
Committee Meeting

of

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS ABBOTT SUBCOMMITTEE

“Testimony from the education field on the achievement gap”

LOCATION: Pyne Poynt Family Middle School
Camden, New Jersey

DATE: November 1, 2001
10:30 a.m.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator Norman M. Robertson, Co-chair

Senator Ronald L. Rice, Co-Chair

Senator Martha W. Bark

ALSO PRESENT:

Melanie M. Schulz
Executive Director
Joint Committee on the Public Schools



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Testimony
submitted by
Sarah Tantillo
Executive Director
New Jersey Charter Public Schools Association

10x

mc: 1-72

SENATOR NORMAN M. ROBERTSON (Co-chair): Good morning, everybody. We'd like to start -- Let me start by introducing myself. I'm Senator Norm Robertson, I represent the 34th District, which includes portions of Passaic and Essex County, so it's a little bit of a drive for us here. But we had -- this is the third in a series of three hearings, one was in Paterson, one was in Newark, and now this is in Camden. And we will discuss how we will wrap up our work, you know, in the weeks to come.

To my immediate left is Senator Martha Bark, who represents Burlington County, all of her district is in Burlington County. To my far right, your left, is Senator Ron Rice, who represents portions of Newark, Irvington -- well the new district is Newark, Irvington, Belleville, Bloomfield, and he currently represents South Orange, Maplewood as well.

Senator Rice and I are co-chairs of a subcommittee. This is a subcommittee of a joint committee. The joint committee means that there are both Senators and Assembly people involved. This is a subcommittee on the State's response to *Abbott v. Burke*. So, we become involved in questions involving special needs school districts, and the purpose of these hearings is really to take a step back from a lot of the micro questions that are involved with the school construction end of things or the whole school reform end of things, so that we can focus on something a little bit more in a macro way and have an opportunity to ask some questions of folks in the manner in which they are asked of us, frankly. Well, if we're spending this much money, how come, you know, people can't pass a test, if that's the case? What's the story with the test? What's the story on the front lines at the moment? What's the story with resources? What's the story with personnel?

Just to these general questions, which will begin to give us a bit of a feel of the environment in which we are working, because urban education, in my opinion -- the success or failure of urban education is probably the most critical issue facing the State. And I say that because it affects so many other issues, especially in the day of *Abbott v. Burke*, where the State Supreme Court has said you shall spend X amount of money. We're not in the education business, they say, so all we can do is tell you to spend money, and we find, as a matter of law, that anytime any systems are failing that the funding formula is unconstitutional as applied to those children.

So without succeeding, we find ourselves less in a position to be able to give good education all around. So, it's very, very important. I tell people in the suburbs this, that they have every bit as much at stake with the success or failure of urban education as folks in the cities do. And obviously the parents and the children who are directly involved have the greatest stake of all, and that of course is our future, and that's one of the reasons that we are doing this.

So, we are legislators, we are not technicians. We are here to represent people, which means that we are here to ask some general questions in layman form. And I'll tell you one of the interesting things about the system, and by the system I mean the system as a whole, is that there is a certain simple beauty in asking these questions simply and in being unsophisticated, because we are forced to have a soft focus, we are forced to have a broad focus, and try to fit everything into a much larger scheme. And I think in doing that we wind up sheading light on important subjects, and that's the purpose of what we're doing with these hearings.

Let me ask Senator Rice if he has any comments to make prior to our opening. He's suffering from a cold at the moment.

SENATOR RONALD L. RICE (Co-chair): I just wanted to say good morning to everyone and apologize to you beforehand because I'm only good to you for about another 30, 35 minutes. I've got to get back up to Newark, and I didn't realize that the traffic is bad, but the two hearings that we've had, some very interesting information has come out of them. I kind of have a sense where I think we should go into the future, but I want to stay and really hear as much as I can. And I know that everything is going to be transcribed. Is that correct, Senator?

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: And we'll pick up from there. So I'm going to be good today. I'm not going to be drilling you all and asking a whole lot of questions. I want to hear. Thank you, very much.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Bark.

SENATOR BARK: Well, just good morning. It's a pleasure to be here. As some of you may be aware, although Camden is not in my district, I think it is critically important for my region, if you will, and what happens in Camden certainly is very much dependent on having an outstanding school system, because those people, those young people, who attend this school, are a significant part of the future of Camden. So, I'm delighted to be here, and I'm looking forward to your comments.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Thank you.

All right, what I'd like to do is first of all thank the people here at Pyne Poynt Middle School for their hospitality. It seems like a wonderful facility, and we're very happy that you're able to do that. And I know Mr. Edwards is reaching out to the Superintendent's office to find out if they're going to be coming by. So, let me start with -- since we're talking about testing and assessment, Michael Wilson of the Plainfield School District is here. And are you here with Mr. Nash, or are you guys separate?

MICHAEL J. WILSON, Ph.D.: (speaking from audience) We're together.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Well, why don't you come on up then, those of you who are together, and give us the benefit of your insights.

And if you can just identify yourselves by name and affiliation for the record. Even though this is an informal hearing, the whole purpose of it is to encourage a dialogue a bit, but we do need to get the record straight.

DAVID NASH: Thank you, very much. My name is David Nash, I'm the Assistant Director of Government Relations for the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association. I have with me this morning, representatives from both the Plainfield and Cherry Hill school districts. We have Dr. Michael Wilson, Director of Testing for the Plainfield Public Schools. We also have from the Cherry Hill school district, Gail Cohen, who's the Public Information Officer for Cherry Hill, and Keith Edwards, who's an Assistant Principal, who has a special assignment in Cherry Hill focused on the achievement gap issue and is specifically assigned to addressing that issue in the Cherry Hill schools.

I don't know if this is on? (referring to microphone)

There we go.

With your permission, Mr. Chairman, I'll give some brief opening remarks and then quickly turn it over to Dr. Wilson. New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association has spent a great deal of time focusing on the achievement gap issue. Our members, as the grass roots leaders of our schools, are committed to the notion that all students can achieve the highest and most rigorous standards, and that we can and hopefully will take proactive steps as a State to address the achievement gap and to make sure that we are resolving the disparities that we do have. We know that those disparities exist not only in New Jersey but across the nation. We know that this is not a new phenomenon, this is something that the entire nation has struggled with for many years. But just because of that fact, that's no reason not to specifically address what New Jersey can do to solve that problem.

My comments are focused on what I think are the four issues that we believe the Legislature should look at in trying to address the achievement gap. Our first, what do we know about the magnitude of and reasons for the achievement gaps that currently exist in New Jersey? What additional data is needed on student outcomes in order to fully understand the gaps, the magnitude of those gaps, and the reasons for that? What measures should we be looking at, beyond student outcomes, to inform State and local decision makers in developing their strategies to address the achievement gaps? And finally, in addition to this reform agenda or for research that we can lay out, what are the proven research based strategies and policies that should be implemented immediately to help to alleviate the achievement gaps that we have identified?

Just to site a few, what we think are answers to each of those questions. First, what do we know? We know, based on New Jersey data that was released last February, that the same trends we see across the nation we're also seeing in New Jersey, as far as disparities and achievements based on race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status. We know that female students outperform male students on language arts literacy consistently, across income levels, while male students, in general, outperform female students in the areas of math and science. We know that there is a clear and direct correlation between socioeconomic status and student achievement. And that within any given district factor grouping, there are also consistent gaps in student achievement by race and ethnicity. So, the gaps aren't entirely explained by income level, the gaps also exist within the same income level for different racial and ethnic groups.

We know that Asian students consistently perform at the highest levels on all exams, followed by white students, Latino students, and black students. And finally, we know that there is a consistent gap before students enter school. Even at the pre school level, there's a gap in readiness to learn. There is very powerful data that was presented by Rutgers University Center for Early Education that lays out the achievement gaps and the readiness to learn gaps that our students face before they even enter school.

We think there is a need, despite everything we do know, for additional data in New Jersey. New Jersey does not participate in the National Assessment for Educational Progress that could provide very powerful, national information on how our students are performing compared to the rest of the nation. There's good reasons for that given the amount of testing that's already

occurring in New Jersey. There is not a very strong incentive for districts to take on an added burden of additional testing, and we need to find some ways to relieve that burden if we want New Jersey districts to participate in the --

The current testing program that we have does not provide clear diagnostic information to help educators help students. It doesn't do a great deal of good for a State to provide test score results that basically say a student isn't proficient in math. We need to know more than that if we're going to help that student. Is the problem in multiplication, division? Is it in more sophisticated mathematical equations? We don't have that detailed information that we need on test score results.

We don't have test score results that address student mobility. We know that a district that has a student in that district for one day or one week is going to have a much more difficult time raising achievement levels than one that has had a student for a number of years. We should be tracking that kind of information.

There are opportunities to learn standards that New Jersey should be looking at. We should be going beyond student outcomes, looking at issues such as student access to appropriate school facilities so that we have an environment conducive to learning. Clearly, you've done your part on that issue as a Legislature in appropriating billions of dollars in State funding. Unfortunately, there have been some major bureaucratic delays in turning that funding into reality for school districts, and we think that we need to find ways to streamline that process.

We need information about student access to teachers that have degrees in the areas that they're teaching, student access to high quality pre-

school, student access to small class sizes with more individualized instruction, teacher and teacher candidate access to high quality professional development, and teacher preparation programs in higher education, so that when teachers are coming into the profession they're prepared.

We know despite all of these issues that there are proven strategies that we can take immediately to begin to improve New Jersey's situation. Certainly, expanding access to preschool is a major issue. We should be looking at, in the *Abbott* districts, improving our implementation and going beyond the *Abbott* districts and even beyond their early childhood program aid districts to provide high quality preschool. Expanding access to rigorous academic courses and eliminating the tracking of students into lower level courses is a critical issue. Implementing an individualized student identification system so that we can track student mobility and track how well students are doing who've been in the district for some period of time.

Looking at the issue of reducing class sizes in the early grades, particularly for schools with large concentrations of low income and minority students --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: I'm sorry, would you say that again.

MR. NASH: Looking at the funding to reduce class sizes, particularly in the early grades, there's very powerful data from a Tennessee study and other studies that shows the correlation between small class sizes and high achievement.

