
Committee Meeting

of

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“The Joint Committee will discuss the topic of community schools”

LOCATION: Committee Room 16
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: April 11, 2018
9:30 a.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator Ronald L. Rice, Co-Chair
Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey, Co-Chair
Senator Patrick J. Diegnan Jr.
Senator Declan J. O’Scanlon Jr.
Senator Samuel D. Thompson
Assemblyman Ralph R. Caputo
Assemblyman Benjie E. Wimberly



ALSO PRESENT:

Rebecca Sapp
Executive Director

Ivy Pomper
Executive Assistant

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

SENATE

Hon. James Beach
Hon. Patrick J. Diegnan, Jr.
Hon. Linda R. Greenstein
Hon. Declan J. O'Scanlon, Jr.
Hon. Ronald L. Rice
Hon. Samuel D. Thompson

ASSEMBLY

Hon. Ralph R. Caputo
Hon. BettyLou DeCroce
Hon. DiAnne C. Gove
Hon. Reed Gusciora
Hon. Mila M. Jasey
Hon. Benjie E. Wimberly
Hon. David W. Wolfe



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MEETING NOTICE

TO: Members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools

FROM: Rebecca Sapp
Executive Director
Joint Committee on the Public Schools

The Joint Committee on the Public Schools will meet on Wednesday, April 11, 2018, at 9:30 a.m. in Committee Room 16 of the State House Annex, in Trenton, New Jersey.

The Committee will be doing a brief reorganization at 9:30 a.m. before receiving testimony from invited guests on the topic of community schools.

The public may address comments and questions to Rebecca Sapp, Executive Director, at 609-847-3365, or by email at Rsapp@njleg.org

Issued March 28, 2018

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SENATOR RONALD L. RICE (Co-Chair): Good morning.

ALL: Good morning.

SENATOR RICE: Okay, can you hear me? We have this new fancy stuff up here. (laughter) I'm glad we got it before we finished the Budget hearings, or we wouldn't have gotten it.

I just want to say that I'm Ron Rice, New Jersey State Senator; Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools, along with my Co-Chair, Mila Jasey. She'll speak to you in a moment.

I want to apologize, because usually I sit the whole meeting. It was important that we have the meeting this morning, for the issues we are going to discuss; but I'm going to have to leave, because I'm on a panel down in Voorhees, New Jersey, which I was committed to prior to us being able to set this date.

Also I want to apologize because some members could not make it today for different reasons. And for those who came -- I want to thank the members who have come. The intent was to reorganize today; but we'll do that at a subsequent meeting, when we have more members to be here.

With that being said, I just want to say that whatever is said to us up here is being recorded. So make sure that you keep your subject matter succinct and stuff like that. If you're going to deviate and say the wrong thing, understand we have you recorded and we will come see you later, okay? (laughter)

So with that being said, I'm going to turn to over it the Co-Chair, Assemblywoman Mila Jasey.

Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MILA M. JASEY (Co-Chair): Good morning; and I will echo what the Senator said.

Thank you to the members who are here.

I'm really excited about this topic, having visited a community school a few years ago. And from what I've been reading, there's a lot of success, there's a lot to talk about.

And as we struggle to figure out how to best educate our kids, I think we need to be open to different approaches and, you know, I'm looking forward to your testimony.

I'd like to ask members if they would like to just give a quick hello, because we want to get underway. We're starting a little late, and I apologize for that.

Senator, do you want to start?

SENATOR O'SCANLON: Actually, I'll be quick, too.

I know we got started a little late. That might be because I ran a little late, so it's a bipartisan acceptance of guilt. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: But it's really-- Look, these are some of the biggest issues that we face -- how to best educate our kids, and most efficiently, and take care of our communities. Because we know that schools are community centers, one way or another. Us doing it in an organized way is a good thing. So I am really interested to hear the dialogue this morning.

Thanks.

SENATOR THOMPSON: I would echo the sentiments of my colleague here.

We're always looking for better ways to improve the educational system out there. And if this is the way to go, then we should implement it.

Thank you.

SENATOR DIEGNAN: Ditto. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Thank you, Chair and Co-Chair.

It's a pleasure to be here. Obviously, we spend a lot of time in education, and there are always new approaches that could be more effective. And it's our job as -- my job as a former educator, former Administrator, former Department of Education official, to listen and, hopefully, put forth the best policy that will affect our children in the state.

Thank you.

Go, Benjie.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I guess I'm walking in on the tail end -- from another meeting.

But it's definitely a great opportunity to be back on the Joint Committee for public education.

I didn't get a chance to acknowledge Rosie Grant, who is a great advocate in our city for public education and our students. And I look forward to continuing to improve the lives of all of our individuals, young people in education, regardless if its public school, charter school, parochial school, private school. We need to realize that this is the way that we can really -- and particularly, in our urban areas -- revise our communities.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Assemblyman.

So without further ado--

A quick change in plans.

Senator Diegnan.

SENATOR DIEGNAN: I nominate you two for Co-Chairs.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I second it.

SENATOR DIEGNAN: All in favor. (affirmative responses)

Okay; re-org is over. (laughter and applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: You know, that's why we miss you in the Assembly. (laughter)

SENATOR DIEGNAN: I learned that from Trump.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Because we were more efficient when you were around. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR RICE: Let me just go on the record to thank the members for that.

And let me go on the record to say that the reason that we didn't have re-org-- We said we were going to have re-org in the first letter you received; but the members said they wouldn't be here, so we didn't think we'd have a quorum. And letters went out telling them that we wouldn't reorganize today. So we're going to ask staff to send a letter indicating that because there was a quorum, we weren't trying to neglect anyone; but it was asked that we do this, okay?

MS. SAPP (Executive Director): Certainly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

Okay; one of the things I've learned about Trenton is you have to be quick on your feet, and ready to change when necessary.

We're going to start hearing testimony from Mary Roche -- I hope I pronounced that correctly -- who is going to give us the national perspective.

Mary Roche is Director of Public Policy for the Institute for Educational Leadership's Coalition for Community Schools. She leads policy and advocacy efforts to promote the community schools approach at both the Federal and State levels. She also manages the Coalition's relationships with its over 100 national partners.

Welcome.

And the mike in front of you is recording; the other mike -- the higher one, that turns red when you hit the button -- that's the one you want to turn on so that we can all hear you.

MARY KINGSTON ROCHE: Great.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Welcome.

MS. ROCHE: Thank you.

Thank you for the opportunity. I just want to make sure the slides--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: You can pull your mike closer to you, I think, a little bit; yes.

Red is on.

MS. ROCHE: Got it; okay.

So good morning, members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools. It's a pleasure to be here, from D.C. this morning, to share a national perspective on community schools.

I've been working on community schools, leading the policy and advocacy efforts at the Federal and State levels, for five years now. And

I really believe in it, as a transformational strategy, to help our students succeed.

I started out my career teaching middle and high school English in Oakland, California, before they really landed on community schools. And I was able to visit the school I taught years later, as part of my job, and see the transformation. What once was a kind of chaotic environment in that school, with lots of students being unnecessarily suspended, I came back and saw a lot of collaboration between school and community partners.

And so things came full circle for me in that way, and I'm delighted to share the strategy with you all.

Through this presentation I hope you will come away with three takeaways on community schools. One, they're an effective strategy for school improvement; two, they are sustainable and scalable; and three, they are a great fit for New Jersey.

To begin my testimony -- and this slide really just is the first one showing pictures of students and families -- I'd like to paint a picture for you of what's possible through community schools by highlighting a few successes.

First, I will take you to Albuquerque, New Mexico, where our Collation Director comes from, recently having led the initiative there. These anecdotes were shared by him.

Imagine buses of students being dropped off on a dirt road, having to walk miles to homes with no running water, electricity, or supervision. And in just nine weeks, a community and its school rallying

together to open an afterschool program, in a building loaned to them, with Internet and food pantry at that same bus stop; in just nine weeks' time.

Imagine elected officials in the county arguing over many other topics, but coming together to develop a cross-sector, collaborative leadership board for community schools with elected official from the city, county, and school district; and increasing blended funding by over 500 percent to scale community schools from 3 to 26 in 5 years.

Imagine Spanish-speaking parents being invisible from their children's education -- because they were afraid, as immigrants, and have younger children to care for at home -- earning a certificate in Early Childhood Education; and starting their own licensed, early childhood co-op center at their children's school in four years.

Imagine a school in one of the poorest areas in the state of New Mexico -- a part of town named by its residents as the *War Zone* -- reducing student mobility from 91 percent to 35 percent in 4 years.

Secondly, I'll take you to Austin, Texas, and look at Reagan High School.

This school, as of a couple of years ago, had an 80 percent free and reduced lunch rate; 30 percent English Language Learner rate. In 2008, 1 in 4 female students in this school were pregnant or parenting, and poverty and a tragic incident in the school caused enrollment to drop from 2,000 to 600 students. The graduation rate was around 50 percent.

In 2008, the district threatened to close the school. Parents, teachers, and students, with a local nonprofit, presented a plan to turn the school into a community school, which the district accepted. They then began to form many partnerships. First, were the Austin Community

College Early College High School Curriculum; they got a full-time bilingual social worker to address chronic absenteeism; they put in place restorative justice practices and a student-led Youth Court developed with the University of Texas Law School. They created an onsite daycare program for the parenting moms, and a mobile clinic. And they funded family resource centers.

The local United Way gives \$300,000 a year to support mental health needs; and the local Children's Hospital commits \$200,000 a year for the mobile health clinic.

Within five years' time, the graduation rate went from 50 percent to 85 percent. Enrollment has more than doubled, 100 percent of pregnant and parenting teens now graduate, and students earning dual college credit went from 0 to over 150.

Those are just two examples to show you the power of community schools; and you'll hear more later about the amazing work going on in New Jersey as well.

So if you look at this slide, these examples give you a sense of the power of community schools. But to take a step back -- what is a community school in the first place?

It's important to know that it's a strategy, not a program, to align resources for equitable school and community improvement. As a strategy, it's not something that is layered onto a school, but a way to organize existing and new resources from the school and community towards student, family, and community success.

There are different ways that the field has used to describe the key components of a community school, and I offer here, in this picture, the way that the Learning Policy Institute has recently described it.

LPI organizes the components into four pillars: integrated student supports, expanded learning time and opportunities, family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership.

To unpack those for a minute -- integrated student supports really speaks to any possible barriers to learning that there are for students that community schools can address. So that could be physical and dental health services, mobile health clinics that you heard about, vision care; housing assistance; family stability programs; child care; and positive discipline practices, like restorative justice.

Expanded learning time and opportunities speaks to the additional learning time that community schools offer, as well as what learning looks like during the school day. Community schools offer afterschool and summer learning, and internships and apprenticeships with local partners. But it also revamps the curriculum to make sure that students really understand the community they come from, and those community partners and experiences are brought into the classroom to be a truly student-centered curriculum.

Third, family and community engagement looks different in community schools, because families and community partners are actually represented on the School Site Leadership team. In this way, they have a direct voice as to the decisions and planning of the school.

And the school also offers supports and enrichment for families and communities. So you might see GED classes, financial literacy classes,

community pot lucks, health fairs. The school really is the hub of the community; and parents and community members get to come in and not only contribute to the school, but get these enriching activities as well.

And fourth, collaborative leadership is really foundational to all these other three pillars, and is a tenant of community schools. This speaks to many things. The role of the Principal, deciding to distribute leadership and see the Coordinator as being another school leader in the school. And the Coordinator is the person who is a critical role for community schools, and facilitates those school and community partnerships.

