
Commission Meeting

of

SPEAKER'S COMMISSION ON EDUCATION: POLICIES, FACILITIES AND REVENUE

*“Testimony from invited speakers on Education Outside the Box:
Change and Challenge in Vocational Education Programs and Funding”*

LOCATION: Room 319
State House
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: May 23, 2001
2:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMISSION PRESENT:

Assembly Speaker Jack Collins, Chairman
Assemblyman Alex DeCroce, Vice-Chair
Assemblyman Peter J. Biondi
Assemblyman Joseph J. Roberts Jr.



ALSO PRESENT:

Theodore C. Settle
Office of Legislative Services

Haskell B. Berman
Christina O'Malley

Jennifer Sarnelli
Assembly Democratic

Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
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Commission Secretary

*Assembly Majority
Commission Aides*

Commission Aide

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ASSEMBLY SPEAKER JACK COLLINS (Chairman): Good afternoon, everyone. I always like to start this way -- an apology for being late. I'm sorry. We will try and make it up with concise comments, questions, and, boy, we'll just roll right along. We welcome all of you to the Speaker's Commission on Education meeting, that today will be focusing on vocational education. We very much appreciate the panel for being here, whom I will introduce in a moment.

But prior to me doing that, I want to welcome a new member of the Commission, Assemblyman Peter Biondi, from Somerset County, who is replacing Assemblyman O'Toole, who got a little confused and felt he should go over to the Senate. (laughter) And hopefully, he will add some of his Assembly experiences to the Senate.

This Commission, for those of you who may not be familiar with it, was put together when a number of my colleagues, including the two other members here at this time, Vice-Chairman Alex DeCroce from Morris County, and Assemblyman Joe Roberts from Camden County, along with Assemblywoman Charlotte Vandervalk, Assemblywoman Nia Gill, and Assemblyman Peter Barnes, decided that exclusive of the efforts of the Assembly Education Committee, which deals with pieces of legislation dealing with education that go through the normal legislative process, that a Commission, chaired by the Speaker and having members from both sides of the aisle and all over this state, would have the opportunity to look in the broadest sense of some of the challenges to education.

We have had a number of public hearings, and from the public hearings, the information we gleaned put us in a position that we would have

more detailed meetings on particular aspects of education. Thus far, it's been special education, and today expanding to vocational education. And the reason for the vocational education aspect, not to negate others, is that during our hearings there were a number of concerns raised. The future of vocational education, what should it be in New Jersey? What about the curricular requirements and determination because of curricular requirements leading to graduation? What role should practical arts courses have, as compared to fine arts? And then -- and a great deal of testimony went in this direction -- what about the funding of it? What is the role of the county? What is the role of the county schools, and a number of other questions. And that's why, today, we are coming together to focus on vocational education.

We feel that we have had some success by bringing in experts -- and that's the four of you, who in any particular area of education -- just to have a conversation, a give and a take. And as much as we question, we look forward to comments from you on things we don't touch.

And for those who are here in the audience, we appreciate your interest, and hopefully, that from this dialogue that we are going to have, that we all learn more about vocational education in New Jersey.

I would like to introduce our panel to my fellow colleagues. We have, starting from my left, we have Mr. Ron Rufner, who is the Project Coordinator and District Council of Northern New Jersey Ironworker Training Program, a youth-to-work partnership; to his left, we have Dr. Tom Henry, Director of Vocational Education for the Department of Education; to his left, Brian McAndrew, the Superintendent of the Monmouth County Vocational

School; and to his left, Ms. Darlene Barber, School Business Administrator for the Cumberland County Vocational-Technical School.

And of course, as you can see with Darlene (phone rings), she brings that -- when you announce her name, music starts. (laughter) Nice to see you, Darlene.

DARLENE BARBER: Thank you.

SPEAKER COLLINS: And no offense to the three, but I really like her. I've known her for a long time. She's a good person, and don't even worry about that.

MS. BARBER: Thank you.

SPEAKER COLLINS: That could have been somebody important calling.

MS. BARBER: I'll catch it later. Thank you.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Thank you all for being here.

Would any member of the Commission like to make a comment at this time? (no response)

Well, Dr. Henry, since I've known you a long time in a lot of capacities, and since I see by title that you are the representative of the Department of Education, maybe we'll start in the broad sense. What's going on in vocational education? Why, when we held these public hearings, did a lot of people express a little bit of dismay? But maybe even more so, in a complementary sense, Tom, a concern about the future of vocational education in New Jersey. So, if you could just give us a commentary on where you think we are, and that will lead us into a, hopefully, free-flowing discussion.