Reforming our State Assessment Program, New Jersey Principals and Supervisors is part of a statewide coalition to reform the testing program in New Jersey so that we have more meaningful and timely information for all

students. That coalition includes all of the major education groups. We've attached it to our testimony. It calls for a movement towards more performance-based authentic assessment to give educators that meaningful information that we need. And finally, providing incentives so that districts do participate in NAEP and we can have a fuller picture of how we are performing.

That's a very broad agenda that our association believes we should be pursuing as a State, but I know you want hear specific information from the districts that have been struggling with these issues on a day-to-day basis, and for that I'll be happy to answer any questions or turn over to Dr. Michael Wilson.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: What I'd like to do is ask you to stay there and ask Dr. Wilson to give us his input, and then we can ask questions of the two of you.

MR. NASH: Okay.

DR. WILSON: I had just learned of this, my participation in this affair, the day before yesterday, so I haven't prepared a statement or anything.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: That's quite all right.

DR. WILSON: I don't have a complete analysis of what we are talking about here. Essentially, from my point of view, and I've been told to make this very simple, and Senator Robertson, you've told me that this is not going to be -- I can't use very complex terminology here, so --

SENATOR BARK: Okay.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: I realize we're in an elementary school.
(laughing)

DR. WILSON: Okay.

SENATOR BARK: I hope that it's not because of our inability to comprehend, but go ahead. (laughing)

DR. WILSON: No, no. So I'm going to try to make this as, what -- in language as -- by the way I'm a psychometrician so I could talk about statistical terms and that sort of thing, but I won't do that.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: I think my point wasn't so much that, you know, your answers needed to be less sophisticated. I was suggesting that our questions were going to be fairly straightforward.

DR. WILSON: Okay.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: And without getting into nuance, more into overall form.

DR. WILSON: Okay. Basically my -- I have two or three concerns about the achievement gap, as I see it. Initially, in looking at the way that schools deal with achievement, I see -- and reading a lot of research that talks about achievement, I don't see a level of complexity, a level of understanding. For example, we talk about constructing knowledge when we talk about teaching and learning. In other words, students are supposed to be -- instead of, you know, the old notion of filling the student up with knowledge, students have to construct their own knowledge as they learn. So that, you know, you can't just take what the teacher knows and put it into the students. It's a matter of facilitating that student's understanding and comprehension of different processes and different skills and different aspects of knowledge.

In looking at the classrooms that I've had over the past several years, I haven't seen that level of complexity that we need to build within the students in the classrooms. I haven't seen -- for example, the literature talks

about elaborating, talks about problem solving, talks about analyzing, evaluating, synthesizing. All very complicated mental processes. It's these kinds of mental processes that people need -- teachers need to be facilitating in their students.

In looking at curriculum, looking at instruction, and especially looking at assessment, I haven't seen these processes being involved in the way we go about schooling these days.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Why do you think that is?

DR. WILSON: I think that there is a lag between people's conceptualization of -- we call it cognition, of the way people think. And, you know, people in research and universities are developing these ideas and we are beginning to, sort of, understand what the ideas are, but we don't have a really consistent usable sense of how they are incorporated into instruction.

Also we don't have -- for example, we don't have a real good sense of how they're going to be involved in the assessment of instructions. I mean, you know, people -- there's an argument here whether you start with curriculum or you start with assessment. For a long while -- I used to help develop the HSPT with Saul Cooperman, and the fellow I was working with at the time was Rabinowitz -- Stan Rabinowitz, and the notion was that if we develop an assessment, and this time it was the HSPT and the EWT, that assessment would drive the realities of learning in the schools. What I saw happening was that schools managed to -- using the way that they usually looked at things, they managed to sort of get things going to develop students enough to answer the questions on that test.

There were limitations on the test. For example, they were multiple choice questions, they were short open question/answers, they weren't the kind of things we're talking about with Grant Wiggins, where you're looking at more authentic, longer time -- for example, if you really want to know how a student performs in a piece of written work, you've got to see that student's performance across three or four drafts of a particular writing. If you want to know how that student thinks about a particular problem using mathematics and other kinds of processes, then you've got to be able to assess that student across two or three weeks, as he or she is dealing with that particular problem.

The HSPA and the, you know, the ESPA and GEPA, they are -- people think they are too long, but in fact they are very short instruments. They are assessments that provide very limited kinds of understanding of the way people think, of the way students think. And they don't -- they are static instruments as well, they're not dynamic instruments. So that if you want a dynamic assessment of how does a person grow within the context of a problem or within the context of understanding or elaborating on whatever he or she reads, then you've got to -- your assessments have to be much more authentic. They've got to be more -- they've got to take these processes into consideration, which we cannot do with a single time, multiple-choice, open-ended question or response instrument.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Let me ask you a question in that respect.

DR. WILSON: Sure.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Because the obvious answer that comes to mind is that that is what should be happening in the classroom on a daily basis.

DR. WILSON: Right.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: On a weekly basis, on a three week basis, and so forth. If in fact that is done successfully, won't the product show itself even on these limited tests?

DR. WILSON: You mean, to what extent does the long process -- that the more comprehensive complex process overlap with the current short, relatively short --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: No, no, no. I meant the question precisely as I asked it. What I mean to say is, if the job is being done in the classroom in the way that you're suggesting, that there is an ongoing assessment being done by the educational community, by the educator in the classroom working with the student, understanding how the student thinks, helping to have an impact on the manner in which they problem solve and approach problems -- but if that is being done successfully, when the time comes for them to sit down and take these tests, won't that wind up showing itself in the results of the tests?

DR. WILSON: To the extent that the tests overlap with the in classroom process, I mean, that's the whole idea of alignment. To what extent does this test align with the processes, you know, as defined? We're talking about elaborative, higher level, you know, problem solving kinds of processes which may not be possible to assess on a state test. If they don't overlap, in other words, if there's a lack of alignment there, then, you know, they're not

going to have reflected in the assessment instrument that kind of process which can't be built into the assessment.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Well, for instance -- maybe because it's political season this comes to my mind -- there's a lot of polling that's done.

DR. WILSON: Sure.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: And everytime there's a poll they always indicate what the margin of error is, plus or minus 3 percent of whatever it was.

DR. WILSON: Right.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Now even though it can't necessarily be quantified because the sorts of things that you're talking about don't lend themselves easily to quantification. As we take a look at the test scores that are available, given a certain margin of error rate, if we see something that tends to gravitate to the extremes -- that is instructive, isn't it?

DR. WILSON: By gravitate to the extremes, I'm not sure -- I mean --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Well, for instance, take the Camden school system, and unfortunately I think what you indicated was correct, that we don't have timely information as we should. The test scores from 2001 should be available now, but unfortunately, if I go on-line I can only get the test scores from year 2000. But if I take a look at the Camden schools as a group, and I'm trying to think -- I think this is the eighth grade proficiency test -- this is the GEPA -- the combined -- well when we talk about proficient and high proficient -- advanced proficient, excuse me -- out of 964 students tested, none scored in the advanced proficient category.

DR. WILSON: It's much larger than that.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Well that -- I'm looking at -- it's much larger. Let's see, I had some test scores -- that's Pyne Poynt -- but for instance in the fourth grade -- in the ESPA test, in the fourth grade test, there were 1233 students tested, and none in the general education scored advanced proficient.

DR. WILSON: Right.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: That tells you something though, doesn't it?

DR. WILSON: Senator, actually that's a function of where you place the standard. That's a function of the standard setting.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: All right.

DR. WILSON: There are several different kinds of standards. We have content standards, we have process standards, and we have complexity/difficulty standards.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Okay.

DR. WILSON: When the State set standards on a particular assessment, they're looking at setting a standard in terms of the difficulty level of that scale, in reference to the scale that they established on that assessment. So, they could have put that difficulty level anywhere they wanted to, and we could have had a lot of kids at the advanced proficient level, depending upon how they established that scale.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: So one of the lessons might be that everything is relative.

DR. WILSON: That's one of the lessons. Your other point about error is quite correct. But there are multiple dimensions of error. For example,

the error I think you were talking about is the error around a particular student's or a particular group of students' assessment on a particular instrument. There's also error in terms -- and I can quantify this -- in terms of what we call generalizability. In other words, if I have a particular group of items, I'm going to say those group of items generalized to a particular -- a whole group of items, a whole notion of how students are performing. So I'm going to have a certain amount of error based upon the kinds of items that I'm going to take from that particular domain of subject elements. And again, I can quantify that, but that's going to take a lot of assumptions, that's going to take, you know -- getting back to my point that we don't really have a good grasp on the complexity and the breath and the depth of the kinds of thinking that we need to address.

Now once we do, once we get a hold of that, then there's the next step, and we have to start thinking about how does this relate to students.

SENATOR BARK: You know, I appreciate you point.

DR. WILSON: Okay.

SENATOR BARK: But my concern is not when we get this information and we figure out how everybody thinks and learns. My concern is we have children now, and we can't wait for the academicians, or whatever they are, to come up with this ability to find out the right way that everybody thinks. We need to help these kids now. And I would like to hear what you recommend that we can do while all of those people that sit at Rutgers, or wherever they're sitting, and developing how we're thinking and how we learn to think, because I don't know how I did it. I mean, somebody said, learn your times tables, and I did. And all of a sudden I knew them, you know.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: You could do math.

SENATOR BARK: I could even be tested on them. But the fact is that we have kids that need help now. I want to hear what you would recommend to this Committee that we could see what we could do to help kids now, and then we could ascertain, somehow, what do they need so we can help them now.

DR. WILSON: Okay.