And collaborative leadership is practiced where you see school staff and community partners deciding jointly the needs and assets of a school, and making a plan from there.

In addition to these components, there are a few important mechanisms of community schools as well. The first is an assets and needs assessment of both the school and community; and I'll talk later about how that connects with ESSA.

Second is a strategic plan that defines how educators and community partners will use all assets to meet needs and interests of students; third is the engagement of partners who bring additional assets and expertise into school; and fourth is that role of a community school coordinator, who is a critical investment to make this all work.

So in thinking about the value-add of community schools, if you were to ask, "What are the specific value-adds?" it's these three things that you see in this slide.

First, they garner additional resources to reduce demand on school staff. I'll give a clear example of that from Baltimore, where many

Baltimore community schools partner with the University of Maryland School of Social Work, who provides them with social work graduate students who offer supplemental mental health services for students, where the social worker at the school cannot handle the case load. The social worker grad students also earn credit hours; so it's a win-win for that partnership.

Second is, community schools provide learning opportunities to develop multiple learning competencies. Two quick examples of this are from Miami and Chicago. In Miami, a local high school partners with Florida International University, where high school students get to use an aquaponics laboratory and learn science, math, and engineering. The College of Business also brings students in to learn about financial literacy and investment.

In Chicago, students are developing their social cognitive skills through a partnership with a nonprofit called *Becoming a Man* -- that's the name of the program -- which is a dropout and violence prevention program, to offer mentoring and peer support to young men through stories, role playing, and group exercises.

So these could be addressed without these partnerships, but not to the same degree, and not to really connect the students who need it with these right partnerships.

And third, community schools build social capital. And that really speaks to-- When you expose students to not only caring school staff -- because it's important that they have mentors in the school -- but community partners who come in, who can show them what's possible -- whether it's a university professor, a college student, someone from a local

business -- so that they can see what's possible; that builds their social capital and their sense of agency.

The concept of community schools has been around for over 100 years; but in recent years, community schools have gained momentum and have grown rapidly across the country as many communities' choice for how to help young people succeed.

As compared to 2007 -- when we counted about 30 places implementing systems of community schools, meaning places operating two or more schools in an intentional strategy -- we now estimate over 100 places pursuing this strategy, a three-fold increase over just 10 years' time. These places range from large cities like New York and Chicago; to smaller cities, like Evansville, Indiana and Tulsa, Oklahoma; to rural areas in New Mexico, Kentucky, upstate New York, and elsewhere.

Of these places, the Coalition directly supports 75 initiatives, including the ones you'll hear from today, across 32 states plus D.C., and 72 cities; 15 state coalitions, and dozens of local United Ways.

The New Jersey State Coalition -- two representatives you'll hear from today -- is a true exemplar among the state coalitions in terms of the number and range of stakeholders they have engaged, the number of convenings they have hosted, and their work with policymakers -- including this Committee -- to build interest and support for community schools.

Community schools is a proven evidenced-based strategy for school improvement. At a time when states are looking at new approaches for school improvement with a new flexibility given, the Learning Policy Institute confirmed that community schools meet the evidence criteria for ESSA, and recommend those strategies to state and local policymakers.

Community schools show impact in various indicators, including academic and non-academic. A study of Tulsa's community schools show that they outperformed non-community schools in math by 32 points and reading by 19 points. In Baltimore, you see the results in terms of chronic absenteeism. Among community schools operating for 5 or more years, students in grades 6 through 8 were 48 percent less likely to be chronically absent; and among those students who participate in out-of-school time activities, they were 77 percent less likely to be chronically absent.

In the first two years of New York City's community schools initiatives, schools decreased chronic absenteeism by 7 percent. And a 2014 study by Child Trends finds that community schools reduce grade retention and dropout rates.

A major strength of the community school strategy is that it leverages and aligns current and new diversified funds towards a comprehensive strategy. This pie chart shows you our findings from our financing guide, which looked at the investments from a sampling of initiatives in schools as to the average mix of funding contributing toward community schools. Here you will see that the district contributes just about a quarter of the total funds, with other sources of funding being a mix of public and private resources. This means that for every one dollar the district invests in community schools, it gets three more dollars in leveraged funding from other sources. This model of diversified funding helps to scale and sustain a strategy, and build support in ownership among stakeholders.

Community schools have also demonstrated a social return on investment. Studies have shown that every \$1 spent yields between \$10

and \$15 back in social return when looking at outcomes related to social, educational, environmental, and health well-being.

Community schools foster greater collaboration at the school and community levels. As New Jersey considers investment in community schools, it's crucial to promote collaboration at the system level as well. In some cases, this is the district, or it can be an entire county. This graphic shows the key components of a successful, collaborative leadership structure at the site and system levels, and the people who should be involved at each level. The middle circle identifies the key functions that occur at the system level, including a results-based vision, data evaluation, finance and resource development, and professional development.

At the school level, you see, noted around the circle, an expanded site leadership team that includes community partners, the coordinator, families, and students.

At the community level, you see this wider group reflected with representation from the school district, unions, community-based organizations, higher ed, business- and faith-based groups, local government, and families and community members.

The intermediary role, which is the bubble in the middle, is played by an organization that manages the community school's initiative, and leads the planning and coordination to serve as the bridge between individual schools and a community-wide leadership group.

The right entity should demonstrate the capacity and commitment to lead this work. It could be a school district, a county, a United Way, a nonprofit, or another public government agency.

By having this collaborative leadership at both the school and community levels, you are strengthening the collaboration, commitment, and investment in community schools; and promoting shared responsibility and ownership for student success.

There's increasing support for community schools at the Federal and state levels. Since 2008, Congress has appropriated funds for the Full-Service Community Schools Program. In 2015, a coalition of advocates, including the Coalition for Community Schools and our partners -- including the national teachers unions, Afterschool Alliance, School Superintendents Association, School Boards Association, and many others -- advocated for this to be authorized; and we got it authorized in the Every Student Succeeds Act, thanks to bipartisan support in Congress.

This occurred at a time when ESSA consolidated 30-plus other programs, so it shows you the strong support for the program.

Until this year, the program had received about \$10 million per year; for Fiscal Year 2018, this fiscal year, Congress has increased funding by 75 percent, to \$17.5 million.

A new program to know about, as funding comes down from the Federal level, is Title IV-A, which is also known as the *Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant*. Whereas last year, Congress only appropriated \$400 million for this; this year, in Fiscal Year 2018, they appropriated \$1.1 billion, which will go, by formula, to states and districts. This is also the only place in ESSA which calls out the role of a coordinator as an eligible use of funding. So it's a great pot of money to consider for community schools, along with Title 1 and 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

The great thing about Title IV-A is that the district is asked to do a needs assessment to determine how to use that funding, in terms of giving students a well-rounded education, providing a safe and healthy environment, and improving the use of technology. So there's a great alignment with community schools.

States are also showing momentum in support for community schools. Community schools are referenced in state plans. Pennsylvania's plan explicitly encourages districts to use Federal funds to implement schools, and commits to technical assistance for communities. And Illinois' plan promotes community schools as an effective strategy for family and community engagement.

The 36 states, including New Jersey, that included chronic absence as a school quality indicator, can look to community schools as an effective strategy as well.

And then, in 2016, this was a real landmark year for community school state support, with four states approving legislation or funding for community schools, among many other states that introduced legislation. This ranged from a modest pilot grant in Minnesota of \$1 million; to hundreds of millions in New York to be dispersed through foundation aid; to a creative policy in California that redirects funding from the prisons to the state Department of Education for dropout prevention activities, among which community schools is referenced as an effective strategy.

And hopefully, we can add New Jersey to this list of states in the near future.

The new *Every Student Succeeds Act* that replaces *No Child Left Behind* empowers state and district leaders to rethink strategies to support all students to succeed. And we hope to see communities as important partners.

I wanted to pull out a few features of ESSA that community schools support, to show this alignment.

First, ESSA promotes a well-rounded education throughout the law. As I mentioned before, with the components of community schools, you see a well-rounded education in community schools; and further, the law explicitly encourages partnerships with nonprofits and higher ed institutions that can contribute to this well-rounded education.

Chronic absenteeism: You heard the examples from Baltimore, and New York City, and many other places that we can point you to, that are moving the needle on chronic absenteeism. This is, of course, in New Jersey's plan as well, as a required reporting indicator in state and district report cards.

Needs assessments: In ESSA, schools identified for school improvement are required to do a needs assessment in order to determine their strategy for improvement. Community schools have deep experience in doing needs assessments as part of their strategy, and are well-poised to implement this provision.

School improvement: Now that we've moved past *No Child Left Behind* and the four required models under the School Improvement Grant Program, states and districts have this flexibility to determine the strategy they choose; and we hope that New Jersey considers the community schools strategy for school improvement.

Expanded reporting requirements: These indicators include new things like school climate, and school discipline, and chronic absence; and community schools address these through the needs assessment. So you already have a strategy that is incorporating these factors into the school plan.

And finally, stakeholder engagement: This is really encouraged in ESSA, especially as part of the planning process; and it was great to see in the New Jersey ESSA plan -- the feedback from the listening sessions, among which community schools was referenced. Going forward, it would be great to see that same level of stakeholder engagement as we now implement ESSA; and community schools offer this way through incorporating family and community voice into school- and system-level decision making.

So lastly, this is just my personal view of the great fit for New Jersey -- of community schools. And I just wanted to highlight a few ways that I see that it could fit, based on looking at your ESSA State plan and working deeply with your State Coalition leaders.

First, as an equity strategy: Community schools is an equity strategy to ensure that we address conditions for learning, and give all students what they need to succeed. As New Jersey -- along with all states -- works to address its achievement gaps and disparities, this is a promising strategy to consider.

Hyper-local and nimble: Each New Jersey district, community, and school is different from the next, in terms of their needs and assets, including the communities represented here today. Community schools are

hyper-local and nimble to be able to customize the specific partnerships needed for that community.

Framework for partnerships: As Greg and Julie will speak to, in a little bit, the survey results of superintendents across the state show an increasing reliance on partnerships to meet the needs and interest of their students. Community schools offer a framework to apply these partnerships effectively to benefit the community.

Effective use of funds: As New Jersey faces a very tight budget for education and looks to recover funding, community schools offer an effective use of funds that leverages diversified funding and shows a strong social return on investment.

Alignment with ESSA. From the previous slide I shared, you can see how the goals and requirements of ESSA fit well with what we are looking to do, especially around New Jersey's plan for chronic absence.

And build ownership for sustainable success: Community schools are not only an effective school improvement strategy, but a sustainable one as well. When you expand the voices at the school and community level to include families, partners, and members of the community, you bring more expertise, experience and, most importantly, ownership so that entire communities commit to helping our young people succeed.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to provide this testimony. I'm excited to see the interest and momentum for community schools, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have today, and serve as a resource going forward.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

I have a lot of questions, but I'm going to hold them until I hear from the other presenters, who may answer those questions.

But one question I'm going to just put out there -- and you can address it or not -- do you know of any examples where community schools have been used as a way to address economic and racial segregation in communities?

MS. ROCHE: So I think that the panelists might be able to speak to this as well.

