
Committee Meeting

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of

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"Commissioner of Education's annual report to the
Joint Committee on the status of the State-operated
school districts of Jersey City and Paterson"

LOCATION: Committee Room 9
Legislative Office Building
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: November 16, 1993
10:00 a.m.

MEMBER OF JOINT COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator John H. Ewing, Chairman

ALSO PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Barbara Wright
District 14

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



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MELANIE M. SCHULZ
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C O M M I T T E E N O T I C E

TO: Members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools
FROM: Senator John H. Ewing, Chairman

The public may address comments and questions to Melanie Schulz, Executive Director, at 609-633-6787.

The Joint Committee on the Public Schools will meet on Tuesday, November 16, 1993 at 10:00 A.M. in the Legislative Office Building (LOB), Committee Room 9.

Commissioner of Education, Dr. Mary Lee Fitzgerald, will be presenting the Commissioner's annual report to the Joint Committee on the status of the State-operated school districts of Jersey City and Paterson.

Issued 9/7/93

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SENATOR JOHN H. EWING (Chairman): Good morning, everybody. I apologize for being late. We will be hearing from Commissioner Mary Lee Fitzgerald. We also have present Jason Teele, who is representing Assemblyman Pascrell who, because of duties up in Paterson, is unable to attend today. Also, Joe Martin from the firm of Arthur Andersen is here, as well, in the audience. I appreciate everyone coming out.

Would you please start, Commissioner, when you are ready?

COMMISSIONER MARY LEE FITZGERALD: Good morning, Chairman Ewing, and members in absentia of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools.

The operational supervision of Mr. Demming and Dr. Wilson is under the direction of Dr. Elena Scambio, who is the Assistant Commissioner for Urban and Field Education. An annual evaluation of their performance was conducted in August, and job targets now guide the accomplishment of identified priorities in both districts. Dr. Scambio meets regularly with both Superintendents, and problems with communication to and from Trenton have diminished. There is increased collaboration and support to, from, and among the County Superintendents in Passaic, Hudson, Trenton, Paterson, and Jersey City.

I have been in both districts visiting schools and programs and meeting staff and parents. We designed and conducted an extensive evaluation of the Paradigm Program in Paterson last spring and summer which resulted in several changes to improve the Program, and more are planned. Jersey City has almost a year and a half on Paterson in terms of redesign and reformation. Both districts, however, are demonstrating developmental improvements.

At the outset, it is important to acknowledge the extraordinary pressure against a new administrative team, the understandable resistance to change, and the desire in both communities to return to local control. If the communities and

the government structures in those communities had been able to operate effective schools, there would have been no dramatic State intervention. The extensive documentation of deficiencies over a period of many years and an inability to correct those deficiencies made it incumbent upon the State to take drastic action to protect and preserve its commitment to the schoolchildren in those two cities and the New Jersey taxpayers who pay for the schools. This is an extraordinary precedent.

Because I haven't had the opportunity, I want to personally express my appreciation to the members of the Legislature for the political courage and conviction which produced this legislation, and for this Committee's, and in particular Senator Ewing's, continued support and commitment to its oversight.

I could talk at length about the preconditions of opportunity: the external influences which destroy so much hope in young children; the social deterioration in poor neighborhoods; the insecurity; the neglect; the abuse; the cultural, as well as the economic poverty, which sends children to schools unprepared for the thorough and efficient education provided by the State.

Paterson and Jersey City, like so many urban areas in New Jersey, need a long-term reinvestment not only in their schools, but in the lives of these children; a coordinated collaboration of services to recreate families and homes and jobs where respect and responsibility overcome the hopelessness and despair which characterize so many of these students.

The Department of Education has a major responsibility not only in Jersey City and Paterson, but in all New Jersey's urban districts, to aggressively initiate solutions and provide strident advocacy for the future of these children, though we must also insist on the efficient use of tax dollars; the wise management of money that will maximize direct aid to children

and teachers in classrooms; and to require schools -- all schools -- to measure real results, real learning, that will enable these students to become successful citizens.

Now, this morning I have with me Dr. Laval Wilson and Mr. Victor Demming, State Superintendents in Paterson and Jersey City, who, with exceptional diligence, are operating on our behalf the school districts of Paterson and Jersey City. After my prepared testimony summarizing their progress, we all three are available to take your questions.

I would also like to acknowledge the presence -- I believe he is here -- of Mr. Robert Perry and Mr. Raymond O'Brien from the Jersey City Board; Mr. Charles Walker, Chairman of the Paterson Board; and acknowledge the presence of parents and staff from each district.

As you will recall, the State takeover of the Jersey City public schools in 1989 occurred as a direct result of the district's continued failure to provide a constitutionally mandated thorough and efficient education for its students. For years, the district was plagued by myriad problems, which included: a total lack of educational direction and vision; poor delivery of programs and services to students; unacceptable levels of student achievement; constant and widespread political interference; no-show jobs; constant changes and demotions at the district level and in the schools; inadequate planning; gross fiscal mismanagement; a personnel function driven by nepotism and patronage; highly questionable business practices in school buildings; and total disrepair and neglect.

It was quite evident that the problems of the district were so systemic and so deep and for so long a part of the organizational culture, that radical action on the part of the State was needed. State intervention was the only means by which to ensure the kind of organizational change that would serve the best interests of Jersey City students. The key

ingredients for implementing the sweeping changes and reforms so desperately needed in Jersey City were a clear vision for the future and systemic planning -- systematic planning.

The Foundation established by Dr. Scambio for this effort was, and continues to be, "Kids First." These are more than words. They make up a phrase of real meaning that has enabled the district to institutionalize the progress of change and reform with a clearly defined purpose and mission. To accomplish this goal, the district had the monumental tasks of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of its overall organization; of affecting the culture and structure of its 36 schools; of restructuring roles; of reorganizing responsibilities; and of forming partnerships with parents, the community, and the private sector.

Since October 1989, the district has dramatically changed. The school system has been restructured and decentralized. Staff on all levels have been reassigned to maximize delivery of direct services to students. Sound and efficient standard operating procedures have been designed and implemented in a wide range of areas. These include: business and fiscal matters; staff training; curriculum development and evaluation; textbook adoption; purchases and evaluation; adoption of new programs and initiatives; hiring and promotion of principals and vice principals; and long-range planning.

Further, the district has taken major capital improvement efforts aimed at remodeling, renovating, and maintaining its schools. The children of Jersey City deserve schools that have been painted, modernized, and are pleasant places to learn. For example, over 1000 classrooms are being painted for the first time in 30 years. Health and safety violations have been corrected; school swimming pools are now in operation, instead of being filled with debris; new windows have been installed; 2600 student lockers have been replaced; major gymnasium renovations have taken place; and roofing

projects are completed. In essence, countless years of decay and neglect have stopped.

The direction that was taken during the first year was clearly prescribed by law. The district's reorganization, which occurred six months after takeover, created the structure and foundation that established clear lines of authority, reporting, and accountability, the fundamental ingredients for educational change. Every aspect of the law was implemented in a timely and efficient manner to: include the assessment of principals; establish an internal audit unit; design and implement a corrective action plan; establish a Capital Control Board; and name members to the Jersey City Board. Beyond the requirements of the law, an initial 100-day plan was instituted to address the district's most severe problems. A five-year master facility plan was designed. A plan to be responsive to fiscal audits was implemented. Programs were developed to clean the schools and, for the first time, fair and equitable personnel practices were put into place.

