given at any time during these students' lives.

Has their curriculum been modified because of these tests? Each time a test has been administered, I as a classroom teacher have adjusted my program to meet identified needs. But in many cases the class has already graduated and new deficiencies may exist because each class and each student is different.

Has the curriculum and/or achievement been improved? Perhaps, but no one can ever be sure because we never wait to find out whether what we did worked or didn't work.

The Commissioner, in his testimony before this Committee, spoke of other countries and their students' accomplishments. He spoke of recent classified ads listing available positions, their requirements, and companies' expectations. It is wise to measure those statements knowing that our first graduating class, which was judged in part by the current High School Proficiency Test, have not yet graduated from school. To indict them for what they do not know, or to indicate their deficiencies compared to others absent any hard data, is not fair or valid. The real question is, where does New Jersey want to go in terms of education?

A test which measures a body of knowledge which all -- and I mean all -- should know, I am certain would be embraced by all facets of the educational community. However, an instrument which is yet to be developed will, in my opinion, quickly become not merely a proficiency test of basic skills, but New Jersey's version of the Scholastic Aptitude Test.

The current test measures proficiencies in algebra, geometry, and higher forms of critical thinking. One can only imagine what skills would be incorporated in the new test if the current one measures what all ninth graders should know. I can imagine a test which ignores the needs and abilities of students, and requires that each student be limited to selecting higher education as their only possible career. It tells we in the education community that we now have, what amounts to, a State mandated curriculum; a curriculum which, in the case of mathematics, requires nothing less in high school than college preparatory subjects. And if this is the world of mathematics, what will be in store for us in reading and writing? Is reading The New York Times or Wall Street Journal the true test, or will The Star-Ledger suffice? (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: I think Bob Braun will do his next column on you.

MR. JOHNSON: I'm sure. No one is opposed to raising standards, be it for students, teachers, doctors, mechanics, or factory workers. We ask only the true direction and not a back door approach by the State. If the State wants a mandated curriculum in certain areas, the State should write it, fund it, provide locals with the assistance to implement it, and not just test for it after a student reaches the eleventh grade.

Again, I can only judge as a practitioner this proposal as others have preceded it. The proposal promises much, but will they deliver? Currently the State promises in service materials and training to assist teachers. But although they had good intentions, they cannot continually

train enough teachers to adequately address the ever changing students' needs in our ever changing society. They promise funds, but the fact is that funding does not increase, and in some cases decreases faster than local costs rise. Finally, they promise that a more difficult test will assure better performance, but proponents of the bill can offer no proof, only speculation. They point to increases in the current rates of passage on the current HSPT test, yet fail to mention that the number of correct answers needed to pass has been lowered.

Speculation is not for us an academic problem, nor is it for our students. It is a real life situation for many young people in New Jersey. In Old Bridge alone, today 110 young people are taking the HSPT test for the second or third time. Our district offers a diagnostic and a remedial program from pre-school through twelfth grade and beyond. But still some students do not pass the test, and will be denied a diploma.

It appears to me that this legislation is guaranteeing that a still larger group will fall into this category, drop out, and fail to obtain a high school diploma. Once this is accomplished, we can look with pride at our schools and say that its graduates, like those of other countries, met the highest standards. We will do this as we turn our back on those that have given up hope and left high school convinced that there is no place for them in society, or way out.

We currently have a testing and diagnostic program which identifies deficiencies early, and affords the students and school ample time to correct those deficiencies. Proposing to replace it with a diagnostic test of eleventh grade skills in the eighth grade, is misleading to the public, and doing a disservice to the students.

The actual ninth grade proficiency test, as it is currently given, in many cases serves as a first warning shot for the students, despite the efforts of their parents or their

teachers in the previous eight grades of school. Taking that away without any evidence that it is or is not working, does not make sense, and is potentially creating a larger category of at risk students in New Jersey.

I believe it is time that we not only review the proposed legislation, but all tests and testing procedures employed and encouraged by the State Department of Education in New Jersey. Since the Legislature, and this Committee, is now addressing this question, I would urge that you accept the suggestion of Dennis Giordano and others before me. Delay action on this bill, create a panel with specific time constraints, and determine what is actually going on in New Jersey vis-a-vis testing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to come before you. I would encourage that you take no action concerning this bill until that independent study can be undertaken. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you. Anybody care to ask a question?

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Through the Chair?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Go ahead.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Mr. Chairman. Dennis, thank you very much for your--

MR. JOHNSON: Glen.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Glen, I'm sorry.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Glen Johnson. Dennis Giordano, he's going to take his place later. (laughter) Go ahead.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Glen, thank you so much for your presentation. It's well documented. Let me ask you a question. How can you have accountability without testing?

MR. JOHNSON: I don't think that there's anyone who is opposed to testing. I think that testing is a part of the process. I have a deep deep concern when we use a test as the single measure of a student's worth, and it is the determining

factor of whether they do or do not qualify for a high school diploma.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: You do then think that there are other methods of evaluating or judging accountability other than the kinds of testing that we present in the State of New Jersey?

MR. JOHNSON: If we're using the collective noun "we" and I assume you then mean classroom teachers, as I indicated in my testimony--

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: You.

MR. JOHNSON: --I do assessment on a regular basis, be it after a unit or a particular topic in mathematics. But that general assessment appears to end when it comes to the High School Proficiency Test. It's either pass that or you fail.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: See, I'm of the naive belief that a lot of this testing that we've gone through in the past many years, is an attempt to respond to questions of accountability in education, and that is why much of the testing comes out very poorly. Like the SAT has proven to be almost superficial when compared against other means of evaluation through the four years of high school, and it doesn't become any better of a measure of how a youngster is going to do than things that already that youngster has experienced; and perhaps we can even save him the \$12 in the final analysis. So when I say are there other means of evaluation-- You know, people cover their tails with tests, do they not, Glen?

MR. JOHNSON: I would suggest that the process of accountability and evaluation is not limited to students with the High School Proficiency Test. I mean, I would say -- again, I'm one teacher, and I haven't taken a grand survey -- but I would submit to you that if you ask most teachers they would indicate to you that it is being used as an evaluative technique for their performance in the classroom also.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Absolutely.

MR. JOHNSON: It's used, absent any visitation by the principal. It's merely reviewed. You have your test scores reviewed. If the children fail, whose class were they in? We can track it, and we've been mandated to track it virtually back to birth. Pretty soon we will track a child's failure from the HSPT back to their parents and what vitamins the mother was on. But those are the kinds of studies we have to do when we review the HSPT.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: I just said to the Chairman it's almost, as you described it, a form of child abuse. Really, when you stand back and look at it in the terms that you presented it, I'd have to think seriously about that. When you look at those specific tests that are given, do you think it makes teachers better teachers, that we have such a thing, such an animal as the High School Proficiency Test?

MR. JOHNSON: I happen to think first of all that teaching is an art, and there are other things involved in the process of teaching. I think what the HSPT test has done is created basic little automatons. You can go through and teach to the test. And there's been a lot of talk back and forth, and I guess the easiest way to say it is there was some hedging of bets today when questions were asked about, "Is there teaching to the test?" You bet your life there is teaching to the test.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: There is teaching the test. It's worse.

MR. JOHNSON: Well, teaching the test is the same. When you hand it down from grade to grade, yes, we're doing that.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Yes, but that may not necessarily be a bad thing, if it helps teachers to be better teachers. If it does just the opposite, if it presents or creates an environment within which very little creativity or

very little autonomy can be expressed, then that's serious business. I'm not saying that it does, but if it does, that's serious, serious business. Is it not?

MR. JOHNSON: It certainly is.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Thank you, Mr. Johnson.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Joe?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Gerard?

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: As far as I'm concerned, you made a good point, Bill. When a teacher makes up a teacher-made test, based upon what he's taught, in large measure that determines what kind of a teacher he is, his knowledge of subject matter, and what have you. But I think one of the mistakes that we've made -- and tell me if you agree with this -- that we've made examination and standardized testing well nigh, per se, synonymous. I'll take it a step further. If I call on you, "Stand up," and ask you a question, and I fire six or seven questions at you in a row spontaneously, isn't that a test of sorts right in the classroom?

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, it is.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: The reason I'm thinking of this-- One time I did something, which my principal almost killed me for, but I thought it was the ultimate test of my backbone. I took one marking period and didn't give one test. The only grades in the book were based upon homework turned in, and classroom participation. And one of my colleagues said, "You are crazy. You don't have tenure." And I told the principal I had done it. And you know what? It was a mute point because not one parent or kid complained. This other teacher showed me his roll book and he had filled up with tests. I agree with you, Bill, you just can go overboard sometimes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Of course they didn't learn anything. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: The hell they didn't.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: I know, Gerry.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: I had good material.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: I know you did.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: On the other hand, the material was made good too.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you, Gerard. Do you have some questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Yes, Mr. Chairman. First of all I'd like to say that the first newspaper that I reach for every morning is The Star-Ledger.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: I reach for the Asbury Park Press because they're here.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: So is The Star-Ledger, but I don't know what that means about me, but--

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: That you're a subversive, Joe.
(laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: That's right.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: We knew that all along.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: But Glen, I appreciate what you had to say in our discussions before this meeting. I think I have a pretty good feel, and we all do, about how you feel about this particular bill. What do you feel as a high school graduation test as it stands now in the ninth grade? Did you touch on that really and I missed it? Is now the right time to do it, as it stands today?

MR. JOHNSON: I think so. What I think we have to understand -- and you and I did speak concerning this. I spent a great deal of time sitting and thinking about my remarks for today. And then I took out the High School Proficiency Test today, just to see what I was looking at and what kinds of skills were being tested for, vis-a-vis all of the comments that have been made. Is there a need to do an assessment of students? Certainly. For a common body of knowledge, I think I even indicated in my remarks, that there should be some

assessment. We test virtually everyone. Lawyers have to pass the bar. Doctors have to pass certain tests. Teachers now pass certain tests.

But I looked at a ninth grade test. There was a problem that dealt with area, the area of a rectangle. The shaded portion of a rectangle that had a little triangle cut out. And the thing that was missing on the triangle was the hypotenuse. So that a ninth grade child looking at that test, in order to come up with the answers, would have had to have known -- aside from length times width is the area of a rectangle -- would have to have known the Pythagorean theorem, would have had to have known how to determine the square root of a given number, as well as the formula for the area of a square.

I think my problem with this particular kind of test is, what are we testing for? If we're testing -- and you used the term a number of times as I was sitting here and listening -- minimum basic skills-- If the minimum basic skills is the Pythagorean theorem, then I submit that we are teaching the PSAT. My child took it a year ago as a junior in high school, and the PSAT covers first and second year math in high school, which is algebra and geometry. So I'm not necessarily not in favor of a test, I'm just not too sure what we're testing for.

And I also believe -- and given my own experiences in my classroom this year -- that we are now going overboard with the test. For me to give the High School Proficiency Test, practice was three days. The California Test of Basic Skills, practice was three days. The Differential Aptitude Test was three days. Next week is the CTBS, that's another three. I'm cutting out a month of school doing standardized tests. Give me a chance to teach. Maybe I can do that better.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: The purpose of this bill is not to designate the content of the test. We're not here to do that or discuss that. It's not part of the legislation.

MR. JOHNSON: But it's the real world that I live in.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Well that's the real world, but when we determine what it is that we do have to test, does it make any instinctive sense to do it -- if it's going to be a barometer for graduation -- close to the graduation date? Isn't there a lot that's going to happen between ninth grade and when they get a diploma?

MR. JOHNSON: I think that there is. And again, understand that I'm talking as a teacher and as a father.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Sure.

MR. JOHNSON: I stood on top of my son's toes, hands, head, and shoulders, trying to convince him that achievement on the SATs was the cornerstone, along with grades, of getting into college. Until he got his first rejection from a higher institution, daddy's words had no impact.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Then he believed you.

MR. JOHNSON: I talked to kids in my eighth grade class about, "You have to be ready for the High School Proficiency Test. It's not a joke." Everything we do is geared towards that test and the skills that are tested on there. "Yeah, sure. No problem." They walk in in the ninth grade and take that test and fail it, and it becomes a horse of a different color.

You heard the young lady talk about, she's not having lunch. She's not having lunch this year because in addition to her regular math class that she is taking for high school credit, she is taking a math workshop so that she can pass the test. But maybe had she really applied herself in fifth grade or fourth grade, that might have been a different story.

I think if we wait until the eleventh grade, and the kid hasn't heard the warning bell, by eleventh grade I don't see summer school being the answer. And frankly if I fail it in the spring of the eleventh grade and I'm allowed to take it in the fall of twelfth, historically the gray matter gets a

little rusty over the summer; and these kids are going to come in and do worse, in my opinion -- and since everyone else gives information absent any data, I can too -- they would do worse in the fall than they did in the eleventh grade in the spring.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Gerard?

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: One last question here. It's been a lot of years since I've been in a classroom. What percentage of your classroom periods do you think -- I know it's a tough question to answer -- do you think you spend in preparation for a test as contrasted with teaching? I remember that you were joking around with me, Joe, about the kids' learning; but I remember talking to one of my teachers when he showed me his 10 tests in the same marking period, and I said to him, "Yeah, but I taught 10 periods more than you did." Let's piggyback on that. How much time do you feel it cuts into your actual teaching?

MR. JOHNSON: You mean, strictly standardized-type testing?

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Yes, preparing for it, and gearing to it.

MR. JOHNSON: I gave you the best shot on the standardized tests that I've given. In addition to that, we're in the process, and I think virtually everybody has -- and the book companies and whatnot are making a fantastic amount of money on it -- and that's a curriculum on how to take tests. I mean, we're now teaching students how to take multiple choice tests, because it is a skill in and of itself. So the first thing that we are now doing with children is teaching them how to take a standardized test; because when in doubt take B or C because odds and the probability is that that will be the answer. I think we will spend close to a good three weeks to a month of time doing standardized test, practicing.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: About 35% to 40%.

MR. JOHNSON: Because the pressure is there. The principal mentioned that you can rest assured that, "If my scores are going to be in the paper, we're going to make sure we did the best we could." No one is any different. They all feel the same.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: One last thing. A lot of people here have been using the word "skills." Do you use the words "skills" and "subject matter" interchangeably, or would you?

MR. JOHNSON: Not necessarily, no.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Thank you. I agree with you. Some people do.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you, Glen. It was very interesting.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: We have Dr.--

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: One more question if I may, Mr. Chairman?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yeah, go ahead.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: You said something to this effect, Glen. Correct me as I go along here. I would like your reaction to what I'm going to say, if you would please. You said that the eighth grade early warning test is deceptive. You didn't use that word. I did. The new test will be on the eleventh grade skill level, therefore, the remediation in high school will be up to the eighth grade level. And then the eleventh grade skills will have to be learned. Let me put it in simpler fashion for myself. If you fail the eighth grade test, you're going to remediate in high school at the same time you're learning the skills for the eleventh grade. Am I capturing the essence of what we're saying here?

MR. JOHNSON: I made a rash assumption. I made the assumption that nobody in their right mind would test for an eleventh grade skill in eighth grade. I'm not going to test

whether you know the Pythagorean theorem. I presume the test is going to have basic skills -- a true basic skills test: fractions, whole numbers, and percents. If a child is deficient or failed -- and I hate that term "failed" -- but if the child is deficient in those areas, and that is the exit test from eighth grade, then obviously that student then is pretty much doomed towards a failure.

What I would also hate to see is, that by limiting it to eighth grade and not-- I think we have to move the spectrum down a little bit, and concentrate on first grade, second grade, and third grade. I mean, we're looking at high school and the--

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCARELL: The Department isn't talking too much about that though.

MR. JOHNSON: No, but that's where the problems are, and that's where the problems begin.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: I differ with that. I thought I heard in that last testimony that it started down in the fifth grade level, getting ready for the 19 -- whatever -- they mentioned at the fifth grade level they were starting to prepare the students. So, maybe they are--

MR. JOHNSON: There is alignment to the-- And you should understand the terminology that is used throughout the education community. We align the curriculum, K through 12, with the HSPT.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: That's true.