I think the approach with community schools is -- and making the school the hub of the community -- that happens as a byproduct, or as a result. So a quick example could be that -- this was a couple of years ago now, in Cincinnati, which has been a very successful mission of community schools. The district is working hard to make every school a community school; and it's actually mandated through board policy -- that all schools will embrace this strategy. And in one particular community, there had been a disinvestment in the public school, where parents weren't satisfied with the school so they were sending kids to the private schools. But close by to them they saw the increasing partnerships, and opportunities, and supports in a nearby school that had become a community school, and decided that they want to go back to this public school and bring that to their school. So they turned it into a Montessori-style education program, as a community school. And in that neighborhood there was a large population of immigrant families. In order to make them feel welcome, they turned the library into an International Welcome Center, so that it wasn't just one group of parents who could see themselves as belonging there, but others.

So I think my quick way of answering that would be -- in making the school the hub, and including all those voices, and doing that needs assessment -- by nature of that, you help to break down those walls. And I suspect that you'll probably hear some other examples too.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you very much; thank you.

Next up, we're going to have a panel--

Oh, I'm sorry.

Do other members want to ask questions now, or do you want to hold them? We'll hold them?

Yes, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

The absenteeism -- the reduction; and I see Baltimore, and I know Baltimore is similar to a lot of our urban communities here, probably, when you talk about the makeup. What was the main factor in reducing absenteeism?

MS. ROCHE: I think a couple of things were the-- The needs assessment really revealed it as a big problem. So until people started talking about chronic absenteeism, there was an attention to average daily attendance, which can mask serious attendance gaps in some students, when you just look at that level -- average daily attendance.

So community schools, when they look at needs assessments, see those gaps. And then it's through the partnerships, they often-- The community school coordinator often works with an attendance committee that is already there, so that they're not just identifying who is absent; but

the coordinator can then connect those -- determine why they're absent -- so figure out the root causes by doing--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And that's my bigger question.

MS. ROCHE: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I mean, the obvious would be-- I know in a lot of urban areas it's housing, health issues, employment issues with parents -- you know, all those things along that line. And I'm just curious -- how did that work? Did they work with them with housing, did they work with them with dental issues, with health issues? I mean, what was done?

MS. ROCHE: Yes. It's all of the above; it's hard to isolate one. But I would say that also connects to students mobility rates, and we have results in that as well, and we can show results where -- through whether it's a United Way sponsored family stability program, things like that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Just for the sake of time, if you could share that with the Chairwoman -- through the Chairwoman, I would appreciate that.

MS. ROCHE: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Assemblyman.

Next up, I'd like to invite Rosie Grant, Executive Director of the Paterson Education Fund; Bryan Murdock, Director of the Center for Community Engagement, Montclair State University; Dr. Anniesha Walker, Deputy Director, Community Schools and Program Development, Mercer Street Friends, Trenton Community Schools.

And we don't have enough seats, but--

Okay; we're going to improvise; I'll explain the mikes.

Toni Baskerville-Richardson, Chief Education Officer for the City of Newark; and Dr. G. Kennedy Greene, Superintendent, from the Newton Public Schools.

So here's, I think, how it could work. As long as you have one of these mikes that turns red in front of you, we'll be able to hear you. The other mikes -- don't touch those; they're just recording. And after you present, maybe rotate the seats, okay?

I'm sure you can figure it out.

Thank you so much.

Please identify yourself for the record.

ROSIE GRANT: Good morning.

Rosie Grant, Executive Director, Paterson Education Fund.
Thank you for this opportunity to be here today.

And a special shout-out to you, Assemblyman Wimberly; thank you.

Paterson has had community schools since 2010. We have five of them, and the first one opened in 2010. But before it opened, we went through a year-long planning process. That one took the most time, because it was our first.

And during that planning process, we had a Request for Proposal process to first identify what school it would be; and schools applied that were interested. And then we had a Request for Proposal process to identify the lead community agency. We formed a community-wide team that was a cross-sector -- pay no attention to this; we'll get there

(laughter) -- that was cross-sectored to make sure that we would be thinking about both coming at it from the community and from the district; but also to think about sustainability as we started going.

During that planning process, we led a needs assessment at the school, once it was identified. We had focus groups, and talked with parents, teachers, students, Administrators, and community partners to try to identify what assets were available to us in the community, and what the needs of that specific community were. Once those needs were identified, we synthesized it and passed it on to the lead agency. The lead agency's role, then, was to try to find the right programs to meet those needs.

So as the lead agency, they hire the site supervisor -- the Coordinator -- and that person's main role is to identify these resources and to coordinate them. So there's not an expectation that the lead agency should provide all the services; but that they should look at what the needs are and pull those services in for the kids and the families.

Because of this, we have five community schools that all look very different. They all have a base of what we're trying to do; and that's why I brought along the theory of change, which is very complex, but it helps us in our work to make sure that we're looking at all the sectors -- seeing what parents need, what the academic needs are, some youth engagement and empowerment in youth development work, social-emotional-mental health work -- are all included in the process of rolling out the community school strategy.

The focus groups happen annually. We don't just do the initial needs assessment. And Paterson Education Fund leads them, because we're an external partner; we're the Co-Chair of the Steering Committee,

districtwide, but we're not a service provider. So we're placed in a way that the New Jersey Coalition will be placed -- as an external force to push the community schools' initiative along. We go in, and people have the freedom to talk honestly about what's happening in their lives and what's happening in their classrooms, in the case of the kids. And we talk to kids as early as kindergarten to find out what they're thinking and what their needs are.

I brought along, and shared with you, a copy of the parent protocol that we use. You'll see that we're looking at what's happening in their lives, in their communities, social and emotional health and well-being, how their kids are coping, what programs their kids are engaged in, and so on. So it's a very detailed needs assessment process.

There was one school that opened without it, and we found out we had to go back and do that. It's very important that that is done at the onset so that the programs are aligned.

I won't take too much more time, but I did want to share that we had a Federal grant, for the first two, that ran out; and then we got a second Federal Full-Service Community Schools Grant for the second cohort of three schools. It's important, at the onset, to pay attention to sustainability; because as that money ran out, we found ourselves in a dangerous place where we could no longer provide some of the services that were needed.

So the two things I want to leave you with are the importance of the needs assessment process, and the importance of having a lead agency and a site coordinator who is focused on community schools.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

Bryan.

BRYAN MURDOCK: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Yes.

MR. MURDOCK: Hello.

My name is Bryan Murdock; thank you for this opportunity to present to you this morning on our project in Orange, New Jersey.

The Orange Community Schools Initiative is a partnership between Montclair State University and 25 community faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, and other colleges and universities.

It began in one school in 2009, with funding from the JPMorgan Chase Foundation. It is now funded by a U.S. DOE grant, and funding from the Orange Board of Education, Montclair State University, the New Jersey Department of Education, 21st Century grant, and the New Jersey Commission for National Community Service.

I'll just take a moment here to reiterate what Mary Roche had discussed earlier -- that community schools are able to leverage a tremendous amount of funding once they're up and running. MSU, for example, alone, in indirect and direct funding -- we provide about \$500,000 to \$700,000 a year through services, and programs, and outreach, and various grants.

I'll take a moment just to talk a little bit about our particular model. The Orange Community Schools is what is known as a *university-assisted community school model*, and it differs from a traditional community school that's been described in Paterson in one fundamental way. In the

traditional community school model, the lead partner is typically a social service agency, like a YWCA or a United Way. In the university-assisted community school model, obviously, it's an institution of higher education. It operates very much like a traditional model, but in addition to organizing and coordinating the community's resources into the life and work of this school, we are also engaging the full panoply of resources from a large research institution of higher education -- from academic programs, co-curricular programs, administrative systems, and including the physical plant of the university.

This model has two primary benefits: One, it's cost-effective, as many of the universities resources -- such as student interns, service-study (*sic*) students, faculty research -- can be leveraged at little to no cost. And two, because of the cost efficiencies of this model, it is very sustainable. These two features have made the university-assisted community school model very popular, as it's been replicated many, many times across the country. So we're big fans of it, obviously.

Just a little bit more information about the Orange Community Schools -- it's comprised of four schools: Rosa Parks, Oakwood Avenue, and Orange Preparatory are full-service community schools; and Forest Street School is what we would categorize as an *emerging community school*.

Two of the schools, Oakwood and Rosa Parks, are the ones that are actually funded by the Full-Service Community School grant. The core of the Full-Service Community School grant are its instructional programs, out-of-time school programs, adult school; and comprehensive support services, such as pediatric clinics located in each of the schools.

All these programs and services, again, are coordinated by a community school site coordinator, who is the leader of the community school and operates out of a community room that is made available by the school.

The idea, again, is to create a hub within the community to replace resources that have long gone away; that are no longer available. There is no YMCA in Orange, New Jersey; there is no YWCA, there is no Boys and Girls Club, right? So the schools represent the extent of institutional resources that are available that we build off of.

So not only do we have wraparound health and social services, but also students are able to participate in programs, mentoring programs, extended learning programs, and social events.

Over the past three years, we've been hard at work collaborating with our 25 partners. Each school now operates a full-time pediatric clinic, where students can receive primary health care, services from an onsite physician, and also access a full range of other medical services, including eye exams, dental check-ups, hearing screenings, and behavioral health support. Last year, for example, 225 students at our Rosa Parks School received free eye exams; 96 of them received free glasses. The effect of this is obvious on their academic achievement. If you can't see, you can't read, you can't participate in class.

Additionally, through the partnership with Rutgers and Columbia universities, we have recruited social work interns; we have significantly expanded our capacity. Again, reiterating what Mary discussed earlier, to provide additional emotional support services for students. This is one of the biggest needs. I think if you went to any school in Orange,

East Orange -- one of the biggest needs is going to be addressing social, and emotional, and behavioral support needs of students.

Almost 1,268, or 85 percent of the students received or participated in at least one community school program, with at least 70 percent of the students participating in afterschool remedial education and arts programming.

At Oakwood Avenue, for example, we started an El Sistema program -- we stole a little bit from Paterson -- for 1st through 4th grade students; 70 students participate in this program, learning violin, viola, and cello, as well as drumming and musicianship. This has turned into a little orchestra for the school, and it the first that the school has had in its history, in terms of a music program like that.

At Rosa Parks, we've opened up an adult school that offers courses in ESL, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, computer literacy, and coding to parents and community members. Programs like ESL help parents to be better partners and advocates for their children in the school, and it also provides economic opportunities, by virtue of them being able to speak English a little bit more proficiently.

Each of the schools receives a 21st Century grant and AmeriCorps funding, which provides funding for in-class instructional support, afterschool tutoring, and an arts program.

The Orange Community School has come a long way in developing our schools into community hubs that we've envisioned. But as with any school reform strategy -- and it is strategy -- and I hear -- I want to quote Peter Drucker, which is that, you know, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." And so it is not a simple task; it takes a lot of time to get these

kinds of programs up and running. But if you're tenacious and you really believe in what you're doing, you can overcome those barriers.

So today we are actively engaging community partners, parents, students, and school faculty and staff to play an active role in addressing the education, social, and economic barriers to school and family success.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

And I'm going to ask members if they have questions.

And also people in the back -- are you able to hear?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay, all right; because I know the fan sometimes interferes.

Assemblyman Caputo.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: First of all, I appreciate your testimony, among others.

Let me ask you about the needs assessment process. What are the ingredients and the steps that you take, in terms of the needs assessment?

MR. MURDOCK: So we collaborated with a research and evaluation assessment center at the University to conduct our needs assessment. And that was a full, three-month process where we went in to assess the needs of the school and the community through a variety of mixed modal assessments. We did focus groups, we did surveys, and -- with parents, with students, with teachers, with staff, and with community members.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Well, who looks at that data once you have it recorded?

MR. MURDOCK: The data was presented to the school community--

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Recommendations, or the data?