In addition, the Department of Education's Alternate Route Program was implemented, and a Unified Equity Plan was put into place which establishes the district's commitment to equal educational opportunity. It goes beyond minimal compliance to the law, and seeks to maximize educational possibilities and benefits for all the staff and students. Since 1989, 24 highly qualified minorities have been hired in key leadership positions, reversing years of neglect of affirmative action. Further, strong controls were instituted to ensure fiscal accountability.

Speaking of fiscal accountability, the district's internal audit unit has done an outstanding job to include uncovering 250 staff who were deceased receiving medical benefits; in auditing payroll, student activity funds, insurance coverage, transportation and travel procedures, to ensure that the district is in full compliance with Federal,

State, and annual independent audits. Here, too, given the solid foundation that was created, the rebuilding process began which was accomplished through a comprehensive, strategic planning process, and is designed to take the district beyond its State-mandated creative action plan. It addresses: school effectiveness, staff performance, parent involvement, student support services, resource management, organizational climate, and facility improvements.

Major accomplishments realized during year two broadened the foundation for change. All schools were now fully staffed with certified and qualified teachers, something accomplished through a very aggressive recruitment plan. Programs were instituted to improve student attendance. During the second year, for the first time, guidance counselors were assigned to each elementary school. Major expansions began to develop in the district's Early Childhood Programs. A comprehensive plan was developed to address district- and school-level educational technology needs, and for the first time in the history of the district, a uniform student Code of Conduct was designed with the input of teachers, parents, students, principals, and Board members. The district's Code of Conduct is firm, fair, and sets high expectations for student behavior and attendance.

A unique Saturday detention component was an integral part of addressing student discipline. A fiscally prudent budget was designed and implemented. For the first time ever, the district met the State standard for student attendance, which is 90 percent. Also, the postintervention trend of increasing student enrollment continued, with the number of students increasing from 27,727 to 29,170. The jump in enrollment was definitely a vote of confidence from a public which is closely monitoring school changes.

During the third year of intervention, a number of indicators and trends clearly illustrated that positive change

was continuing. For example, Early Childhood Programs continued to grow at a phenomenal rate, with sites now being placed in public housing units. An administrative internship for teachers was implemented, creating a talent bank for aspiring principals and vice principals. The district continued to meet the State standard for student attendance. Positive trends were seen in student achievement on the eighth grade early warning test, the high school proficiency test, the metropolitan achievement test, and the continued expansion of advance placement courses at the district's five high schools.

In 1990, only 178 students were enrolled in high school advanced placement courses. Three years later, 531 students are enrolled in these advanced courses. Parental input and involvement remain a top priority. It was evidenced in such efforts as the Annual Parents' Symposium, a magnet school fair which was attended by 1000 parents and their kids, and for the first time, parent participation on a number of school and district committees for the selection of principals, vice principals, and assistants.

For the first time ever, a district Special Education Council, which included parents, was organized to provide for strong parental and staff input concerning program planning, a review of programs, and better communication. Other important initiatives were implemented. The district embarked on a major expansion of after-school programs for elementary and high school kids, including: chess, computer, debating clubs, intermural athletics, vocal and instrumental music clubs, ancient history, tutorial and homework programs, and the district has worked closely with the city's Recreational Department to provide additional opportunities for kids throughout the school year and during the summer.

Student nutrition services were greatly improved, and a Breakfast Program was instituted for the first time. On a daily basis, 5600 breakfasts are now served. During 1990 and

1991, only 9500 lunches were served each day. In '92-'93, more than 17,500 lunches were served, a major increase. Further, during three major curriculum revisions, a broad range of subject areas including reading, language, arts, math, social studies, health ed, science, art, and music were all instituted. It is important to note that these new curricula were developed by the district's teachers. This is not only a good educational practice; it creates professional ownership.

Student achievement continued to indicate positive trends. On the 1992 11th grade high school proficiency test, both overall and on the individual reading, math, and writing tests, the district's students out-performed their counterparts in similar districts. In comparing 1987 results on the metropolitan achievement test, in 1992 test scores showed improvement in both reading and math. Also, beginning in 1992, the district instituted midterm and final exams starting in grade four. These important tests were developed, again, by teachers and assist the staff in diagnosing strengths and needs.

During year three, the district also implemented its Twenty-First Century Careers Initiative. At the heart of this initiative is a career-focused magnet plan at the five public high schools. Specialized programs in the health professions, the legal professions, engineering, transportation, finance, and communications serve as the major themes. Until State intervention, the district had no formal curriculum for high school programs that could provide students with the academic and technical skills to enter the workforce.

During the '92-'93 school year, which was the fourth year of intervention, continued emphasis was placed on program implementation and refinement, program assessments, student attendance, and achievement. These measures and others ensured that the blueprint for change and reform continued in a timely and institutional manner.

In April 1992, the Jersey City Board, through a change in the intervention legislation, began voting on curriculum matters recommended by the State District Superintendent. Through the Board's Educational Programs Committee, these curricula matters are fully discussed and reviewed prior to voting. The Board's expanded role is a significant change and provides a solid base for increased involvement and participation. I am pleased to report that Snyder and Dickinson High Schools each received a renewal of their 10-year accreditation from the Middle States Association during that fourth year.

We saw the district move to expand its base of facilities as ground was broken for a new elementary public school -- 17 -- and the painting of over 1000 classrooms continued in a systematic manner. Most importantly, test scores continued on an upward trend, with major improvement noted on the district's '93 eighth grade early warning tests. The improved EWTs are directly related to the district's extensive curriculum development and staff training that I previously mentioned.

The percentage of students in the top level -- Level I -- of the early warning tests in reading went from only 5.4 percent in '91 to 34 percent in '93. In math, the Level I percentage went from only 7.6 percent in '91 to 13 percent -- almost 14 percent -- in 1993. And in writing, the percentage in Level I went from 5.7 percent in '91 to 19 percent in '93. Major reductions were also seen in the percentages of students who scored in Level III, the bottom range on the EWT which required remediation. For example, the percentage of students in reading, Level III, was reduced by 15 percent; the percentage in math, Level III, was reduced by 14 percent; and the percentage in Level III writing was reduced by 35 percent. These very significant improvements are the result of: emphasizing student problem-solving strategies; purchasing new

textbooks; extensive curriculum development; more departmentalized instruction; comprehensive training; and vigorous monitoring of the district's curriculum and instruction.

Early Childhood Programs continue to expand in Jersey City. In 1989, only 147 students were in pre-K programs. This year, 424 students are enrolled. In 1989, only 375 students were in full-day kindergarten. In '92-'93, 1125 students were participating, and for this year, 1269 are enrolled, clearly a major movement.

Also expanded in 1993 was the school year itself. Comprehensive academic elementary and high school summer school programs were conducted for the first time. Additionally, the district sponsored a broad range of athletic and recreational opportunities for kids during the summer. An innovative summer band camp and a host of athletic camps were offered, which included: baseball, basketball, bowling, cheerleading, track, fencing, football, golf, soccer, softball, swimming, tennis, and physical conditioning. These outstanding summer programs provide continuity and outstanding opportunities for these kids.

Also during year four, the district continued to make major efforts to upgrade and maintain its school buildings. Comprehensive renovations were completed at Snyder High School, and are in progress at Dickinson High School, Lincoln High School, and a number of elementaries. Years of neglect have taken their toll. This is not an easy thing to embark on, but the district is definitely moving ahead to bring them up to a standard that says, "We care about school buildings."

As we have seen since State intervention in Jersey City, student enrollments have suddenly increased. In '92-'93, the number of students went up by 1096. Last month, the district reported another jump in enrollment, and I expect this trend to continue. It may be attributed to several factors,

which certainly include the renewal of public confidence in what the schools are doing in Jersey City.