MR. JOHNSON: It is the curriculum.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: That's true. Thank you, Glen.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Our next presenter will be Dr. McKenzie, Superintendent, Montgomery Township School District. On deck will be Dr. Jack Eisenstein, keeping with the baseball season.

D R. J A M I E S O N M c K E N Z I E: Members of the Committee, I appreciate your allowing me to speak this afternoon. I have a four o'clock negotiating meeting back in my school district and--

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Let me guess. It's with the NJEA.

DR. MCKENZIE: I'm one of the people from the trenches. I'm not here representing an organization. I'm from a district where almost every kids passes the HSPT on the first time around, and so I have nothing to hide. But I am an opponent of this State's emphasis on testing. I was pleased to see The New York Times article on testing mania. I'm here because you as a Committee have an opportunity to turn the direction of the State around and start getting ready for the next century.

I included with my testimony an article from "Kappan" that was written by David Kearns, the Chair of the Xerox Corporation. It is time for the State to take a radical approach to fixing the problems of our cities, our urban districts, and the lack of inequity in our State.

The testing program is not working. It is not dealing with the real issues in education, and I think it's a distracter from the real sessions. So my testimony today expresses concerns about the direction that education in this State is taking entirely, and I would like to suggest that you take the leadership to turn us around.

As I superintendent and a teacher, I come before you this afternoon to express my concern about the new test proposed for eleventh grade. As the author of a new book entitled, "Making Change in Education: Preparing Your Schools for the Future," I am concerned that we are setting our standards too low, settling for an Eisenhower curriculum, when we should be developing a new curriculum for students aimed at preparing them for a new century. I applaud the commitment to high standards. I applaud the commitment to accountability. I applaud the stress upon reasoning. But I am deeply concerned

about the existing HSPT test and the effect that it is having upon the quality of education in New Jersey. I am deeply concerned that a new test will simply be -- as Assistant Commissioner Bloom has called it -- a harder version of the HSPT.

We approach a new century, in fact, a new millennium. I would expect that New Jersey, being the technology and invention state that it is, would lift its educational aspirations beyond the horizon. Industry has spoken. A global community and world economy will tolerate no sluggards. We need future citizens who are imaginative, inventive, collaborative, and resourceful. And the present testing program doesn't tell us much about that at all.

1) My first concern is the narrowness of a curriculum driven by a basic skills test and a lack of attention to 21st century skills. Why do we measure only reading, math, and certain kinds of writing? The next century will require many skills presently taught in very few schools. Where is our long-range planning as a State? Where is our curriculum of the future? I attach an article identifying at least ten of these skills; a tool kit of skills for the next century. It includes skills such as questioning, cooperating, group problem solving, inventing, forecasting, voting and deciding -- what's happening to citizenship in our country, less than half of our people vote? If we had an HSPT on citizenship we'd fail miserably -- connecting and puzzling, metaphorizing, modeling and simulation, empathizing and dreaming. The testing tail wags the program dog in this State. If we don't measure these important kinds of skills, they're going to go untaught.

You've heard the testimony this afternoon. This testing program is incredibly powerful. You're getting what you're buying. You're getting a basic skills curriculum. Math, science, invention, a lot of these things are dropping out as people teach the test. Basically, if we don't start

measuring these things, they're going to go untaught. If they go untaught, our students will greet the new century unskilled.

2) My second concern is the cultural illiteracy -- recognize the phrase from a current book -- that may result from an overemphasis on skills over content. In order to raise test scores, ditto sheets, workbook pages, multiple choice, and fill in the blank exercises, proliferate in this State today. Ask any elementary teacher. In countless classrooms, students digest six to ten ditto sheets each day. Hands on science, experiential learning, investigation and exploration, die out in many places at the very time when we need to be developing inventors to lead our country through the challenges of the next century. We're not listening to industry. We're ignoring what they're saying. Cultural literacy grows as skills count more than content. Science, social studies, invention, and the arts, lag as the State fails to test those areas. Before you add this new test, go out and find out what's happening to science and social studies instruction in K through eight. School after school drops them out to focus in on this basic skills test. Asked why there are few student questions in classrooms, many teachers blame the emphasis upon tests.

We have a State educational policy so narrow in focus, that it seems better suited to the 1950s than the information age. At the very time New Jersey seeks to be a leader in technology, and the Governor seeks learning for the next century, we emphasize an Eisenhower curriculum. Have we forgotten Sputnik? Do we ignore history? Remember back in the '50s, why can't Johnny read? We suddenly had all those science programs. Look at what's happening to science in the State of New Jersey. Where are the facts? Where is the research from the State Department?

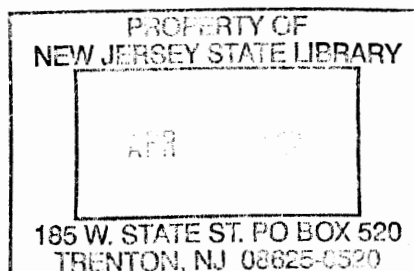
3) My third concern is the unresolved urban/suburban equity issues arising out of tougher standards applied without creation of a successful model for school improvement in urban districts. Yes, the Governor says lift the high jump bar. What we've forgotten is coaching. What we've forgotten is the resources to help urban kids get over that bar. Why would the State lift the testing high jump bar to loftier levels, without first addressing the underlying causes of educational failures? Why is the urban dropout rate above 40% in many places? Why was the State's urban initiative, a program heralded as the solution to urban problems, a failure by the Department's own admission and evaluation?

Urban areas with low HSPT scores feel more impact than suburban districts, as city kids spend less time on citizenship and leadership, less time on literature and the arts, and more time on basic skills. As social policy it's reminiscent of the old debate between George Washington Carver and W.E.B. DuBois, as Carver argued that blacks should get a trade and not worry about the fancier aspects of education. City kids should read real literature, not just flaccid paragraphs on ditto sheets. Try reading some of that junk. They should see substantial gifted programs instead of just remedial and compensatory education programs.

Why is there no HSPT test for citizenship, for invention, the arts?

How can we justify raising standards without addressing funding inequities that allow advantaged suburban districts who spend twice as much per students as disadvantaged urban districts? Read what Dave Kearns from Xerox says about funding equity as a basic solution to solving the problems of the urban districts.

To raise performance of disadvantaged students we must develop a major staff training agenda, which would cost millions in a single city such as Camden alone. I've done work



in Camden. You're talking about a huge training agenda. We must also change class sizes, build libraries for elementary schools. I do training on teaching for thinking in Paterson, and the elementary teachers in my workshops said, "What if a kid asks a question and we don't know the answer to the question?" Being a suburban educator, I said, "Well, you'd send them to the library." They'd say, "We don't have libraries." Do you realize you've got schools in your State without libraries? How can we call that a democratic education? We must also improve learning and working conditions for all these people. Then we can lift the high jump bar with a sense of justice. Lifting the bar before people know how to jump, is unjust.

4) My fourth concern is the teaching to the test phenomena you've heard so much about today, which gives a distorted and exaggerated picture of student progress. One way New Jersey tries to raise test scores is to encourage districts to teach to the test. Okay, you've heard testimony that they teach the test today. Districts are encouraged to use old items from the HSPT to diagnose and train future test takers. Read the literature from the State Department. They encourage us to take last year's test, test the eighth graders with it, find out what they can't do, and give them practice on the exact test items themselves. And look how much the test items change from year to year. There's hardly any change. These test items change very little from year to year. Format and structure is very similar. Students memorize the patterns. Districts are also encouraged to align curricula to the HSPT test. That means teaching math, reading, and writing, with those tests very much in mind. Such strategies exaggerate and inflate students' success.

What every happened to test security? We've heard a lot about that this week. Should teachers or students practice old items in advance of the test? What do the scores really

mean? Do they prove transfer of learning to new situations, which is, after all, the real goal of instruction? Isn't teaching to this test the same as stacking the deck? Isn't teaching to a narrow sample like limiting students to a fast food diet? Using such strategies, HSPT scores have risen in many districts, but as Robert Braun points out in his Star-Ledger, April 3 column, "Independent measures with test security such as the SAT test and the New Jersey test of entering college freshmen show little improvement." If students were actually learning something more than the HSPT, wouldn't these other tests show more improvement?

5) My fifth and final concern is the imposition of curriculum by the State upon localities. These tests interfere with the curriculum development of locally elected boards of education, as well as local educators, seeking to build courses of study around the needs of local students. Such tests dictate a State curriculum, with learning homogenized and standardized across all the schools. What happened to our longstanding belief that big government leads to bad policy?

New Jersey should heed lessons learned by the steel and auto industries, who lost their ways in the 1970s. What we have here is an Edsel. Big cumbersome organizations, distant from the customers, sometimes fail to adjust to a changing world, and they lose their market share and profits as they drown in red tape. Those who force quick profits often fail in the long haul. School improvement, like corporate improvement, is best fueled by the inspirations of school champions and local districts close to the clients, the families, and students, operating in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion, guided by sound educational philosophy.

The challenge of State leadership is the creation of a climate and a system which inspires, supports, and rewards the development of great programs, reserving heavy supervision and compliance activities to those who have demonstrated bad

faith. Compliance is the name of education in New Jersey today. Whether you're a good district or a weak district, you're treated pretty much the same.

As legislators, you have the opportunity to determine whether or not New Jersey will lift its sights beyond the horizon, and prepare students for citizenship in the next century. The goals of educators throughout this State will be shaped to a significant degree by the way you shape testing programs. I don't see how you can pass a test before you know what it is, what it's measuring, and what kinds of goals it will dictate, and how it will wag our programs. I ask that you move to address the problem of inequity in this State -- an educational failure -- before you lift the testing bar. Hold off on this proposal until you get answers to the questions that were asked today.

Make the State Department practice what it preaches. It forces school districts to prove that they've had success with research and evaluation. They don't evaluate their own programs. They don't answer the questions that they would make us answer about any program that we suggest. Force them to do the research that they recommend to us.

Testing identifies problems, but it is the beginning of the solution process, not a solution in itself. Let's work together to improve the educational high jumping skills of all of our students, as, and before, we lift our standards.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you very much, Dr. McKenzie. Any questions of Dr. McKenzie?

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Doctor, ultimately do you think -- and I asked this of several people -- do you think we should have a content type test or a Regents type test in this test?

DR. MCKENZIE: I'm opposed to the Regents test because I think it's an interference with local control. I think that the overemphasis on testing gives you homogenized, standardized, curriculum, and it destroys inventiveness. And

the best kinds of programs that are developed in the best districts come from the strength of teachers. There is considerable evidence now that the best educational change comes from the building as the center for change. If you read Sirotnik's work, if you look at the work of the Essential Schools group from Brown, if you look at the work suggested from the Carnegie Foundation, we're talking about believing in teachers and administrators, and communities and school boards as inventors of great programs. If you have a State test developed by a Committee-- You remember what a camel is? A State program developed by a Committee will be a camel of an educational program.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: Do you think that school districts then, ostensibly should emphasize content more, and have Regents of sorts?

DR. MCKENZIE: I think that school districts should be able to demonstrate performance. There should be strong evaluation programs in school districts. If you read Kearn's article, he says one of the things we don't do in education that industry does, is fund research and development. We have no money to do decent evaluation. We have no money or time to do decent training. If you want to get ready for the next century, we ought to start investing in human resource development, and resource and development of good teaching ideas the way industry does. We do everything on a shoestring in our business. No wonder it's often broken.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: I just want to congratulate you on your statement, and say that a lot of people -- and I don't think this -- a lot of people would probably view what you said as some kind of a heterodoxy. And if you were in a very very traditional school district, in some districts in this State you probably wouldn't have gotten above teacher. It's to your credit that you're maintained your own ideas and gotten as far as you have.

DR. McKENZIE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you, Dr. McKenzie. Good luck on your negotiations.

DR. McKENZIE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: We will have Dr. Jack Eisenstein first, and on deck we'll have Dr. Joel Bloom. Jack, have a seat. Nice to have you.

D R. J A C K E I S E N S T E I N: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Jack represents the Urban Schools Superintendents of New Jersey.

DR. EISENSTEIN: My name is Jack Eisenstein. I just retired this past June, after serving 19 years as Superintendent in the Atlantic City Public Schools. I am currently representing the Urban Schools Superintendents of New Jersey.

We don't have a position statement because there is disagreement among our group. I think mainly that's because of the variety of districts. If you look at urban districts, you're looking at a Newark with 60,000, and you can look at Pleasantville with a district of 2000. Nevertheless there's that classification of urban districts, and there's some 56 districts classified that way in the State of New Jersey.

If I can, let me try to review some facts with you, as we see them -- or a consensus of opinion as we see them -- and let's see what happens.

At the eighth grade currently, there is a standardized test given in most school systems. If the State were to give a test, it would be welcomed in some districts, particularly those that might have sending and receiving relationships in high school districts, because some of the receiving schools claim that other districts pull their students down, because they don't have control of the elementary education programs. So the sending district coming in to the receiving district tends to pull their scores down at the ninth grade level. It's a regional setup, and it's not their students that are doing it.

If you gave a test at the eighth grade, certainly it might help in terms of the youngsters who could be remediated, but I would say that the youngsters have already been remediated somewhere along the line -- whether it be third grade or fifth grade -- because virtually every school system tests at every grade in some form of a standardized test.

I think, too, that if your youngsters at the eighth grade level were stopped -- those that couldn't make it -- what do you do with them? Many of these youngsters might be rechecked again for special education. Right now, youngsters that are identified at the eighth grade level as not being at grade level, can't go on to vocational education when they could go on to vocational education, perhaps because they haven't mastered the basic skills. And this is a particular problem in urban areas.

Let's look at the current ninth grade test. If a youngster passes the examination -- and approximately 75%, we've heard a figure, in this State do initially. Let's look at another figure. We've only given this test two years. Not one urban district classified as an A-1 district -- that would be a Newark, or Jersey City, a Paterson, a Camden, a Trenton, an Atlantic City, an Asbury Park -- not one of those districts in two years have 75% of their youngsters passed the math portion. They have yet to pass it. Perhaps one city or two cities might, this time around. So if we raise the standards, what are we doing in terms of those youngsters enjoying some type of educational success?

There's no doubt about it, the dropout rate has to have some effect on these youngsters. Assemblyman Palaia, you raised a question. You wanted to know what happens to some of these kids? Where do they disappear? It is a flat figure given. And I can tell you from past experiences, it depends on how the district counts dropouts. Dropouts are a confusing item in the State of New Jersey, in terms of each district

classifying dropouts. As to how they're classified: A youngster transferred to another school system walks into an office and says, "I'm leaving school. I'm transferring into another community." And you might get the transfer request. You might not get the transfer request. So there's a great mobility factor. We know that in some school systems, individual schools, the transient population, that school can turnover as high as 50% in many of the urban districts in the State of New Jersey. Don't lose sight of the fact that over a third of the students that go to school in the State of New Jersey come from urban districts. So the mobility factor is great, and it concerns us, and that's the reason in many instances, the youngsters as far as statistics go, the urban districts come out so poorly.

The eleventh grade: If you move the test to the eleventh grade, some would argue, and some would favor it saying, "Well, you're truly going to get the eleventh graders. By that time youngsters have dropped out of school who are not going to stay there, and perhaps our test scores will be higher." I think what's happened in our State, and it's been said here already this afternoon -- I think everything that's been said, could be said, has been said -- and that's in terms of the tests themselves are tied into the certification process. Each and every year the urban districts are held up to ridicule because their districts come out the lowest within their counties. However, the schools are rated in the newspaper, put in the newspaper because the test scores were the lowest. The urban programs in some instances are some of the outstanding in the State. Yet the results aren't that outstanding when you look at statistics, and rightfully so.