THOMAS A. HENRY, Ed.D.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Over the past decade, there have been numerous reports. I'll just cite two. *The Neglected Majority* is one which is based on the premise that our school system does a very good job of preparing 10 percent of the students, 20 percent of the students to go onto college. Another 20 percent are well-prepared to go directly into the workforce following high school education. But the majority, approximately 60 percent of the students, either enter college with no idea of what they want to do or nor do they have the skills to succeed in college, nor can they enter the workforce successfully, because employers' surveys continually remind us students are not prepared for the workplace of today. Other studies have reinforced the concept that we are not as efficient as we could be in the high school years.

Happy to say, vocational education is leading the way on education reform at the secondary level. The Federal Vocational Education Act stresses that all students need higher academic skills and advanced technical skills in order to succeed. Vocational education has always had a very close partnership with business and organized labor. And with the Perkins Act of 1990, there has been a renewed emphasis on preparing students for postsecondary education. The two-plus-two tech prep programs that seek to align the last two years of high school with at least the first two years of college have broken down the barriers that vocational education is only for students who can't go to college or for special education students.

So vocational education today is leading the way in education reform. Many people don't understand that change. They remind themselves that vocational education is the vocational education as it was when we were in high school 40 years ago. They do not understand the role, especially in New

Jersey, of our county vocational schools. The county vocational schools are leading the way in establishing high-quality career academies, which are now attracting the best students in the state. High school districts don't want to see their best students leave, so they are saying, "No, you can't go." And we have had numerous legal challenges for students choosing to go to a county vocational school.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Tom, if I may jump in, that's the first I've heard that. And if I may be very honest, when you said our best students, I thought well, you know, best is always relative. It could be the best in this area or that. Then you went further and said that there's actually legal challenges and so on. Could you or the superintendent--

DR. HENRY: Brian could answer that much better than I, Mr. Chairman.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Either way. That's the first I've heard of that, that schools are fighting having students going to vocational schools or whatever.

Could you, Brian, give us a little more on that?

B R I A N M c A N D R E W: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Besides being Superintendent of the Monmouth County Vocational School District, I also serve as President for the New Jersey Council of County Vocational Schools. And so, we bring to that table discussions in terms of what is going on in all 21 county vo-techs. As Dr. Henry had indicated, vocational-technical education has changed rapidly over the past 20 years.

Ironically, about 20 years ago, this Legislature passed legislation to enact the Marine Academy of Science and Technology out of Gateway National

Park, Sandy Hook. And with that piece of State legislation, unbeknowing, you actually created the first county career academy in the State of New Jersey by doing that. And that Marine Academy of Science and Technology has flourished over the years and now is one of the top schools and, in fact, is the only high school in the State of New Jersey that's been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as a New American High School.

What's been happening since? Monmouth County developed an academy, a high-technology high school, on the campus of Brookdale Community College about 10 years ago. And along with that, Bergen County opened up its Academy of Science and Mathematics. Bergen County, at that time, began to catch a lot of flack from the comprehensive high schools over the fact that this academy is now structuring for young people who want to pursue a career specifically in math, science, and technology. And Bergen's Academy did this by not only infusing just academics as we know it and as we went through high school in pretty much a teacher-centered type of an environment. The Bergen Academy, along with the Marine Academy high-technology high school, infused hands-on applied methodologies and student-centered types of instruction along with high-level academics for all the students that attended these schools.

As the years progressed, Monmouth County now has four career academies. We have an Academy of Allied Health and Science, and we just opened up a fourth one, a communications high school. Since then, also, we have a magnet high school of science and technology up in Union County. Hudson County vo-tech has a high-technology high school. Salem County has a little bit different model, but a magnet vocational-technical career academy

that they're working down here. Gloucester County has developed them. And in a number of these counties, we have seen a number of local school districts saying, "Wait a second. What is going on here? All of a sudden we see some of our more highly motivated students electing to go to these types of programs." And as a result--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Now, let me ask this question.

MR. McANDREW: Sure.

SPEAKER COLLINS: When they go to those programs, whether it's Monmouth or any of the others you mentioned, do they go there on a full-time basis?

MR. McANDREW: Yes.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Okay. So the concern is raised by some districts, and of course they're all individual fact patterns I'm sure, are the students who are not going to, let's say, Freehold High School, instead they're going to the Monmouth Vocational School -- I use Freehold totally as an example, because I knew it was in Monmouth County -- that the concern is that these better students are going to your school instead of their school.