MR. MURDOCK: --with recommendations; there are 10 recommendation that were made. We put the recommendations up on the wall; we had parents, and community members, teachers and staff take an opportunity to prioritize what they believe, out of those recommendations, where the priorities. Obviously, you can't focus on everything, so you have to focus on the top priorities. And we used that process to sort of launch the initiative.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Well, who reviews that information? Who reviews the data that you collect?

MR. MURDOCK: Who reviews that data?

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Yes, who reviewed it and made those recommendations?

MR. MURDOCK: Well, the recommendations were made by the center -- the evaluators, the external evaluators who did it, and we did it--

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Are the evaluators -- are the evaluators from Orange, or -- where are the evaluators from?

MR. MURDOCK: They're from the schools; I'm sorry.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: The evaluators are from the schools?

MR. MURDOCK: No, they're from Montclair State University.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Montclair State; okay, all right.

Question two: What is your total amount of funding for those four schools? What is your budget for those four schools?

MR. MURDOCK: Well, we receive-- There's a tremendous amount of funding. There's \$500,000 a year in Federal funding from the Full-Service Community School grant; \$300,000 from an AmeriCorps grant that we receive from the New Jersey Commission here in the State.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Right.

MR. MURDOCK: There's a 21st Century grant, part of which serves two of our -- two, I think -- two of our community schools. And then there's funding that is provided by the District and by Montclair State University, either direct or indirect. I would say it's well -- it's obviously well over \$1 to \$1.5 million.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: All right. And how many staff members do you employ?

MR. MURDOCK: We employ two from my end, from the University's end; we're the lead partner in the project. We employ a Site Coordinator at each of the schools; and, again, those are the leaders who are coordinating the resources and doing all of the planning and implementation of programs and services. And we have a Project Coordinator who we fund through blended or braided funding resources, who helps oversee the overall project.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: How about members from the community; do you employ any members from the community?

MR. MURDOCK: Well, we have hired people from the community into our AmeriCorps program, where they serve as Family Liaisons, and also work in the classrooms.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Okay.

I have a special interest, because I worked in Orange; I was Assistant Superintendent there. And I understand what you're talking about -- this was years ago -- that many of these programs have disappeared; and in Newark also. Over the years, many of these somewhat community programs have disappeared. The reasons why, we don't have to get into; but the fact is, there is a gap and programs like this are necessary.

But it's always nice to diagnose how these things -- how do programs match the needs, how objective the data was, how it was reviewed, and how involved was the community in forming these programs. Because if they're not -- if the community is not involved, they're not going to work, because you're not going to get the support from the parents and from the other business entities in the town, and any other services that you can get.

So it's very important that they're linked, and there's faith both ways -- trust -- between everybody working there.

Okay; I'm going to pass it on to someone else.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: And Assemblyman, I know that you also had a question for Rosie Grant; do you want to ask that now?

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I'm going to hold--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: You're going to hold it?

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I'm going to hold that; I'm going to hold it; yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay; all right.

I have a request from Senator Rice, who has a conflict and will have to leave.

So I would like to ask Toni Baskerville-Richardson to speak next; if she can change places with you, Dr. Walker, and then we'll hear from you.

Okay; and Bryan, if you would turn your mike off; Toni, you can turn yours on (laughter), and I'll turn mine off.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: You're on, Toni.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: All right.

ANTOINETTE BASKERVILLE - RICHARDSON:
Good morning.

SENATOR RICE: Good morning.

MS. BASKERVILLE-RICHARDSON: Good morning, Senator Rice, Assemblywoman Jasey, and all members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools.

I did leave a document; but I have written a bunch of notes on my document. So what I say will not be exactly what you see on the paper.

So I want to, first, just thank you for this opportunity to talk about the Newark Initiative and where we are now.

When I speak, I'm going to give a high-level overview; I'm going to include the things that are working, the things that are not working, and just kind of a review of how we -- where we started and how we got to where we are today.

For those of you who don't know me, I am -- I work now as Chief Education Officer for Mayor Baraka; but I am a retired educator in

the Newark Public Schools, past President of the Newark Board of Education, and have been embedded in the Newark Public Schools probably for all of my life -- other than, like, for four years when I went away to college. So I bring that perspective to all of this.

So in Newark, there are a number of schools that, prior to the Initiative now, were designated as *community schools*. But they were individual schools -- Sussex Avenue School, Quitman Street School -- they still carry the name, community schools, in their name, but it was never a districtwide kind of initiative.

So although they never got the kind of support that was needed, those schools do have cohorts of parents and community people who still keep certain programs going and support things at that school, and who are really interested in becoming a part of the formal Initiative that now exists.

The most recent push for community schools in Newark was initiated by a core of Newark community members who were involved in fighting back against the barrage of reforms that resulted in -- and this is the important part -- that resulted in the destruction of the culture of neighborhood schools in Newark, particularly in the South Ward. And so community schools were called for in the District's Strategic Plan -- actually, in the Strategic Plan that we are now implementing, as well as the one before that. And Newark residents made a conscious and educated choice to pursue a community schools model. There are people in our community who actually -- before the School District, in any way, was thinking about community schools -- there was a core of people in our community who took the initiative to really educate themselves about

community schools, visit community schools all over the country, and just began thinking about what the best alternative was for Newark for education.

So the choice of community schools also aligned with the beliefs of Mayor Baraka. Mayor Baraka, as you may know, used to be a high school Principal at Central High School, where, as Principal, he was able to usher in remarkable academic growth and a real positive improvement in culture and climate, under a community schools model called the *Global Village Zone*. Unfortunately, that initiative ended under State-appointed Superintendent Cami Anderson. But the flame was lit, and people were really, really interested in continuing that model.

So the current South Ward Community Schools Initiative was conceptualized by Mayor Baraka and then-Superintendent Christopher Cerf. And it was funded by a \$10 million grant from the Chan Zuckerberg Foundation; and that was in December of 2015.

Despite this historic cooperative effort, the road forward was difficult. And, you know, we can read between the lines. We have, as we know, our school district and our city government -- they're two separate entities. And they agreed on an idea; but to actually make it work and the coordination of that became a real, I'd say -- it became a challenge.

So despite this historic cooperative effort, the road forward was difficult. But I'm here today and I'm happy to report that many of the obstacles have been overcome; and those that haven't, we are actively working on this.

So the current Community Schools Initiative includes five schools in the South Ward of Newark, which is one high school and four

elementary schools that can feed into the high school. I say *can feed into*, because, right now, within the area of the South Ward, in particular, many of the families opt to go to charter schools; and our traditional high schools in the South Ward of Newark are under-enrolled.

So the mission is to organize resources around the needs of children and families to remove the barriers that keep children from coming to school and doing their best. And also, as I just implied, is to want families to go to the schools in the South Ward.

So while a community school does not have to be a neighborhood school in the traditional sense, in Newark we are refocusing neighborhoods around schools. And the idea of the South Ward Community Schools Initiative -- which I will refer to as *SWCSI* -- is to increase academic success by strengthening families and communities, and working with all cohorts and constituents to share the responsibility of educating our children and improving our city overall.

So SWCSI is completing its second year of full implementation. It's been transformed from a rushed initiative -- only six months' planning time -- with few pieces in place and a leadership team that struggled to find common ideological ground; to a community schools initiative that has made tremendous strides and is working consciously to implement best practices.

So SWCSI is managed by a leadership team that consists of representation from the Newark School District, the City of Newark, and the Newark Trust for Education, which was hired as an intermediary for the Initiative. A National Advisory Board meets quarterly, and has advised the

Initiative on best practices for organization and finance; and is now looking at sustainability.

The Newark Children's Cabinet meets by-monthly and has active subcommittees comprised of city agencies and CBOs -- community-based organizations -- that align resources to support the efforts of the community schools. And the most active committees are Health, Safety, and Arts. Examples of their support work are a Community Safe Haven Initiative, and -- I mean, I could go into more detail about those, if you want -- a Trauma Informed Initiative called *Newark Cares*, and a Safe Haven logo contest. Those are just some examples.

A Special Assistant supports the organization and the day-to-day activities of all schools; that person is employed by the School District. And the Office of the Mayor -- we supply the backbone for the National Board and the Children's Cabinet; and the Newark Trust serves as the fiscal agent.

So I want to talk a little bit here, kind of, about where we started and where we are now. I'll talk about challenges, wins, and more challenges; every challenge doesn't have a win yet, but--

And this is not-- I mean, I just touched on a few things, because I was told I had five minutes. (laughter)

Okay; so one challenge: Ideological pedagogical differences -- okay? -- and that was where we started. Even though the Mayor and the Superintendent both agreed on community schools, they had very different visions and very different beliefs about what community schools actually were, and should be, in Newark.

We now have developed a logic model -- and this is the *win* -- we have now developed a logic model which includes a mission statement: Schools will become supportive, nurturing hubs where students and families can access the resources they need to engage and thrive in education, career, and community.

And we have agreed on six core elements: High expectations for learning -- and I'll just go over them quickly, you have them in the document -- capacity to address student health and mental health; quality in-school and expanded learning time opportunities; community of engaged supportive adults; high-capacity partnerships and resources; integrated student data information systems, and approach to learning analytics.

Another challenge: Convincing the District that each school needs a dedicated Community Schools Coordinator. The win: All schools have Community Schools Coordinators; although, in some schools, they have dual titles, okay? Our challenge now is that every school should have a dedicated Community School Coordinator who has no other responsibilities but that.

Another challenge: A large part of the \$10 million dollars was used the first year. Win: Under the guidance of the Newark Trust, school teams now participate in fiscal planning and are responsible for their fiscal decisions.

Another challenge: Malcolm X. Shabazz High School got a late start in planning and implementation. The win: Rutgers University is now engaged with Shabazz High School in a university-assisted partnership model.

Challenge: Matching schools with the right lead partners. Last year, all five schools had lead agencies; now only three have lead agencies. And to answer a question that might come up -- that had to do with the limited capacity of some of the lead agencies that were at particular schools.

A challenge: Governing and leading the Initiative. The first year felt disastrous and disheartening. The win: Hard conversations, bringing in a new intermediary -- the Newark Trust for Education; having two years of experience, constantly studying best practices and visiting and learning from community school districts with rich experience and lessons; working closely with the Children's Aid Society, the Coalition for Community Schools, and the AFT -- which does some of the professional development with the teachers. These have allowed us to identify problem areas and plan and implement more best practices.

A challenge: The need to structure and broaden the leadership group to be inclusive of more of the invested partners and, consequently, be more collaborative.

The challenge -- another challenge: Visibility, digital footprint, and information sharing. The win: A website is, finally, in the final stages of revision, and should be up very soon.

Challenge: Who's flying the plane? Many important pieces are in place, and the need for a Community Schools Director -- a citywide Community Schools Director, with the capacity to develop, lead, and grow the Initiative, has become apparent.

Another challenge: The initial funding of \$10 million by the Chan Zuckerberg Foundation will be finished at the end of School Year

2019. A win: Each of the community schools won a SIG Grant, which is a five-year grant.

Challenge: As Mayor Baraka says, “Money must be important, because they keep taking it.” (laughter) So we obviously understand that part of sustainability is developing new and diversified funding streams. The win: The potential win is that we have your ear. The time seems right for sharing information about how community schools in other states have sustained; and the discussion of developing diversified funding streams and sharing of resources in New Jersey. For a lot of reasons, this is the right time for that.