Take a city like Newark: 2000 pregnancies two years ago at the ninth grade level. Take a city like Atlantic City: 100 pregnancies on an average each and every year of ninth grade students. Keep it going. Camden, you can go to Trenton,

you can go to Paterson, you can go to Philadelphia, you can go to New York, you can go to any of the large cities, and urban education has its problems today. Poor is poor. And consequently your test results are going to be poor.

I don't know whether, truthfully, raising the standard from a ninth grade test to an eleventh grade test is going to change the educational program in the State of New Jersey in terms of better educating our children. I think, as has been suggested, we have to look at our programs. I think we don't know enough of the ninth grade test results. There has been improvement, but as has been suggested, some of that improvement might be that the kids, by the time they get around to testing in the tenth grade and the eleventh grade, those that flunked it in the ninth grade are not even around when that test would come up in the tenth grade or eleventh grade, realistically speaking. So there has to be a great deal of research done, I think, in data, before you can come to a conclusion and automatically say, "Gee, we're going to have a better student in the State of New Jersey by giving the test at the eleventh grade as opposed to the ninth grade."

I think that our schools, and our people in urban situations, don't mind being held accountable. But we all don't start out the same, and that's the problem. Everyone is expected to finish the same, but yet our children don't start out the same. I think urban school systems-- I think we have to pump more money into the schools in the State of New Jersey.

Just look at the quality of life. I don't care. Again, mention any of the big cities. I'll go back to my city, Atlantic City. In ten years we have gambling. Walk two block from the boardwalk and how much have you seen done over in Atlantic City as far as improving the quality of life? Can you walk the streets safely in some of urban cities in the State of New Jersey? You can't. And consequently, that spillover of the quality of life takes place in the school. Everybody

expects the school to be the Mecca, I don't know, the messiah, for the quality of life that's going to take place in our country today; and it hasn't turned around in our large cities. We haven't found the real solutions yet to the problems as they exist. And just raising the bar of a test is not the answer to it.

I think it requires further study. And I would urge at this point, as a consensus of opinion, that we wait and see how much we really improve in the next few years to come, before we look to raise standards some five or six years in advance, and know exactly what we're testing for.

The things that have also been said are also very very true. In the inner cities today, everything is geared to the test, to the test, to the test. Seventy five percent of your kids can pass the test. They'll pass it at ninth grade. They'll pass it at eighth grade. They'll pass it at eleventh grade. It doesn't matter. Twenty five to thirty five percent -- depends on what group of youngsters you're talking about -- are going to have difficulty with a majority of skills. It doesn't mean that these children can't learn; they shouldn't go out in society. We should be concentrating our curriculum -- as has been suggested -- in citizenship and other values.

Not everybody drives an automobile. It's a physical skill. That person can still exist in society. We have thousands and hundreds of thousands of people today that can't do their math properly. You go to a McDonalds. You see the kids behind the cash registers. It's automated. Five hamburgers? They push five hamburgers and the price comes up for them. You go to a Shop Rite store. They don't figure out the prices. They take the package and run it past the register.

And we talk about the higher water skills. Water, unfortunately, will seek its own level. So will many of our citizens on their capabilities.

You're hearing now a great deal in college -- I'm doing some work right now with some of our State colleges in New Jersey -- "The test scores are way up." The test scores are way up because the prices compared to some of the private institutions are down. You can educate a youngster in the State of New Jersey at some of our State college for \$6000 or so. I mean, in some of the private colleges you're paying 14,000 or 15,000, and in the Ivy League schools you're into the 20,000s. So consequently there's more kids that want to go to school. More kids want to go to the schools, what have they done? They've raised the test scores to be more selective.

We can go on and on, but I've tried to make the points that I thought the Committee would be interested in. And I'll keep quiet now and answer any questions you might have.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you, Jack. Anybody from the Committee have any questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Just a brief question. Going back to your policy statement which you presented, the Urban Schools Superintendents of New Jersey, you know that statement? You have a mission statement and then you went into each of the areas. In that document you say that the State requirements have had -- you're talking about changing student and course proficiency requirements. I'm referring to that. You say this, "State requirements have had unintended negative influences on course emphasis and content. School districts with severely limited resources have been forced to limit curricular offering. Many disillusioned students have lost their motivation to stay in school because of the new testing and graduation standards." Somebody else said that today. Two people said that today. You believe that, right?

DR. EISENSTEIN: I do, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: "Unfortunately, the current system inadvertently rewards districts that allow borderline students to fall by the wayside. State testing standards,

graduation requirements, and currently under discussion course proficiency requirements, should not be implemented so that districts are rewarded for circumventing guidelines or mis-serving students. Nor should districts be penalized for continuing to work with low performing or troubled students. There must be a better way to regulate educational achievement." You stand by that statement?

DR. EISENSTEIN: I would say so, to some extent. Of course there's druthers in there too. I think what happens with many--

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: You actually could, data wise, support the statement--

DR. EISENSTEIN: I don't have the document in front of me. I don't want to--

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: --that State requirements have had unintended negative influences on course emphasis and content?

DR. EISENSTEIN: I think so, because what happens is that, particularly with a good portion of your school-- Let's say you have 2000 youngsters that might be in a high school, a typical inner city school, or 1400 or 1500. Maybe 500 of those kids are earmarked right away for remedial courses. And they take nothing but remedial courses all day long. Two-thirds of your school, or probably 50% of your school, depending on each individual community, those youngsters take their regular college work, or what we would call a normal high school education. The rest of those children are in remedial work. So therefore it has an adverse effect on the curriculum that you're going to offer those children. In that context, I would agree with it.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Mr. Chairman?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Assemblyman Kyrillos?

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Thank you, sir, and thank you Dr. Eisenstein. I fully agree with you that we all don't start out the same. And certainly students in urban school districts don't start out the same as students in Old Bridge, for example. But we aren't all expected to finish the same. There are going to be school districts where clearly students are going to out pace students in Atlantic City, but I think that we all want to expect from our urban students, for their sake, that they have the minimum basic skills. I think that's what this bill speaks to. We're not going to finish the same. I think we all agree on that.

DR. EISENSTEIN: Well is ninth to the eleventh going to make a difference?

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Well, I think it will. I think it will.

DR. EISENSTEIN: That's the point. That's the issue we're addressing here today.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: I understand your concerns. And I'd also like to say that McDonald's has to make it real easy for their kids to press the buttons, that's troubling to me. And it's troubling that we've got to just zip through the supermarket checkout line through the--

DR. EISENSTEIN: But I would rather take a kid like that in school, and if he was a decent kid, and encourage him to use those machines, and make a better citizen out of him, and let him be productive than frustrated, like we heard a couple of the little children in here this afternoon. They're truly frustrated.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: They are frustrated. We need to do something for them.

DR. EISENSTEIN: And I would rather take a kids like that and teach him on those machines, that he can go out and earn a living, that he can function, that he can drive a car, that he can raise a family. I would rather do that. I'm just

afraid that we're getting so elitist that these kids are the kids that get pushed out and get frustrated. You saw two here today.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: There are a lot of other jobs though that are a little more complicated than driving and going through the McDonald's machines and whatnot. I understand your point.

I had one question about what you had to say about mobility and the dropout rate. I wasn't clear on the point you were making. Is there a lot of movement in urban districts that affect the dropout rate? Is that what you're saying?

DR. EISENSTEIN: That's what I'm saying. And I think until we have a common denominator to define an actual dropout rate, that it will vary from district to district as to what really is a dropout. I think that it's complex. If a youngster transfers to another school, but does he actually get to the school? Maybe if the school gets the request from another school than they don't count it as a dropout. They'll count it as a transfer.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: So because of the rapid mobility, this may in fact be affecting the rate?

DR. EISENSTEIN: That's why I think you have the percentage of figures.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: And exaggerating it potentially?

DR. EISENSTEIN: That's the answer.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Okay. Thank you, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you. Thank you, Jack. Good seeing you again. We have Dr. Joel Bloom, Assistant Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Education.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members. You are in the process of getting a prepared statement, and we have some other materials for you which I'll talk about briefly.

I appreciate the opportunity to present additional information to you regarding A-2928, the proposal to establish an eleventh grade high school graduation test.

At the April 7, 1988 hearing before this Assembly Education Committee, the President of the NJEA, and many today, have repeatedly questioned the motives of the Department of Education for establishing an eleventh grade high school graduation test.

The motives for basic skills testing for an eleventh grade test in this State, and other states, has always been rather straightforward:

Governors and legislators have historically, in response to their citizenry, recognized the need for basic skills education. They have passed legislation mandating statewide basic skills testing in order to determine if the basic skills were being learned.

Statewide testing of student learning was initiated in New Jersey following Governor Cahill's 1972 State of the State Address, in which he lamented that fewer than half of New Jersey's high school students could read above the eighth grade level. This resulted in the testing program we heard earlier referred to, the EAP, or the Educational Assessment Program. In 1978, the Legislature, again recognizing the need for basic skills testing, passed then a minimum basic skills test. New Jersey was about where most states in the nation were at that time, minimum basic skills. Clearly, as other states have learned we have also learned, that minimum basic skills are not enough. Therefore, in 1979, the Legislature made passing the test one of the graduation requirements, in addition to curriculum course credits and attendance requirements.

Several times today, as you heard on April 7, people continued to refer to the test as the sole determinate as to whether or not children get a diploma in the State of New Jersey. In fact, it is not that at all. It is one of four.

Children have to take certain curriculum requirements, that are locally as well as State mandated. They have to have a certain record of attendance. They have to accumulate so many credits. And they have to pass the test.

Based on what we know since 1985 when the graduation requirements -- that four-part graduation requirement -- went into place, the thing that has had the least effect on whether or not a child graduates on time, is the test. The reason most children have not graduated on time has to do with their inability to pass the courses in their high schools. We have evaluated that. We have collected annual surveys, and we have sent them out statewide.

So I'd like to put the role of testing, to date, in its proper perspective. It's one of four graduation requirements, and it's the one that least affects, to date, whether or not children have graduated on time.

In 1982, the change to the HSPT was initiated. This change, like its predecessors, reflected both State and nationwide recognition that we must know whether or not students are mastering the critically needed basic skills. The skills that are the foundation for all other learning. I absolutely agree that we should give children the richest curriculum that we can give them -- give them an array, a broad smorgasbord if you will, to choose from -- but only when they have enough of those critically needed skills to achieve proficiency in those other curriculum areas.

The basic skills, not by Saul Cooperman, or the State Board, or the esteemed Committee before us, have been stated loudly and clearly state after state, commission after commission, that they are the critically needed foundation for all other learning. Without these skills children, upon becoming adults, will be severely limited from achieving success economically, socially, and politically. The HSPT moved us from a program of minimum skills, of the rote recall

-- using the McDonalds, if you will, change machine -- to thinking and problem solving skills.

As we become an increasingly technical, competitive and scientific society -- it's all around us -- the skill requirements are likewise increasing. The tests and basic skills instruction are increasingly shifting the emphasis from performing simple arithmetic to problem solving; from grammatically correcting sentences to composing sentences into an essay; and from demonstrating literal comprehension to drawing conclusions from reading passages. These are skills not only for those that we may think we can relegate to the bottom quarter of our citizenry. These are skills for all of our citizens. The proposed eleventh grade test, by providing two more years of learning for the students, will increase the emphasis on thinking and problem solving skills.

At this time, along with New Jersey, 48 other states conduct basic skills testing. Twenty-two require the passing of a basic skills test in order to receive a high school diploma.

You've heard much today about doing a comprehensive study. I know we are not naive, nor are you, to think that we have not considered what other states are doing nationally, and we have not looked at the whole issue of testing in the State of New Jersey. That, as some of your material in your packet will indicate, we have done evaluations of the training, of the impact upon the curriculum, of what teachers and students have told us. Take a look when you get an opportunity at some of the materials. I will touch upon them if you care to, a little later on, and possibly in response to some questions.

By 1992 there will be an national test in this country. Congress had funded it. People are working on it. It's called the National Assessment of Educational Progress -- NAEP. It will be administered for the purpose of reporting how well students are learning the basic skills nationwide. States

will early on have a chance to participate in a voluntary way. I think we'd all, again, be deceived and naive to think the pressure wouldn't be upon any state not to participate in the nationwide testing.

Basic skills testing is a necessary state, national, and international means of assessing what children are learning. It's this simple. The purpose is that straightforward.

Our motives for testing statewide are in fact simple. How else do we know how well students are learning the basic skills if we don't measure them, using some common means and agreed upon standards? Every enterprise has some barometer measuring its strengths, weaknesses and effectiveness. In education, ours has been one of basic skills testing, using statewide paper and pencil tests.

Similarly, our motives for proposing to move the test are straightforward. The same kind of motivation. Basic skills measured at the ninth grade level are quickly becoming ineffective indicators as to whether we are preparing students for employment or continuing education in the twenty-first century. It's got nothing to do with elitism. It's got to do with an equal education for all children. The expectations of employers, based upon more technical service and information jobs-- I think we're all aware that in the past 16 years this particular State, with the quality of life which we're all enjoying, has increased its service and industry jobs by over one million; as compared to at its pinnacle when it was a manufacturing state, part of the rust belt, we had 850,000 jobs. Clearly the need for the higher skills are there.

We are also looking at a shrinking labor pool. Again, we are now a State that does not have enough labor to fuel its industries. Our continuing education and military institutions, and our present educators, support the higher level of basic skills learning. We cannot, as Governor Kean has stated, "Waste a body." That labor pool just isn't there.

We can no longer believe that all children -- as unfortunately I believe I heard today-- People still believe, still believe after decades of effective schools research, that all children cannot learn the basic skills. That, in part, is the root for much of the failure in public education. People are willing to buy in to that belief. We know they can learn those basic skills. Researchers and demographers have predicted that if the practice of not expecting all children to master the basic skills is continued, we will have more dropouts, more teen-age pregnancies, more unemployed, and welfare recipients. It has been proven that there is a direct relationship between expectations -- what's very often insidious in many of our school districts -- basic skills achievement, and the quality of life experienced by society. There is a direct relationship.

If you've not seen the Ford Foundation-- It's a ten year study. It's been written up by Gordon Berlin and Andrew Sum. It's an excellent piece of work. Every researcher has looked at it. It does not quibble with the data. In fact, they are the people who have written about that direct relationship between basic skills, the quality of life, the effect on teen-age pregnancies, dropout rates, welfare and unemployment. Again, if anyone would like copies, we can certainly supply them. It's a very recent publication, 1988.

Along with raising expectations and the standards, the Department has increased the level of assistance to schools. In May, 1985, we initiated a \$13 million plan of helping educators prepare their students for the High School Proficiency Test. You have a copy of that plan in that packet. Some of the materials in that packet are the results of that plan, that \$13 million. In fact, not including this year; it's not quite to date. And there's an evaluation study of this in there, in the packet of materials:

- We have trained over 7000 teachers and administrators in instructional strategies through HSPT institutes. Some of the speakers before me spoke about the need for comprehensive, well-planned, staff development programs. They are absolutely correct. But toward what goal? We feel that at least a goal of basic skills is a beginning point to get all people well trained who teach and supervise in our public schools. The participants' evaluations of the institutes -- again, included in your materials -- have been overwhelmingly positive. I ask you to read some of the comments that they write in their evaluations.

- We have provided assistance to approximately 200 school districts, revising and aligning their curriculum. As difficult as we find all of this to be on any given day, the comments I hear when I go out there -- and I was in three school districts this morning -- from the school people are, "These curriculum changes were long overdue." For the first time many school districts, some of which I worked in, had the responsibility to dust off their curriculum guides and look at what was in them. And the HSPT did cause that to happen.

- We published 55 "How to" instructional guides for turning the good research into good classroom practices; again, some of the sample materials in the packet before you.

- We have enrolled, working with predominantly urban schools, over 4000 students in State-funded remedial summer schools.

I could go on and give you additional information about our Effective Schools Programs. Absolutely right, to turn urban schools into effective schools it's a three-, four-, five-year process. It's exhausting. It's never ending work, but it must have a commitment and it must be well managed.