MR. McANDREW: In Monmouth County we have, over the years, because of the Marine Academy happening 20 years ago, have not really had that type of animosity, as much as we've seen in some of the other counties. However, I would be misleading the Commission if I told you that they were not upset over two factors. Factor number one is that, yes indeed, we are taking some of their brightest and best, and factor number two, they're paying a tuition to us in order to have that privilege take place.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Now, is there any way that the locals -- they've got to do that, because I was going to ask Ms. Barber, who deals with those dollars in Cumberland, for some input. Eventually I'm sure she will offer it, but let me stay with you then. Is there any way, at least in Monmouth, that a local school district can say no to a student going to the vocational school?

MR. McANDREW: No. According to Chapter 54, in Title 18A, it's very clear that if a young person gets accepted into a county vocational school district, that it is the responsibility and the obligation of the sending district to send that child, to pay for whatever tuition costs that that county vo-tech charges, and to provide transportation to that student.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Okay, now, let me ask this question. As I say, it's free-flowing, and anyone can jump in and any other member of the panel. But it allows me, at least in my mind, to move to a concern a while back, and let me go to it. If a student goes to Monmouth County Vocational School as a full-time student, when they graduate from your school, do they get a State of New Jersey approved certificate of graduation?

MR. McANDREW: Yes.

SPEAKER COLLINS: All right. The debate that was taking place a few months back with regard to the practical arts and the fine arts, which I believe has been at least temporarily taken care of, however-- Dr. Henry, I'd like this to be a two-pronged question. The way I look at what was done, if freshman students entering this coming September are allowed to have a choice between 10 credits of practical arts and fine arts and/or fine arts, why would it be a temporary resolution? At least we're talking four more years there.

Now, to go back to you, Brian, does that fine arts-practical arts curriculum challenge of just a little while ago have any impact on your students? And then maybe you can refer to the broader picture topic.

MR. McANDREW: It would all depend on the program that was designed 9 through 12 at the county vo-tech. If it were a career academy, such as the ones that we operate, we were developing an infusion process for the fine arts. It was going to be difficult, but we were going to be able to do it.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Now you don't have to do it, though, right?

MR. McANDREW: Now we don't have to do it. Right.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Okay. One more second.

Darlene, is Cumberland County's Vocational School -- is that a career academy?

MS. BARBER: No, we don't have a career academy in Cumberland County. We have a share-time program there only.

SPEAKER COLLINS: With other local schools?

MS. BARBER: Right.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Does that mean, Darlene, that there are not full-time students in Cumberland County?

MS. BARBER: We only have a very few special education students. That's it.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Very few. Okay. Okay. Thank you.

Go ahead, Brian. I didn't want to cut off -- free-flowing, remember.

MR. McANDREW: So that if we were to use an example like Middlesex County vocational school district is a 9 through 12, what we would call a traditional vocational-technical high school district, they were going to

have extreme difficulty, along with some of the other full-time Burlington County vocational school districts. We've had difficulty infusing the -- not only the 10 credits of fine arts, but also the 10 credits or equivalent to world language. As a result, we were going to be asking those school districts to be able to not only provide a very high-quality vocational-technical education program along with the core content academic subjects, but in addition to that, more requirements both in the fine arts and in the world language.

So, in essence, we were putting young people at risk in terms of making a choice between what they feel at this particular point in time they would like to do along with getting those traditional high school graduation requirements by giving up some of their vocational-technical, if not all of it, and versus the fine arts. However, fine arts was going to be more of a problem for the comprehensive high school who sends to a Cumberland County, okay, because those schools were telling their students there's not enough time in the day and enough credits in the four years for you to go to Cumberland County Vo-Tech and to take all of the high school graduation requirements put upon them.

SPEAKER COLLINS: And how do you resolve that problem, Dr. Henry?

DR. HENRY: Well, let me go back. When the core curriculum content standards were first conceived, there was a great discussion about should we have three areas or two areas. We eventually decided on two, academic and more workplace readiness. The third area under discussion at the time was an area called technical. And if we had allowed students to also have the ability within the 110 hours to take technical courses in addition to academic and

cross-content workplace readiness standard courses, we would not have had the discussion about practical arts over the last year.

Now it is the five-year review period mandated for the core curriculum content standards. And I think the fundamental question is, rather than shoehorn the so-called practical arts in with fine and performing, we need to ask ourselves, are there a series of technical skills that every student should know in addition to academic skills and workplace readiness skills in order to graduate from high school, ready to either enter college or the military or the workplace or a combination thereof?