A challenge: Via the National Advisory Board -- which was established as an advisory body for the Initiative -- we’re looking at sustainability; we’re in discussion with the National Coalition of Community Schools around developing a sustainability plan that speaks to finance, partnerships, leadership, academic rigor, etc., etc. But we are very clear that in addition to developing these diverse funding streams, we must do the hard work of supporting the shared responsibility for education, children, and schools in each community. Which means that we know that as important as money is, those partnerships are even more important.

The challenge: How are we doing, really? And the win: We have an independent evaluator, and are in the final stages of development of the evaluation tool. So we should have some data on how to move forward from that that we can use when we’re looking at sustainability, as well as all the other areas internal to the Initiative.

Challenge: Family and community engagement. This is -- it varies at each of the schools. And we say, from the perspective of the City

of Newark -- we say that that is a *challenge* because we see this Initiative -- and I think it's been -- this supports what's already been said here this morning; I'll just say it, maybe, in a little different words -- we don't see this as a top-down initiative. Assemblyman Caputo -- that, as you have kind of stated, will never work. We really think it's important to build the capacity of the community to sustain the schools, and for their input to be as important as anyone else's input. So that's the direction that we're looking to see family and community engagement go in.

Our lessons: Every district is different; every school is different; the lessons are continual; self-evaluation is key. And a special lesson from Newark is that authentic buy-in from all the key partners is crucial, and silence is destructive.

Thank you very much.

SENATOR RICE: Yes, thank you very much, too.

Once again, to all who are here, I have to leave, maybe a little late; you know where I'm going, but I'll get there.

So I'm going to leave Assemblyman Caputo here, my running mate, to bring me up-to-date on this. (laughter) So I'll put him in charge.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: He gives me many jobs to do, I want you to know.

SENATOR RICE: Just one quick question, because you mentioned that there was some disagreement as to what path we should be taking. But that was all before local control came back; is that correct?

MS. BASKERVILLE-RICHARDSON: Yes. I'm talking about in the very initial stages of the planning phase of the Initiative, where the Superintendent, at that time, did enter into the Initiative with the Mayor,

but was not really ideologically aligned with community schools as we've talked about them today.

SENATOR RICE: So during that period of time, just for the record, he wasn't aligned, and the Board really had no real say-so because they were still an Advisory Board. Now we're back to local control; the election is coming up. Hopefully, between the new "Superintendent" and new Board Members, there's no rubber-stamping; but there is agreement on where the District should be going; in particular, community schools. And I need to say that for the record; and I can say that, as the Co-Chair of this Committee, but also as the Senator representing the District and as a taxpayer, I'm going to be monitoring the Newark Public School System, along with this Committee. Because we had a commitment that if we go back to local control, that we have to see where Paterson, and Newark, and Jersey City, and all these places are going and make sure it works.

So community schools would certainly be a priority, I'm sure, of this Committee to pay attention to. But let the School Board members, once -- whoever they are, and they win, okay? -- know that we're going to have to have a meeting, maybe, up there -- not with the Joint Committee, but with some of us -- to make sure that they're going to do education, and not everybody's politics and everybody's political agenda, if you will.

Because that's been problematic in some of these areas. And the way I see across the country, where community schools are working, it's because they have taken the politics out of it and they focus on education. And I think that's important for us to be doing here. I know the Mayor is committed to it; but I want everybody to take back to your various districts -- Mercer County, Essex County, Passaic County -- that we have another

kind of responsibility to make sure that politics are removed from the school districts to make these things work, okay?

Thank you very much.

MS. BASKERVILLE-RICHARDSON: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Senator.

Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Well, first of all, the challenge is so -- in bold letters. Because everyone who understands your history in the Newark School District can see what happened, in terms of disruption in those neighborhood schools; understand that the challenge was even steeper to gain the trust of people while all this turmoil was going on -- even after the aftermath, with certain people leaving -- whatever. So that challenge had to be very, very steep.

And I respect your experiences, as someone who spent a lifetime in the Newark schools. And your position regarding this is so under the radar -- which is so great, because you were able to accomplish many things because you knew, in the Mayor's Office, what you could do and what was feasible in terms of accomplishing important goals in the community; and where those holes and problems existed at the Board.

So, I mean, we went through all this; you went through it personally, but we observed and participated. It was a horrible experience. Hopefully, we're going to have sunnier days. And the fact that people like you are there to advise and to direct -- I'm personally pleased, as someone who has spent a lot of time Newark himself and represents a major part of the City.

So I have no questions, other than to compliment you for the work that you're doing.

MS. BASKERVILLE-RICHARDSON: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Assemblyman.

I appreciate the panel being flexible, so we'd like to hear from Dr. Walker now.

You can just switch seats with her, Toni.

And I'm going to ask, if you have written remarks and we have them, just kind of give us the overview and the highlights of your testimony, all right?

Thank you.

ANNIESHA D. WALKER, Ph.D.: Hi; thank you, again, for this opportunity.

My name is Dr. Anniesha Walker, and I'm the Deputy Executive Director at Mercer Street Friends.

We have -- our experiences are similar to those who have spoken prior to me. But I would like to share a little bit of how Mercer Street Friends embraced the concept of community schools.

Mercer Street Friends is a nonprofit organization here in Trenton, and has been serving the community for about 60 years. And the agency's mission is to move individuals and families from poverty to self-sufficiency; and they do that through three major prongs, which include fighting against hunger -- we house the County's Food Bank; addressing healthy parenting skills; and promoting education and adult literacy. And

so those are our three, main, over-arching areas in which we provide services.

Several years ago, Mercer Street Friends went through a major transition and decided to explore how they could have more meaningful and deeper impact with the participants. And so we went through, internally, some evaluation, as well as we began to do a community-wide needs assessment that was evaluated by Harvard University. And that was a two-year process; but what we learned through that process is that in order for us to be committed to our mission of moving individuals and families from poverty to self-sufficiency, we really need to home in on education. Education is the surest way out of poverty; and so as we looked at who we are as an organization, we looked at our strengths and we looked at what results came out of the needs assessments.

And that's when we decided to embrace the community school model. We looked at the community school model really as a strategy for operation -- for implementing our agency operations, and looking at how we can then partner with the local school. And so, about four years ago, that's when we began a school-based needs assessment, which was evaluated by the National Center for Community Schools. And they also provided technical assistance for how we can embrace the community school model using the structure -- the infrastructure that we had internally.

So we have embraced the community school model, looking at our current funding -- how can we leverage our current funding and resources -- as well as new funding, including the U.S. Department of Education's community schools funding. So we're currently funded through that pot of funds for one school here in the City; and that's a

middle school. And we, through that partnership with the School District, that's how the school was determined -- which school we would pilot in.

And over the years, what we've decided to focus on was based on the school's needs assessment, where we interviewed parents, staff, students, and support staff to determine what the current needs were in the school, as well as what resources already existed. We didn't want to come in and kind of use our backing as an organization to override anything that was going on in the school. And so as a partnership with the school's Administration, along with using the needs assessment, we decided, collectively, what services would be focused on.

And out of that came mental health and behavioral services -- there were many students who were struggling with anxiety, depression, and some suicidal ideations. And given all that's in the news, where we're seeing that is, especially in our schools with younger and younger students. So that's one of our major services that we provide.

Youth development support, as well as interventions that address chronic absenteeism. And we, along with the school, take a tiered approach, where those students who are high in needs -- the school district kind of focuses on interventions with them. And if you're looking at a bell curve, the students are right in the middle where -- we're not quite sure why they're not coming to school. That's where a lot of efforts are targeted so that we can understand why -- taking the time for each individual student, to understand why they are not coming to school. And some of it -- what we found is, some of it is medical; some of it is transportation issues. The middle school that we're currently at is one of the few schools that house students from every Ward in the City. And there are no transportation

accommodations from the School District. And so we're trying to look at creative ways of assisting students, who may live in the West Ward, get to a school that's, in essence, in the North Ward.

So how do we address those issues? And we work with staff, as well community volunteers, to partner students with mentors -- caring adults -- who are going to kind of support them and their family in addressing the child getting to school, and emphasizing the importance of school.

So that's one of the ways in which we address our chronic absenteeism.

But just like everyone else who has spoken before me, we also have on-site Coordinators. That's one of the key positions that are necessary for us to engage in all that we're doing, both within our organization, but also what we're doing inside the schools. And so we kind of -- we serve as a lead organization, but we also understand that, yes, we're in the school and, yes, we're in the community. And so how do we leverage our reputation, and our resources, and partnerships to support what's going on in the school?

So the three major activities that we provide are mental health/behavioral health services, youth development activities, and interventions to address chronic absenteeism.

Some of the lessons learned over the past-- So we've been fully in the school for -- this is our third year. And we've acknowledged that, one, Mercer Street Friends, although we are multi-faceted in the services that we provide, we alone cannot provide the full amount of services that are necessary in the schools. And so we use our relationships with local

businesses, colleges, and universities; just like Montclair, we house social work interns, counseling interns to support the amount of work that we have at the schools.

We also use the universities to provide professional development for the teachers, both in the classroom as well as targeted study areas.

And we use other partnerships -- like local businesses, the YMCA, the Boys and Girls Club -- to leverage those 21st Century funds to also provide some of those very specific content areas. For example, we partner with McCarter Theater, who works with us around in-class support, around comprehension and how using theater and creative arts impact a different way for students to comprehend what they're reading. And what we've shown in the past year is that the students who participated in that specific program increased in their testing scores.

And so we're looking at -- regularly, we're looking at our partnerships, and how can we collectively move the needle on academic success. And so that was the second lesson that was learned -- is that moving the academic needle is not just a school district issue; it's a community issue, and there are many layers that impact why students are not excelling in school.

And the last lesson learned was that when community nonprofits embrace the community school model, it's a dual benefit. They are able to leverage the funds that they have, they become invested in the academic success of the students, and schools in the community school model become more sustainable because they have additional funding, additional supports that the school districts do not traditionally have.

So that's Mercer Street Friends' perspective on how we embrace the community school model, and how we look to continue servicing the Trenton community.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

Any questions?

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: No.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay; all right.

So we're going to -- you can stay there; and maybe change seats.

Oh, Dr. Greene, I'm sorry; you're there.

G. KENNEDY GREENE, Ed.D.: I am here.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Superintendent, Newton Public Schools.

And again, because unfortunately we started late and we're time-constrained, if you would give us the highlights, I would appreciate it.

DR. GREENE: Sure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: And in your remarks -- and anyone on the panel is invited to contribute to this after his testimony-- Senator Diegnan had to leave. We are constrained by a number of meetings that have been rescheduled because of the snow. For example, the State Board is meeting today; it was a rescheduled meeting at the last minute. So they're not here -- the DOE is not here, and they apologized for that; but they will be in contact with us.

But Senator Diegnan had a question about security approaches when you have more people in the building. I don't know if that has been an issue, but if you thought about it, or if it has been an issue, after your testimony we'd like to hear from the panel about that.

DR. GREENE: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, and members, for the opportunity.

Again, I am Ken Greene; Superintendent of the Newton Public Schools, but I am also the President-elect of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators. So I am pleased to speak with you today on this topic.

Many of you I have gotten to know and work with over the last several years, with regard to the larger school funding issue. And unlike that issue, where the State is a primary and essential actor -- because the State needs to provide the full funds for schooling and also to equitably distribute those funds that are already being allocated -- this issue-- It's great to be here to speak about this issue, because I think the State's role in this is not as the primary actor, but as a catalyst to really unleash the community's creativity and for schools and communities to work together.

But it is still an important role to play; and I hope you think about that as you think about where the State might provide assistance and support.