SENATOR BARK: Maybe I'm being silly. Maybe I should sit and wait for everybody to come up with the answers, but I guess I'm too darn old. And the fact is that I have seen various let's do the new math, let's do this, because we will learn. And over and over we find these new ways, and they're still failing. So I really don't care what everybody is off there learning about how we learn. I want to know what should we do now because from my book there's one way to learn. What you need is, you need a good principal, you need good teachers, and you need parents who will send their kids to school wanting to learn. Let's once again talk about the importance of education. And I promise I will not say another word.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: And that's -- I couldn't point to a more explicit example of what I was -- the point I was trying to make before. That's how the question comes to us. And I realize you're in the business of testing so that's your area of expertise, and perhaps this is more properly --

DR. WILSON: Okay --

SENATOR RICE: But before you answer that and make yourself -- and I don't want you to forget that train of thought. I've always had some concern that's relevant. And the way I see it -- first of all we need to understand

and define what are we really trying to assess? That's were part of the problem is, you know, what are we really trying to assess? And some of the answers that really should go to this serious question is we take common sense for granted. And what we're really trying to say, and I'm listening to you, and it seems to me you were talking about this complexity, but it seems to be in your arena some confusion as to how you get a grip on actually addressing cognitive skills. There's a difference, you know, in how you address reasoning because everything is not academic, everything -- you know, some of that involves some common sense approach, which we're going to start here by making observations in the environment in which young people are growing up. They start to connect things, and that's why, to me, the early childhood education becomes very important because we'll assume that a person at 13 or 14 should have some common sense. You know, even adults do that -- boy, where's your common sense? What are you talking about? But there's a relationship. To me, I really believe there's a direct relationship from the common sense, coming here and the cognitive skills you pick up there, to what's going to be taught in that classroom in terms of relating.

And I also believe that if you're going to talk about reasoning -- I always hear the teaching say, well, we have to teach for comprehension, we have to teach them how to comprehend what it is they're getting. Yes, but you can't do that without teaching them how to reason and think out too. And they can't reason and think out, once again, if they don't have a common sense approach to begin with.

So, I just want to say that I'm looking at this thing and I'm saying, what are we trying to assess at what age group? Down here, I'm not so sure if

I want to give curriculums initially -- curriculums before I assess. I may want to assess a person going to preschool how much have they picked up from the world around them, you know. And maybe find a way to determine, well, what kind of approach do they take on their own, that just a normal person would take, you know.

I just want to be clear on that because the assessments I've been seeing, the end result has been, if you don't do well on the test then you throw an eraser at somebody in the classroom, you classify them. And you want them in special ed someplace, which means we're destroying the whole system. So I just want to go on record with that before I leave.

I just don't -- I listen to all of you educators and -- you know, I'm like the Senator, I went through the system too. I've been around and looked, but I have a few degrees, I just took them in different areas. It took me a little longer to learn sometimes. Other folks say I may not be Harvard material, I disagree. It would just take me longer to get through Harvard. So, my point is, all those variables come together. And that's one of these -- put that in the record.

MR. NASH: Mr. Chairman, if I could kind of prolong?

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Yes, please.

MR. NASH: We agree that the current tests clearly provide enough information -- and nobody disputes this -- it provides enough information so we know there are major problems, there are major achievement gaps. The problem with the current testing programs is it doesn't give you enough information for educators to develop the solutions for individual students. What can we do to improve the situation? That's why we're part of a coalition --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Is that its purpose?

MR. NASH: Well, that should be a very important purpose of the testing, to give you information, to give the teacher information so they can help that student improve.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Well, I have a question about that. What were teachers doing before we had standardized testing? I mean, you know, public education -- education has been around for thousands of years. I mean, you know, isn't it a process of a teacher. By the way, I'll mention parenthetically, this is the third hearing that we're having, so if you run into a little bit higher frustration level on the part of the legislators, that's one of the reasons why. You know, because I, you know, absorb and absorb and absorb. You know, I did this with the racial profiling hearings. By the time I got down to Newark, you know, this poor guy said the wrong thing, you know, gave me a bureaucratic answer and I jumped all over it. Then the newspaper said, well he's only doing that because they changed his district.

But the point is that, you know, education has been going on for a long time. I mean, to tell you the truth, you know, I look at these tests -- is it's something there. But tell me what's going on, to tell the uninitiated what's going on, to tell a parent what's going on. And if I'm parent and I'm sending a child to a school where the pass rate is 1.8 percent, I know I have a 98 percent chance my child's not going to be educated in that neighborhood school, you know. I mean, that's what that tells me. So I mean --

MR. NASH: Well, I think the difference --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: I mean, I understand the points you're making. But, you know, isn't that something that should be done anyway?

MR. NASH: Yes, it is something that should be done. The difference today, and this is a fundamental difference, is that we have much higher standards for all students than we've ever had before in New Jersey or as a nation. We're expecting students to perform, all students, to perform at higher levels. The kinds of things that we're asking all students to do today, in previous years we were asking our most gifted students to do, and we were targeting towards specialized programs for a much smaller number of students than we've ever had before. So the standards are much higher than they have been in the past.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: I disagree with you slightly, and I'll tell you why. I went to the Paterson school system, all right. And at the time that I went to the Paterson school system, there might be three types of schools: One was a inner city, troubled, difficult school; the vast majority were blue collar, working class neighborhood schools; and then there were one or two schools in the more affluent sections of town, which don't particularly exist anymore. So, even then, you know, I think -- even within the schools and the school administrations there were higher expectations in the working class areas than in the inner city areas, and there are higher expectations still in the more affluent areas than there were in these other areas.

SENATOR RICE: Exactly.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: You know, the expectation game didn't start with the onset of these test scores, I think. But what the test scores wind up teaching us, and the reason that I'm here today, and the reason that we're today, is that we take a look, you know, at some of the children in our neediest of areas, and we see that they're not getting the same sort of -- they're not being

held to the same sort of expectations, you know. The President is the one who said there is a certain quiet bigotry in low expectations, and I think that that's true. And that's why you're seeing a lot of frustration level here, because my -- I'll just tell you something -- I don't mean -- we're here to listen to you.

But I have a four year old at home, all right. She'll be four in January. And so my wife and I are wondering about, you know, what school to send her, what will we do. I live in a blue collar suburb, and, all right, we'll take a look at the neighborhood school, take a look at the catholic school down the street. And now I've seen a lot of schools, and of course, I've visited schools here. And last week, we took her to Montclair Kimberly Academy, which is one of the top schools in the country.

SENATOR RICE: And the most costly. (laughing)

SENATOR ROBERTSON: You got that straight.

SENATOR RICE: Send her with the payment.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: But it's still less per capita than Newark spends on its students.

SENATOR RICE: Yes.

SENATOR BARK: Isn't that odd.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: But what happens is, you know, I went in there and I listened to the presentation, which was very thoughtful and very thorough, and the one thing that struck me is that they hardly mentioned computers. They mentioned it in passing: yes, we've got them, you know, but it wasn't like, here's the ribbon we're going to cut, we're now 100 percent wired, we now -- you know, we'll have the computers. It's a given that that's just a tool. What they concentrated on was their reading program. They concentrated

on their writing program. They concentrated on their ethics, you know, program. The things they've won awards for and stuff like that.

And I think what you're saying too, Senator, is, you know, what do we do with students who need the fundamentals in terms of reading and math skills, and what does this tell us. That's the thing that we're grappling with now.

MR. NASH: Absolutely. And I think some of the solutions that I tried to lay out earlier are tangible steps that we can take to address that problem.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: But, you know -- let me ask you this. Do you know of elementary schools in urban areas that have done really well?

MR. NASH: Yes.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Okay. What's the difference between those schools and schools that are not doing well at all?

MR. NASH: There are a number of differences. In many of those schools, on their own, they have found the resources to have preschool programs in place to help students early on. They've found a way to reduce class sizes at the early grades and provide more individualized instruction. They've found the resources to devote to professional development on effective reading strategies to help address the needs of those students at the earliest grades. And clearly, the best things that we can do happen at preschool and the earliest elementary grades.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: All right, now why do they do it there, and it's not being done in other schools?

MR. NASH: There are some schools where they've been able to reallocate their resources, sometimes through private investment, sometimes

through having corporate support, and other outside support from the school district to support innovative programs. Not every --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: How did they stumble into it? They were lucky enough to have those folks ring their doorbell?

MR. NASH: Well, not every community has the same access to those types of outside resources, and some communities are more fortunate and can develop those partnerships.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Absolutely.

MR. NASH: Some communities also do a better job at developing those partnerships, and everybody should clearly do that.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Well, you're the Principals and Supervisors Association. What else do they have?

MR. NASH: Well, clearly, I mean, we've talked about the importance of strong leadership at the principal's level for all schools. In fact, we're part of a project called the State Action for Educational Leadership Project that's designed to improve the leadership skills of all school principals, and we can go through a litany of strategies to help have much more effective school leaders and much more effective preparation programs. Frankly, the current higher education programs for school administrators are not very effective programs.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Because you didn't mention that before, and absolutely everybody that we've had that has testified has said that one of the biggest differences between schools that are outstanding and schools that are struggling, one of the biggest differences is the difference in leadership.

MR. NASH: And I agree with that. I was trying to focus our comments on more specific issues.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: No, I understand.

MR. NASH: But we are part of this --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Yes, but that's part of the achievement gap --

MR. NASH: No question.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: -- because you know what happens, I've talked to Superintendents, and we've had Dr. Bolden here, you know, last week. I've talked to Superintendents and, you know, they say that too. And, you know, when I provoke them enough they finally say, well, you know, you've got to realize that I have this to deal with and that to deal with. Well, it seems to come into two categories: resources and personnel, leadership.

MR. NASH: I could give you one example of something we could do tangibly to improve the pool of high quality candidates for the school principalship. There are many very highly qualified school supervisors in New Jersey who have been leaders as supervisors, but they would have to go back and get a completely separate master's degree program. Start over again in a graduate program in order to become school principals. We have recommended a streamline process for those school supervisors to go through a more targeted, rigorous program, and in one year become certified as school principals. There are over a thousand potential school leaders in that field. We've surveyed our members, they would be very interested in having those opportunities.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: There are over a thousand vacancies?