In conclusion, we are definitely seeing many indicators of progress as a result of the hard work and collective efforts of so many people. In all fairness, challenges remain. This is an urban district in 1993 struggling to recreate promises of a positive future for all of its students. However, through sound planning, stability, and a solid focus on results, student achievement levels must, and will, continue to improve. Dropout rates will be reduced. School building maintenance needs must continue to be addressed in a timely manner. Opportunities for alternative educational programs must, and will be expanded. Early Childhood Education Programs must, and will be expanded.

As Commissioner, I will continue to do everything in my power to ensure that this is accomplished in Jersey City.

I want to turn, before we take questions and open it up, if you don't mind, to a few remarks on Paterson.

SENATOR EWING: Do you want to mix the two, or do Jersey City and then do Paterson?

COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD: Would you prefer that?

SENATOR EWING: Well, what would you prefer?

COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD: It's up to you; you're the Chair.

SENATOR EWING: I respect you tremendously. You're an educator, and I'm not.

COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD: Oh, I see.

SENATOR EWING: So which would be best for you, Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD: Mr. Demming feels we should take questions about Jersey City -- or comments.

SENATOR EWING: Assemblywoman Wright has joined us here.

I made a visit to Jersey City with Melanie Schulz, our Executive Director of the group here. Really, it was most encouraging the other day. I guess we visited how many, five schools? (affirmative response) Five schools. In talking to the teachers and everything, and the principals and everything, we could see the enthusiasm they have and the changes that have been made. Really, Commissioner, what you have read is certainly an indictment. I think some of those former Board members and former municipal officials should be in jail for what has been uncovered up there.

But, in talking to the individuals, they now can do the hiring themselves. They are not given Tom or Mary because they are the cousin of somebody, or something of that nature, and do not know anything about education.

They are getting supplies. I remember years ago down here in Trenton we came across five or six schools where in the sixth grade they all had different math books. Well, the same evidently was true in Jersey City to a degree, and now they all have the same books to use in the various courses. Unfortunately, within the inner city there is a greater movement of population around. Jack Ewing might go to this school for three months; then the family moves and he has to go to a different school. Previously to that, they were getting different books for the same course. It is just incredible.

In visiting Dickinson High School, which was one of the ones-- I think the job that Mr. Dooley has done up there has been outstanding. Also, as I feel so strongly about all of life, is the discipline. Tragically, for many of these young people, regardless of their socioeconomic background, no matter where, our whole nation is lacking discipline because of parental involvement. The Health Clinic-- I don't know if that was there before or not, but what has been organized there in conjunction with the Medical Center in Jersey City is tremendous in what it does for those young people. I was

amazed to find out that these young people can, at their own wish, get a complete medical checkup every year. I gather the majority of them are taking advantage of that, which is certainly of great, great benefit to them, and to all of society, to pick up any problems they might be having and start working on them.

Certainly, the renovations were going on when we were there. I know one thing that Mr. Dooley pointed out, and it annoys me. I have a grandson. He comes to our house. He is at the Edison School. He wears a hat when he comes in the house, but I get him to take it off. Evidently at school, they are all wearing caps or things, which seems to be the craze of young people, and now they don't do it. It is just a discipline thing -- bing, bing, bing. It is going to be so beneficial to them in later life, to all of us sitting here, and all the citizens in the State.

For those naysayers who say, "Oh, takeover doesn't work," it is so annoying, because all they are looking for is to line their own pockets and get friends into jobs or get friends contracts who shouldn't be there. I don't know how much longer we will be in Jersey City. The people have to learn there that it isn't at the end of five years that it automatically all stops whatsoever. As you know, we are working on redoing the takeover legislation to correct certain parts which we didn't realize. Now we have been working for several years in both Paterson and Jersey City, and there are some corrections we should be making so we'll be smoother when we take over other districts. I certainly hope and pray to God that we take over Newark soon, and not let those poor children go down the drain, which they are doing right now because of the lack of interest from their Board and their local municipal officials.

On the Early Childhood, where do we stand as far as the number of children who should be in kindergarten who are

not -- total numbers? Do you have any idea what that total would be?

V I C T O R D E M M I N G: No, I do not have a total number, but let me just speak for a moment on Early Childhood, because I think that is an area that is of significant importance to urban America.

First of all, I would like to thank the Department of Facilities and Planning for allowing us to go into the housing projects to have classes. We were able to get variances and were able to set up classrooms within those buildings.

What is important is, a lot of times parents are afraid to come into traditional classroom environments. They are intimidated. We have been able to not only set up classes to have youngsters there, but parents, as well, come into that environment. We have parenting rooms where they get educational upgrading, as well as their youngsters.

What this has done is to actually bring new life to the housing projects. Contrary to what people had originally thought, the classrooms have not been destroyed. It has become, really, a haven within the housing structure. That whole immediate community -- both housing projects -- has taken pride, and now believes strongly that the things we are doing towards getting young people involved early in the educational process are meaningful ones. So, from that perspective, I mean, we are moving in the right direction.

SENATOR EWING: I would like to interrupt you just briefly. On Early Childhood, we had a meeting -- the Senate Education Committee staff did. I feel strongly that what we have to do is take Head Start, Good Start, and make-- To hell with the individuals who want their own little fiefdom. Merge them all together and have one big, massive program, but get to every child.

It is interesting that some of the people from Head Start were sort of, "Well, oh, no, we want to keep by

ourselves." They want their own little group to have their little bit of power. Do you feel they should all be linked together?

MR. DEMMING: For the overall good of education, absolutely. I think we have to get away from what I call the-- We should become more collaborative in that arena. There is absolutely no reason-- There should be continuity between the groups, so that when a youngster finally comes into a regular classroom environment, there is one set of ideas or curricula that had been developed for these young people.

In addition to that, we should also take into consideration the whole Breakfast Program, because what tends to happen, and what has happened in the past, is that there were wrong ideas about that whole Breakfast Program. We should be looking at it from a more nutritional value. As you develop these youngsters-- If you develop them early enough, in conjunction with the Breakfast Program, you begin to look at nutrition from a different mind-set. We are investing in our young people's future, as opposed to later on in life having to deal with a series of health problems. I think that if we addressed it early enough--

SENATOR EWING: But how much do you think it would cost to provide all the children-- Is it the space requirements you don't have for kindergarten?

MR. DEMMING: Space requirement is a major issue. As a matter of fact, we are coming back to the Department of Facilities and Planning in the next month or so, because we are in the process of identifying some more space in one or two other housing projects to take care of the needs of some additional youngsters.

SENATOR EWING: Well, the one-- Which one did we go to?

MR. DEMMING: You went to either the Montgomery Gardens or the--

SENATOR EWING: Dungan Avenue.

MR. DEMMING: Dungan Avenue, correct.

SENATOR EWING: I can't believe that that one little Head Start Program, or whatever it is there -- preschool -- can service all the children who are in those buildings.

MR. DEMMING: Correct; you're right. Some of the children go to their home school, which is Public School No. 39, which is around the corner, and some of them are there at the housing projects. You're correct. There are others who could-- But at this point in time, funding is the real issue.

SENATOR EWING: It's the funding. Do you have any idea about what it costs to do a preschool, roughly?

MR. DEMMING: It will cost us about, maybe, \$300,000 to take space and really convert it to provide us with the kinds of areas--

SENATOR EWING: No, but I meant the ongoing expense per year, per child.

MR. DEMMING: Per year, it is about \$5000 per child to maintain, which really isn't that bad.

SENATOR EWING: But, really, the gain you would get by having them in the preschool is so tremendous to get them prepared--

MR. DEMMING: The gains are tremendous, because what happens is, by the time that youngster moves into kindergarten, he has already had a significant head start, which coincides with the name of the Program. But we think that about \$5000, \$5500, is what it would take per student.