I can talk with you about the alternative schools that we've got in place, the basic skills program improvement plan, but again, much of this is summarized in the material submitted to you.

A final point regarding State assistance, about which I believe the Committee may have been misled on April 7. The State compensatory education appropriations since the HSPT has been initiated are as follows:

Fiscal Year '87 - \$110 million dollars. Somebody left off the last three zeros there. (referring to his prepared statement) Please have those corrected. Plus a supplemental current appropriation of \$48 million, for a total of \$148 million. So FY '87 - \$148 million. There was a current year placed in that, based on the data that we got from the HSPT.

FY '88 - same amount of money - \$148 million. There was no decrease, as you had heard earlier on April 7.

The FY '89 request now in place - \$160 million.

Not only has the assistance been there, but the dollars have been there, the expertise has been there, the products have been there. If we haven't had the people, we've reached out to national people -- the Larry Lezottes, the Ron Edmonds, the Comers, the Fenwick Englishes -- the people who have spent their lives working to improve public education, particularly through improved basic skills education.

Some additional items which should also be clarified for your information, that I don't think you heard exactly clearly in materials that were previously submitted or were previously presented to you from April 7:

First of all, no one person or handful of people developed the HSPT; nor would that occur with the proposed test. It involved approximately:

First we started with 60 people, including educators, business and community representatives, on the skills identification committees. The tests measure what people tell us are those critically needed skills as the foundation for all other learning; to allow children to graduate from our schools. So we don't write the test. No one group, necessarily, writes the test. Start with the skills identification committees.

We then had 45 educators take the skills, and work with us to develop the test items that would assess those skills. It included math teachers, English teachers, reading teachers, subject supervisors, from around the State.

Once we had the skills and the many many items to assess those skills, we had 4000 teachers work with us to determine what's mastery and non mastery. Based on their determinations, we set the passing scores.

After that was all done, we bring in on an annual basis -- actually twice a year -- seven testing experts from around the nation, some of which are New Jersey based. They are our technical advisory committee. They review the test. The reason I have included Dr. Jeffrey Smith's name in there -- a professor at Rutgers, and quite a good one -- is because you heard in the testimony presented by Dennis Giordano on April 7, that Jeffrey was one of the developers of the test. Obviously, he is one of over 4000 developers of the test, if you will. His comments I think are incomplete in the material that was presented to you as well on April 7.

When we finished all of that, we then bring in 12 minority representatives to review the test for bias. We want to give everyone an equal opportunity to pass that test.

Student performance on the test has improved, as it did on the MBS. This improved learning is due to the efforts of New Jersey's teachers, administrators, students and parents. Answering enough of the questions correctly does indicate mastery of enough of the more than 100 skills examined by the test. It is not this narrow test that you may have been misled to believe. There are over 100 skills on that test. That's a pretty broad curriculum, if you worked in the areas of curriculum.

Mr. Giordano is wrong in stating that we changed the number of correct answers -- as you also heard repeatedly, erroneously today -- to increase the number of students

passing. That's incorrect. Let me tell you what we did do. We do make changes annually, if necessary, in order to ensure a consistent level of test difficulty from year to year. Because we use an "open test," yes we give the test back to the educators to use for the purposes of diagnosis of younger children in earlier grades. We therefore must develop a new test each year. You cannot guarantee a consistent degree of difficulty from test to test. It's impossible. So you change, or adjust, the number of correct responses needed to pass the test in order to maintain consistent test difficulty from one year to the next. We did not reduce the number so more kids can pass. In fact, on the math test the number hasn't changed in the four years it's been in operation. It's minimally changed in writing. It's changed the most in reading, and if you'd like to talk about that further I can explain that to you. It has to do with how you teach and measure reading skills.

Nor, as I have already said, is the test the "single instrument" and I'm reading from a quote from Mr. Giordano's paper "for determining whether a child deserves a high school diploma or not." The determinants, as previously stated, are passing courses in locally and State-mandated curriculum areas, accumulating credits, and school attendance. For students who achieve all of these determinants, but who do not pass the test, teachers and administrators can use the Student Review Assessment. We are concerned about giving all of those students an equal chance, and there is a piece built in there called the Student Review Assessment. Yes, you will hear people complain about it's labor intensive. How else do you measure whether or not children have achieved skills other than have a labor intensive effort to identify whether mastery of the needed basic skills has occurred? Graduation in this State is for the most part the decision of local educators.

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Annually, approximately 97% of the eligible ninth grade students take the HSPT. Mr. Giordano's numbers in citing Professor Burch's report are based -- as you've already heard today -- upon September 30 enrollments. Two problems in considering September 30 enrollments, one of which Mr. Eisenstein talked about earlier, and that has to do with the mobility. These counts taken almost eight months prior to April testing, are no longer accurate, particularly in the urban schools that we're talking about. And the counts do not distinguish the number of classified students who may have been exempted from the test by the child's study team and by their IEP.

In reviewing the data for Jersey City and Asbury Park -- and it certainly has improved since we've been monitoring it -- considering those eligible to be tested who were enrolled at the time of testing, legally enrolled at the time of testing -- such as this past Tuesday when we started the HSPT -- the results:

- For Jersey City are 91.2% of the eligible students were tested in April of '87; and,
- In Asbury Park, 96.3% were tested also in April of '87.

We've pointed this out to Professor Burch in several meetings with him, and he recognizes the fact that he was making his assessment based on the best data that he had available. We have since supplied him with this data.

A final point, Mr. Giordano stated that this basic skills test, and all such tests, hurt minorities. Based upon the experience to date with the HSPT, the results of the effective schools research in this State and across the nation, national reports -- you've heard and read about many of them -- by prestigious panels, it is the absolute contrary. It is the absolute contrary. Basic skills teaching, basic skills assessment in fact have improved education, not only for

minorities, but for all children. Raising expectations, delivering a focused and coordinated curriculum, maintaining a safe and orderly school, exerting principal and teacher leadership and ongoing assessment, including statewide measures, improves schools and learning for minorities and all children.

I ask you, when you get a chance, if you would please review the materials that were given to you. I'll be happy to answer any questions. I thank you for the opportunity.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Dr. Bloom, I just want to ask you, do you really believe that this ingredients of the test are realistic? You know, when I hear these two young people today -- and I know we keep harping back to them, and they are not the criteria for all the students -- but it just seemed to me that they made some sense when they said what they do know about algebra, or geometry? You know, I took algebra in high school, and the only thing I remember is the unknown factor. (laughter) I still don't know what the unknown -- I know it's X, but I never--

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: And you haven't been able to figure me out since.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: I haven't been able to figure it out. But Joel, it just seems to me it's not realistic for what they're going to face when they go out in the real world. And I realize it's high tech and all that. Could you answer that for me?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Yes. This is a little from recollection, and I'll certainly supply you with a current copy of the test--

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: --but you heard earlier of an example of a triangle within a square, and you were informed that you needed to know the hypotenuse to solve the problem. That happens to be incorrect. Really what the

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students had to figure out, based upon the area of the rectangle of the square, and figure out, without knowing the hypotenuse, the area of the triangle, and subtract the two. Let me now take that example. If you were going to come in and carpet this room, and you happened to be working at a designers school. They said, "We'd like a free formed shape. We would like a triangle up the middle of this room" -- and if you've not been in these places, I have, and I'm sure you have also -- "and on the borders we want something else done." A man putting down carpeting, putting up wallpaper -- or a woman -- does have to figure out the area. And no one is going to say to them, "Here are four right angles." They're going to write on the wall "A equals length times width," and now go put up my wallpaper, put down my floor. Those are real, practical, applied problems.

And where do we get the problems from? We get them from the people in the profession who are teaching it. And I think the idea of being able to figure out the area of a triangle or a circle within a square has a lot of practical application for a lot of jobs that people do in our world.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Do you really believe these kids though, who are basic skills kids, could really do anything with something like that, Joel? I really think it's overstretching what they possibly can do. We want kids to work to the best of their ability, but I think we're taking them beyond what's even within their best interest there to say, "You're going to need this. You're going to be a carpenter or a carpet layer." You know what they do? They'll figure out an easier way to do it. They'll figure it with the old math.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Assemblyman, you're absolutely correct. And you can respond to numerous problems-- First of all, just to point out a clarification, it's pre algebra and pre geometry. The reason we don't call it algebra and geometry is because then you do need to have many more of the skills that you may not well apply. You can figure

out the solution to many many of the problems on that test by applying logic. That has nothing to do--

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: And that's what you're looking for?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Absolutely. They are thinking problems. They are thinking problems, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Okay. Let me ask you one other thing. Okay. There's a lot of questions here. One other question. I noticed when you went through the portion about who makes up these test, Joel, you had some very prestigious people from all walks of life. Were there any students every involved, any students really directly involved with the actual test that's going to be given?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: In the past, no, but I guarantee you in the future, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes, I figured that.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: We have had two recent--

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: No, I could just figure that out that they would.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: When we've been meeting with people on high school graduation requirements, as we had panels on the proficiencies issues -- some of the core materials or issues you've been talking about -- we've had students on every one of those panels, three and four students. And I daresay, whether they were from Newark or from-- They were excellent, and gave the panel members a large amount of insight that I think would have escaped them.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: That's right.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: I guarantee you that there will be students involved in the development and many of the committees that you've heard us lay out here.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Good. I commend you for that. Joe, you have questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Okay. Then we'll go to Bill. Go ahead.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Joel. Can you speak to the dropout rate a little bit, the criticisms that we've heard, how you think this test affects it, and the change from ninth to eleventh how that might affect it, and how the Department calculates the dropout rate? I've been confused by various pieces of testimony I've heard. Maybe you can clear things up for all of us.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Earlier I heard somebody make a statement-- Oh yeah. It was Joe Zemaitis. And Joe was absolutely correct in talking about academic failure causing a dropout. It's one of five or six factors that-- Again, we've met with some of the best people, as well as the practitioners, who have effective programs, people in Rochester you've heard referred to earlier, other people from around the State and the nation. There are several factors that cause a dropout. What we now know, since about the last three or four years, is you can even predict some children as dropping out based on some of these factors. It's kind of a sad comment if we don't start responding to that. And it has to do with things like -- the Commissioner cited some of them earlier -- mother's degree of education, socioeconomic factors.

Academic failure is one of the factors. No doubt about it. But academic failure is cumulative. Academic failure is not one test. Students don't walk into a classroom like this one we're all sitting in, fail a test and say, "I'm dropping out." Those children have been experiencing academic failure since second, third, fourth, fifth. This is one more -- unfortunately, one more -- and schools have to be responsive to early academic failure. It is too late when children are in the ninth or eleventh grade to start addressing the issue of academic failure. It has to be addressed at the fourth grade, at the third grade, and the first grade. For many many

children, something we've been talking with Assemblyman Palaia about for years now -- excuse us, Joe -- preschool programs for many kids.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: That's right.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: If you asked me, in my opinion, based on the opportunities I've had to work in this business and talk to many other people in this business, what will prevent academic failure for many of the children that we've heard many of us talk about today -- the poor and the minority child, and sometimes the white child as well who's poor -- they are preschool programs, but done right, done right. And they're not easy to do right. Good preschool programs are harder to do than good high school programs. Preschool programs, but well run, well-planned, well thought out, and to my experience-- I've looked at one, the Perry Street School, looked at the research, but that took a lot of planning, a lot of training, a lot of extra time, and a lot of extra effort, and a lot of extra money. That's what we're now in the process of negotiating with some of you on this Committee now.

The issue of how we count dropouts in this State certainly can be improved upon. Just to clarify something that was not correctly told to you. We do count and consider children in the enrollment through the summer. It does go through August 30. Unfortunately it ends August 30 of their senior year. So we do have a missing number of children who may not return after the summer of their senior year when they didn't graduate on time. There is no real counting for them. That's one group we're missing. Absolutely correct.

There's another group. Any student who drops out at any time, there's little or no follow-up for that student. Where really did they go? Why really did they drop out? We are basing all of the data on dropouts in this State at this point in time, on the reports -- as you heard Jack Eisenstein

say -- that are submitted to us by local school districts. We need to work with local school districts to improve the reporting, improve the follow-up, deal with that August 30th date of the twelfth grade when children didn't graduate on time -- what happens to them; and find some way -- and I know some schools have done it, and I'm aware of what Perth Amboy is doing -- trying to track those children that are very very mobile and move around, and generally move around within their school system or neighboring school systems. What can we do better to attract those students, short of having a massive computer system, assigning social security numbers -- which legally of course we could do with young children? There are some things that have to be improved upon. No doubt about it.

Based on the data we have, the dropout rate -- and I'm not praising the data, it has its problems-- The dropout rate has been flat in the State of New Jersey during MBS, and as we have looked at students as they have moved from the ninth grade into the tenth grade as a result of the HSPT. People are absolutely correct. We do not know the full effect yet of the HSPT. We are proposing a plan that is five and six years off. In the meantime, we have the obligation to you, the obligation to the State at large, to continue to evaluate and report on the effect of the HSPT; some of which the preliminary data, again, is before you. We will continue to do that. We will continue to do that.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Anything else, Assemblyman?

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Yes, thank you, Joe. Joel, just to make sure I heard you correctly, you don't count those students that leave after graduation?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Children who don't graduate on time--

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Yeah?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: --August 30 the count stops on them, unless school districts pick them back up.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: For a fifth year?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: For a fifth year. For the most part, many of the children do not get picked up. But let me also tell you, that that's a small number of children, something we've talked about before. Most children appear to be dropping out in the high schools -- because we've never really collected elementary school level, not that I think you're going to find much there -- but at the high school level is around December of their tenth grade. You heard earlier people talk about that age of 16? That's when they begin to hit that age. That's the problem. That's not the cause of the problem. The cause of the problem is well-established many many years earlier.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes, Assemblyman Pascrell?

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Are you finished Joe?

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Go ahead, Bill. I may come back in a minute.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes, come back. That's okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Dr. Bloom, I thought you gave a very excellent presentation. And that concerns me, what you just said, in being honest about it, about the middle of the tenth year. I want to focus on that, but I want to clear up some mechanics first if you will.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: There was an article in The Star-Ledger On April 12, Tuesday of this week, which dealt with the skills test and how they were under tight security. I am concerned that some tests went south, but that isn't what really concerns me. In that article, Commissioner Cooperman said the following, he's quoted as saying, rather The Ledger is now writing -- this was not bylined interestingly -- "Cooperman would not detail the procedures, but it is known that State staff members will be making unannounced visits throughout the State, with special attention to so-called 'high risk' school

districts, where scores on the test could determine whether the systems receive State approval." What does that mean?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: I was at the press conference where all of that article emerged from, and I didn't hear any of those statements being made.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: No, I didn't attribute them to a quote.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Oh, okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: I'm saying that this is what The Ledger said, paraphrased. Here, you want to take a look?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: I think, unfortunately, I've probably committed some of those to memory by now.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Who are these high risk school districts, Dr. Bloom?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: What we are doing -- and I can go into detail -- we're in about 40 school districts around the State monitoring the administration of the test, from about a week and a half ago, the preparation for the administration, until the make-up which ends May 5. We have randomly selected some schools around the State.

The purpose in doing the monitoring is several fold. On a number of occasions throughout the past three and four years, we have received complaints from students and parents, that not enough time was given as was expected to be given on the test. We also looked at test climate and test environment conditions. We also looked at proctoring of tests.

In addition to those randomly selected, we have also gone into some specific school districts where we have had complaints from teachers, administrators, students who have written to us, about unfair test conditions, cheating on testing, examples that were put on the board and worked out in front of the children. So there are some school districts that we have specifically focused on.