MR. NASH: Well, there are not vacancies, but the number of candidates that are applying for the positions is much smaller than we used to have. And we would like to have a larger pool of candidates applying for each position so that school districts have the highest quality candidates to choose from.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: I think that's an excellent idea. Let me bounce a question off of what arose in our discussion with Superintendent Bolden. I said to her -- I said, well, take your bottom performing -- because she has a couple of great performing schools and, you know, has great leadership and a lot -- done the partnerships you talked about, and then there are some schools that are really struggling -- and I said, you know, if you took your six or eight -- and I don't know who they are -- if you took your six or eight least performing schools, and leadership is so important, has any personnel changes or actions been taken with respect to leadership in those buildings? And she said, well, I've only been here two years, but we have moved three principals, all right. And I'm not picking on the principals, but you happen to be from the Principals Association, so good luck. So, I said, well, when you say moved what do you mean? And she didn't want to really get into it, and that's appropriate, I think, you know, because she didn't want to talk about individual personnel situations. But then the Newark Teachers Union came forward and said one of the problems that happens is that you take a poor performing principal and you often move them to the least performing school. Now, heaven forbid you're a parent who lives in that neighborhood, because your chances just went down from 98 percent -- from 1.8 percent chance to 0 percent chance that your child is going to be educated to proficiency.

What needs to be done, if anything, to give superintendents greater abilities to deal with the personnel side of the equation, given that its resources and personnel?

MR. NASH: We actually, as an Association, took a leadership role on this a number of years ago, and this Legislature passed a ten-year reform bill targeted not only to school administrators but to school administrators and teachers. That streamlines the process. If you have the most serious of problems where after working that individual you can't improve their situation, there is a process in place for the removal of that individual. It has been reformed --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Give me a good example of a good cause. Give me a case study. How does somebody lose their job?

MR. NASH: Well, a case study could involve persistent, low test score results where a superintendent has worked with that administrator and hasn't been able to improve their performance of that person over some period of time. And the person isn't able or isn't willing to improve. In fact, the process that we worked to streamline cut the amount of time to remove that individual by almost two-thirds. So it's much --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: What sort of time -- from what to what?

MR. NASH: From sometimes being a process that could take more than three years, to a process of about a year. And again we don't want to lose all the due process protections that are in place, because sometimes you want to remove principals for other very illegitimate reasons. So, you want to make sure you have those safeguards in place, but the process is much more

streamlined than it ever was before. Before you ever get to that point, obviously, you want to improve the individual. We've talked about a mandate for ongoing professional development for all school administrators. We think that's critical. We've approached the Department of Education about this issue, and we wanted, frankly, this to happen at the same time that it happened for teachers. The Department of Education wasn't ready at that point. They wanted to first move ahead with the teacher requirement. We've been a leader saying that we should have that mandate for all of our members.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: What can't you do both?

SENATOR BARK: You can't.

MR. NASH: You should do both. You should have ongoing, professional --

SENATOR BARK: The Legislature and the Department didn't do it.

MR. NASH: The Department wouldn't do it. We supported that, and we asked for that mandate to be placed out there for our members to have that ongoing, professional development requirement. We offered it on a voluntary basis for members and we have for many, many years. But there is no reason there shouldn't be a professional development plan that every school principal has to have. Hopefully, and the Department has been working on this issue with us for the last year or two, and I think they are ready to move in the next couple of months. We share your frustration on this issue.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: See, this is the point at which I lost it, you know, with the racial profiling hearings because the thing that the guy said was -- you remember that, Ron -- a nice guy too. He was only brought in to

help, you know, but he was talking about -- what's being said to the troopers on the road? And his answer was, well, we're developing a computer program that in X amount of time will give us the ability to do assessment. Hello.

MR. NASH: Just do it.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: You know, that's like saying there is a fire and that the infrastructure for fire hydrants is being installed and we're quite confident that it would do the job when fully installed. Meanwhile, your house is burning down.

MR. NASH: No question.

SENATOR RICE: Well, part of the problem -- and I'm going to have to leave in a moment.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: This is so frustrating.

SENATOR RICE: Once again, my gray hairs are not that premature. I don't say much, but I interact a lot and I pay attention. I do have common sense. Some of the problems are not the principals, often times it's the superintendent. There are also tools we give the superintendent to be flexible with different schools. You can't run 80 schools in a district and treat them all the same, and you can't expect every principal in every school to be the same. They're going to have to have some uniqueness about them, as well as some things that are common to other schools. And then of course you may ask, how do we get a superintendent, school board members?

And so the whole process is that a superintendent says, well, I'm working with some of these principals to straighten them out and try to work with, but they don't perform. Unfortunately, no one can prove that it's the superintendent because the fight doesn't get reversed. And all we've said when

you have a lot of problems with a lot of principals, maybe you should take a look at yourself. And so, I just wanted to at least say that, because it is not a one way street for teachers, principals, and superintendents. All have to be looked at. What does the team look like? And one of things that I've been hearing is just that. That where we find the better schools, there are good team relationships, people understand each other, and the things you mentioned about the resources, and there are programs to develop professionalism and things like that, and leadership.

And the final thing about leadership is that I've been through it too much. Most principals, or at least superintendents, are too afraid to admit that they're probably moving in the wrong direction. And often times we don't listen to them, so there is a leadership fear. How do we come over leadership fear? How do we come over, I'm going to lose my job? You know, I've always taught people the job I have, and I've had a lot of them. Take them.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: You've been very constructive.

SENATOR RICE: As long as I'm doing them, you know -- people don't give us right information. We go into systems and the kids -- I've been in systems that -- and I'm going to end on this -- but people call and, well, we don't have enough books in the classroom. There are superintendents that say, we have books in the classrooms. Principals say, we have books, then the kids sit there and say, we don't have books. I think the kids know if they have a book or not. And I would quietly slip up in the classroom unannounced and find that the kids are right. And then they will tell me that the books have been stored over here for three months and we forgot, or I didn't know they didn't have books over there. I said, well, they were telling you they didn't have them.

You see things like that because even the principal or the superintendent or someone was afraid they were going to get transferred from Ann Street School to another school, or they're going to lose their job because they don't want to talk on the system.

And even at the hearings we've had, the superintendents -- Marion Bolden is probably one of the best developed superintendents in the State. What I like about her, she's a State takeover, but she will tell the State, look I can't do this job if your not going to help me, you can take it. But the difference is that that's not most superintendents. But my point is that most don't want to tell us, and even she is cautious about what she said, because at our hearing she made it very clear, wait a minute, I don't have a problem answering questions, you know, but I want to answer these questions correctly because I want to make sure you understand where I'm coming from. So we go to the superintendents and say well look, be honest. When Dr. Hall was in the State takeover system, she would never say anything about the \$70 million that we got before our Committee. And she was getting ready to ask Jack -- you had an excellent question, and she froze up and started looking because the Commissioner was sitting there. I said, wait a minute you tell the truth at this meeting. Is the \$70 million going to help you, or is it going to hurt you? What is it going to do to that school system? Then she elaborated. She could sense that, well, is the Commissioner is going to take me out of here, you know, etc.?

The attitude should be at your level, you shouldn't really give a damn. Couldn't you get a job someplace else? If everybody took that attitude, guess what, we'll get the answers we need and we'll have education. So, I wanted to say that, before I left, on the record. Not to badger you but to give

you something else to think about on this as you move in your profession and directions of assessments and stuff like that.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Does that tell you -- yes, we're here to try to be helpful, you know. So, if we put you on the spot and provoke you sometimes, sometimes it's so that you will be frustrated enough to say look -- and that's the only way we got Marion to tell us what she wanted to really tell us.

MR. NASH: If I could just comment on Senator Rice's comment on the issue of fear in leadership. I think that some of that fear is structurally built into the system. We don't have, frankly, clear definitions of the roles of the school board versus the superintendent, and we're concerned. Where a superintendent is constantly working on a three year contract, without that clear definition of roles, meaning what should the school board be doing, what should the superintendent be doing, that we need to reform that system. We've looked at that as part of this project, for State Action for Educational Leadership, that we have to have much clearer roles for the board, and when we should rethink the idea of just having these very short three year contracts. You can't have strong leadership throughout the State without reforming those kinds of policies.

DR. WILSON: Could I say something? In terms of -- I'm a school board member in Lawrence Township, and we have recently hired a superintendent. What happens with superintendents is that they are corrupted by school board members constantly. I mean, I know, as a school board member, I can get involved in personnel, I can get involved in athletics, I can get involved in every aspect of that district. I can be -- you know, I could intercede

in a certain extent on what the decisions that the superintendent should really be making.

A big part of it -- okay, let's say for instance, as a school board member, I am making all of these decisions that the superintendent doesn't have to take responsibility for those. I mean, it's the school board that's making the decisions. What you're doing is you're -- with the current system, just like David said, the duties and performing -- what the school board is suppose to do is not well-defined, and what the school board is not suppose to do is not well-defined either.

SENATOR BARK: You know, I have to interject because I was a school board member. I was a school board member for ten years and I thought it was very clear. I thought that the role of the school board was to set policy.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Help out with policy.

SENATOR BARK: And it was the role of the superintendent to carry out that policy, and if any school board member overstepped his bounds, the rest of the school board said, you don't do that, you do not get involved in the implementation of this policy. That is the role of the superintendent. We put that on his shoulders, and we will hire, fire, or raise his salary based on how well he implements that policy. If school boards are not doing that then that is the fault of the school board. But I think it is very clear.

And of course, if all school board members go to whatever that thing is that you go to the moment that you are elected -- and they will give you this class on how to be a good school board member -- and if you follow what that is, you will be a school board member and school boards will in fact serve

the function that they are suppose to have, and they will reflect the community in terms of the policy that is set. And I think it is very clear.

DR. WILSON: Unfortunately --

SENATOR BARK: Maybe it all got changed, I don't know. I mean

--

DR. WILSON: That's not what I experience.

MR. NASH: Unfortunately Senator, implementation in many of the districts -- Boards aren't always following that procedure that you clearly followed in your board.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: The culture is different in different communities.

SENATOR BARK: Well, they ought to, because that's appropriate. And the only one that they are involved in, from my book, in terms of hiring or firing or whatever is the superintendent.

MR. NASH: We agree with that.

DR. WILSON: Absolutely agree.

SENATOR BARK: And the rest of them -- everybody else -- he better do it right. Although the one thing that a board can do, and that we found very successful -- and we said when we hired our superintendent, if there is any teacher, principal, or whatever that is not performing up to excellent, because we don't want mediocre, we want excellent, we will back you when it comes to getting rid of that person, because, you know, if your board is not behind your superintendent and they want to get rid of a tenured employee, it's a tough role. So that to me is also a very significant part of being a school

board member. You must be sure that you tell your superintendent that you'll back him.