SENATOR EWING: Have you any trouble on supplies? I didn't gather that from the people I talked to anyway.

MR. DEMMING: Again, I know Dr. Scambio has addressed this in the past, but when we went into Jersey City, there was a series of problems, so each one of us took a specific area. What we have done as far as supplies are concerned is, the supply order for the subsequent school year-- That process

begins in January. By March or April, we have a time frame for when the supplies are to come into the school. Principals direct it. We will know by the end of the school year -- the current school year -- that the supplies are either in -- at least 90 percent of their supplies for the next school year are in-house. So to that extent--

SENATOR EWING: And nobody is taking them out the backdoor.

MR. DEMMING: No one is taking them out the backdoor. Dr. Scambio's concept was, come day one of class, we should be ready for instruction.

SENATOR EWING: Right. One question I have to ask you: On that new school you're building--

MR. DEMMING: Public School No. 17.

SENATOR EWING: I think that has a flat roof, doesn't it? Do you know the plans?

MR. DEMMING: I think it does have a flat roof. Like most of the other schools, it has a flat roof.

SENATOR EWING: All right. I wish the Department of Education would look into it further on their requirements, because truly, I mean-- Right in Somerset County we have the Richard Hall Health Clinic, which is a big building. It has been up for 13 years, and now they have to replace the roof. Throughout the State the money that is spent in the leaking of flat roofs-- Nobody has ever designed a-- I still go back to the original, which is 20 years ago, the Medical School in Newark. The first year they opened that building they had over a million dollars worth of damage from the leaks in the roof because it was flat. The lousy architects, contractors, "Oh, don't worry. We have a system. It will stand up." It is just tragic. I cannot agree with it whatsoever.

MR. DEMMING: Senator Ewing, one of the things we have done with our roofing is, we have gone for a manufacturer's guarantee. You pay a--

SENATOR EWING: Well, what if they go out of business?

MR. DEMMING: Well, the manufacturers guarantee it. We are going with companies such as Goodyear. We're talking about the better companies where they are guaranteeing the roof that is being placed on the building.

SENATOR EWING: Yes, but, Vic, you know who is going to make the money, don't you, in the long run? The lawyers.

MR. DEMMING: Yes, the lawyers.

SENATOR EWING: Sure, because you are going to have to go to court on it and fight it; whereas, if you put a decent sloping roof on to begin with--

COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD: I'll check it out.

SENATOR EWING: What coordination do you have with the colleges and places like that with your high schools, etc.?

MR. DEMMING: We have a really good relationship with the Jersey City State College, and also with St. Peter's College. As a matter of fact, as you may or may not be aware, we have a real great working relationship with St. Peter's where many of our students from our academic high school go to St. Peter's for their education in certain areas, to include science and a couple of other subjects that are taken over at St. Peter's College.

SENATOR EWING: Because they can be of tremendous help.

MR. DEMMING: They can be. We also have a working relationship with Stevens in Hoboken and Jersey City State College. We actually use them for both our visual and performing arts high school, as well. The colleges -- the local colleges -- have become intricately involved in the things we are doing for the overall betterment of the school district.

SENATOR EWING: Do you make any contacts with major corporations that are in Jersey City itself?

MR. DEMMING: Yes. Two things: When we first went into Jersey City, the first thing we did was to join the local

Chamber of Commerce. We did that because we view ourselves not only as a school district, but also as a business. That gave us an opportunity to interface on a regular basis with all of our major corporate sponsors -- sponsors in the Twenty-First Century Careers Initiative Program.

One of the other things they did was to provide us with an awful lot of services. For instance, when we sat down and started to develop SOPs, they were in and they provided us with professional people to help us to develop those SOPs. It is a great relationship because we meet with them, along with the city, and discuss business issues. Whether it is the tax issue, whether it is just other business issues that will ultimately impact on the school district, they are always discussed at these Fiscal Advisory Meetings.

You have heard about our Leader I to III Program. The corporate sector is involved with that, as well. Madelaine Roman (phonetic spelling), who is a Director of Ed Program Services, is the leader from the Board's point of view with the Twenty-First Century Careers Initiative. We have companies such as NatWest, the Provident Bank, Merrill Lynch, always providing us public service -- and New Jersey Transit -- providing us with a lot of service. We have created a real collaborative coming together with each of those corporations, to include having Merrill Lynch sponsoring our teachers annually at their training center down in Princeton.

What is really important there is that our teachers, for the first time, are beginning to be exposed to corporate America, and they are really beginning to feel like professional people; that they are a part of that business community. Even though they function in the classroom, they are now getting exposed to the other side. I think that is making a significant difference in how they are approaching the subject matter in the classroom. It is helping our youngsters tremendously.

SENATOR EWING: Do you know what the ratio is of administrators to your overall staff, or to the teaching staff?

MR. DEMMING: I'm not too sure.

SENATOR EWING: No, that's all right.

MR. DEMMING: I think it is about-- As I recall, we were below the State average -- as I recall.

SENATOR EWING: I am wondering if the State average is too high.

MR. DEMMING: I don't recall that off the top of my head.

SENATOR EWING: I feel that is something we have to start looking at someday and maybe make up, you know, funds for so many administrators, and the rest you do on your own -- I mean, on the taxpayers' backs.

MR. DEMMING: Sure.

SENATOR EWING: Okay. The one thing I would like, Victor, you and your cohort there -- Laval -- to do is to give us your thoughts, because you have been through the process now of the present takeover law, other than saying it shouldn't be there, maybe, of where we could correct it to improve it. As I say, when we did that to begin with, we were pulling things out of the air. That is why we pulled five years out of the air. We had no reason to say five or twelve or two. But you have come across things, I am sure. I know one of the suggestions we have already received, which I think we will be working on is, in the early part when the State is coming into you, instead of saying, you know, "That is the wrong color wall," they should say, "Now, look, that is the wrong wall, but here is a suggestion for you. See if you can go along with it." Start working with you way early on, rather than getting into the takeover phase actually.

MR. DEMMING: One of the suggestions -- and I think, again, Dr. Scambio addressed this issue before -- was that it has to begin at the beginning of the fiscal year.

SENATOR EWING: That's in here.

MR. DEMMING: Okay. I do recall.

SENATOR EWING: But I'm thinking-- We don't have to go over them today, but any thoughts or ideas you have, including that one -- put them down on a piece of paper and send it to Melanie, or to me here in Trenton, so we can incorporate them in our thinking, because we will be coming up with the bill, I think, early next year. We've still got it under wraps, but we will be working on it the early part of next year to make corrections where there should be corrections made. We know it is not perfect whatsoever.

MR. DEMMING: Sure.

COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD: Sure.

L A V A L S. W I L S O N, Ph.D.: Senator, one of the things that our Advisory Board has been concerned about -- and our Chairman is here today, Charles Walker-- They are concerned that once takeover has ended, that the bad practices that were in place prior to takeover are going to all of a sudden return. So, some way of monitoring the progress. It would be a real disaster and shame to go through State intervention for five years, six, or seven -- or how long it takes -- and then once that ends to find that, within a short period of time, relatives and friends are again hired, nonqualified people there, with business as usual going on. Those are issues that many of our Advisory Board members are concerned about.

They would like to have an opportunity to direct the affairs of the district again, but they are concerned about things slipping back. I think that is an issue we have to address.

I have said before that I think the condition of the buildings is a critical issue; that taking over a district requires some money for program enhancement, as well as the

improvement of the buildings. Those are issues that I would like to see addressed in the provisions of the law.

MR. DEMMING: If there are no other questions, I would just like to make a couple more comments, if at all possible.