I thought Senator Rice had an important-- And I'll -- instead of really paraphrasing my testimony, which is there for you, I'm just going to respond -- as one of the benefits of being the last one to speak -- and respond to sort of address some of the things that have already come up, and not repeat what's already been said.

I thought Senator Rice's comments sort of got to a point that's important to me, and that is that we don't see in Newton that community schools are a *program* or an *initiative*. It's been commented that they're a *strategy*; but even a strategy has an end. A strategy is used to achieve an

objective or a goal. And ultimately we see community schools more as an organizing model. We are community schools; that's how we behave. It helps us accomplish our mission which, in the short version, is to educate the whole child. We spell that out more specifically.

But in many of our school missions, we have similar wording to talk about how we engage the community; how we engage stakeholders, parents, etc. And community schools is a model which makes that essential; it is *the* way that we operate. And I'll go on to describe how that is, and how that becomes important for us.

I think, for us, it's important because community schools, for us, has been an organic and really grassroots effort. The District is the lead partner, if you will; and what we do is we're organizing the work of other partners to come into the life of the school. For that reason, I think that the idea of it as an organizing model ought to have us think about how the funding we already get can also be geared towards acting as community schools. Additional funding is important; the contributions of partners is essential; but it's also about how we rethink, how we allocate our own resources; and I can speak to that as well.

Something that I think is key to that is establishing, with the partner organizations, an understanding that what we're trying to do has to be of mutual benefit. It can't be just, "The schools want this help, and you're providing this to us." How can the schools help these partners address their corporate missions, their nonprofit missions, the things that they're trying to get accomplished? Because they need us for that as well.

So I think it's really -- it has to be, at least for us, from our point of view -- it's really helpful that we operate from a mutual benefit mindset.

As I said, this is happening organically. We're really in the first year of actually implementing our community schools model. It took us a year or so to really plan that out well, and we got key district stakeholders engaged in discussions back in the spring of 2016. The Board of Education adopted a goal to develop a Newton-specific model for community schools, and then took several action steps, including creating a District Steering Committee, developing and administering needs assessments -- which I want to speak a little more to, about our needs assessments in a moment -- and then building school-specific model elements? And I want to highlight a couple of those for you.

I think that idea of having a steering committee, what we call a *Design Team*, is important to us. It includes representatives from corporate entities, local and county government agencies, healthcare providers, and nonprofits all working with the District, and meeting on a regular basis to really make sure that we're-- Actually, they have a two-fold role: to provide guidance and support at the macro level for the school-level initiatives, but then also to engage in micro-level partnerships, where we're actually working with them directly to provide services, again to help them accomplish their missions as well.

Let me speak to the needs assessments; and Assemblyman Caputo spoke to needs assessments earlier on. So this is also community-oriented, in the sense that we developed a district community schools instrument from which we got over 900 responses from students, staff, and

parents. And I'll speak to how that, and other needs assessments, got translated into our initiatives. We already have school climate team surveys that we distribute; and we work within the schools, so that information was used. And then we had four of our Design Team partners, who had done their own community needs assessments for their own purposes, and we all looked at that data together as well. So it wasn't trying to create new things; we were already looking at the same kind of data.

And together we pulled that together to address some school-specific model elements. It was stated earlier that each district is different, each school is different, each level of school-- We have an elementary, a middle, and a high school. What's needed in our high school is not the same as what's needed in our elementary school, although there are some commonalities.

So let me speak to three of those school-specific model elements.

It was stated earlier, mental and behavioral health services; extremely important. This was identified, interestingly, largely from our students who self-identified, and for their peers, the issues of anxiety, stress, suicidal ideations -- all the things that were talked about. The students are telling us this; this is largely middle school and high school students, of course. It was very important that we got that message

And in terms of mental and behavioral health services, what we are doing now is working with these partner organizations that have excess capacity and are able to provide it to the schools. So several organizations -- that are local and regional health care and nonprofits -- are providing part-time efforts from social workers and psychologists to do the things that

our schools are not capable of doing. What is the school capable of doing? In a crisis, we have crisis teams, we act in a crisis. We have the ability to do some preventative work; our guidance counselors and social workers do that. It's the part in between that's the ongoing services that certain students need that we're not able to provide, and that's where our partners come in. They're providing small group counseling and individual counseling; and it's important that it's happening in the school -- that the school is the place.

To address a question that Assemblywoman Jasey brought up about economic and racial segregation. You talk about racial and ethnic segregation. One of the issues that we have with the expanding Hispanic population, is parents -- particularly those who are not born in the United States, and are familiar with educational systems outside -- the education system is somewhat at a distance; it's an authority figure not to be interacted with. And we've developed groups and means to try to integrate parents so that parents feel much more comfortable in the school than they may feel going to a social agency.

So instead of saying, "The mental and behavioral services that your children need -- we can give you an address, and here's a phone number, and you can go there," where transportation may be an issue, especially in a rural county like Sussex County -- that service may not be right in Newton. Those folks -- we can tell them, "Next Wednesday, at 2:00 p.m., this counselor will be here, and we will get that help for your son or daughter." Or we can call them on the phone and we say, "We have an emergency," and they will come to the school. That's the kind of relationship that allows this to really work well.

We also have some groups that are providing wellness-based pathways to mental and behavioral health. So they're helping us on the preventive end, with programs that they can provide. A number of those programs tend to be grant programs; and so when they're grant programs, they need sites to do the work, and that's -- because we have a relationship, it's an easy call. They call us up and say, "Can we do this with your students?" and the answer is "yes."

So that's one school-specific model element.

A second one that is germane to the elementary school is expanding preschool. We know the State, obviously, is putting additional monies, hopefully, in the new budget to expanding preschool. We're already taking active efforts, on our part, to work with local partners like the United Way and Norwescap -- which is the *Northwest Community Action Partnership* that sponsors HeadStart in our area -- and the other local providers. Because universal preschool can't just be provided by the school; we don't have the space, it's not funded fully. So we can do some of it; but we need to work with the others to make sure that we're providing that universe of services somehow, and we're activating community partnerships in order to do that.

And a third important model element-- And then there are many others; I mean, I'll just mention a couple -- but specifically, our 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, the Federal grant, providing our afterschool program. We can now connect these partners that are working with us on community schools directly to that effort, as well, to provide the academic remediation and extension activities, with social-emotional development. Ours is a STEAM-based -- STEM plus arts based

enrichment; and they work directly in partnership with that. So again, they see a structure where they don't have to provide all of the funding for that, but they can connect to it very purposefully.

I'll go back to, again, Assemblywoman Jasey and your comment about economic segregation.

So among the other things that we provide, though, is connecting our city and local social services to students specifically. So students feel comfortable; and, especially as they get older, when they don't feel so comfortable accepting economic help. And they feel much better about that because, again, the services are in the school -- so the backpack programs, the food programs. And our County Social Services felt good enough about the community schools partnerships to actually set up an auxiliary food pantry right in the school.

So those are the kinds of things that happen, again I think when it is mutually beneficial; when it's about -- and I think we're all saying the same thing -- when it is about relationships; it's about relationship building. And to develop those relationships with the community is an essential part, again, as I've said, of all school missions. And that's how we're activating it very purposefully.

So I think I've covered sort of the highlights of the things that we're doing; and then I'll answer the questions as they come up.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Yes, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Well, first of all, I want to congratulate all the people who testified. And we had a real balance of experts in the field regarding this whole issue.

And one of the most important things in your testimony was the mental health services, because based on what's happening -- what's happened in our country in terms of not identifying kids, kids falling through the cracks in terms of their anxiety, depression problems, etc.; this type of community schools framework could prevent -- by identifying and also recommending the proper prescription, in terms of remediation or continued service in regard to young people.

So I think when we get down to that level-- And you know what? We've missed the boat over the last few years in many of our communities. Because of the lack of funding and the lack of synthesizing, organizing -- all of these different facets -- of applying all these services at that level, we've caused the problem. Or let's put it this way -- we haven't fulfilled our responsibility.

So this is not a luxury; this is something that has to be done, and it's not.

DR. GREENE: And you're bringing up a point that Senator Deignan's question gets you to -- about security.

And so school security isn't just a schools' issue; it's obviously a community issue as well. And so not just looking to the schools' budget as to how we harden targets, but also how we provide these services is extremely important. It has to be a role played by health services and Department of Health services. Our Office of Security School Preparation shouldn't be just about target hardening -- although that's a piece of it -- but how are we providing funding and services to the schools to be able to do this work? Because no one is as qualified, I think, as the schools to identify the students who need that assistance; but too often in our budgets

we're not able to provide it. It has to be provided by the larger community coming together.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: So the collaboration is essential--

DR. GREENE: Exactly, exactly.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: --and the fact is, we have to widen and expand our job descriptions.

DR. GREENE: Exactly; just as the schools have had to, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Terrific; thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Assemblyman.

Senator, did you have a question?

SENATOR O'SCANLON: I do not.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay.

Thank you very much, panel.

And again, I apologize that we started late; so here's what I'm going to suggest.

I know that the last three speakers have very short testimony, so I'm going to call them up; and then give the remaining time to Julie and Greg.

So Sean Spiller, Vice President of Governance, for NJEA; Michael Vrancik, Governmental Relations Director; and Sharon Seyler, Legislative Advocate from New Jersey School Boards; and Betsy Ginsburg, Executive Director of the Garden State Coalition of Schools.

And just so that you know -- all of the testimony, once it's been transcribed, will be shared with all the members who were here, who were not able to be here, or who had to leave.

Okay; so I figure you guys can do this in short order, yes?

Thank you. (laughter)

We'll start with Sean.

S E A N M. S P I L L E R: Okay, great; thank you.

Well, thank you, Madam Chairwoman, and thank you--

Is this on, by the way? Can you hear me?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Did you have someone else with you, Sean?

MR. SPILLER: Well, we have our local President in Camden -- was here; and I know he just ran to another room for another meeting.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Yes.

MR. SPILLER: So unfortunately, we apologize for that. But with the times--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay; only this mike is important for you. (referring to PA microphone)

MR. SPILLER: Okay; great.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: The other one will pick up your testimony.

MR. SPILLER: Is it on?

MS. SAPP: Red is on.

MR. SPILLER: Oh, great; I think it's on.

MS. SAPP: It's not on red. Now you're on.

MR. SPILLER: Ah, there you go.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Now you're on.

MR. SPILLER: Okay; great. Now you can hear me.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Get used to this, Sean. (laughter)

MR. SPILLER: Okay; well, again, Madam Chairwoman, thank you for having me; members of the Committee, thank you, to all of you as well, for listening to the testimony today.

My name is Sean Spiller, and I am a high school Science teacher; I'm also, proudly, serving as the Vice President of the New Jersey Education Association.

And I know that we're giving you a packet that has my written testimony; but I'm not going to read from that, in the interest of time. But I also wanted to highlight a couple of pieces in there and talk to you just about two other things that we have in there as well, so you can reference at your leisure when you have time.

First, I just want to talk a little bit about the great things that we do have going on around community schools, and how we can expand on the programs that we have, to kind of implement some of the strategies that you've heard a lot about today.

We've seen here that community schools are successful; we believe in them, of course. We try to support them, where we can. And we've been emphasizing -- through the work that we've been doing with our national partnership, our NEA affiliation -- to really see what's been working in terms of best practices in other states, to really emphasize the six pillars that we feel are so important that all community schools should have.

And I'll just quickly say those are a strong and proven curriculum; high-quality teaching; inclusive leadership; positive behavioral practices; family and community partnerships; and the support services that are there as well. And that is in one of the big booklets that we have for

you here that has all of those. You can get a chance to, kind of, look through that.