The high risk -- that is not our statement. That is not what we are specifically doing. Those that we're in intentionally, other than randomly, are only because of prior complaints of problems during testing.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: One would conclude from that paragraph that there were a select group of school systems in the State of New Jersey--

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: There were.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: --that were zeroed in on--

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: There were.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: --and they were primarily those districts that were in jeopardy of the State having to take them over.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: That's incorrect.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: That's what it says.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Well, unfortunately, that's incorrect. We're in school districts where we have had prior complaints, problems, and concerns about testing. That had nothing to do with the takeover. Absolutely nothing.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: In other words, we would conclude from this that the only places where we could have hanky panky are in those districts where--

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Oh, absolutely not.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Well, that's what it says.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: As I said earlier, we are in randomly selected school districts that are some of the stellar in the State as far as basic skills.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: So, those districts that you have zeroed in on -- we'll take the quotes away from the high risk.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Those districts that you've zeroed in on are not necessarily those districts that are in jeopardy of the State taking them over?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Absolutely correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Are the six districts that are being monitored -- or the seven or eight districts, I don't which it is.

MR. ROSEN: Nine.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Nine? Thank you. The nine districts that are on level three, are they nine districts that we've zeroed in on?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: I'm almost positive one or two of them are not included in that.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: But seven of them are?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: I don't have the data in front of me, so--

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Isn't that a rather high percentage of those, since we've zeroed in on "X" amount of districts? Why these seven, Dr. Bloom?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Again, we have accumulated over the past two or three years districts that have, either by their own reports or people within the district, that have told us that there have been testing irregularities. I don't know, without the information in front of me, if all of them-- I'm almost positive that two of them are not included in that list, only because I thought about that. But we are randomly in school districts. We are not targeting districts, other than those that we have had complaints about, self reported complaints by some of the schools.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: I take it then you've had complaints from these seven districts in the nine that are being monitored for possibly going beyond the third level?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: If we're in them, the answer is -- and they're part of that targeted group -- then yes, we've had problems and complaints. Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: It's ironic that two of the districts where the problems occurred are targeted districts.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Yes, that's unfortunate, but we've also had prior complaints in those districts.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Okay. Let me ask you another question. Do we contract services to test? How do we arrive at the data? Is everything done in-house, in research and then coming up with the test?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: No. It's a mixed bag. I for one, depend more on outside consultants, and we check it in-house.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: How are those outside consultants designated?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Very often under competitive bidding. They are part of our overall, in this case, with National Computer Systems out of Iowa City, Iowa.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Do most states plug into that?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: A majority of states doing the kind of testing we're doing, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Pennsylvania -- not Pennsylvania any longer -- National Computer Systems, which is Westinghouse Corporation, is a very popularly used contractor for this kind of testing, yes.

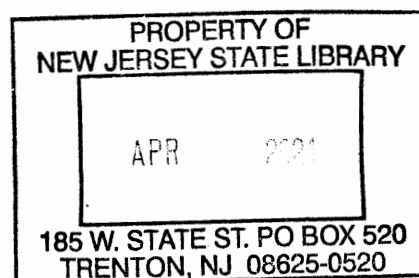
ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Is this contracted service competitively bid?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Absolutely. Yes. It's run by the Treasury Department, overseen by the Office of Management and Budget. I haven't even been present for the past three bid openings.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: I'm sure you haven't been, Dr. Bloom. (laughter) I just wanted to clear away some technical things. I think--

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Which have been complained about but--

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: I'm sorry?



ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: No, no that's--

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: "What will be the likely impact of the eleventh grade test on your district?" We asked that question in the past. How come the answer that you give is very very -- not just very, but very very -- different from the answers that principals and superintendents give to the question? Am I not phrasing the question correctly? Are we not communicating on the same level? Your answer is very different in terms of your testimony today.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Let me possibly elaborate on my answer, and then tell me if it's different. You asked on April 7 -- and it's a good question, and since the Commissioner assigns me that responsibility, I'll answer it. You were concerned first about the elementary curriculum.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: That's correct.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Would the eighth grade test have an effect on the elementary curriculum? In all school districts in the State, no; in many, yes. In the urbans in particular, absolutely yes. What will the effect be? I think you will have what is very difficult to achieve -- and I make the comment in here (referring to materials submitted previously to Committee members) -- that coordinated curriculum. What happens in our business -- and it's often unfortunate, and it's an experience that I have firsthand as a building principal -- is that teacher one in grade one is not talking with teacher two, three, and four, in grade one; and then is not talking with teachers one, two, three, and four, in grade two. There's a lot of re-teaching, a lot of uncoordinated activities, learning exercises that go on for children. They are pulled in multiple, many directions. To some degree, some can say they are creative. Absolutely. Yes. And if you want to see creativity, go and look at good compensatory education programs. They are some of the most creative people I've seen in this business.

But what must happen is we must have some overall framework from which we all teach. Otherwise, kids are going to move through the grades with no coordinated learning. It's hit and miss. We waste a lot of time teaching and re-teaching, and not teaching and getting caught up. Schools need that curriculum. Will the eighth grade dry test drive that for many of our school systems? I believe so.

Let me just go back, because I don't want to in anyway impugn urban schools. Some of the urban schools have done a better job than many of our suburban schools have ever done with curriculum. They are working, though, at a great disadvantage, given some of the social economic conditions that they have to work to overcome. But there are many urban schools that have done a good job with curriculum. Some of them are right around us right here.

What is the effect, as a result of the eleventh grade test, on the curriculum? I think for now we've spent a lot of time with seventh, eighth, ninth grade teachers. Maybe we've begun to reach some of the sixth grade teachers as a result of the ninth grade test. The high school teachers -- and I was there, so I have some degree of sensitivity -- we taught content. When I was in a secondary school, you couldn't talk to us really about skills, other than some of the scientific inquiry skills that Jamie McKenzie was addressing earlier. The reality is though, for some of our children basic skills still need to be a part of the curriculum in high schools. I think the eleventh grade test will have a significant effect on the curriculum in many of our schools, particularly in grades ten and eleven.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: You're saying, therefore it would have a positive effect?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Oh, absolutely, positive.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Therefore principals should hold off-- They're quick to judgment. Is that what you're saying? Don't let me put words in your mouth.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: I think that's fair. Again, let me not, in any way, mislead you. The kind of assessment we do in this State can very easily have negative effects if you don't guard against them, and some of those negative effects could be in your classroom. What we have to believe is, when we go into this kind of testing, doing some of the kind of assistance that we're doing, we work to overcome some of those possible negative effects. We're not looking for a narrowed curriculum for all kids. I will say that for some children it's the only choice you may have, based on the fact that they haven't mastered enough of those skills early on in their elementary education, that they do have that narrowed curriculum when they're still in high school. But it can be creative. And no one ever said-- We are the ones who condemn children to graduating high school in four years.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: That's right.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: No one ever said that high school is a four-year experience for every kid. In fact -- I know you're going to hear from some vocational people shortly -- vocational people, through competency based vocational ed programs, hold some of the keys to the kingdom to keeping some of these kids in school through part-time job educational kinds of programs; which have worked well in pilot programs we've had in the State and our alternative ed programs, as well as some of the vocational education programs in the State. But you've got to be creative; just what you were looking for. And you can't believe we have to narrow the curriculum for all children. That is absolutely incorrect.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: There is no magic in the test, and there is no magic in 12 years.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: I have one final area, for now anyway. You were bold enough, and sensitive enough, and forthright enough, to talk about too late. It's too late at that point. And I interpret that to mean, that doesn't mean you give up on kids in the tenth grade. I know you don't mean that. It seems to me that every time we turn a corner in education in this State over the last 10 years, or 15 years -- well, particularly since 1976 -- we run into the high school curriculum.

Maybe I'm missing something, and maybe I was out of the State for any period of time and I missed the news, but I tried to look back through newspaper morgues, into all the public debates on questions, and darn it, Dr. Bloom, I'd say 95% at least talk about high school. When you said it -- courageous enough to say it -- that if we don't make it in the elementary school it isn't going to mean a hill of beans later on. And you won't give up on that kid, and I won't give up on that kid, but the kid gives up on himself because we haven't provided him with the tools. And we keep on dumping these kids -- let me use that word, if I may -- on the steps of the high schools in the State of New Jersey. We changed the test from ninth to tenth to twelfth to eleventh, and we think that we are effecting a change. The kid is on a merry-go-round. He is literally on a merry-go-round.

Those that get through, finally get into the community colleges. You have a disaster area there in talking about remediation, and how much you spent on remediation in those schools. These are the ones that have made it past the tenth grade, when you know that the average person dropping out of school is literally there in December of his tenth year. First of all, is that analysis correct?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Why don't we go back then into that elementary school and concentrate resources, manpower, dollars, your ability to put tests together that are relevant and not just test. You've got a nice reputation there. I don't say that in a patronizing sense. I never do. You'll know where I stand all the time. But I'm saying to you, why don't we concentrate back in that elementary school? That's where the problem is in education in this State. And you know it better than I do.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: You're correct. It's part of the problem. There's no doubt about it. And it's part of the problem for many children. The eighth grade test-- See, we're kind of caught on the horns of a dilemma of between what's good logic but what can we do well with tests. Hold on a moment. You hear some people talk increasingly-- First of all no one test, particularly-- You test children in kindergarten, and it's like rolling the dice with any kind of standardized measure. And I know Assemblyman Naples is getting ready to leave. I just want to get this in.

ASSEMBLYMAN NAPLES: I have an appointment at 6:30.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: We are saying the eighth grade test is not a gatekeeper. It's not a gatekeeper. We are saying it on page 14. I tied that in, I guess, a bit.

So the problems of testing: We have to be very conservative when you're dealing with very young children. I for one, at this point in time -- and testing is a relatively new business -- I feel very comfortable. Everyone looks at the high school. There have been seven national reforms in education since 1893. Everyone of those reforms have focused on the high school. It's not going to change today. It didn't change as a result of close to 100 years ago. I feel confident when we go and talk about an eighth grade test, that it can serve two purposes, and that's what we're trying to get out of it. The early warning system so that we won't leave a lot of

kids exposed for the first time to that eleventh grade test rather late in their career or education, but also to drive down the issue of the elementary curriculum.

What I feel very confident about saying is, we can do a real good job; eleven, eight, six, and three and say there's a real good relationship across that long continuum of education. No. So, I feel confident with the eighth grade test. Give us some time. We're on a long program here. We, you, and I, a lot of us would like to change it all tomorrow. But give us some time. I think, I know, we will increasingly-- Instead of driving it down, we're trying to do two things, the eighth grade test, and the preschool; unlike what we've done with the ninth grade test. We kept on trying to drive it down. This time, with a lot of guidance from Assemblyman Palaia, we are trying to drive it up a bit with preschool. So between the two, I think we'll be on a pretty fast track. But it's going to take some time.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: One final question. Would you go so far as to say that competency in these tests -- take care, Gerry (Assemblyman Naples leaves hearing) -- that competency in these tests could lead to the elimination of the tests in those school districts that have accomplished "X" or "Y," rather than continue the pain and the abuse?

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: If I'm not mistaken -- because sometimes I forget when Saul has said what. I believe he said at the hearing on April 7, correct me if I'm wrong, that he would like -- because we've talked about this at length, and I've heard him say this publicly -- he would like to believe that sometime in the future of New Jersey we will be doing away with Statewide assessment of basic skills; for very obvious reasons. Everyone is doing well. Why test? Why spend the taxpayers' money? Why try to drive up or bring down, or whatever it is we're doing here as far as which direction we're trying to work at concurrently? Why do the testing? Do I see

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that happening in the next five to ten years? No. Do I think there is a good amount of knowledge, and increasingly able people who can begin to move toward that? Yeah. It's going to take awhile though.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you, Joel.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: Thank you very much.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER BLOOM: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: I appreciate it. And I appreciate everybody, especially the few last speakers. I apologize profusely to all of you who had to wait. Mia Anderson was next, and Mr. Elinor French was after that, and we have Monte Seewald after that.

M I A A N D E R S O N: I admire your stamina.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you.

MS. ANDERSON: I'm not sure that mine is as great as yours. I do appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. I will be as brief as I can. I will try not to reiterate some of the concerns that were brought to you before. Redundancy has never been anything that added to the bottom line other than weight, and you all don't need that today.

I want to begin by telling you that New Jersey PTA has not taken a position on this particular issue, although we have discussed it. We have some concerns, and the results of those concerns, what happens with that, will determine in fact what position we take. I'll read quickly, and be as brief as I can.

Obviously, New Jersey PTA certainly supports efforts to achieve excellence in our public schools. Raising the standards of academic achievement required for graduation is not something that parents could, or should, oppose. How we accomplish the goal is what's at issue.

With regard to the eleventh grade High School Proficiency Test as proposed in Mr. Kyrillos' bill, while the current proposal of the Department as represented by this piece of legislation, is well drafted and meritorious on its face, we

have some concerns about its implementation. You've heard many of those concerns here.

Increasing the level of skills required for graduation, and moving the High School Proficiency Test from the ninth to the eleventh grade, will be productive only if the Department of Education is given the authority and the resources to require local districts to enhance their curriculum and remediation efforts. We cannot, however, continue to emphasize the need for increasing the skills of those students who remain in school, while not dedicating sufficient efforts and resources to retaining students. Increasing excellence must be accompanied with increased efforts to retain urban students and remediate their deficits.

Recognizing that only 40% of our urban students who remain in school are able to pass the current High School Proficiency Test, is frightening for several reasons:

First, it is tangible proof that the system is failing with those students who do remain.

Second, and perhaps more alarming, is the recognition that with an urban dropout rate of between 40% and 50%, the 40% passing rate shrinks to nearly half when it is applied to the entire eligible high school student population. In other words, only about 20% of our urban students are minimally academically competent.

Consequently, we urge both the Legislature and the Department of Education to expand their agendas to include the development and support of programs designed to reduce student dropout rates. Otherwise we will have lost sight of what we're really trying to do with the public education system.

With regard to the eighth grade early warning test: Moving the ninth grade MBS to the eighth grade will be productive only if it is used as a diagnostic test that will trigger remediation appropriate to each student's needs. The Legislature must place the responsibility for this remediation

on the districts. How districts provide such remediation in doing their job must be included as components in the evaluation of the districts done by the Department of Education.

One thing that hasn't been brought up here is, what do we do with out-of-state students who transfer in in the tenth or eleventh grade, and come in with severe deficits? The time to remediate that, is obviously insufficient for many of them to pass the proposed exam. What do we do with those kids? I urge you to ask the Department to address those kinds of issues. I'm not going to suggest proposed solutions. A few of them, of course, jump to mind. But I think that's something that we don't want to have fall through the cracks. Then find out the hard way when parents come crying that their kids were successful in West Virginia, they came to New Jersey in the eleventh grade, and couldn't get a high school diploma. That's not the system that we want to foster.

With regard to alternative diplomas for students with limited ability: We must continue to provide those students who try to achieve a diploma, but who, for various physical or mental handicapping conditions, are unable to do so despite consistent effort and attendance. You heard some of that today. We have got to continue to make a respectable alternative diploma. These kids have skills. Employers will need to know that they have skills. Employers will need to know that they have a sense of responsibility, that they can commit the task, etc. etc. I think you need to authorize, require, or whatever fancy word you want to put in, the Department of Education to make sure that such a degree is developed -- actually you have one -- but is continued to be used.

Let me stop for a minute. What we're trying to do here is education reform, so that we make our schools more successful than they are. I don't have to convince you that we're losing the war here; that the kids that are coming out

of school today are at real risk of not being successful 15 years from now, given their educational competence. But you cannot keep continuing to focus only on increasing academic skills, because the kids who sit in the classrooms are bringing into the classroom burdens that teachers have never before had to deal with. When you realize the statistics with regard to what's happening with our kids, you realize that it has to be more than the curriculum, more than moving a test, more than increasing academic information.