SENATOR EWING: Fine.

MR. DEMMING: When we talk about physical plant -- and there was, and still is a need for moneys to upgrade many of our facilities-- However, just basic cleanliness and maintenance are some things that should be maintained. I have a real problem with any urban district -- and I went to school in Newark. I grew up in Newark and am a graduate of the Newark high schools, and I go through Newark, as I do Jersey City. I have a problem when we have buildings that are not properly maintained. A big part of it had to do with the nepotism that we talked about.

So my mind-set is that we need to make sure -- whether it is Paterson, Jersey City, or any of our other urban districts -- that cleanliness becomes an issue, just basic, normal maintenance. That can be done through some of the measures that we took. For instance, we have our custodians and our security people in a building reporting directly to our principals. Okay? Now, the reality is that many people in administration want the authority, but not the responsibility. You now have all the authority, and we want results. It is just as basic as that.

We talked about the fact that when it comes to interviewing for principals and vice principals at those building levels, that not only is the Parent Council of that particular school involved -- whether it is Parent Council or PTA -- but also we have a teacher who is authorized from the union who is involved on the staff. There is a group of administrators which makes that decision. The superintendent will go along with the decision.

I mean, we are talking about a school base, and we need to make sure that that continues in all of our schools. But at the same time, because we live in a democracy, we also need to make sure that us folks in the White House make sure that the process that is taking place out there is being adhered to. So, it is kind of important. In some sort of way it relates to what Laval is saying. Once we leave these takeover districts, we need to make sure that we have created enough of a stir so that the people in the district do not want it to go back, because all of the rules and regulations that we put into place will not necessarily stand -- hold fast, if, indeed, the local people do not want them to remain that way.

So, those are just some of my comments.

SENATOR EWING: Certainly the buildings we were in-- Whether it was last year or more than that, improvements have been made in the cleanliness of the buildings. The five that we visited were certainly in great shape. There was no question about that. Maybe we should have gone into some of the worst buildings.

MR. DEMMING: We don't have too many, because the administrators wouldn't be there.

SENATOR EWING: The great part is being able to control the hiring, as you say, which is so important, reporting to the principal, because then it is his neck if there is something wrong.

Yes, Commissioner?

COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD: I am just wondering if you want to go on to Paterson.

SENATOR EWING: Yes, thank you. Please continue.

COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD: The second part of my testimony addresses Paterson, which became State operated on August 7, 1991. The best summary analysis of the progress of Paterson since becoming State operated is found in the October 1993 interim report of the Joint Committee's independent

auditors, Arthur Andersen & Company. As part of the review process, Arthur Andersen's staff members interviewed various central staff, 11 of Paterson's 36 schools, and had extensive conversations with principals, teachers, support staff, custodians, secretaries, and, in several cases, parents. Based on these meetings and the documents reviewed, it appears that in the areas of governance, leadership, and management, significant progress is being made.

Recently, I visited the Paterson public schools, along with two members of the State Board of Education and several Department staff members. We heard staff presentations concerning reforms in the business office, in particular, and we visited several schools.

As you know, the establishment of Paterson as a State-operated district came after years of study and repeated efforts at school improvement; efforts undertaken by the district alone and, sometimes, with State assistance. But despite these efforts, the public schools in Paterson were never able to become certified as adequate in the 16 years since the State began monitoring school districts. Some of the areas in which the Paterson district was failing, as cited in the Comprehensive Compliance Investigation Report, were these:

The Board of Education's governance practices were not reasonably designed to provide a thorough and efficient system of free public schools. It had not established clear priorities. The administrators had not been held accountable for the operation of the schools to which they were assigned. There was an absence of effective management at the top, which precluded delivery of high-quality services. No comprehensive planning process was in place. Central office administrators did not articulate any mission. A comprehensive instructional program was not in evidence. Poor managerial policies and procedures had negatively affected services delivered to kids.

In conducting business operations, the Board had failed to comply with basic fiscal regulations, New Jersey statutes, and prudent practices. There was a lack of consistent leadership in the business office, and poor relationships which led to inefficient business practices. The Board had failed to provide adequate safeguards for its liquid assets. The business office did not support the educational programs and services of the district. However, since State operation and the last report to the Joint Committee, progress continues as reported by the three Advisory Board reports submitted to the Commissioner, the Arthur Andersen interim report, and our visits to the district.

In particular, district-wide and individual school goals have been established and disseminated to everyone. The goals were developed among administrators, staff, and parents. Contract negotiations resulted in teachers working in their schools two additional days per year and an additional one-half hour each school day beyond the requirements of the pre-State operation contract. Administrators and school principals also work additional days each year.

A system for district assessment of each school's effectiveness based on current best practice has been instituted. Since State operation, over 1000 -- which is half -- over half of the staff members of the schools have been trained in fundamental format, a teacher training concept focused on student learning styles. During September of 1993, an additional 50 teachers -- 500 teachers -- received training in collaborative planning and educational methodology for enhancing the delivery of basic skills instruction and improving student behavior.

In community relations, cable TV programs are now produced on a weekly basis to communicate with the community. Newsletters prepared in both English and Spanish are periodically sent to the school community to explain programs

and inform the public of issues and accomplishments. Thirty-three thousand copies are distributed on the issue date of each newsletter. During April of the last school year, the district employed an ombudsperson who is designated to assist parents, school system constituents, and the citizens to resolve problems associated with the operation of the schools. Parent meetings are held at each school, and the president of each school/parent organization meets with the State district superintendent on a regular basis.

A two-day symposium on multicultural understanding in Paterson has been in preparation and will take place on December 1 and 2 this year -- next month. Participants in this community event include 250 high school students, presidents and officers of the various school/parent organizations, community leaders, government leaders, and public officials, religious leaders, and civic associations. It is expected that events such as this symposium will help to improve relations among the different ethnic and cultural groups in the city and in the schools.

In the area of finance, the district's budget development process continues to be a highlight of community satisfaction with district planning. The process allows for extensive community input through open budget hearings and two Budget Advisory Committees which provide specific advice from parents, students, staff, and the community. The '93-'94 school year budget is both fiscally and educationally sound and has a limited impact on city taxpayers.

Since the last report to the Joint Committee, the district has finalized the conversion to the new computer information management system and has successfully completed the implementation of GAAP in its business office. The Paterson public school district administration is particularly proud of its inclusionary efforts to expand opportunities to minority vendors. The second minority vendors' conference was

held last school year to provide information to minority vendors on the bidding process.

Facilities: A loan program for \$10.4 million has been approved to upgrade district facilities. As a result of a comprehensive 300-page facilities study conducted by an outside consultant, during the first year of State operation the district was positioned to respond quickly and successfully to the New Jersey -- it works -- School Loan Program. These funds, combined with supplemental financing through the Small Projects Loan Fund, allow for six major capital projects to begin. As an example, one major project involves the demolition of portions of an old school and construction of a new section which will provide seven Early Childhood classrooms, a library, and a computer lab.

Asbestos abatement has been completed in the district. Prior to State operation, the district had continually failed to address this environmental hazard.

In the area of educational programs, the district has demonstrated improvements in meeting State certification requirements in standardized tests, as the district is now above the State standard for the grade three level. Also, as a result of the Paradigm Program, students in elementary schools with Paradigm are scoring significantly higher than those schools without Paradigm. The program has been modified for the '93-'94 school year with the assistance of the State Department of Education. The new program has increased the number of subjects offered in the nine elementary schools piloting the project. Grades four and eight include offerings in technology, health, social studies, science, art, and music. Students who are below grade level will be offered a voluntary after-school program which will include club activities and instruction in reading, writing, and math. It will be further enhanced through the use of computers in nine new computer labs. At the secondary level, the program will

become voluntary and provide intensive remedial help beyond the regular school day.