MR. NASH: We agree. Our suggestion goes that we should at least step back and see if there are ways that we can be clearer. And I agree that the board's role is suppose to be policy, and the board members are told that, but I think there does need to be even clearer directions and guidance given to the boards.

SENATOR BARK: And maybe so. I mean, it worked very well when I was on the board. And who knows? You could get different people, you know.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Doctor, are you an elected school board member or an appointed school board member?

DR. WILSON: Elected.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: So you're a politician too then.

DR. WILSON: Absolutely. (laughing)

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Okay.

SENATOR BARK: In a way --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Not in a way. They get elected the same way we do.

SENATOR BARK: I was elected too.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: I always get a kick, everybody in education never admits they're in politics.

MR. NASH: I was also a school board member. I understand that.

SENATOR BARK: Small feat, that's all.

MR. NASH: Great.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Okay, well, thank you very much.

Now are you --

MR. NASH: Mr. Chairman.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Yes.

MR. NASH: If I could also introduce our representatives from Cherry Hill? If you would like --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Absolutely, I don't know if they want to come forward at this point. (laughing)

But let me also say, if there is a list of reforms that you would like to see implemented, send them to me, so that we could incorporate them into -- if we wind up doing a report or something from this. I mean, there is going to be a new administration come the first of the year, and at least we would have done some thinking about it, and we can make -- this might be exactly the time to make a suggestion.

MR. NASH: Absolutely, and we thank you for that opportunity. Some of those suggestions are in our testimony, but I will forward the other ones as well.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Sure. Okay, great.

MR. NASH: I'll let our representatives from Cherry Hill introduce themselves.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Thank you.

G A I L C O H E N: Hello, my name is Gail Cohen, and I'm part of the Administration for Cherry Hill Public Schools, I'm the Public Information Officer.

Senator Robertson, I appreciate your comment about how the success of urban schools has an impact on all the schools in New Jersey. Our Superintendent would probably expand that to say with the success of public education is probably the most important issue for our country right now, and he has really been imparting that to all of our staff and our entire community.

We appreciate being here today because in the past, Cherry Hill has not been part of the *Abbott* discussions, nor have we been part of the discussions about closing the gap because, frankly, it was never considered a suburban issue. In fact, when I met with a Congressional aide this summer about how Cherry Hill is growing more diverse and the subject of closing gaps she responded to me, dear, there is no issue. If they have moved to Cherry Hill, they have made it. Educators know --

SENATOR BARK: Okay.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: (chuckles)

MS. COHEN: My sentiments exactly. Thank you.

Educators know this is not true. The achievement gap exists in every school, in every state, and in every district in the country. Dr. Sherman, Superintendent of the Cherry Hill Public Schools, knew this. In 1997, he came to our district with the belief that every child can learn given the right opportunities and environments. He voluntarily desegregated test scores, which showed as much as a 20 point gap in scores. And this confirmed his suspicion. With the knowledge that testing is merely a snapshot of what goes on in the classroom and the child's ability, he went further and investigated into AP and honors participation, National Honor Society participation, and other forms of

extracurricular and social activities. The low levels of participation supported his suspicions again.

With this information he convened administrators and minority leaders in the community. Spirited discussions took place as to how to approach this issue. They reached out to school districts outside of New Jersey, who were addressing these issues, and administrators attended conferences for solutions. As a group, we determined that we needed to take the information we had gathered and create a solution that fit the needs of our district.

So, in May of 1999, we sent out a memo inviting anyone in the community who is interested in participating in this issue to come to a meeting. Sixty community members gathered: parents, teachers, administrators, everyone from the community who wanted to be part of the solution. They worked from June to December, and they presented a five-point recommendation on ways to close the gap. They presented this to the Superintendent and the Board of Education and the community. Their solutions focused on guidance, student and parent support, curriculum, recruiting, and professional development. The recommendation also called for the district to continue with initiatives they had started, such as the standards initiatives, setting your standards high and putting in supports for students who may not reach the standards as quickly as other students. Smaller class sizes, kindergarten enrichment for Title I students, at risk student portfolios, and elimination of the IOWA test, which did not align with the curriculum or the standards in Cherry Hill, and in exchange, put in the new standards reference exams, which served as a diagnostic tool for the direction of our curriculum -- professional development and then any revisions that were needed to our curriculum.

The New Jersey State Department of Education has followed our district's lead. And they are requiring, as of January, for districts now to desegregate all of their test scores. They have also accepted our invitation to sponsor a statewide symposium on student achievement on May 15th of this year with Rutgers University.

Within the last six months, we have begun implementing ideas proposed by the committee. Mr. Keith Edwards, principal on assignment, is a key figure in carrying out the crux of these proposed initiatives. It's important to note that the committee proposed creating six of the positions in which now Keith serves; however, funding, which only comprises 13 percent from the State in Cherry Hill, is not available for more positions and all of the initiatives, which are contained in the proposals.

If we're committed to truly closing the gap then we need to support school districts in these initiatives, and we need to support every school district. And each district is going to need different levels of funding, but every district has this issue and it needs to be addressed. Now I'll let Keith tell you a little bit more about the details of what he's doing in the district.

KEITH EDWARDS: Okay, my name is Keith Edwards, I'm the Assistant Principal for Outreach and Mentoring. For the parents, I identify myself as a student advocate, somewhat of an ombudsman for the community. I'm going to highlight a few of the things that we've done, and we are doing, as some of our first steps.

We've convened parent focus groups to solicit parent input about the learning environment in Cherry Hill. We focus on the parents of color, you know, in order to eliminate the achievement gap. We challenged the families

to push their children to stretch their achievement goals by taking more rigorous courses. We've explained the value of that, we've provided information. As a result, students, in fact, do move from lower ability level classes to the more challenging ability level classes. At the same time, once the students accepted the challenge to work harder, we had to put in place some supports. We created cohorts of students who moved up a level and we've had opportunities for these students to regularly meet and discuss what problems and what barriers and obstacles that they've encountered. We've introduced role models and mentors for the students during these occasions.

Secondly, we met with the students class by class. Our goal, again, in the background is to heighten the awareness of the issue of achievement gaps and to listen to the responses of people as we made them aware of it. So we met with the students class by class and made them aware of some of the achievement gaps and some of the causes for it so they could be proactive and make steps to eliminate it. We coordinated after school -- and we're in the process of doing this -- coordinating tutoring after school and after school support newsletters to the parents. We are participating in the action research as part of a consortium of New York and New Jersey districts that are tackling the problem, and we are focusing on the middle schools and high schools collecting data for the math achievement within the district.

Part of my job is: to identify and eradicate any policies that adversely affect students of color, to reinforce district policy for cognitive empathy and the differentiated instructions, which are safety nets for students, ensure that the conditions for learning are well-suited for student success. Again,

that's part of the purpose of meeting with the students, so we can hear what they have to say about the learning environment.

And finally, I work closely with the community in order to solicit their help, as far as volunteering for the community. And again, working with the Minority Achievement Committee and the Cherry Hill Minority Civic Association, as far as just responding to what their needs are.

Those are just a few of the things that I have jotted down, as far as the effort I've taken. It's a new position for me, and one of the things I probably didn't mention is that I am doing research on best practices, and I'm serving as a clearinghouse within the district of -- and repositing of information having to do with the achievement gap. For example, the Department of Defense Schools supposedly have a very -- almost a nonexistent achievement gap, and there's data about that. I might have brought a sample of that with me. It says, march towards success, school success, and minority achievement in the Department of Defense Schools, and, you know, we're looking at data like this and other practices, across the nation, to help us borrow. And pretty much there's a lot of the consortium meetings. We try to cross-pollinate and share ideas of what works and what's not working. In general, that's the gist of it.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: How -- thank you for your testimony. We have a little town in my district, Montclair, which is also dealing with this issue in a somewhat more suburban setting. Let me ask you first, now you have -- Camden is right next to Cherry Hill, right?

MS. COHEN: That's right.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Do you have any other special needs districts surrounding you?

MR. EDWARDS: Maybe Gloucester.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Gloucester City borders also?

MS. COHEN: Burlington. Is Burlington in our -- yes.

SENATOR BARK: Burlington City. Pemberton? Pemberton is pretty far north.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: The reason I say that, and I'll clue you in to this so you can help us follow up on it. I represent Clifton, which, you know, has Paterson on one side and Passaic on the other and Garfield across the river. And one of the things that we insisted it be part of the facilities. Legislation last year -- is a charge to the Department of Education to the Commissioner, to develop ways to address the special needs of districts who adjoin two or more *Abbott* districts because some of the same urbanization pressures can be found on the periphery of those districts. And I know we have a situation like that in the neighborhood that adjoins Paterson, and the test scores are going down. That's where people are moving to, that's where the population is going up, and yet, with respect to school facilities, 100 percent are being paid for in the special needs districts. And in the first incarnation of the bill there was just only 10 percent, but my amendment managed to get it up to about 40 percent.

So I just mention that to you in passing, so you can pass that along your administration, because they're supposed to be doing something on that question that may be helpful to you.

MS. COHEN: Yes, and it's interesting because we have an influx of about 300 new students per year, so that is really putting stress on our schools.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: And frequently they're in the same neighborhoods, I imagine.

MS. COHEN: Actually, it's really across the district, very much across the district.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Oh is it? Okay.

SENATOR BARK: That's interesting.

MS. COHEN: However, we're seeing a lot of kids coming in from the urban districts. And the later they come in, actually, the larger the gap. Last year, we figured out that 19 percent of our middle school students were brand new to the districts and we realized we had --

SENATOR BARK: Wow.

MS. COHEN: Yes, which was very new from possibly ten years ago. And we realized this looking at math scores and wondering why they had dipped so dramatically. And then we took a look at the time the students were in the district and where they were coming from, which districts, and immediately we knew we had to put in supports. We knew of a superintendent who said, I believe every child can learn. You better believe that there is going to be something to follow.