In this country today you've got 5 million kids a year who attempt suicide, 5000 succeed. Today, this very day, 40 teen-age girls will give birth to their third kid. Forty percent of the homeless population in this State are children, and 25% of the entire juvenile population is born into poverty in New Jersey. For the first time in our country children are the poorest segment of our society. They are six times more likely to be poor than a senior citizen. Now, I can guarantee you that if as a Committee, and as a Legislature, you do not begin to focus on the broader issues of why we are not able to give our kids the information, why they are not able to absorb the information regardless of how good the curriculum is, then it doesn't matter where you put the test, or how good the test is, or how good the curriculum is.

Look at that. (points to announcement on wall)
"Breakfast Club." Finally somebody has realized that a hungry kid can't learn, can't do well. It's not that the kid doesn't want to do well; can't. You can't continue to just do that when you test them. You've got to recognize that these kids have to have the supports they need in order to be successful. And you need to design curricula that does more than teach them math. You need to design curricula that helps them develop coping strategies, that helps them develop self-discipline, that helps them develop a good self-image, and then you will begin to see test scores rise because they will be competent human beings first and foremost.

I want to conclude by saying that you have got to begin to recognize that parents must be equal respected partners in education; that you have got to somehow get to the principals, get to the school boards, and get to the teachers, that parents are not their enemy; that if a parent is concerned about their kid, that parent can't be looked at as a problem to be ignored, to be denigrated; that you need to make that parent your ally. And to increase parent involvement will certainly result in increasing student performance. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you, Mia. We'll have Elinor French, the Director of Testing for the Middlesex County Vocational-Technical School. I apologize to you, Elinor, for the long long delay in putting you on.

E L I N O R F R E N C H: I'm not only Director of Testing, I'm also Supervisor of Basic Skills for my district.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Good, thank you.

MS. FRENCH: I am here to testify today on behalf of the Board of Education of the Vocational Schools in the County of Middlesex, the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. J. Henry Zanzalari, and in my position as Supervisor of Basic Skills.

My district wishes to go on record as being very much in favor of moving the present ninth grade High School Proficiency Test to eighth grade, and enacting legislation to establish an eleventh grade high school graduation exam.

Since the High School Proficiency Test is supposed to be testing the skills the students have acquired up until they have entered high school, the test should be given at the end of eighth grade. How better to pinpoint the students who have not yet mastered these skills? How better to pinpoint those districts that are not delivering an adequate education to their elementary students?

At the present time, the State is spending a great deal of time and money on reports gathered from the High School Proficiency Test's information on eighth grade data, to acquire

this information in order to go back to the eighth grade schools whose students do not perform adequately on the HSPT test. This is like locking the barn after the horse is stolen. By giving a basic skills achievement test in the eighth grade, the reports will pinpoint both the deficient students and the deficient schools. Then measures can be taken to correct programs, curriculum, and methods of delivery, in the districts that have need of help; and to set upon remedial programs for those students who should be enrolled in them.

In a district like ours, a full-time vocational high school, we accept students from 25 different sending districts and many private and parochial schools, who come to us in September of ninth grade. We have no knowledge of the curriculum or programs their districts have provided for them.

We spend a great deal of time and money testing these students so that those ninth grade students who would be at risk to pass the HSPT at the end of ninth grade, are put into remedial classes to help them overcome their deficiencies before they take the HSPT. Approximately one third of our entering freshmen classes are identified as, or tested as, remedial; and in general, they've been in remedial classes throughout most of their elementary school years. We must test these students on the HSPT in April of the same year, giving us exactly seven months in which to try to overcome deficiencies that local districts have not been able to do in the previous eight years. This is obviously a herculean task, and when we do not succeed at the rate the State expects us to, we are listed in the newspapers as a district which needs improvement.

This is obviously not the case. In the first place, we are dealing with a much larger proportion of lower scoring students than the normal curve would indicate. If you would look at a normal distribution curve, our district does not have many students at the right hand tail -- those students scoring a great deal above the median -- and we have more students at

the left hand tail -- those students scoring below the median. We do educate these students, and we do deliver basic skills to these students by the time they graduate. We cannot, however, do this in the seven month's time that the current HSPT test allots us. Neither could anyone else.

We have one of the best secondary basic skills improvement programs in the United States. Our program has been recognized by both the United States government and the State of New Jersey for its excellence.

In 1985, we received a certificate of merit from the United States Department of Education for outstanding progress towards excellence in compensatory education. This is the highest award a school district can receive. We were the only vocational school in the United States to be so honored. Our program was in a book published in 1986 by the United States Department of Education, entitled "Effective Compensatory Education Source Book" as a program to be emulated. I have the book right here.

We were also cited for excellence by the New Jersey Department of Education and our program included in a book entitled, "Effective Practices in Secondary Basic Skills Programs: A Compendium of Case Studies." This book describes effective Chapter I programs found in Region I, which is 13 northeastern states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

We are not modest about the fact that our program has been copied in its entirety by many districts within the State of New Jersey, and throughout the United States.

If you enact the legislation to establish an eleventh grade graduation test, you would be giving us a chance to teach these deficient students for three years. During that time span, we could accomplish our goal of having every student pass the high school graduation requirements.

We have proven that we've done this with the Minimum Basic Skills Test, and we are doing it with the High School Proficiency Test. In the four years that the graduating high school classes have had to pass the Minimum Basic Skills Test in order to receive a diploma, only one student in all of our five schools has failed to graduate. In each of the four previous years that we've given the High School Proficiency Test, our test scores have improved each year.

The most critical issue facing the schools at the moment is the need to improve student abilities. From careful planning, teacher training, implementation, and evaluation, comes improved learning.

We agree with the Governor and the Commissioner of Education that a high school graduate should be competent in reading, writing, and computational skills. We believe that testing students in eleventh grade would be a much fairer measure of what we as a district have been able to teach them.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you, Elinor. I want to commend you because I've been to your school, and it's an excellent school. It's well run, and you do provide an excellent curriculum. I can testify to that.

MS. FRENCH: Thank you. Come and visit my program sometime.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: I will. Thank you very much.

MS. FRENCH: You're welcome.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Our next speaker is Monte Seewald. Monte, again, my apologies I add to the others. But it's one of these days where we've had some testimony that is quite lengthy, but very interesting.

M O N T E S E E W A L D: First of all, I'm glad to be here. I'll just tell you briefly that I'm here representing only myself.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: That's good.

MR. SEEWALD: I don't belong to any organized group. I've been a teacher for 27 years.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: He must be a Democrat. Who's that Will Rogers? (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Monte, what school are you from?

MR. SEEWALD: In New York City. I teach in New York City.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Oh, New York City? Okay. Go ahead.

MR. SEEWALD: I'll just tell you briefly. I ran out of my last class, which ends at 2:15. I'm on early session. I was told, "Three o'clock they may leave." So I'm grateful you're here. And the point of view I'm expressing, as I said, is my own. I don't belong to any group. I have very very strong feelings on this topic. I wish all of you were here, but I am confident that--

I would like to say first of all, I think your bill hasn't gone far enough. I am aware of the NEA statements, and I'm aware of statements by the Teachers' Association. And nobody has to preach to me about teacher associations, being a Chapter Chairman, and being at a time a Chapter Chairman and union member when I was the only one in the school. It doesn't take any courage now. I've been, as I said, teaching 27 years.

What I'm going to say to you doesn't come from any prepared speech. I made little notes against the wall while people were talking, and I'm stunned at some of the statements made.

See that sign up there? (points to sign) It says "Breakfast Club," true enough, and breakfast is very important. No one has to tell me about that. But don't you think that a parent or child can take some Kellogg's Corn Flakes and put them in a bowl with some milk? I think it's more important to teach them to prepare their own food rather than give it to them. You give somebody something for nothing and that's what it's worth, nothing.

I'm a math teacher. I was listening to the statement about the rectangle with the square, actually it's a rectangle with a triangle, not that difficult. Not that difficult at all. In fact, that type of problem, unless I'm mistaken, is given to fourth and fifth graders in Japan. You're not talking about something esoteric.

I have a lot of other statements to make, but I guess I'll start from the beginning.

Do any of you remember the column, "My Turn" written in "Newsweek Magazine" by a college professor? My wife and I cut it out and discussed it. He came out with statements that didn't surprise us. For example, some of the statements, "When did the Civil War take place?" And he gave a list of -- this is to college students -- four or five dates, 1950, 1600s, 1860, and so forth. More than half of the class got it wrong. He said, "Who was Joseph McCarthy?" And he mentioned several possible topics. No one knew. "Who was Rembrandt?" Second baseman-- This was in "My Turn." Nobody was surprised.

Let me get to the point. These things happened to me, so I think you will see my feelings on it. These are things that happened to me and my family.

First, I have two boys. One of them is now in grade eight. When he was in kindergarten they used what they called "The Sight and See Method" of teaching reading. He was very quiet in class. He didn't say a word. The school called us in and told us, "Keep your hands off. Everything will be fine." They gave a basic standard test -- it was either kindergarten or grade one -- and he scored near the bottom, below 30 percentile. My wife physically worked with him for one year on phonics, strictly the old phonics book. And he went from, without exaggeration, below 30 percentile to over 90/99 percentile as a winner of a constitutional contest on writing.

He was fortunate that he had my wife, but I'll tell you what else he was fortunate about. That he had that -- you know, you were using those terms back here, I'm walking in and out because I was so angry as I was listening to some of the statements -- that alarm bell. If that alarm didn't ring, he would have been going right along the path.

I don't think you're even getting close to the point where you're preparing our students to compete in the world against Japan and Russia. I don't even think you're coming close. Let me be even more specific.

I was the pilot teacher in 1962. They had one on the east coast and one on the west coast. I was in a junior high school when Sputnik went up. Do you remember Sputnik? And suddenly they found that our students weren't being prepared for engineering. 1962 is when the Sputnik went up, '62 is when we started the program. Sputnik went up. Everybody started hemming and hawing we didn't prepare the students. Stanford University, I believe it was, started a program to try to prepare our students to compete, prepare engineers and scientists. That's when you started with the properties -- the commutative property, associative property, the distributive property -- the "new math." Nobody bothered to ask the teachers, though, what was going on? We had to prepare -- me, and one other teacher on the west coast who I never met -- submitted reports. I don't think they were ever read.

I have a strong feeling, I hope I'm wrong, that at this public meeting that some of you already made up your mind. Groups are already forming, associations. You know. They're going to lobby against this test. They're going to lobby against this test. This group for, this group against.

I heard Dr. Bloom speak, whom I didn't know until I heard him speak recently. I'm glad they're starting a national test. He mentioned Congress was going to in 1992 introduce a test. It's about time. In fact, it's long overdue.

Some of the questions I'd like to put to you, you can't answer. Where are you going to get the teachers? Are the teachers literate? You're assuming that the person in front of your child is literate. And you and I both know that we can go places where the teachers, it's true they can read and they can write, but by golly I wouldn't want them teaching my son. You are competing in an area where Japan gets the top students to teach.

If you want to give out high school diplomas, why not just hand them out at birth. I don't want any boy or girl to fail. I really don't. Honestly. But if you want the paper to mean anything at all, anything at all, you better start sitting down with tough, fair, comprehensive tests. And I'm not talking about basic.

You mentioned the Regents. I heard the word Regents. I assumed you were talking about the New York State Regents. It's long overdue here, long overdue. You have boys and girls going through the system, getting perhaps A, B, C, depending on if they're nice to the teacher they may have got an A or a B. If their teacher is a, whatever, the teacher might give him an F, and the student might know the work. There's a lot of subjectivity going into it.

So let's face the comments put out by the NEA. I think the teachers are important. I really do. But they're one little aspect. I think they're very important if you have a good teacher. They're really significant if you have a terrific teacher.

We saw a test being done, where an early identification test was given to students in kindergarten. And then on a blind study -- and it was done in the school, no fancy doctors here, doctors that. It was practical teachers. They had the kindergarten teacher, who I think had 40 years experience -- it was her last year -- she rated the students. It was 100%. It was incredible. If I wasn't involved or didn't see it, I wouldn't believe it. It was 100% correlation.

I'm trying to get a point across to you. I know it's late. I know you're tired. You want to go home. Am I right?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: No.

MR. SEEWALD: Let's face it. I get excited about it because I see kids going through the system. I see some of them graduating. We know some of them graduate college.

ASSEMBLYMAN PASCRELL: And become teachers.

MR. SEEWALD: And become teachers, and shouldn't have graduated high school. Let's be fair. If you want an education to mean something, if you want to prepare those kids, somebody has to bite the bullet and say, "This is where it starts."

People said, "What happens when they come from West Virginia to New Jersey?" I'll tell you what happens. Along the way, when you give those CBTS, parents know all along whether their children are reading or not. Those tests are standardized. If a boy or girl comes from West Virginia, and they are in the ninth or tenth grade, and they can't compete successfully in the HSPT, it shouldn't come as a surprise. That's been happening all along.

All I'm trying to get across to you is a frustration that people like I have, people like myself, who aren't coming here.

I think you have to address certain things, and I think you need certain answers. I'm going to give you what I think are certain answers. They are not good answers, but they are the best of a rotten choice.

Teacher morale has to be improved. It stinks. This town that you're in now, Old Bridge, I did run for the school board, and lost. But I went from door to door asking people to vote for the budget. (inaudible comment from unidentified member of audience) Yes that's right. I was honest. I went door to door asking people to vote for the budget, and the stories I heard, I would go home at night almost in disaster.

The budget here has been defeated -- correct me if I'm wrong -- 19 years in a row, or close to that; 19 years in a row in this town. I wish some of you would travel with me, walk from door to door, to areas where the people didn't know us, and they opened up and talked about education.

Let me give you another example where you have no standardization. You're in a high school now, Cedar Ridge. Do you realize you're in the only high school in the State of New Jersey that's a Class One school -- a certain population -- with no track, no field, no athletic field? Had you had some form of standardization-- Do you ever speak to the students from Cedar Ridge or the parents who went through here? Some of them were fine athletes, and no field of their own. And my children don't go to this school. I did. I didn't realize until I went from door to door.

The gentleman that's on your Committee that said he never gave tests, I spoke to him outside. We remarked back and forth. I can see he's a very dynamic person. And to be quite honest, if my sons went to school I'd wish they had a teacher like him. He was teaching English. The only teacher that I heard never gave tests until he did, was Robert Frost, who also happened to have taught English one year in college. He started off the year by saying, "Look, some of you are concerned about grades," -- it was an honors programs by the way, in poetry -- he said, "No grades. You make up your own grade at the end of the year." That's not practical in the high school situation or the junior high school or the elementary school.

Proper funding: Let's face it. This is going to cost money, right? Where is it going to come from? You have a town like Old Bridge. The budget was defeated every year. I've lived here since 1969. I watched the budget go down in defeat every year. Some of the answers are given by your own colleagues. The property tax paid by older people-- You read them in the paper. These people were telling me, meeting them

for the first time, I introduced myself -- "Monte, I'm voting against the budget, I'm voting against you, because" -- I'm paraphrasing it -- "I can't afford the taxes." Honestly I felt really sick, because here I am a teacher, fighting for the budget -- and I think everyone would agree who knew me that no one was more pro budget than I -- listening to the other side, and I really empathized with them.

I believe the Assemblyman from New Brunswick -- Lynch?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Senator Lynch?

MR. SEEWALD: Senator Lynch?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Right.

MR. SEEWALD: I beg your pardon. Senator Lynch, he mentioned reducing the property tax by increasing the income tax. Nobody wants a tax, nobody. But if you want the areas to get more equal distribution of the money, and less hurt, that's the only honest way you can go through. I know the Republicans are against it. You're nodding your head. It's the only way you're going to get through.

Last thing. I see the administrators are certainly against this program. I'll tell you why -- and they're right -- more paperwork, more headaches. Every time you pass bills, do you ever go down to the people that have to administer them? I mean, you heard the superintendent this speak to you, and the superintendent that, doctor this, and doctor that. Do you ever go down to the gut level, to the high school principal, to his office, one on one; or speak to the teacher in his classroom, who stuck it out in the classroom and had a chance to leave? Get some feedback. This is my chance to get it off -- even at 5:13.