Through a partnership with the Paterson Education Fund, a \$1 million grant with matching funds from the district has allowed the district to open 15 elementary school libraries complete with library staff, library books, and materials. Three additional libraries will be added by the end of the school year, bringing the total to 18. Prior to State operation, there were no elementary school libraries in the district, and only a traveling staff of six librarians. Also, the district's three high schools will have the existing resources in their libraries expanded this year.

The district has developed a collaborative venture with Concerned Citizens for Head Start, which began this school year building on the successful New Jersey Good Start's initiative. Four classes for four-year-olds started in September at two schools. The program was developed in recognition of the fact that investments in health, nutrition, language development, and socialization are critical to their vitality, long-term stability, and educational success.

The district has adopted a two-phase introduction to an entire new textbook series for the elementary grade levels. The areas of language, arts, and math are being introduced during '92-'93 and '93-'94. The \$2 million investment enables all appropriate grade level students to have their own textbooks, something which was lacking in Paterson schools prior to State operation.

The district continued its summer music camp in the Paterson Residential Educational Program which was recognized by the New Jersey General Assembly. A summer computer camp was added last year, as was an after-school and summer pilot education recreation program jointly funded by the city government.

One complaint in the district prior to State operation was a lack of implementation of effective school models, especially ones designed to improve parental involvement. After planning began last year, three schools are now implementing the Comer school model; three schools are implementing the Success for All model.

The district has established collaboratives with Teachers' College, Columbia University, which has assisted four schools in studying, selecting, and implementing school reform models; and William Paterson College, which has assisted in the development of a professional development school model and the use of technology in schools.

Prior to State operation, there were no school Breakfast Programs. Since the last report to the Joint Committee, 35 schools now serve an average of 2215 breakfasts to children each day.

Finally, I do believe that the Paterson public school district has made significant progress in the first two years of State operation, and is prepared to continue to move on the road to educational excellence for the benefit of children and youth in the City of Paterson.

As I say, I have been to Paterson several times myself, and have met members of that Board. Frankly, I am proud of both Laval Wilson and members of that Board, as well as the people who are running the Jersey City Board, and, of course, Dr. Scambio, who started all of this in Jersey City.

It is a tremendous undertaking. I just do not think anybody can quite imagine. It is not easy to be a superintendent anyway, and when you are taking over a district, people like the two men sitting beside me just deserve far more accolades than they ever receive: Victor Demming coming in after Elena Scambio left a year ago, their Boards in particular; people from those communities who have had to endure unrelenting criticism from their own friends and

neighbors, and who have stayed the course with unequivocal conviction that the State takeover must succeed. It is extremely impressive. I also have to say that I am tremendously proud of the staff -- the teachers, the principals, many of whom I have talked to, the parents, and the kids, who know they are a part of some grand enterprise that has so many national implications for proving this can work; for understanding that change is not easy, but it is imperative; and for committing themselves to a better future for this generation of their children.

Thank you very much. Questions?

SENATOR EWING: I think we also have to add the fact that we have to give credit to the people in Paterson that they did not sue the State the way Jersey City did to try to stop the takeover, costing, I guess, the taxpayers of New Jersey about \$850,000, because the money came from us to lead the suit against us.

COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD: That is correct.

SENATOR EWING: Of course, I don't understand the justice system anyway. I just wish to God that Newark would look at the situation the same way and stop putting in the roadblocks as they continually attempt to do. I just feel so strongly that the only reason they are trying to stop it is because they know there is a hell of a lot of dirt up there that has to be cleaned up. They are doing everything to stop people from finding out, really, what they are doing to those children. I feel very, very strongly about that. They don't give a damn about the children whatsoever. It's all personal greed, I feel.

Laval, on the hiring-- Who does the hiring of the teachers in each school?

DR. WILSON: One of the things that we have tried to make sure we expand was an opportunity for parents and teachers to get involved in principal interviews. We set up panels so

whenever there is a principal vacancy we have different community people and parents interviewing the principals.

As far as teachers, we like to give the principals the best opportunity possible to interview potential candidates.

SENATOR EWING: Who makes the final decision?

DR. WILSON: The final decision? We have not found that to be an issue. The principal-- If we are transferring staff, then those individuals who need to be transferred are transferred over. But if they are brand-new teachers, there are interviews on the part of the personnel office. Qualified people are then sometimes hired by the personnel office for specialty classes; other times the principals get a chance to interview and make some decisions on it. So it is a combination, depending upon the subject area. Bilingual and special ed-- Usually the personnel department would make the decisions because of all the interview candidates. In the individual classroom situations, principals will frequently make the decisions.

SENATOR EWING: Well, unless I misinterpreted what I learned in Jersey City-- Victor, how does it work in Jersey City? The principal does most of the hirings? They are responsible for most of the people in their buildings?

MR. DEMMING: Yes, they are responsible. Again, using the school-based management approach, the principals are responsible for the hiring. So, quite frankly, we--

SENATOR EWING: But if I walk in looking for a job, who decides whether I get it, the principal or somebody down at the personnel office -- in your building?

MR. DEMMING: The principal, because the principal is a part-- He makes those decisions on the persons he will hire for his building.

SENATOR EWING: Yes, because he is responsible for production in that school.

Laval, I would hope that you would look at that and see why it can't be done in Paterson.

DR. WILSON: We are moving toward some of that, sure.

SENATOR EWING: That principal is responsible for those people -- the way that school operates. If somebody downtown is saying, "Oh, here are five people; I want you to look at them," they are not giving him the opportunity. Now, granted I say if there are 500 people looking for one job, then that is a little difficult.

DR. WILSON: No, I would try to indicate to you that there is substantial school-side management, but when a principal indicates to the personnel director, "I am in need of a bilingual teacher for the second and third grades," if that principal indicates he would like to interview those candidates, he would get a chance to interview them. Frequently, the principal would indicate to the personnel director that he does not want to.

SENATOR EWING: Well, who makes the final decision?

DR. WILSON: It depends on whether the principal has said to the personnel director, "I would like you to select a person for me."

SENATOR EWING: Well, do all the principals know that they have that leeway that they can make the final decision?

DR. WILSON: I would indicate that I think there is a good partnership between the principal and the personnel director as far as how they go about hiring. If they want to interview particular candidates for openings, they get a chance to do that. But many times a principal will say, "I have several types of needs. I would like you to procure the services of those people for me and send them to my building."

SENATOR EWING: Okay. On the school report cards, how are they given to the parents?

DR. WILSON: Copies have been sent to each school and principals have been asked to disseminate those.

SENATOR EWING: Disseminated to the children to take home?

DR. WILSON: Let me ask Dr. Hoover if those went that way, or did we mail them? (consults with member of audience) They went directly to the children.

SENATOR EWING: They what?

DR. WILSON: They went directly to the children to take home.

SENATOR EWING: Have you had many come back -- I mean, people talking about it or anything like that? I am just wondering how many children drop them in a garbage can on the way home or something because they don't know what it is.

DR. WILSON: Well, that is always an issue when we send things home rather than mailing them.

SENATOR EWING: Right. Of course, the mailing is expensive. That is the other part of it.

DR. WILSON: Again, usually we send out 33,000 or so newsletters, so it's mailing them. We try to send them out that way, and also provide an opportunity for dialogue and discussions during the monthly meetings. We encourage the parent groups to discuss those during their monthly parent meetings at the schools.

SENATOR EWING: Well, you duplicate the report in your own operation, right? Do you have some available if you do have parents' meetings so they can get them at the parents' meetings in case Jack didn't bring it home or something?