We put into place a summer math academy and that was for all students, for students who needed remediation, as well as students who were in that bottom or middle level who said, I want to work a little bit harder, and in September, I want to be in that higher level math. And it was a wonderful

success. We would love to be able to provide that during the year and also follow up with that next summer. Funding issues are very, very critical for our district where we're considered a high wealth district; however, nearly half of our schools are designated as Title I.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: That's exactly right. Yes, with X percentage of school lunch program eligibility and so forth.

MS. COHEN: Right.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Which is what we're doing up in Clifton.

Mr. Edwards, let me ask you. Your program -- you've talked about the intervention with the junior high school and the high school level. How early do you go though, with respect to this, for the reason that she said?

MR. EDWARDS: My job is new, and initially I'm focusing on the middle schools and high schools.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Okay.

MR. EDWARDS: And just to piggyback on that thought, one of the concerns that I have is the precollege programs that are targeted for *Abbott* districts, and what I'm trying to do now is find some programs that we target for just students of need, irrespective of the district they're from. And that's one of the challenges I have.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Yes, and I think that's the next step. Although the fire is most intense, obviously, in the --

MR. EDWARDS: That's correct. And again -- but the need should be the driver.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: No, I agree with that. But of course the fact that a lot of your students are new and coming from special needs districts, again points out, you know, how much attention we really have to pay to urban education, as far as that's concerned. That's a good example of how that does.

MS. COHEN: If I could follow up on your question. Again, the Committee proposed six of these positions, and it was because this should start very early on, it should start at the elementary level. I think Senator Rice had even touched on it when he said we should find out what children know just from their experiences. So, that's what the Committee was really looking towards, to have people on every level and to have enough for this 11,000-plus school district. However, we know we need to start small, with the constraints, and we're always looking for private funding, outside funding, foundation funding for many of these initiatives, and hope to have more people to address this.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: How will you know or -- even more to the point, how would we know -- the general public, know whether or not you are succeeding?

MR. EDWARDS: Well, I do collect data for particular students. The students that we're trying to promote, obviously, we have to create a database and data mine for the various variables that affect their academic performance. So that's ongoing. That's something that we're trying to refine as we go.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Okay.

MS. COHEN: If I could. At one point, I'll shut up, I promise.
(laughing)

Some of the things that we look for is a total portfolio. And in that, we look at the rate, and we include it in our testing report. And that is: the number of students who have participated in AP courses, in honors courses; the number of students in the National Honor Society; the number of students in community service. The test scores, again, are merely one snapshot of what is going on in the districts. We really look at the total portfolio. For every child who we consider at risk of failing or not meeting the standards, there is a folder kept on that student. So, at any point in time, the Superintendent can walk in to that high school, go into the guidance office, and say, let me see the folder on Keith Edwards. That folder really should outline where Keith has started, what has happened, how he is progressing, and what interventions have been made. So these are some of things that you're going to measure.

SENATOR BARK: I have a very quick question. How many -- how are districts in our many, many multitudinal districts in the State of New Jersey going along this route, would have a job comparable to yours, Mr. Edwards?

MR. EDWARDS: I've done no research on that, so I really couldn't -- I have met a few that said they are directors for student improvement and titles like that, but I don't know an answer that would be accurate.

MS. COHEN: When the Committee met, and I was actively involved in coordinating the Committee -- we actually stole this idea from a Philadelphia school. This is not -- I mean no idea -- one of the things that we did was research what's out there, instead of reinventing the wheel. So it is out there.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: A Philadelphia school?

MS. COHEN: Right, in a Philadelphia school. And I think it may have been -- I could probably come up with the name of it. I think it was a charter school where they --

SENATOR BARK: Might have been a charter school?

MS. COHEN: It may have been a charter where they implemented this. However, it is something that has been implemented, and I don't know how much, within New Jersey.

SENATOR BARK: I was just curious.

MS. COHEN: We have been working closely with Montclair in exchanging many of the ideas. And Montclair is one of the other school districts in New Jersey that was a part of that New York consortium.

SENATOR BARK: But you're to be commended. But I do believe that this came about because of very strong leadership. Right? Are we back to that?

MS. COHEN: Absolutely.

SENATOR BARK: Ok.

MS. COHEN: Yes, this was Dr. Sherman's vision.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: At least I can tell by the way I talked about their Superintendent.

SENATOR BARK: I thought we had to underline that.

MS. COHEN: Actually, when he first desegregated the data and he brought all of us into the room, he said this is what I found out, this is a good suburban school district and this should not be happening. I want to go to the press. And it was, oh no you are not, you're not going to the press.

Yes, we need to think this through.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: I think I like him.

Well, thank you very, very much.

MR. EDWARDS: Thank you.

SENATOR BARK: It was very enlightening.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: And if there's something you want to send us, you know, something about your program and so forth and the sorts of things that can be replicated, we'd certainly appreciate that.

MR. EDWARDS: Sure.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Because we're that outside role that he was talking about when he wanted to go to the press.

Let's see, I'm trying to figure out who's here. We have representatives from the NJEA. Joyce Beverly-Scott is here, come on forward. And Nick Timpanelli, from the Camden Education Association.

L I N D A M. K A S S E K E R T: (speaking from audience) And myself, Mr. Chairman. Linda Kassekert, from the New Jersey Education Association.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Oh good.

MS. KASSEKERT: Thank you for the opportunity to be here this morning and to talk about the issue of achievement in our *Abbott* districts. I just wanted to comment on some of the testimony that has gone before, regarding testing in general. And I think some of the things that Senator Bark said and Senator Rice said are very important.

You know, not only do we have children coming into the educational system that have profound problems, children that might be born of addicted families, children that might have nutritional issues, premature birth issues, poverty, and a lack of medical care -- I think that's important to take

into consideration when you are looking at the issue of achievement. And with respect to special ed, whether classified correctly or not, there are more special education students in our urban districts than in the suburban districts. That of course has an impact on testing, as well.

I wanted to mention that NJEA is part of the coalition that David Nash spoke of, the Coalition for Responsible Educational Testing and Assessment in New Jersey, and we agree with the conclusions that they have come up with in the report. We were an active participant. And I would urge you to take a look of those and some of the recommendations that we've made through that report that was attached to Mr. Nash's testimony. We agree that -- we believe, although testing might be used for a variety of purposes, the most important purpose is that it be a diagnostic tool for the teachers, that it be timely, that it be returned in a timely fashion, so we can learn from the test results what we can do to help those children improve.

I want to take a slightly different tact, since we are in the *Abbott* district, and talk about what the *Abbott* decision said, basically, with respect to the needs of children to achieve. The Supreme Court said, in *Abbott IV*, that "perhaps no amount of money would be able to erase the impact of the socioeconomic factors that define and cause these pupils' disadvantages. We realize that perhaps nothing short of substantial social and economic change affecting housing, employment, child care, taxation, and welfare will make the difference for these students."

The Court, in *Abbott IV*, cited a number of other factors that certainly impact on a child's ability to achieve. You've heard some of them already: class size, parental education programs, job training programs, early

childhood programs, and school facilities that have an environment that's conducive to the achievement, to the thorough and efficient education.

Somebody's cell phone is going off. (referring to ringing sound)

However, it should be noted that the decision in *Abbott IV* only came out slightly more than four years ago. Many of the programs instituted under *Abbott* have barely had time to be initiated, let alone implemented. Class size, for example, has just started to decrease. At the Ecole T. Loverture School in East Orange, which is in Essex County, the student/facility ratio was markedly higher than the State average until the issuance of the last report card that we have on record, which is the 1999-2000 year report card, when the ratio has finally come down below the State average, let alone trying to meet some of the things the Court said about smaller class size in general.

The issue of early childhood programs, while it was recognized in *Abbott IV*, it was not fully laid out until *Abbott V*, and as you know, the Supreme Court revisited the subject just as late as last week, when they determined that a Special Master would not be needed to be appointed to oversee preschool. Preschool is a factor, we've said it here. It's certainly most important to student achievement, but the implementation of these programs has been slow in coming.

Similarly, while the Legislature recognized the need for school facilities by passing the Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act in July of 1999, to date there are no shovels in the ground. Districts are barely through the pre-site application process. It is not likely we will see any building before the first quarter of the year 2002. Currently, districts are dealing with design work on health and safety components of these projects and, at this

point, are not even beginning to address the educational needs. Adequate facilities are certainly an important part of student achievement and given the age and condition of many of our urban schools, they must be addressed if we expect our children to improve and meet State standards.

And I want to talk a little bit about the issue of student mobility. I know that you've heard various types of testimony. This was not specifically addressed in the *Abbott* decision, but this certainly impacts on districts and their ability to achieve. In urban districts, it's not only an aspect where the child moves in and out of the district, they may move within a school, within that district. And because of the *Abbott* decision's requirements for Whole School Reform, they may move to a district that has a completely different Whole School Reform Program than the last school that they were in.

I want to talk to you about some of the statistics here in Camden. According to the 1999-2000 State Report Card, the statewide mobility rate is about 14.3 percent for elementary and middle school students. Here at the Pyne Poynt Family Middle School, the average mobility rate for the same time period is more than double that amount, or 35.7 percent. The mobility at Woodrow Wilson High School for 1999 was 33.3 percent, compared to a statewide average of 12.3 percent. One school in particular that I want to point out, the Davis Elementary School in Camden, the rate was an extraordinary 55.5 percent. And if a child is not present in the classroom for a significant part of the time, it's difficult to ascertain that level of achievement. I believe Mr. Nash spoke about the idea of the test scores -- testing not being done on a child until they have been in the district for at least one year. And NJEA supports that because you can't expect a child coming into a district that is new, with new

curriculum, perhaps a different Whole School Reform program, or a new program that is being implemented, to achieve.

NJEA expects that our children in our *Abbott* districts will achieve, but that can only happen if we fulfill our State and Court obligations to those children. Four years of compromising the Court's mandate has unfortunately compromised our children's ability to learn. Our children have not failed us. When you look at it from this perspective, we have failed our children.