But some of the key strategies -- and I think you've heard them here today -- this has to be a bottom-up process; this has to be where the community does that needs assessment, where they determine what it is, in terms of, again, the needs; but also the supports that they have in place -- what resources do they have? And it doesn't always have to be financial. I think when you heard from Superintendent Greene -- that was a perfect example of, they figured out what they needed, and they're putting forward the services to support their community. That's the kind of example that we need.

Us, specifically -- we've established some of framework that can help to do that. We've had our Priority Schools Program now, which has been in existence for 6 years in 15 districts, really focusing on the curriculum, the quality teaching, and inclusive leadership. We embed people in that at a significant financial impact. We want to make sure there's collaboration that we're fostering.

And we're seeing some of those outcomes -- and I know he would have spoken to some of this -- but our local leader in Camden can talk about the mentoring program that we brought in there as part of the student mentoring program; the Reading Buddies Program. But also, tying in -- and I know funding is always an issue and question -- tying in groups like the Optical Academy, where they can come in and identify which students need reading glasses, or which family members need reading glasses, and get them what they need at a very low cost so that they can be participants in the educational process.

So those are examples of bringing in those businesses or other assets that you may have nearby that can help with some of that work.

There are also examples of things that can be built upon. Wegman's has come in and done some of the community gardens and some of the work there. That's a great start piece, but we know that a more long-term, sustained partnership around, maybe, talking about school nutrition or giving them examples of healthy and unhealthy food -- that would be a broader base. But you start somewhere, and you grow from there. And I think that's some of the emphasis points on these community schools -- that you just have to start somewhere, and then build from there.

We also have had our Families and Schools Together work for children -- our *FAST program*. You heard some of the examples here of how we've tried to engage, in this case, on the community partnerships and community support services. You heard the examples in Trenton we talked about, where we have some embedded programs that help support the students; and that's an important piece as well. We've been funding that program for a number of years to try and make sure that we can utilize these services throughout the state. And again, it looks different in every place. But whether it is one-on-one counseling or afterschool programs -- like the case in Trenton with the Mercer Street Friends -- you know, there are examples of how this is going to obviously impact positive student educational outcomes.

We have our HIPP Grants, which support innovative ideas around this, that we can say, "How can we inclusively involve parents, involve others, and make sure we have the supports that are needed for our kids?"

I know that Chairman Rice had asked me, on the way, to just quickly talk about some of that funding. And I think you've heard a lot of it here, and I think some of the key pieces is to say, this doesn't all require new funding or new revenue sources. I think we have a lot of resources that we can reallocate and assess to see where they would be useful and how they would be needed.

You have other partner groups and organizations that are looking to invest and help along the way. Certainly, when you talk about the Federal fundings -- the Title I, Title IV, ESSA -- you know, these things do exist now. I do think it is important for the State to be involved, though, because a lot of these outside entities -- they want to see you have some continuous funding source, or some support from the State, or local, or whatever it is, in terms of continuous government institutional funding; and they know they can add on to that. So it's an important piece, even for nothing else other than some seed money to get the others to buy in.

So that's an important piece as well; and I wanted to mention that for the Senator, for the record.

Discipline issues -- another big piece -- we're seeing that, yes, in Camden; but we have some great programs going on in Atlantic City, and some other places, where restorative practices are really addressing the issue of, in many ways, getting kids out of school, inappropriately, and trying to keep them in school more. And that's a key piece to learning, which we know; so we see that there.

I have to, of course, speak to Montclair Education Association, my local town, where they're doing a restorative justice program. It's funded by an NEA grant; and, again, along those lines, how do we re-

envision what we talk about when we talk about disciplining kids? How do we use discipline as a learning tool to get the kids more engaged, as opposed to something that's alienating and exiling? So again, some great things that they're doing there; and, of course, we see that in a lot of different places.

And then finally, I just wanted to mention an emphasis on the collaboration piece. There was a big gathering with the Governor and others on the Rutgers Labor Management Collaborative that we have going on in the state. We're really leading the way, in a lot of ways, around the nation on that front.

It's been shown to have positive impacts, which is kind of obvious to all of us that when you're working together you're going to get more positive impacts. But really, I think it's a starting point, a jumping off point for the broader collaboration that needs to and must exist in our community schools; with parents, students, and others all being part of that decision-making process, and also that accountability process. So some great work that's going on there, and I think that will continue to happen.

So I just want to say that, in closing, you know, we look forward to continue to partner with you, continuing to partner with all the other groups that you've heard from today, and will hear from today; of course, our families, our students and others. Because we do believe that, in essence, when you look at those pillars, every school should be a community school. This should not be separate and apart; you know, "We have these other kinds of community schools over there." This has to be something where we say, "They're not all going to look the same; they're going to look based on what each community needs, and each school needs to have." But

they should be -- these practices should be employed in every district in every school.

So with that, you have all the information in my written testimony, and you have a number of handouts that kind of go into more detail, if you need some more information.

So thank you for your time.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

I think that was a pretty good summary. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: That's why he speaks at the end; he knows what he's doing. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Sharon and Mike.

S H A R O N S E Y L E R: I'll begin; thank you.

Obviously, we echo everything that's been discussed today.

We, as New Jersey School Boards -- on behalf of them, we totally support community schools; the intent. It's a positive asset to the community and to the school district.

I spoke to one of the school districts in Atlantic County who -- a small scale, but what they're doing right now is keeping kids after school Monday through Thursday, through the 21st Century Program, in order to feed them dinner before they go home. So they're open until 5:00 or 6:00 p.m., and they feed them. And if their families come too, they feed them as well.

So there are all types of unique opportunities within the districts and what their needs are; and everybody's probably an individual case of what's needed. So I think that's something that we should

concentrate on -- that it's not just a one model; everybody needs something different.

And as far as just the oversight -- we believe that the Boards of Education should definitely have something to say about how it proceeds.

Thank you.

MICHAEL VRANCIK: I'll be even briefer.

I think there are three points I want to make. First, the Association is obviously driven by policies that are formulated by our Board members. The policies that Sharon referenced, and you have in our written comments, go back to December of 1982. So this is not something new for us.

There's a realization that what happens during the school day is augmented by what happens after school. And I think the focal point of this discussion has to do with creating enhanced opportunities for kids to learn. The most important part of our Association's mission statement, and the information that we share with our members in the context of our training initiatives, ultimately lands on the idea that we're about student achievement. To the extent that we can have educational opportunities enhanced by these things, they're great.

Lastly, I guess -- the first speaker talked about the fact that these things are, by default, hyperlocal. And I think that there's not going to be a one-size-fits-all for these programs. Different communities, by default, are different; and I think that the ways these things are growing-- Ken Greene mentioned the organic nature; I think that's important. But I just want to make sure that the ultimate focus here remains on how these things impact student achievement, because it's about enhancing student

learning. And if Senator Diegnan was here, I was going to mention that as well.

I think one of things that we have to be, unfortunately, mindful of now, is what would be the requirements -- assuming that we expand these kinds of services -- in terms of making sure that these places are secure, and how we figure out whether we have expanded School Resource Officers, etc., just to make sure. Because in this world that we live in, you never know when there's going to be situations that require some kind of policing and some kind of oversight.

And that's pretty much all I have to say.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Yes; I think you were reading my mind on some of those. I appreciate that.

Sean, can you switch with Betsy?

MR. SPILLER: Sure.

ELISABETH GINSBURG: We're playing musical chairs here.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Betsy Ginsburg, Executive Director, Garden State Coalition of Schools.

MS. GINSBURG: Good morning, and thank you for taking the time to listen to all of this testimony. And, of course, we echo it as well.

The Garden State Coalition supports community schools. We believe that the community schools movement is part of an evolution in education. And it looks both backwards and forwards. It looks backwards to the time when all schools were the beating hearts of their communities. We want schools to be the beating hearts of the communities again.

To be the beating heart of the community we have to pull together all the resources in the communities. And we think that many of

the districts in the state -- certainly many of our member districts -- have components of the community school ideal already. One of our Executive Committee pointed to the new high school in New Brunswick, which was built in 2009. It was designed specifically to house, in addition to high school classrooms, a health clinic -- a functioning health clinic -- which is run by the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School at Rutgers University. It's a success; it's a success for the students, it's a success for the community. So they are not a designated community school, but the philosophy is there.

So we feel that since so many places have a foundation for the community school idea, that it can grow from that.

You know, there has been much talk, particularly in budget season, of the desirability of a massive school district consolidation. We think a more intelligent way to approach consolidation is to consolidate the resources of the community in the school. We think the future of education -- any education in New Jersey, whether you're talking K-12 or higher ed -- is in partnerships. So that's part of this evolution. And we endorse those partnerships; we endorse districts that already have community schools; we endorse the individual nature of the community school movement and the scalability of it.

And we think that-- Our philosophy at Garden State has always been that when everything else in society falls apart, the school is still there. Well, the school is still here; the school can bring the community together. This is what we need right now.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: That was a great way to put it. I really appreciate that; I wrote it down. (laughter)

Because one of the things that has struck me this morning is that we're not talking about a lot of money; rather, we're talking about how do we best use and deploy the resources that we have? And so that I find very encouraging, and something to really share with my colleagues who are not here.

Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Just to expand on that.

The art form is, how do we connect these services?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: That's really the magic. It's not easy; and the fact that you reinforce that is very important. As usual, your testimony is always intelligent and well taken.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

So last but not least, certainly, we're going to hear from Julie Borst, Co-Coordinator of the New Jersey Community Schools Coalition; and Gregory Stankiewicz -- I hope I pronounced your name correctly -- Co-Coordinator, New Jersey Community Schools Coalition.

And I have to let you know that I have a hard stop at 12:30 p.m., unfortunately--

JULIE BORST: I don't know -- what time is it? (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: --because I have a university President coming to see me.

MS. BORST: Okay; so we will step it up.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: We had to reschedule several times.

MS. BORST: Right.

Okay; well, first let me say, thank you very much to Assemblyman Jasey for inviting us here today to share the good news of community schools -- not only throughout the country, but also what's happening here in New Jersey.

Greg and I have had the good fortune to be heading up the New Jersey Community Schools Coalition's work over the last couple of years, which has included convenings, and meeting with school superintendents, and doing work with what I affectionately call the *five-letter alphabet soup game* -- NJEA, NJPSA, NJASA (laughter) -- pretty much any education-related person you can think of, we have been talking to.

And a lot of this, as you know, kind of comes out of the environment of what's happening in public schools in New Jersey. So Greg and I will be talking specifically about what we have found in the State of New Jersey; we did some research over the last six months, and we're here to deliver some of that information to you. You'll find that it supports everything that you heard today; and everyone who spoke today has been a partner with us in doing this work. So we're very excited about it.

So I'm going to turn it over to Greg, and he'll get his started.

GREGORY STANKIEWICZ, Ph.D.: Thanks; and Julie did a very nice job of introducing the Coalition.

But I just wanted to say, on my behalf, we're standing on the shoulders of people who are doing amazing work; and we're in a state that has tremendous resources and tremendous opportunities here for

partnerships. And so we really appreciate the chance to speak with you. And I really like the way it was presented before -- that we're looking to you to be partners with us -- again, just as you've been on so many other things -- and to serve as a catalyst to continue this movement going forward here in our state.

(refers to PowerPoint Presentation)

Very briefly, the goal of the Coalition, when we were formed three years ago, was to basically serve, as you heard, as a model. Community schools is a strategy; so we see this as a way to bring people together and to look at the type of opportunities we have here in the state, and the type of obstacles that so many of our students are facing in rural, suburban, and urban districts across our state. And so that's what we're here to focus on.