DR. WILSON: Sure, those are available.

SENATOR EWING: That's good. They can have it then.

Do you have any of the preschools, the kindergartens in any of the projects up there?

DR. WILSON: No, we do not have them right in there. What we have tried to do, along with Good Start-- We got a major grant this year with Good Start to place -- to open up a brand-new four-year-old program. We want to expand that. We

think it is important to have as many four-year-old programs as possible. This was the first year for us to collaborate and receive a Good Start grant. So we have opened up two four-year-old classes in one building and two in another building. We would like to expand that concept. It has been well-received.

Trying to get young people started in an urban school early is very important. We have some young people coming to first grade who have not gone to preschool programs who do not recognize shapes and colors. We are trying to get young people in at four, or even earlier. It is critical for these preschool interaction skills. Young people need to start off early understanding that they do not grab and take items from each other. So managing interpersonal relationships early on sets a good pattern of interpersonal behavior for later on. So, as early as we can get young people into urban schools is critical not only for educational preparation, but for interpersonal interactions.

SENATOR EWING: On the housing projects, are they owned-- I guess they are owned by the city, aren't they? Do you know?

DR. WILSON: Our projects are probably funded by Federal and city moneys.

SENATOR EWING: Yes, the Section 8 program, but who actually controls-- Is there a housing authority in Paterson?

DR. WILSON: I think they are under the jurisdiction--

MR. DEMMING: The city is the housing authority.

SENATOR EWING: What?

DR. WILSON: We have been asked to collaborate--

SENATOR EWING: It would be interesting to sit down with them and see what you could do about putting them in; see what buildings will be becoming available, because they would have to take an apartment, or two apartments, and change some

of the walls around. But I think we ought to work on working with the housing authority to see how we can promote this program.

DR. WILSON: I have been asked to serve on a planning task force by one of our housing groups. I will be on their advisory committee. We will be taking a look at the possibility of doing that. In Boston, we had some preschool programs in housing authority buildings. We would like to explore that in Paterson. So, by being on the planning committee, I will have a chance to thoroughly review that with the housing office.

SENATOR EWING: I think even short-stopping that, if you get the Mayor to get the-- He is certainly interested in education.

DR. WILSON: Sure.

SENATOR EWING: Get him to set up a meeting in the very near future with the people who really run the housing authority and start putting this idea forward. I mean, you are on an advisory committee and that will go on up and everything, but if you sit with the Mayor and the top people of the housing authority, I think we might get quicker action to see what can be done, if something can be done. I certainly feel very strongly that those are so necessary in our housing projects.

DR. WILSON: I know the Mayor -- Assemblymn Pascrell -- has a bill that he and I have talked about which focuses on Early Childhood. So one of the things we will be talking about, again, would be the opportunity for implementing some of that in the housing buildings.

SENATOR EWING: Right. Do you feel you have-- Is there a tremendous number of children who are not in kindergarten itself?

DR. WILSON: There are many young people in the city--

SENATOR EWING: Because of the lack of space, I guess. Is that the main thing?

DR. WILSON: Lack of space, lack of money. Clearly there are many young people in the city. Our population is growing. We are expecting 2000-plus students in four years, and we do not have space for them. We have selected five architects to start helping to design conceptual drawings, even though we do not have the capital funds for the projects. I have one school that is outside the City of Paterson. There is not space in the city for this elementary school.

SENATOR EWING: But you had to get out of that building, didn't you, and move to another--

DR. WILSON: We had to move them to another building in another city. We are in Ridgefield Park right now. We were in Fair Lawn. That's an elementary school.

SENATOR EWING: Much further away?

DR. WILSON: Another five or eight minutes away, but it is approximately 20 minutes on the bus; not a great deal of difference than the first two years. So our population is expanding basically in the elementary schools, not as much in the high school projections. But we have tremendous facility needs for new buildings; approximately \$12 million for each new building we would put up; approximately, you know, 700-student elementary school buildings. Each would require about \$12 million. That is our greatest need right now.

Construction needs are severe. We have four buildings. If you recall the big study we brought previously, it said those four buildings must be taken out of service; that they are too old to try to put in new boilers or new windows or electrical systems or plumbing systems. So I know that in Paterson, as well as in Jersey City, facilities are an issue. That issue we cannot solve by ourselves. We have to have State help on that.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, yes, definitely.

DR. WILSON: I know you have been quite helpful to us -- I want to indicate that publicly -- in trying to make sure

that our libraries were approved in a couple of schools. The principals are grateful for that, and our staff is. We think that having libraries in all of our schools is important. Some of the space is not there because of the overcrowding and the need for classrooms, so if we are able to get those four very old buildings removed and new structures put up, that will then free up more space for libraries.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you.

On the Paradigm courses, when I was up there -- I am coming up on December 3 to go through some of the schools -- but when I was up at the public hearing there was some contention with the Paradigm. I was wondering, is that contention still there? Are they getting acclimated to it and feel it is good, or--

DR. WILSON: Well, we have made some modifications in it. I think it is an issue that won't go away, though, as far as the need to have skills. I am very concerned that young people are not going to fare well on this high school proficiency exam across the state, and that young people who do not have adequate reading, writing, and math skills, and communications in urban schools, are just subject to failure. They are not going to make it. I think we have to push the issue of literacy. In fact, this afternoon, the Mayor and I are going to have a press conference to focus on literacy in the entire City of Paterson. We are going to ask all parents, young people, and citizens in Paterson to read 30 minutes a day. It is going to be called, "Paterson Reads." We are also going to cohost a symposium to bring in the ministers to help us out on that. It is critical to get adults and young people to have better literacy skills. Paradigm's focus was not to restrict young people from understanding science and social studies, but to get them deeply skilled in those critical areas.

So we have made some modifications. We are adding nine computer labs in those nine elementary schools so that

young people can begin to look at literacy development not just through paper and pencil drills, but through the use of technology. We have some of the best computer labs in the State. We have instituted computer upgrading as a result of our budget committee activities, hearing from some of our parents and students. You will get a chance to see those when you come in. We have state-of-the-art Apple equipment. We have an Apple lab. We are going to be a national training center for training staff members on the use of Apple equipment. So we have moved significantly forward in technology. We think that is going to be helpful to our high school students and our elementary students who have been involved in Paradigm.

SENATOR EWING: Do you also feel that the parents are gradually accepting this now and understand it better?

DR. WILSON: Some are. I think they are understanding it better, but there are some people who didn't want it and will not want it, the same as some did not want takeover and will push against takeover. When you say to people-- When employers-- We have a great collaborative relationship with the two hospitals, Barnert and St. Joe's, with Hoffman-LaRoche and a number of others. When they say, "We will hire your young people, except they have to be skilled in math, writing, and reading," and you tell young people, "You can get jobs, but you have to have the skills"-- People cannot have it both ways. They can't say, "We are not going to spend the time and energy to get those skills," yet they want the jobs. So sometimes we have to focus them.

I have a number of people in the audience who would be happy to dispel the notion that reading, writing, and arithmetic are not American. They think that is an American skill. You have to tell people sometimes, "That you have to have, and you can take some of the electives later on." That is what Paradigm is all about; to try to get young people

skilled in the basics, not to deprive them of education, but to give them an education, and say, "You can't do regular work without reading skills." Some kids for so long came out of the 12th grade reading at a sixth grade level. As long as they didn't punch anyone they got a diploma. They were not literate. That was happening in Jersey City; that was happening in Paterson. You just sat there four years in high school, and you got a diploma. I think that is deplorable, and I think we have to change that. We have to force the issue. That will not go away by itself.