Thank you for the opportunity to share some of these remarks with you today. I have with me Nick --

NICHOLAS TIMPANELLI: Timpanelli. (indicates pronunciation)

MS. KASSEKERT: --Timpanelli, who is Vice President of the Camden Education Association. I will tell you he has less notice of this meeting than the gentleman from PSA did. Unfortunately, we had hoped to have our President here this morning. She broke her leg. She is over at a hospital getting it X-rayed, so Nick has gladly come in her place. He is going to talk to you a little bit about of what he sees, with respect of being on the ground here in the Camden school district.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Just think of it as a pop quiz, then.

MS. KASSEKERT: A pop quiz, right. (laughing)

MR. TIMPANELLI: Yes. I've taught here for 32 years, so I'm well familiar with the Camden school district. Some of the problems I see here, again, was the implementation of the *Abbott* regulations. If you look at just the leadership, the top leadership, we've had four or five Superintendents within the last three years, okay. Every single one of them coming in reinterprets the *Abbott* regulations as they see fit. That's a new learning curve for everyone.

The *Abbott* regulations themselves, basically, are almost set up for failure. An example of this: zero-based budgeting. Yes, we should be involved because every school is different and unique, but when we have to start school, start teaching, start setting up our roles, get out all of our supplies, all at the beginning of the school year, and then have a date such as October 15 that we have to have zero-based budgeting done where do we find the time for this? We should have some realistic timelines. We support being in there, it's just unrealistic with many of the things that have happened.

Hiring practices, the way they are set up we have a conflict. Who does the hiring? Is it the SMT's at the schools, principal, or the human resources building? Where are the regulations for this, exactly spelling out who is in charge? It sets up a case where principals feel threatened. Who's the boss in the building? Therefore, they hide things or keep things from the SMT. That causes problems.

Funding, if we look at some of the funding sources, I don't know where they are because -- for instance, our salary guides here in Camden, they are not competitive with the surrounding areas, so we have many teachers coming in, two, three years, learn how to teach, get the experience and leave. I don't blame them. And it's going to get worse as time goes on because people at the top are looking at surrounding areas and saying, why are we here? Let's look at early retirement. We're losing them. So we need funding here that's real. We shouldn't just look at the number of students but maybe what really is needed in the city of Camden.

Constructions. She mentioned constructions. Take a ride around Camden, and look at all of the elementary schools that have trailers outside

their houses. And go into some of these classrooms. They are overcrowded. That's one of the points that *Abbott* points out as impacting the learning curve of the student. Again, we haven't taken care of that. We need more teachers. They don't have the funds to fund more teaching stations.

She mentioned special needs children. Well, we're including them due to the Inclusion Law, putting them into a classroom that impacts on the learning curve. They must take the HSPT, the High School Proficiency Test, and all the tests. That means we have to devote time to them. What happens to the other students? Their scores are not counted in the final analysis, but again it impacts on learning time for everyone, not just them. And are we serving them as well as we can when we have other students in the classroom? Again, problems that were set up by State legislation.

These need to be addressed. I think what happens --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Be careful, don't confuse the Legislature

--

MR. TIMPANELLI: With the Commission's.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: -- with the Executive Branch.

MR. TIMPANELLI: True. Perhaps a few weeks in a classroom by some of the officers up there might help and see what the real problems are. If you have specific questions, maybe I can answer them for you. I don't know what else to tell you.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: No, it's very instructive actually.

SENATOR BARK: Yes it is.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Let me first of all thank you for your vocation. My brother is a career educator, just retired from the Milford system after about 32 years or more than that probably. He started in 1962 or something. His daughter is a teacher, her husband is a teacher, his son is a drug counselor, his wife is a teacher's aide. So, I mean, I love educators, as far as that's concerned.

Let me ask you a question about the salary structure. One of the things that struck me as I was taking a look at the Camden school system, and I guess I was taking a look at Pyne Poynt's own school report card, was that there seemed to be an appreciative difference between the salary levels in Camden and the salary levels state wide.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Right.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: If I had the Superintendent here to ask, which unfortunately I don't, what would you guess would be the response of the Administration as to why the salaries are the way they are? I mean other than to say we don't have the money.

MR. TIMPANELLI: That's exactly what they're going to say. We don't have the money.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: From where?

MR. TIMPANELLI: From the State to finance everything that we need, including salaries. We are short books, textbooks, right now. I'm short of supplies, I teach chemistry. I haven't had a test tube come in years.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: What is the amount of -- see we can only deal by what information is available to us.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Okay.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: What is the per pupil spending in Camden?

MR. TIMPANELLI: Ms. Beverly --

JOYCE BEVERLY - SCOTT: I was going to answer your question regarding salaries --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Oh sure, go ahead.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: -- because I did negotiate the last contract here in Camden with respect to the teacher's contract.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Oh good, I have a question for you then too.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: One of the things that we've heard constantly was that the budget did not allow for an increase in salaries. At some point they wanted to increase salaries zero percent, and the gap, in terms of money, was a lot higher -- the gap was more than it is now. It got to three percent, and then finally there was some reallocation of funds and it got to five percent. Well, that was the going average, but it did not bring the salaries up.

One of the problems was that not only are we talking about salaries being low but once you get what the increase is going to be, how do you distribute the money?

SENATOR ROBERTSON: That was going to be my question.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Okay. That was a major problem.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Probably because, frequently, education associations are accused of eating their young.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Well, eating their young. (laughing)

SENATOR ROBERTSON: No, I mean, if I'm a first chair teacher, the ones you're talking about -- I mean, in a lot of school systems, they will get zero percent --

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: No.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: -- because it's all accumulated in the bubble at year eight or six or whatever the local --

MR. TIMPANELLI: That's one of the problems, yes.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: What happens here?

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: That did not happen here last time. As a matter of fact, a great deal of the money was put at the beginning steps of the guide.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Because that's up to you guys, right?

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Well, no. It's a mutual agreement. Both sides have to agree how to distribute the money.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Oh, I know, but does -- why? Does the Administration usually say --

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Absolutely, yes.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: -- they say, don't give it to the early ones, give it to the later ones?

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: No. Well, this time they said don't give it to the later ones, give it to the early ones. As a matter of fact --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: That I can see, no offense. But I understand the logic in that.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Well, their position was, give it all to the early ones. And when you have new teachers coming into this district who don't

know the political setup, who don't know how to get their needs met, and there is not someone working with them -- I mean, if you have a district like Camden that's all new teachers, you're going to have chaos. We have teachers who come into this district, last two weeks, and they're out of here, not just because of the money but because of the working conditions.

Not only that, there are problems with the paperwork. We have teachers who have worked here 30, 45, 60 days and still have not gotten their proper pay.

MR. TIMPANELLI: They're being paid as substitutes.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Right. And in some cases they haven't gotten paid at all. So, there are major problems, in terms of new staff coming in.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: You're not a takeover district?

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Well --

MS. KASSEKERT: Not yet.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Well, they're certainly a high presence of State Task Force members at every, you know, level.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Then why are you having these problems?

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Well, I'd certainly like to know because --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: That was a near rhetorical question.

(laughing)

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Okay. Well, I mean, but I'd like to know the answer to that as well.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Maybe we'll ask the Commissioner if we get a chance to speak to him.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Who's going to actually bite the bullet, and --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Well, no, he's the perfect guy to ask because, you know, you can't blame him too much. He's only been there for two months.

I'm sorry.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: So, the question, who is actually going to bite the bullet and resolve the problems?

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Well, I mean, as in any war --

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Because we're chasing the mouse.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: This is a war fought on many fronts. I mean, that was the reason I asked the question about the salary guide and stuff. So, like, if I'm a first year -- let's say I'm a second year teacher, right now. How much of that raise am I going to see? How much is my salary going to be raised?

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: A thousand dollars.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: A flat amount?

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: That's correct.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Well, you know, it's a -- I mean, I understand you went through it when you were a second year teacher --

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: No.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: -- but it's a little hard to complain about how first and second year teachers don't get paid when you limit the

amount of salary increase that you're going to give them. And I say you because that's your end of the table that does it.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: What I'd like to say though is, from the middle of the guide to the end of the guide, there was no increase. Whatever --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Okay, so they get the better part of it?

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Yes, they move to the next step, which meant that they had an increase in money.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Oh, okay.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: But the salary guide, the amount on the salary guide itself --

SENATOR BARK: Didn't move.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Right, did not change simply because --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Oh, okay.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Right.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: I just wanted to let you know that some of us are at least watching a little bit, as far as that's concerned.

SENATOR BARK: See --

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Okay, but I also want you to know that, in this case, when it comes to the salary guides, we haven't taken all the money and put it at the top of guide for those people who have been here for 20 and 30 years. Even though they righteously deserve a major increase for their staying power and perseverance.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Oh, I understand. I'm just talking about the point at which the bubble -- you know, the people who are in the bubble.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Right.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Which is what, around six years, eight years, or something like that?

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: No.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Here it's a little higher.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: A little higher.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Here it's 11, 12 years.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Okay.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Right.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Because there's a 15-step guide here.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: But that can, theoretically -- and I realize that something that has happened and has been inherited by everybody -- but that will have an adverse impact on a districts ability to keep younger teachers. It's the younger teachers that aren't going to be rewarded.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Correct.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Especially if you are somewhat below the salary level statewide.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Right. It's a little difficult to put an increase in anywhere in the salary guide when all you're offering is 3 percent, and the actual incremental percentage of increase is beyond the 3 percent, when it's 4.2 percent.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Yes.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: So, that doesn't even address the increment, let alone give people raises that they deserve. So, we're hoping this year, because this year is a bargaining year, that there will be a sizable increase

so that there can be some competition, in terms of salaries with respect to the other districts in this area.

MR. TIMPANELLI: And to answer your question. The last three years, I've gotten a 1.3 percent increase, on average.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Right.

SENATOR BARK: So, you really have to want to work here, right?

MR. TIMPANELLI: Yes, right. I'm losing money every year.

SENATOR BARK: Well, thank you for staying.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Thank you.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: I have a question that may sound naive, and it's not meant to be a trick question at all. When we're talking about accountability, and we're talking about trying to get test scores, and we have all of these ways of evaluating students, what is the range of ways in which teachers are evaluated? For purposes of determining whether or not they're effective. Is it entirely subjective or what?