I talk to you, and I'm going to make my closing remarks by simply saying: Gentlemen, you didn't even get close to the mark. I don't know what that comprehensive test is going to consist of, but you and I both know that you're going to water it down; that when kids leave this system, they're not

going to be prepared for the work world, they're not going to be able to compete with their colleagues from Japan.

Statistics were thrown around to you. Did anybody bother to say that Japan, with a fraction of our population, produces what is it, 40% to 60% more engineers than we do? Ever hear that figure? If you gave that HSPT test -- try it as a joke-- If you gave that HSPT test or an equivalent in another language, to the students in Japan or Russia, you could give it on a seventh or eighth grade level and they'd pass. I'm not telling you any secrets. Everyone of you knows that I'm right. You're not going to say it, I don't think, because of pressure from the groups. I don't think you're going to.

The time to catch the children? Forget the warning bell, the eighth grade warning bell. You know when it is? The time to identify children is as early as possible, because their work skills are developed at a young age. By the time a math teacher sees them in high school, folks, the game is over. Their work skills have been developed.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: That's my bill.

MR. SEEWALD: I hope you pass this bill. I hope you haven't even touched the surface of it because you have a long way to go. And what frightens me is that, more than anything else, I really don't think when it's all said and done-- First of all you started this meeting at 1:30, and I know you have time limits. I'm grateful you stayed. How many teachers are going to come here unless they belong to some organization? How many teachers are going to get in a car and come down here to speak to you? You'll hear from the superintendent who has a prepared statement.

So I'm saying to you, first of all, thank you to the Republicans, and to the Chairman who-- I don't even know if you're a Democrat or a Republican, by the way.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: I don't know myself sometimes.
(laughter)

MR. SEEWALD: I assume you're a Democrat.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: You assume wrong. No, I'm a Chairman of-- I'm a former school principal and teacher for 33 years, Monte.

MR. SEEWALD: Tell me, what I said to you, does it make sense?

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Every bit of it. I'm sitting here nodding when you said early-- Monte, I don't think anybody here-- Bill was a teacher here. We've all been associated. You're saying everything that's right on target, Monte. Our problem is, we have one bill in front of us now.

MR. SEEWALD: Can I ask you--

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Yes?

MR. SEEWALD: Again, I don't belong to either political party. First of all, thank you for introducing the bill. It's long overdue. I think it took courage.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Thank you for your comments.

MR. SEEWALD: On behalf of children who aren't here, and parents who don't take the time and can't take the time to be here, thank you very much.

Somebody has to take the courage and stand up and say, "Look, it's about time we gave some meaning to education." If you want kids to sit in a classroom, and you want to hand them a diploma because they breathe, then do it. But if you want to have the kids have some meaning to the diploma, then by golly stand up and say, "Look, these are things you should have learned. These are things you are responsible for. And we're going to start you out at an early age." There are alarm bells all along the way. What alarm bells? I picked up the alarm bell on my son when he was in kindergarten, thanks to a standardized test.

Some other things. You're all teachers. How come none of you made a comment when they talk about the SAT just random guessing? Do you know what happens when you random

guess? You score rotten. You lose points. In fact, the test is designed -- and I'm not an SAT person, but I do know as a parent -- that test is designed so that if you score randomly without educated guesses, you lose. Right or wrong.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Right, you do.

MR. SEEWALD: I think that it's time-- Forgive me Mr. Republicans for saying this. I think your Democratic colleague from New Brunswick, and the others of his ilk, have the courage and should be supported when it comes to funding. You're going to need the money. Where are you going to get it from? You're killing the people, especially the old people, with property taxes, in a town like Old Bridge. In Holmdel or Colts Neck that's fine. But in the guts, in Paterson, in Old Bridge, in New Brunswick, etc. etc., you're killing some of the old people who are striving-- Walk around and visit some of them, and I'm sure you do. Ask them why they vote against the school budget? I don't agree with them, but their comments are legitimate.

I'm going to get off because I know you have to go home. But the things I said to you -- and I can go on ad nauseam -- things I've said to you I truly mean. It's been bothering me for a long long time. Thank you for giving me a chance to vent my feelings.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Thanks very much, Monte.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: I might add, it was worth waiting around for, really. I appreciate that. Is there anyone else? (affirmative response from member of audience) Just give your name for the record, that's all.

A R V I N E S A D L E R: Sure, my pleasure. Hi. This works really good. I don't need this. (referring to microphone)

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: No you don't. That's for them.

MR. SADLER: I don't need that. I won't be saying a lot. My name is Arvine Sadler. I teach here. I was an original art teacher here. I was also the original art teacher at Madison Central, that's back in '61. I've never had such an opportunity in my 29 years of teaching and my seven years of college, to sit in on such a fine meeting, with such a fine, educated, interested, group of people. I think that you add a lot of dignity to Cedar Ridge for being here today. And on the part of the staff. I'd like to say thank you for being here.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: Thank you. And I think that's a compliment to our sponsor too. Thank you. A very nice day, a whole day like that.

ASSEMBLYMAN KYRILLOS: Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN PALAIA: And if that is our last bit of testimony, I thank everybody for their patience. And we thank Cedar Ridge.

(HEARING CONCLUDED)

APPENDIX



**New Jersey
Principals and Supervisors Association**

1479 Pennington Road, Trenton, New Jersey 08618
Phone (609) 771-8200

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

APRIL 14, 1988

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, I AM ARTHUR RANGES, PRINCIPAL OF EUCLID ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN HASBROUCK HEIGHTS, AND PRESIDENT ELECT OF THE NJ PRINCIPALS AND SUPERVISORS ASSOCIATION. I APPRECIATE HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT PSA'S VIEWS ON A-2928, WHICH, IF ADOPTED WOULD RAISE THE GRADE LEVEL FOR ADMINISTERING THE HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENCY TEST FROM GRADE 9 TO GRADE 11.

SINCE THERE IS A NEED TO TEST BASIC SKILLS, WE SUPPORT ADMINISTERING THE HSPT IN DECEMBER OF THE 11TH GRADE. BY MOVING THE TEST CLOSER TO GRADUATION, IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO TEST A HIGHER ORDER OF BASIC SKILLS. THIS WILL MAKE IT A TRUE HIGH SCHOOL PROFICIENCY TEST RATHER THAN ONE WHICH TESTS SKILLS DEVELOPED AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL. WE AGREE THAT READMINISTERING THE TEST THREE TIMES AFTER DECEMBER OF THE 11TH GRADE WILL PROVIDE STUDENTS A FAIR OPPORTUNITY TO PASS THE TEST. WE REQUEST THAT SERIOUS CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO HAVING ONE OF THESE DURING THE MONTH OF AUGUST, AFTER SUMMER SCHOOL. THIS WOULD PROVIDE STUDENTS WHO HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED TO INTENSIVE REMEDIAL PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS IN SUMMER SCHOOL WITH THE BEST OPPORTUNITY TO PASS

THE TEST WHILE THE INFORMATION IS FRESH IN THEIR MINDS. WE SUPPORT THE NEED TO CONTINUE THE STRONG EFFORTS BEING MADE TODAY IN OUR SCHOOLS AT REMEDIATION TO ENSURE THAT STUDENTS WHO FAIL TO MEET THE STANDARD OF THE 11TH GRADE HSPT WILL ULTIMATELY LEARN THOSE SKILLS AND GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL.

WE ALSO SUPPORT THE CONCEPT OF AN 8TH GRADE "EARLY WARNING" TEST TO ASSESS STUDENTS' SKILLS PRIOR TO ENTERING HIGH SCHOOL. WE BELIEVE SUCH A TEST WILL HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT IN SEVERAL WAYS:

1. IT WILL FURTHER IMPROVE ARTICULATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE AND SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN THE BASIC SKILLS AREAS.
2. IN THOSE DISTRICTS WITH REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOLS, IT WILL FURTHER IMPROVE THE COORDINATION WITH THE ELEMENTARY DISTRICTS AND THE REGIONAL SCHOOLS.
3. VOCATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS WILL BENEFIT SINCE FAILURES AT THE 9TH GRADE OFTEN PRECLUDE STUDENTS FROM PURSUING VOCATIONAL TRAINING. THE EARLY WARNING TEST AT THE 8TH GRADE WOULD NOT BE A PASS/FAIL, BUT RATHER A TOOL TO DETERMINE STUDENTS' NEEDS AS THEY APPROACH THE 11TH GRADE HSPT.

WE DO, HOWEVER, HAVE SEVERAL CONCERNS ABOUT TESTING IN NEW JERSEY. IT IS TIME TO STOP TO CONSIDER WHERE WE ARE GOING WITH TESTING IN OUR STATE. WE SHOULD BE ASKING WHAT ARE THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF TESTS, BOTH THOSE ADMINISTERED BY THE STATE AND THOSE STANDARDIZED TESTS USED BY SCHOOL DISTRICTS. THERE ARE MANY CONCERNS BEING RAISED BY PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ABOUT THE WISDOM OF TEACHING TO THE TEST, LETTING THE TEST BECOME THE BASIS OF THE CURRICULUM, AND THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF TESTING ON STUDENT AND TEACHER CREATIVITY. WE AGREE WITH THE RECOMMENDATION THAT A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF ALL TESTING IS NEEDED. SINCE THE HSPT IS STATE LAW, IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LEGISLATURE TO CHARGE THE EDUCATION PROFESSION AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO SEARCH FOR IN-DEPTH ANSWERS TO PROBLEMS THAT ARE TOO OFTEN GLOSSED OVER IN OUR RUSH TO IMPROVE SCORES. TIME WILL NOT PERMIT A FULL REVIEW OF THE MANY PROBLEMS AND PROFESSIONAL QUESTIONS INHERENT IN TESTING, HOWEVER, LEADING EDUCATORS AND PROFESSIONALS IN THE FIELD OF TESTING ARE ALL QUESTIONING THE MISUSE AND ABUSE OF TESTING IN OUR SCHOOLS TODAY. WE THEREFORE HAVE ATTACHED A COPY OF THE TIMELY ARTICLE WHICH APPEARED IN THE N.Y. TIMES WHICH DEALS WITH THE TESTING MANIA WHICH NOW EXISTS. SUFFICE IT TO SAY, BETTER SCORES DO NOT NECESSARILY MEAN BETTER SKILLS, OR BETTER EDUCATION.

FINALLY, SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT ARE "AT RISK" NEED MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE AS WELL AS FINANCIAL AID TO HELP THEIR STUDENTS, AND THE HELP MUST BE PROVIDED BEYOND

THE REGULAR SCHOOL DAY. AFTER SCHOOL, SATURDAY, AND SUMMER PROGRAMS MUST BE AVAILABLE IF WE HOPE TO PROVIDE MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO STUDENTS IN THOSE DISTRICTS. SUCH ASSISTANCE WILL HELP THEM PASS THE TEST. WHILE WE CAN NEVER GUARANTEE EQUAL RESULTS, CHILDREN IN SUCH DISTRICTS SHOULD AT LEAST HAVE AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO QUALITY EDUCATION. THEY ARE NOT RECEIVING THIS TODAY. PERHAPS A THRESHHOLD CAN BE ESTABLISHED FOR EACH DISTRICT WHICH, IF NOT REACHED, WILL TRIGGER IMMEDIATE STATE ASSISTANCE TO IMPROVE THE DISTRICT'S PERFORMANCE. OF COURSE, AN INITIAL STEP WOULD BE TO GUARANTEE FULL FUNDING TO THESE DISTRICTS SO THAT A STABLE, PREDICTABLE BASE OF FUNDING COULD PROVIDE CONSISTENCY TO THE EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE LEARNING SITUATION.

IN SHORT, WHAT WE ARE SUGGESTING IS -- RAISE THE STANDARDS, BUT ALSO RAISE THE COMMITMENT. THERE IS WITHOUT QUESTION A LINKAGE BETWEEN THE TWO. UNTIL WE STOP TALKING AND START PROVIDING MEANINGFUL HELP FOR THOSE CHILDREN, NOTHING WILL REALLY IMPROVE IN THE SCHOOLS -- TEST SCORES MAY IMPROVE SOMEWHAT BUT THE NUMBERS WILL HAVE LITTLE MEANING OR LASTING EFFECT ON CHILDREN. WE URGE YOU TO FULLY COMMIT THE STATE'S RESOURCES TO RAISE THE BASIC STANDARDS OF EDUCATION IN ALL OUR SCHOOLS. WITHOUT SUCH A COMMITMENT, ANOTHER TEST DOESN'T AMOUNT TO VERY MUCH FOR THE STUDENTS WHO FAIL, WHO DROP OUT, OR WHO ARE SIMPLY UNACCOUNTED FOR IN THE STATISTICS.

SUBMITTED BY: ARTHUR RANGES, PRESIDENT ELECT OF THE NJPSA

Testimony of Jamieson McKenzie
before the Assembly Education Committee
April 14, 1988

Honorable Members of the Education Committee . . .

As a superintendent and a teacher, I come before you this afternoon to express my concern about the new test proposed for eleventh grade.

As the author of a new book entitled **MAKING CHANGE IN EDUCATION: PREPARING YOUR SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE**, I am concerned that we are setting our standards too low, settling for an Eisenhower curriculum when we should be developing a new curriculum for students aimed at preparing them for a new century.

I applaud the commitment to high standards.

I applaud the commitment to accountability.

I applaud the stress upon reasoning.

But I am deeply concerned about the HSPT test and the effect it is having upon education in New Jersey.

I am deeply concerned that a new test will simply be, as Assistant Commissioner Bloom has called it, "a harder version of the HSPT."

We approach a new century. In fact, a new millenium. I would expect that New Jersey, being the technology and invention state that it is, would lift its educational aspirations beyond the horizon.

Industry has spoken. A global community and world economy will tolerate no sluggards. We need future citizens who are imaginative, inventive, collaborative and resourceful.

1. My first concern is the narrowness of a curriculum driven by basic skills tests and the lack of attention to 21st Century skills. Why do we measure only reading, math and certain kinds of writing? The next century will require many

skills presently taught in very few schools. Where is our long range planning? Where is our curriculum of the future? I attach an article identifying at least ten of these skills . . . a tool-kit of skills for the next century. It includes skills such as questioning, cooperating, inventing, forecasting, voting/deciding, connecting/puzzling, metaphorizing, modeling/simulation, empathizing, and dreaming. The testing tail wags the program dog. If we don't measure these skills, they may go untaught. If they go untaught, our students will greet the new century unskilled.

2. My second concern is the cultural illiteracy that may result from an over-emphasis of skills over content. In order to raise test scores, ditto sheets, workbook pages, multiple choice and fill-in-the-blanks exercises proliferate. In countless elementary classrooms, students digest 6-10 ditto sheets each day. Hands-on science, experiential learning, investigation and exploration die out in many places at the very time when we need to be developing inventors to lead our country through the challenges of the next century. Cultural illiteracy grows as skills count more than content. Science, social studies, invention and the arts flag as the state fails to test those areas. Asked why there are few student questions in classrooms, many teachers blame the emphasis upon tests. We have a state educational policy so narrow in focus that it seems better suited to the 1950s than the Information Age. At the very time New Jersey seeks to be a leader in technology and the Governor seeks learning for the next century, we emphasize an Eisenhower curriculum. Have we forgotten Sputnik? Do we ignore history?