SENATOR EWING: But talking about the literacy thing, I feel so strongly about that also because I am starting to do some work in the prisons on education, and the percentage of prisoners -- I think I am right in saying this -- is about 75 percent who are illiterate. These people who are going in there for three, five, six, seven, ten years, if they can't read and write, what the hell are they going to do when they come out?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER FROM AUDIENCE: That's right.

SENATOR EWING: It is going to go right on around, so, you know, we are working on it to see-- Granted, we are only scratching the surface now, but I am glad that Paterson-- The Mayor up there is certainly a very progressive individual and understands it, so I think that's wonderful. Try to push as much as you can on it.

It will be very interesting. I look forward to coming up there. Who set up what schools we are going to?

MS. SCHULZ (Executive Director): Dr. Wilson.

SENATOR EWING: No, we will look at the list of schools and then say--

DR. WILSON: Any school you would like. There are no hidden agendas at any time.

SENATOR EWING: Well, I want to go to a couple of the very oldest ones that are really lousy.

DR. WILSON: We plan to take you to some of the old ones.

SENATOR EWING: I mean, in lousy shape.

DR. WILSON: We are planning to take you to some of the older schools, as well as some of the medium. Any school. You can just close your eyes and touch the map -- any school. There is nothing set up in particular. We just want to take you and show you the schools.

SENATOR EWING: The only trouble with Jersey City is that we didn't plan enough time, unfortunately.

DR. WILSON: Give me a day. We will take the whole day.

SENATOR EWING: We're coming up on the 3rd. I can spent the whole day.

DR. WILSON: We appreciate your coming to see us.

SENATOR EWING: We stayed that night for the hearing, you know. (laughter)

MR. DEMMING: That's right; that's right.

DR. WILSON: We want to show you all the good things. I want to thank you for coming out to prep during the summer and spending some time there with those young people.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you. Thank you all very much.

Are there any questions from people who live in Jersey City or Paterson here that they might want to ask? We don't want to get into a confrontation.

DR. WILSON: I would like to have my Chairman, Mr. Walker, stand. He may want to comment, if he may. Mr. Charles Walker is our Chairman.

SENATOR EWING: Sure.

C H A R L E S W A L K E R: Senator, how are you?

SENATOR EWING: Fine, thank you.

MR. WALKER: It's nice to see you again.

My comment has to do with the-- As you have indicated, you are hoping to now revisit the law and make some

changes that you didn't see, couldn't see at the outset. I would just comment -- and I know it has been brought up many times before -- concerning former Board members participating on the new structure. You can't take part of the problem and make it part of the solution when going forward.

I would just strongly urge that in the future-- The former Board members would be legally excluded from participating on the Board of the future.

SENATOR EWING: Let me interrupt you a minute, though. What the hell was that Board doing before to get into the situation where there had to be a takeover?

MR. WALKER: Yes, you're absolutely right.

SENATOR EWING: Well then, why would you want to continue people who don't have enough guts to stand up and be counted?

MR. WALKER: I don't want to continue.

COMMISSIONER FITZGERALD: No, he doesn't want--

MR. WALKER: I don't want to continue. I said that former Board members should be excluded.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, excluded. I'm sorry.

MR. WALKER: I'm sorry if I didn't make myself clear. They should be excluded.

SENATOR EWING: No, I'm getting older. My hearing's--

MR. WALKER: That's all right, so am I. We're catching up with you. But, they should be excluded from serving on the Board. Excluded -- period -- all those. Perhaps maybe through legislation even if they were included -- if they were included because of an oversight. When it moves towards the election, they should not be allowed to stand for election.

SENATOR EWING: Oh, that part I think-- I am not a lawyer, thank God, but I think that part would be difficult.

MR. WALKER: Well, I would ask you to take a look at that, because it defeats -- if we have to take a long look --

the purpose of the legislation. Forming an Advisory Board, the Advisory Board could serve along with the Commissioner and, of course, the joint legislation, over a period of time-- After a period of time, they would stand for elections, and it is from that group that it is hoped that the changes and the reforms that have taken place would not go away tomorrow.

If you have former Board members coming onto that situation, I can guarantee you that it is going to be tougher to continue those types of changes. So the money and the effort and the energy, the things that you have heard about from both Jersey City and Paterson -- okay? -- would not be able to be sustained.

I just ask that you take a look at that in the provisions of the law as you look to change it. Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: We thank you very much.

DR. WILSON: We have a former Board member on our Advisory Board. That person does not come to retreats; does not take part in the in-service training.

SENATOR EWING: No, because he knows it all.

DR. WILSON: It is not a helpful force; it is not a helpful force.

SENATOR EWING: Anybody from Jersey City? Mr. O'Brien or Mr. Perry, do you want to say anything?

R O B E R T E. P E R R Y, E S Q.: Speaking as the former Chair, I believe you have heard from us. I mean, we rang the phone off a lot to you regarding our situation.

I think a number of parents have been involved--

SENATOR EWING: Do you want to pick up the other microphone, too, because this is being taped?

MR. PERRY: Okay. --have been involved and continue to be involved in trying to bring about the changes we're making. Our concentration now, as Victor has said, is ownership, you know; that the No. 5 School, Lincoln High

School, and so forth, will say, "We like this. We want to keep it regardless of what occurs, or how long intervention occurs," and so forth.

It is hard with a Board of 15 to get constructive participation of all members without other baggage coming in. So when we examined it we made some recommendations and we examined what that 15-member Board should look like. We talked about not only that, but also outlined early on particular areas that you want this Board, as advisers, to pay particular attention to, and giving it responsibility in these areas.

You have before you our third assessment, which talks about progress and talks about other areas of concern. We happen to think it is our best. We have kind of learned the process. We think that what we say there is reflective of what has been done over the last year, from the hearings, from the Arthur Andersen report, from the report of the Superintendent to you. We do see progress as the report is being made. Additionally, our concern is that it remains on the right track for the kids' sake.

Thank you.

SENATOR EWING: Mr. O'Brien, from Jersey City?

R A Y M O N D J. O ' B R I E N: Good morning. This pertains to the intervention statute, Senator. The headline in the local paper today makes it clear that the vultures are circling in Jersey City. I think, as you might be aware, we have a former Councilman Signorile who is an attorney. He has filed suit on behalf of another city employee, a Mr. DiMillier (phonetic spelling) to change the intervention statute -- it is going to court -- so that when the election comes up in April, anyone can run for the Board.

SENATOR EWING: I heard about that.

MR. O'BRIEN: Yes. I don't think that is a flaw in the law. I think we need continuity. After all, what is the purpose of transition? We have been the folks who were there.

I just wanted you to know that the wolves are already circling. It is happening as we speak. I believe Arthur Andersen, in their final report -- if it is similar to their first report -- will indicate more emphasis on transition.

Sometimes I think the word "transition" can be defined too narrowly, such as giving the appointed Board more authority, or putting more residents or current district employees in key positions. I'm all for that. At the same time, we have to think about institutionalization of the programs -- procedures that were put into place by the State team which are showing success. My point being: My personal opinion is that the takeover in Jersey City is working. I don't think it can end after five years. The wolves are at the door now. Be assured that if it ended in October, we would be back to square one within a year. No doubt about it.

SENATOR EWING: Thank you very much.

What we will be doing with the legislation-- We will certainly give it out ahead of time before we have a-- We might have some hearings on it or something before we bring it up in Committee so we can get input from you individuals.

But in the meantime, as I say, if things come up, Laval and Victor, and anybody else -- Ray, Perry -- let us know in writing if there is one part you want to change. We don't care if it is six pages long or one paragraph. We need the ideas from you people who have been involved on a day-to-day basis with so much of this.

Thank you all for coming. I appreciate the interest shown in education. Thank you.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)