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: There is some subjectivity. There's a format. Unfortunately, I didn't bring that format with me. I don't have that here today. But there is a list of things that are observed and then -- it's a rating. You get a certain number and that would determine whether satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Each area is rated: presentation -- I'm trying to think of what else is on the list. There are a number of items on the list.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Content areas, classroom management, etc., discipline. And it's done both by the administration in the building and the supervisors. So you have outside --

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: One of the problems that we've had is that the administration has not followed the procedures.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Right.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Okay, so we do -- I'm saying that, ideally, it's set up to be objective but in actuality and practice and reality, it's actually very subjective. And I know that the Task Force came in --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Well, observations are by their very nature subjective, to some point.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: But there are things like whether you smell or not. I mean, just things that are totally inappropriate.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Well that's objective. (laughing)

MR. TIMPANELLI: Right.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Things that are totally inappropriate.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: That would be in the objective column.
(laughing)

MR. TIMPANELLI: Doesn't like the color of the bulletin board.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Oh, okay. Really.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Rather than let's try some new teaching strategies, instructional strategies. The focus has not, in the past, been there.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Right.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: And so, it sounds like you got some, you know, fires beyond the general ones that we're talking about. Because one of the frustrations for us as been that -- for this Committee, we started our hearings at a school in Paterson, and, you know, I went through the Paterson school system, and it's a good building, it's a nice building, sort of like this

building actually, on a much smaller scale. It was an elementary school. Nice building, class size was below the State average -- class size, like, 16 -- it's a State takeover district so it had, you know, lots of people watching. And in the year 2000, that's the group that had the 1.8 percent in the fourth grade test.

Now, those fourth graders have been in the system for five years and during that entire time the State of New Jersey has been running the school system. So, among the -- what we're seeking to get, and I know there is no single answer, we have to pretend to think there is, but one of the overall frustrations for the Committee is, you know, why should that be? And at what point -- when I talk to superintendents, and they talk about resources and personnel -- but absolutely nobody who has taken, you know, these witness chairs has said, in the first instance, as they talk about the various things that need to be done, the ways in which additional accountability can be put into the system. And maybe it's less fair to ask that of the folks in Camden if things are really that difficult, but at some point we've got to bring our system to the point where we are asking those questions, because that's an obvious component of any successful enterprise. Period.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: I totally agree with you. And that's something the Association itself is asking it's members. What can -- how can we participate in a way that allows for that achievement gap to decrease? One of the problems that we see is that there is a plan, there's the *Abbott* regulations, which is a plan on how to address that problem. But there are all kinds of obstacles that are put in the way of that plan being realized. So then, when you come back and ask, well, how come you're not achieving? Then I have to go back to the plan and tell you all the problems that -- not that the plan itself is

a bad plan, but in the implementation of that plan, you have major problems. So then we need to look at what kind of supports need to be put in place so that we can at least carry out the plan and realize the results.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: And I think that that's not an unfair thing to say, except to the extent that -- you know, this is the point, when I was on the racial profiling hearings, that I lost it, which is that while we're waiting for the computer system, isn't there a manual system that we can do to be saving more children? I mean, in this context.

There are schools that are successful. And there are reasons that they are successful. And they didn't wait around for the regulations to be put into place. What we're dealing with though, however -- just to make sure you understand we are sensitive to what you're saying -- is that the regulations have imposed additional responsibilities that are not instructional in nature, which is exactly what you're talking about.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Correct.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Correct.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Right. Yes, exactly.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: You know, those are the sort of questions that we want to pose to the Commissioner.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: And those aspects of the regulations that allow for creating additional educational programs, that address those needs, that even though school staff have put together a plan, there have been all kinds of problems in trying to implement those plans, even when the State funded the plan, and the money was spent differently, or some person of higher authority

decided that, no, we're not going with this plan, we're going to choose a different plan.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Well, part of the problem with that, and this is something that I hope we'll be able to explore -- I hope we'll have one last hearing -- but, you know, I want to get the Attorney General's office in and David Sciarra in because part of the problem is -- he's the attorney for the school.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Yes.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Yes, we're well familiar with him.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: We know him well.

SENATOR BARK: The name is familiar.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: I'm sure you know David. Because part of problem, here, is that we're dealing in an adversarial context.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Correct.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: And I don't mean that rhetorical, I mean that literally.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Right.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: It's an adversarial, you know, on opposite sides in a case. And yet I'm hearing some of the same frustrations from each side. And yet, it's the adversarial nature of the proceeding that has helped to cause this. So, you know, I'm just hoping that there is some way we can develop a paradigm, you know, a procedure, to which we can do these things.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Tomorrow -- I shouldn't say tomorrow -- it's on the 7th -- November 7th -- is when the district has finally put together a

training session, which begins with all parties coming to the table. There will be a series of round tables where there will be some training that takes place with all SMT members. And at that point, the Association has been invited in, and hopefully those adversarial concerns will dissipate, and we'll be able to --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: No, no, no. I'm not talking about stakeholders having different points of view. When I say adversarial proceedings, I mean, there's a plaintiff and there's a defendant.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Okay.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: And there is a court watching.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Okay. Yes.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: And the court says, you must have this done by October 15th --

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: The court --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: -- because the advocate for the plaintiff is saying they're not moving fast enough.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Okay.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Meanwhile, the defendants, which actually includes all of you because it's the State of New Jersey and the educational system, is saying we can't do it by the 15th. And you're saying we can't do it by the 15th. And David Sciarra would listen to that, because he listens to folks, but yet somehow there is a disconnect there because of the nature. And that's one of the things that I'm concerned about, because that's what's driving educational policy now. In part, is the adversarial nature which was necessary to do in the first instance.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Okay. Because no change was --

SENATOR ROBERTSON: But we have to find a way, you know. If there's a genuine buy-in on both sides, we have to find a way around the negative aspects of that dynamic.

SENATOR BARK: Unfortunately, we --

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: And by the way, we could get it done by October 15th if you would pay us to work July and August.

SENATOR BARK: Oh, she's right on the toes, isn't she. (laughing)

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Well, that a --

SENATOR BARK: But I think -- there are a couple of things, you know, that I think are unique where we are right now. First of all, I think Camden has very special, specific dynamics that maybe other districts, even other *Abbott* districts, don't have.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: That's correct.

SENATOR BARK: And I think there's also, you know, a disconnect when you have a court running education. I don't think that that is a positive thing for education. And I truly wish that the courts would get out of it. Now, have they done good things? Yes, because they have provided money for certain kinds of districts which I think was needed, but they're are still trying to tell the educators what do in school. And I don't think in most cases they really know what goes on in a school. I'm not sure that they have that kind of knowledge. And so I would say that it's adversarial to that extent.

The courts have really driven education for the past, what, 25, 30 years. We've been through the T and E process that long, and we get different directions, and consequently, whether than saying, this is the way we're going

to do it, stay the course, perfect the course, and get it done, we're always doing something else.

I want to say one last thing, and then I will shut up.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: No.

SENATOR BARK: I so often feel that we forget why we're all talking about this. Sometimes I felt when I was talking, when I was a school board member, that everybody forgot why we were there, because obviously once we remove children we are redundant in this conversation about education. And you don't always focus on that, and I'm not even sure that the courts do, you know.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Can I pick up on that?

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Yes.

MR. TIMPANELLI: As a teacher of 32 years, and in defense of my fellow teachers, we don't teach just a subject, okay. We teach the child, and therefore our emphasis is not solely on the testing and the subject matter. We have many problems here in Camden that are beyond the subject that we're teaching. We really must teach the child first.

SENATOR BARK: Good point.

MR. TIMPANELLI: And that's our emphasis here.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Well, the one thing -- and I agree, but ultimately, despite the fact that it will be a pain in the neck, a lot of this stuff, it'll hopefully get you some of what you need to do that job.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Right.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Because we wouldn't be here if it weren't for the existence of test scores that demonstrate to us that there's a genuine, deep seated problem. A problem that we would always know was there this early, but the question is how do you explain to a single parent in the neighborhood that their children will not be educated to proficiency?

MR. TIMPANELLI: Yes.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: How do you deal with the fact that tomorrow's leaders, tomorrow's scientists and lawyers and doctors are going to come from that portion of the student population now, which is in the advanced proficient column? And that there are whole cities that aren't producing one student in an advanced proficient category. Now that's not to say they won't graduate to be successful. Yet they do succeed.

MR. TIMPANELLI: I was going to say, yet they do succeed, many of them. We can point them out. Yes they do.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: But it tells us that there is a real problem and that there's something that we need to pay additional attention to.

MR. TIMPANELLI: Exactly.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: And the fact that we're down here today is as a result of that.

MR. TIMPANELLI: And we thank you for that time.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: We just want to work, and we want to build on that to the degree possible instead of just letting it go by and telling ourselves that the reform du jour is going to solve all of our problems.

Thank you very much for your input. We appreciate that.

MS. BEVERLY-SCOTT: Thank you.

MR. TAMPANELLI: Thank you.

SENATOR BARK: Yes, it's good, very good input.

MS. SCHULZ (Executive Director): I don't think there's anybody else here that's going to talk. You could ask.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: I don't think anybody else here has asked to testify, but let me ask Mr. Edwards -- Principal Edwards. No, the other Principal Edwards. (not referring to Keith Edwards).

MS. SCHULZ: He's not around.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: He's not around? Oh, I'm sorry.

MS. SCHULZ: Do you want me to go and get him? He might be teaching, because he also teaches.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Oh, he also teachers. Oh good, so he's a business administrator --

MS. SCHULZ: Yes.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: -- a capital planner, a principal, and a teacher?

MS. SCHULZ: Yes.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Okay.

SENATOR BARK: I don't think he ever wonders what he's going to do, right.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: It's true. Makes for an interesting day. We have yet to hear from E-3. I'm surprised they're not here.

MS. SCHULZ: They're not here.

SENATOR ROBERTSON: Alright. The School Board Association had expressed some interest in the hearings, but -- are there any representatives that want to give any input? (no response)

If not, then there may be one other one that we'll have to do at some point. Well, I thank everyone for coming this morning. I appreciate it.

Okay, thank you very much. We'll stand adjourned, and there's food in the back, please. It's one of the nice things about these things.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)