3. My third concern is the unresolved urban-suburban equity issues arising out of tougher standards applied without creation of a successful model for school improvement in urban districts. Why would the state lift the testing high jump bar to loftier levels without first addressing the underlying causes of educational failures? Why is the urban dropout rate above 40 per cent in many places? Why was the state's Urban Initiative, a program heralded as a solution to urban problems, a failure by the Department's own admission? Urban areas with low HSPT scores feel more impact than suburban

districts as city kids spend less time on citizenship and leadership, less time on literature and the arts, and more time on basic skills. As social policy, it is reminiscent of the old debate between George Washington Carver and W.E.B. DuBois, as Carver argued that blacks should get a trade and not worry about the fancier aspects of education. City kids should read real literature, not just flaccid paragraphs on ditto sheets. They should see substantial gifted programs instead of just remedial and compensatory education programs. Why is there no HSPT for citizenship? Invention? The arts? How can we justify raising standards without addressing funding inequities that allow advantaged suburban districts to spend twice as much per student as disadvantaged urban districts? To raise performance of disadvantaged students, we must develop a major staff training agenda which would cost millions in a single city such as Camden alone. We must also change class sizes, build libraries for elementary schools, and radically improve learning and working conditions. Then we can lift the high jump bar with a sense of justice.

4. My fourth concern is the "teaching to the test phenomenon," which gives a distorted and exaggerated picture of student progress. One way New Jersey tries to raise test scores is to encourage districts to teach to the test. Districts are encouraged to use old items from the HSPT to diagnose and train future test takers. These test items vary little from year to year except in details. Format and structure is very similar. Students can memorize the patterns. Districts are also encouraged to "align" curricula to the HSPT test. That means teaching math, reading and writing with those tests very much in mind.

Such strategies may exaggerate and inflate student success. What ever happened to test security? Should teachers or students practice old items in advance of the test? What do the scores really mean? Do they prove "transfer" of learning to new situations, which is, after all, the real goal of instruction? Isn't teaching to the test the same as "stacking the deck?" Isn't teaching to a narrow sample like limiting students to a fast food diet?

Using such strategies, HSPT scores have risen in many districts. Yet, as Robert Braun points out in his **Star Ledger** April 3 column, independent measures with test security such as

the SAT test and the New Jersey test of entering college freshmen show little improvement. If students were actually learning something more than the HSPT, wouldn't these other tests show more improvement?

5. My fifth and final concern is the imposition of curriculum by the state upon localities. These tests interfere with the curriculum development of locally elected Boards of Education as well as local educators seeking to build courses of study around the needs of local students. Such tests dictate a state curriculum with learning homogenized and standardized across all schools. What happened to our longstanding belief that Big Government leads to bad policy?

New Jersey should heed lessons learned by the steel and auto industries who lost their way in the 1970s. Big cumbersome organizations distant from customers sometimes fail to adjust to a changing world and lose market share and profits as they drown in red tape. Those who force quick profits often fail in the long haul.

School improvement like corporate improvement is best fueled by the inspirations of school champions and local districts close to the clients (families and students) operating in an entrepreneurial and innovative fashion guided by sound educational philosophy. The challenge of state leadership is the creation of a climate and a system which inspires, supports and rewards the development of great programs, reserving heavy supervision and compliance activities to those who have demonstrated bad faith.

As legislators you have the opportunity to determine whether or not New Jersey will lift its sights beyond the horizon and prepare students for citizenship in the next century. The goals of educators throughout this state will be shaped to a significant degree by the way you shape testing programs. I ask that you move to address problems of inequity and educational failure before you lift the testing high jump bar. Testing identifies problems. It is the beginning of the solution process, but it is not a solution in itself. Let's work together to improve the educational high jumping skills of all of our students as we lift the standards.

REVISING THE EDUCATIONAL AGENDA: BASIC SKILLS FOR 2010

by Jamieson A. McKenzie, ED D

The time has come for Boards of Education, local and state, to meet the future, shifting the educational agenda to address the challenges of a new world.

If uncertainty and change are the main certainties in an uncertain future, the ability to create new tools for thinking becomes the pre-eminent skill of the future and the priority of education for the next century.

Like automobile companies of the 1970s, we cling to old ways, old goals, and old products, educating students as if they were graduating in the 1950's instead of the next century. We let tests of basic skills "drive" our curriculum while we should also be investing in the development of new programs to teach skills we have long neglected or never attempted, skills our society will need to remain a vital member of the global community.

How should we shift the educational agenda to ready the Class of 2000 for the world that lies waiting around the corner?

As we move forward into the information Age, as we round the corner from the twentieth to the twenty-first century, and as we recognize that we are global citizens competing in an increasingly difficult world economy, the goals of education must shift to embrace far more challenging tasks than those addressed in industrial and traditional societies.

We hear urgent requests from captains of industry that we equip students with more than the three Rs - Reading, 'Riting and 'Rithmetic. A recent national report issued by business leaders called for far more attention to the fourth R - Reasoning. Studies such as **In Search of Excellence** (Peters & Waterman, 1983), **Workforce 2000** (Johnston, 1987), **Schools of the Future** (Cetron, 1983), **Industrial Renaissance** (Abernathy, et. al., 1983) and **Renewing American Industry** (Lawrence & Dyer, 1983) strike a common theme . . . we will need citizens with imaginative problem solving and reasoning skills to maintain a healthy and competitive America.

Schools have traditionally emphasized memory and mastery of information rather than thinking. Students spent their years learning the truths that would supposedly serve them well as adults. They filled their minds with countless facts, figures and generalizations, instead of filling a "toolbox" with thinking skills.

Students must become tool-makers, tool-shapers and tool-breakers rather than mere tool-users. We need a generation of inventors and leaders -- creative problems-solvers -- who will rock the boat and make waves in order to create order out of chaos and meaning out of nonsense. The presumption is that many of the tools of today will be archaic and outmoded by the time our students reach their 30's. The most important issue will become the ability to fashion new tools to meet new challenges. As adaptation and versatility are prized, the educational agenda will shift to include the following:

1. Questioning

One can never know all of the right answers, especially in a world of rapidly changing information. However, with proper training, one can usually fashion the right questions to get to the answers. Questions are tools of thinking that can be modified and molded to fit shifting situations. Unfortunately, many teachers dominate classroom questioning and students have few opportunities to ask questions or sharpen questioning skills. Student questions are a low priority in most schools. Even when students do research, they often pick topics of questions from a list supplied by the teacher.

Questions are essential tools for problem-solving. Despite the longstanding American tradition of two-step word problems and teaching by algorithm (patterns), most real problems involve far more than two steps and they usually do not fit into neat little rehearsed patterns. Solving the unfamiliar and surprising problem demands independence and questioning. It's a bit like untangling a fishing line that has become snarled in a hopeless knot. You have to pull here first, then there. Through trial and error, hunch and intuition, you begin to make sense of the mess. Problem-solving demands a similar spirit of inquiry.

Students must learn that a question leads to a question, that there are families of questions and that questions nest within each other. Questions will be the scalpels, the saws, the drills and the meter-sticks of the future citizen.

. Cooperating

Corporate leaders complain that college graduates know little about group problem-solving. Raised in competitive school systems, these graduates have learned how to borrow the good ideas of others and how to outshine the next person; but they know little about synergism and sharing. When they enter the corporate laboratory and find themselves assigned to a team of research scientists charged with the invention of a new product, they often lack the specific skills or attitudes underlying consultation, eggbacking and support that have proven critically important in the world of high technology.

Schools pay "lip-service" to group work, but few schools have carefully articulated developmental approach to cooperation and collaboration. While science classes may require team experiments, there is rarely any explicit skills continuum. There is little concern for how such skills should differ from one grade or age to the next. Just as there are specific curriculum objectives in other areas, these skills should be listed and identified as an essential part of a student's education.

3. Inventing

Invention makes it possible to alter, modify, elaborate and shift the things and the systems around us to "make things better." Strong invention skills permit successful adaptation to a changing world.

Invention can be taught. On Bloom's *Taxonomy*, it is labeled "synthesis." It is not simply magic or talent. It is a frame of mind, a perspective and a set of skills. One learns to rearrange and transform the elements of something into a new version. The crystal tube of early computer days becomes a micro chip. The desk top calculator becomes a credit card calculator.

Despite the myth that inventors are a tiny group of creative individuals who slave away in little workshops, nearly everybody needs to be an inventor to thrive in a changing world. Driving to work through megalopolis demands inventiveness as traffic jams and construction projects confront us with a daily maze. Teaching a group of adolescents demands inventiveness as each group walks into class with a bundle of surprises.

Fortunately, DeBono, Osborne, and many others have demonstrated that people can be taught to "get out of the box," to think laterally and to scamper. They can be raised as risk-takers and rule-benders who are more interested in what is possible than what is probable. Instead of a steady diet of two-step word problems, they can feast upon real problems that require inventive solutions.

4. Forecasting

Straight-line projections of the future can be dangerous

"The volcano has never erupted before!"

Times of rapid change will make prediction all the more precarious; yet, the value of forecasting will be enhanced by higher stakes. As the basic structures of life shift, the ability to "see what's coming" becomes a basic survival skill. Only if you have some sense of what's coming will you know what kinds of tools you will need. Being prepared requires some attention to looking around "time's" corners. Just as invention of gunpowder, muskets and cannons gave footsoldiers in the Middle Ages good reason to lay down their shields and practice new strategies --

uch as hiding behind trees and walls -- the changes sweeping in with the Information Age should give citizens pause to think about rituals and rites that have served them well in the past.

"How much longer should we teach students to do research with little white cards in wooden boxes?"

Forecasting is rarely part of the school experience, but it deserves attention as we enter this new age. Heavy rational focus upon cause-and-effect relationships should be balanced by exploration, hunches, intuition and other approaches to prediction. Students can begin with the weather, but ultimately they should look 20 years ahead at their own society and picture what is coming. Wondering about the future can help spur the inventive impulse to adapt to what is coming.

. Voting/Deciding

How well have we prepared our citizens? Our national report card shows a resounding F. Less than half of those eligible to vote for President are bothering to do so. Less than a third bother to vote for Congress. In fact, the USA has one of the lowest voter participation rates of any democracy.

So what? History reminds us that Hitler and fascism rode to power in Germany on the votes of the disenchanting and alienated. A margin of victory was created by one of the largest voter registration drives in history . . . a human wave of angry people who voted with their emotions rather than their heads . . . a mob who delighted in propaganda, loved demagoguery, burned books, turned in neighbors and applauded the Holocaust.

While we are experiencing a democratic crisis, the schools have done little to stem the tide. Far too few classrooms stress the thinking process supporting voting and deciding - the level labeled "evaluation" at the top of Bloom's *Taxonomy*. In addition to teaching students how to gather data, compare and contrast, set criteria and make a reasoned choice, we must engender democratic values such as efficacy - the belief that political participation can make a difference.

1984 and *Brave New World* both described undemocratic societies divided into elites and disadvantaged. If we cherish our democratic traditions, schools need to build the foundations of a democratic society by stressing the skills and attitudes which support meaningful participation.

6. Connecting/Puzzling

A changing world is likely to face us with chaos and fragmentation. The frameworks, customs and traditions that have served for generations bend, shake and sometimes collapse under the pressures of change. The shift in family structures in the past twenty years is but one example. At the same time, an increasingly technological society threatens us with isolation as we pick up a telephone and hear a computer voice selling us insurance or we call our friends and hear a taped voice asking us to leave a message.

In order to thrive, students must learn how to make meaning out of chaos, drawing connections between seemingly disconnected ideas and events. Too often in schools we present students with neat little packages explaining such chaotic events as the beginning of the Civil War in a few concise paragraphs. First we teach a law of science and then we let students "discover" the law later in a canned laboratory "experiment." We bar students from the task of making meaning by studying fragments and putting puzzles together for themselves. Since we usually show them the whole picture before they start working on the puzzle, they rarely experience puzzling it out. Puzzle aficionados would consider that cheating, and so must we.

Because the future will be filled with puzzles, students must also learn how to maintain human connections in an increasingly alienating society. Like jig-saw puzzles, communities are difficult to hold or put together, yet the skills of community building are central to the survival of civilization. How many months can a friendship subsist on tape-recorded messages? How many months can a family subsist on silent microwave meals consumed in separate rooms before separate television screens?

Metaphorizing

Although metaphorical thinking is an especially potent strategy to convert strange and unfamiliar phenomena into cognizable and comprehensible entities, it is rarely taught that way in schools. Metaphors allow us to compare and explore complex ideas using familiar objects and experiences which touch our lives in comforting ways. Just as exploration of the jig-saw puzzle in the previous section allowed us to define a new skill for the future, other metaphors can help us invent new ways of thinking and understanding.

Sentence completions are a non-threatening introduction to this kind of thinking. "Problem-solving is like . . . jumping off a very high railroad bridge into a cold river or spending the whole day at the old fishing hole waiting for a nibble. Learning how to reach for thinking is like . . . learning how to scuba dive. Banking with a modem is like . . . A two career marriage is like . . . learning with a computer as teacher is like . . . "

While metaphors and similes help us to compare and contrast, they also show us the emotional side of life, taking us past left-brained, analytical thought to consider fears, anxieties, dreams, inspirations and vision. They provide us with one more potent navigational instrument to guide our exploration of the future. Central to agrarian societies of the past, metaphors had been pushed aside by technological society, but they are experiencing a renaissance as leaders such as John Sculley of Apple discover their power to enhance understanding and humanize organizations.

Modeling/Simulation

If we could only teach our children not to touch the stove! Ideally we have the technology to test hypotheses and theories without paying the price of burned fingers. "What would happen if

The computer allows us to simulate experience so that we see the consequences of various decisions without actually suffering them. A manufacturer can test plant locations to see cost and profit implications without laying a single brick. A biologist can test a new vaccine without infecting a single insect. A social planner can predict the number of homeless given a particular welfare rent ceiling. An artist or composer can generate thousands of variations on a theme before committing to paper.

Exploring an uncertain future can be made less dangerous by equipping citizens with these simulation skills that allow us to "look before we leap."

9. Empathizing

Putting yourself in the other person's shoes.

How could that be a basic skill of the future? Don't ask for whom the bell tolls. No person is an island!

Closely related to connecting and puzzling, empathy combines the skill of understanding the vantage point of others with the value of caring about them. Empathy allows bridges to be built. It helps people pursue "win-win" strategies. It identifies the "common ground." It resolves conflict. It brings people closer together. Without empathy, it is difficult to build local communities, not to mention global communities. If anyone doubted that we live in a global community, the recent stock market crash dramatized how inextricably we are webbed together. A nuclear global community and a world drowning in its own garbage requires empathy for survival.

10. Dreaming/Imagining

All of the skills listed above come to naught if they are not directed by the imagination and fed by the dreams of our people. As Langston Hughes once wrote, "A life without dreams is a barren field crusted with snow." Dreaming calls upon our finest instincts and lifts our eyes from the ground to the horizon. Without dreams, the future will just happen to us. It will arrive with the impact of a speeding garbage truck. Dreams set us free to invent a decent future, cleaning up the oceans and the skies if we chose; ending homelessness and joblessness if we chose; creating cities that throb with energy and health and homes that are warm harbors . . . if we chose.

Schools can encourage dreaming by teaching of the many dreamers who have dared to cross oceans, challenge bigotry and build a better world. We can make dreaming of a better future a major school activity. "Imagine the world in 2010. What do you want the world to be like? What are your dreams for yourself? The world?" We can fuel our students' dreams by making the arts central to schooling as literature, music, dance, drama and the graphic arts connect us with the dreams and the follies of those

ho have gone before us. The arts help us pass the torch from
ie generation to the next.

Conclusion

New technologies, alien diseases, fragile ecologies, shifting
values, endangered species and fractured social structures present
us with a kaleidoscope of challenges. Our students deserve the
chance to greet the future with power to invent the good.
Because the next century will demand untold new wisdom, new
skill and new knowledge, necessity will give birth to invention.

The most valuable and powerful tool we can hand a student
is the ability to create new tools. While schools have traditionally
concentrated on the task of transmitting basic culture and the tools
that have served previous generations well, the focus of education
must now shift from transmission to invention. The educational
agenda should maintain basic skills as a foundation for learning,
but it is time we build a cathedral of essential skills upon that
foundation.

Adapted from a chapter in his book, *Making Change in Education:
Preparing Your Schools for the Future*, Jamieson A. McKenzie,
1987, Westbury, N.Y., J. L. Wilkerson Publishing Co.)