You've seen the type of membership in our Coalition that's much greater even than what's listed here. But we wanted to thank everyone who was here today and everyone who has been working with on this.

And I'm going to turn it over to Julie to talk about the study that we undertook here of what's currently happening in New Jersey.

MS. BORST: Right. So earlier, about mid-year last year, we did a survey of 550 school districts in the State of New Jersey, with NJPSA and NJASA. They were very generous in helping us get that survey out.

And so what you're about to see is the culmination of that work. And we were very happy to see, just overall, how engaged our Superintendents were with their communities. I mean, you heard from Dr.

Greene -- he's obviously an amazing exemplar for the rural areas. But really, the context of this -- and you all know this -- so we're down \$9 billion in capped aid over the last 8 years. And so what we're dealing with now is, what are the effects of losing all of that money in our public schools over all this time.

Also happening at that time has been a suburbanization of poverty; something that New Jersey has not really experienced prior to the last -- in 10 years or so. And so you're seeing school districts in places that traditionally have not been entitled to Title I money, now are; and you're seeing larger pockets of that happening around the state.

And so Superintendents have been on their own, addressing the needs of their students. And we're talking about places like Princeton and Westfield, as well as the usual places that you heard from today. So your Newarks, and your Camdens, and your Patersons, and your Trentons, where people normally think of a traditional community school happening.

And so how do you address those needs? So there are a variety of models which we touched upon today, and you heard; so I'm not going to repeat any of those.

And we also know that there's been Federal funding awarded to some of our districts; and you heard from all of them.

And here is our survey. So 14 districts call themselves a *community school*; but 49 out of all of those districts were doing some version of the work. And so we put together a map here, and you can see -- it's literally from one end of the state to the other. The red tags call themselves *community schools*, the blue tags don't call themselves that, but they are doing some form of work, have some form of partnership with outside entities.

And actually, two of them are actually using a community schools model to address their special ed student's needs; which is amazing, because I wear that hat as well in the State, so I was very happy to see that.

So the number of partnerships that districts have -- you can see the majority of them have three to five different kinds of partnerships. And that's everything running the gamut from having a partnership with a food bank, with hospital associations, mental health, State or county-level organizations, and things like that. So you can see that there is a lot of this work going on.

And here's who the partnerships are with. It's nice to see, too, that a lot of partnerships happen with community members; and that could be everything from the eye doctor down the street providing eye care once a year, to a mom who teaches dance and she teaches a dance class once a week after school. So it's a wide variety of things.

You can see what we're doing here -- afterschool programming, job development; a community schools model also really works well as a community development model as well.

Nutrition is, obviously, something that is happening everywhere; and those programs need to be expanded as well. Mercer Street does a lot of that work in Trenton as well, as Anniesha mentioned.

And our biggest obstacles -- and this is going to be no surprise to you, right? -- so lack of funding over these past eight years. What happens with the lack of funding? You now have lack of staff capacity, because everybody is down to bare bones. So who is going to be doing the work of going out and finding these partnerships, and making those partnerships, making them sustainable, keeping them going?

And to us, that is the Site Coordinator position. And that person is a person who is dedicated solely to making and keeping those relationships within a school, so that people like Dr. Ken Greene don't have to be the one spending his time not being a Superintendent, doing the school things, and making -- and going out and making all those connections. So we see that those are some of your biggest issues.

And Greg will talk about the findings.

DR. STANKIEWICZ: So one of the findings that we found, and we heard, was something you heard this morning as well -- was the importance of mental health, and having our students have access to mental health services. That came up over and over again.

I live in Princeton; I actually serve on the Princeton Board of Education. All the Superintendents of Mercer County got together to issue a joint call of action on the mental health crisis that our students are facing. That's just one example, but we've heard that across the state, and we feel that this is a -- as you've heard, this is a good vehicle of trying to access partnerships with service providers who can do that, and help not just our students, but our families as well.

There has also been identification for other needs, you know, around just health care needs. Eye exams have come up a lot this morning, as well as in our findings.

More pragmatic -- a lot of Superintendents said the same thing -- that you need that needs assessment up front in order to prioritize. What every school and every district needs is different. So you need that needs assessment; but with a lack of capacity in staff, you don't have the capacity to do it properly. And that was a big finding for us -- that that's what needs

to be done to help our schools do these partnerships with the people who are out there who can help our students.

We believe in the community school model because, as you heard again, it's important to have these efforts be organic and from the ground up. We believe it's a good vehicle in order to target chronic absenteeism; to encourage collaborative governing across teachers, staff, students, and parents.

All these different approaches -- as different as they are, that you've heard from today, they are all anchored in a theoretical basis of social-emotional learning; of working with the whole child, and learning what every child needs in a school. And so that's what is the power of it -- is putting these two together. And the key, again, for us, is to identify, train, and place a Community Schools Coordinator in each school, and have that person be the one to prioritize and help work together to understand what the services are that are needed, and who in our community can provide those services and work together in partnership.

A lot of the benefits you've seen already; and I thank Mary Roche for being here today to talk about the national data, so I'm not going to go through that again. But it's in the testimony.

But I did want to just underscore the finding that there's a return on investment. That when you invest in our students, the return -- the future return is much greater than what you put in, because you're working at stuff early on. And so the Children's Aid Society found, in one 2013 study, that the return on investment is over \$10 for every \$1 that you invest into these programs.

And then, finally, I just wanted to emphasize again that you're relying on community assets from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. So you're working with local businesses; you're working with universities; and you heard that over and over again. There is such a wealth of help and resources that are in our universities here in New Jersey. And you're working with the districts and with other agencies, and putting them all together.

Our current effort has been developed with Coalition partners; and we floated that, actually, in our last convening back in October, so that all our members of our Coalition could talk this through.

And so the goalpost we've identified is -- we think that with a small sum of money the State could help pilot a new version of expanding the community schools model to 50 schools and charter schools across the state over the next few years. And we see this as an opportunity to better expose people to the idea of community schools, and to also have an independent evaluation to provide the data so that you, as the Legislature, and the public can understand the benefits of this model and understand whether or not we want to, then, in five years' time, disseminate the model even further across the state. And so this is just a guidepost to our thinking.

One of the things, though, that I think is very appealing is: There are going to be 50 schools that will be selected for this; but any school district, any charter school in our state would be able to take advantage of training and professional development in the community schools model. So whether or not they're selected, they're going to learn more about it, and learn more about the advantages; and think through how

they can reach out, identify their needs their priorities, and work together to get themselves in place to be able to access some of the funds that are already out there, and think through how to do it most effectively going forward.

MS. BORST: So I just want to expand a little bit on what Greg was just talking about. And I'm glad Senator O'Scanlon was able to rejoin us at this point. (laughter)

SENATOR O'SCANLON: I apologize, guys.

MS. BORST: I appreciate your efforts on the Senate Budget Committee very much. And I sat in yesterday on both the OLS and the Treasury, and your comments about public school funding, and your efforts last week in Newark as well. And I know Red Bank is -- you've been a champion for them. And they also employ a community schools model -- I don't know whether you know that -- but Superintendent Rumage has been doing that as well; entirely on his own, by the way.

And so he is a fine example, as well as Dr. Greene, of being able to know what the low-hanging fruit is, and what those issues are with their children in their buildings -- and doing their best to address that.

What we propose is to have a pilot done to provide Site Coordinators to schools so the school districts do not have to come up with the money to pay for a separate person to do that. There's no staff capacity in any school district in the state to be able to this in the way that it needs to be done, to be perfectly frank. And we know this because we have been so underfunded for all of these years, and the cumulative effects of that are -- a lack of staff capacity is definitely a piece of that.

And so our hope is, with a very small sum of money we can train people to use the pilot; but also for districts that are not chosen to be part of that pilot, they can send staff to be trained by us for free. We want this model out there because there are so many needs to be addressed in schools right now, and there isn't -- there hasn't been a way, uniformly, to start to address those things. And don't misunderstand me; I'm not talking about a top-down thing. Every district, every school is different. You can look at Paterson and you can look at Newark, and you know that every single one of those community schools looks different because the people who are attending those individual buildings have different needs than their neighbors across town.

This is so key to this. The assessment part that Greg was just talking about is also key here. So not only do we want to understand the effects of having Site Coordinators who are dedicated to doing this work, and creating these relationships, and working towards sustainability, we also know that you can't just plop down a standardized way of assessing every school building, every program exactly the same way.

And this opens up a new way for us to talk about what's important in our schools. It's not just test scores, right? It is teaching the whole child; it is getting them access to music and art when they don't have that in their regular schedule; it's access to before- and after-care so mom and dad know that their kids are in a safe place. It's access to health care in the way that whatever those needs happen to be. It's access to mental health services. In our cities -- so we're talking about SROs, and the Education Committees are going around having school safety hearings. You know, part of that is bringing in your local law enforcement; but that looks

very different in a wealthy, white district than it does in a poor, not white district, right? And how do we do those things in a way that's engaging the entire community?

This model does that. And having a Site Coordinator; somebody to be the face of that for a school district, working collaboratively with that school district, with that school board, with that Superintendent, with those teachers, with the families, with the business owners, with whatever agencies happen to be down the street. Ken's lucky because he's in the seat of Sussex County; so he has County services literally down the street from him. Not everybody has that, right?

So this is what we are hoping for to help move this model forward in New Jersey. It is definitely a grassroots, ground-up approach to this. And we are looking at a model that gets as much education out there in our schools.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: I want to thank you for that. I think that's a very good summation.

I think we could probably sit here for another hour talking about it.

MS. BORST: Right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Unfortunately, I have to leave now.

But I see this as an informed beginning of a discussion; and then, hopefully, action, to really address the pressing needs of our schools.

MS. BORST: Right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: And every school that was described today is a school -- that is a community school, is a school that's

reaching the needs of the students, and the families, and the people who live in the community. And I think that's very exciting and very hopeful; and so I look forward to continuing this discussion and, hopefully, as I said, following it with some action.

If members want to ask questions or continue the discussion, I'll officially end the meeting; but you're welcome to stay and discuss.

MS. BORST: Thank you so much for your time. We appreciate it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: I'll just comment, real quick.

To all the presenters -- I apologize; I've had to be in and out; no disrespect intended.

I'm a true believer in this whole concept. I am somewhat familiar with what they're doing in Red Bank. And look, a lot of the schools we talked about -- they're not in my District; Red Bank isn't.

MS. BORST: Right.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: But I care about it, because we're all supposed to care about a moral state--

MS. BORST: We hope you do. (laughter)

SENATOR O'SCANLON: --will care about all our children, right?

MS. BORST: Right.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: It's a great concept -- the efficient usage and -- using this as a clinical term, not a pejorative -- *exploitation* of our existing resources--

MS. BORST: Exactly.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: --so we can deliver the most value to our communities.

And it's interesting today -- from Newton to Newark, we had a really interesting discussion with a lot of-- It's the same, in some of these school districts. They're dramatically different; but the needs and the needs to use resources efficiently doesn't change from district to district. No matter the culture, no matter the color, no matter the race, no matter the socioeconomic background; and we all need to come together for that.

And the fact that it doesn't require a huge infusion of money we don't have at the State level is a good thing.

MS. BORST: Right; exactly.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: So a really fascinating day today; I appreciate you putting this together. And I look forward to working with everyone, going forward.

Thank you, guys.

MS. BORST: Thank you; we appreciate that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you; thank you, everyone.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)