So, it's still an open debate before the Malone Committee. Where do we put the technical skills, whether we call them vocational-technical skills or practical arts, in the construct of the core curriculum content standards?

SPEAKER COLLINS: Is what the concerns were within the last year with having to make that choice and what I have read in your news release on April the 4th, other reports that I've gotten, is this debate between whether you have to take fine arts and not practical arts, is that resolved? Is that over?

DR. HENRY: No. No, Mr. Speaker. It's not resolved.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, then, what happens to a freshman who starts this year and decides to take 10 credits in practical arts? Will they have met the core curriculum standard by the time they're a senior? Because the policy statement that came out of the Department was and/or.

DR. HENRY: Yes. The standards that apply when you enter a program are the standards you're held to.

SPEAKER COLLINS: So at least those people will have four years-

DR. HENRY: Yes.

SPEAKER COLLINS: --and those ahead of them. So at least we're safe for four years of having to deal with this issue.

DR. HENRY: But I hope that that issue will be resolved within the next 12 months between the discussions on the core curriculum content standards and deliberations of the Malone Committee.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Okay.

Assemblyman Roberts.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROBERTS: Thank you very much.

I have two things I want to touch on. First of all, good afternoon. Good to see you all here.

Dr. Henry, I guess this should be to you. The basic technical competence that a student ought to have when they graduate high school that you indicated that you're wrestling with now, what are those kinds of things? What ought to be the components of that?

DR. HENRY: Well, certainly, technology--

ASSEMBLYMAN ROBERTS: Excuse me, talk about what they ought to be and those that are not presently offered routinely or required, except for students in vocational programs.

DR. HENRY: Technology education, information technology applications would be two of the biggest omissions we now face. I would leave it at those two right now.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROBERTS: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I had one other question about funding. I think it's the Council of County Vocational Schools that might have presented a

document to this Commission previously, which indicates -- and I would like to confess, I was not aware of this -- that if you have an *Abbott* student who is enrolled in a county vocational school that the *Abbott* funding doesn't follow the student to the county vocational school nor is it retained by the district, that it magically comes back to the State of New Jersey, who hangs onto it. If you could amplify that point, I would appreciate it. Because clearly, the case can be made that if the student has special needs that identify he or she is an *Abbott* student in the first place because of where they resided, they bring with them to the vocational school some needs that need to be addressed. There ought to be some mechanism for the funding to recognize that.

MR. McANDREW: Go ahead.

MS. BARBER: I think I could probably answer that for you best, because Cumberland is certainly one of the highest-- In fact, they are the highest level of students that come from *Abbott* schools. We have -- 79 percent of our population is attending from *Abbott* high schools. Three of the four high schools in Cumberland County are *Abbott* schools.

Half of the parity aid, which is allocated to *Abbott* students, in essence, returns back to the State, because we do not get that for those students. They come to us, 79 percent, 80 percent of the students, come to us, who are in their home school receiving *Abbott* funding or parity aid. And they come to us, and we do not receive that aid.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROBERTS: Can you give me an estimate of a typical student? What the dollars would represent and what would be lost?

MS. BARBER: I figured that it's about \$400,000 for our total population, and our total population is around 500. So about 400 of our students are *Abbotts*. So we're losing. I didn't figure that out, but we're losing.

ASSEMBLYMAN ROBERTS: So 400 students represent 400,000 lost?

MS. BARBER: Yes. Lost dollars. Lost *Abbott* parity aid.

MR. McANDREW: Okay. On a State level, Assemblyman, we project that there were 8000 to 10,000 students enrolled in vocational school districts that are from *Abbott* districts. And we also projected that is about \$6 million statewide we lost on these *Abbott* students that are attending county vocational school districts now rather than their *Abbott* districts. So, in other words, if these students stayed in their *Abbott* districts, either full-time or shared time, the State would be paying those *Abbott* districts \$6 million more. By them coming to the county vocational school district, we receive none of that *Abbott* district aid, and the State keeps the 6 million.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, let me, if I may, jump in, Assemblyman.

I might not have made this clear, but when I said three times, and I'll say it a fourth time, free-flowing discussion, that could be amongst the four of you as well as us. It just doesn't have to be this way. And as I've said, we've done this before with a number of panels, and it's proven quite educational, at least for me.

Where does the money come for those *Abbott* students if it's not coming from the *Abbott* district? Where does that come from to pay for their education?

MR. McANDREW: It comes from-- The county vo-techs, they're funded-- Again, we have 21 county vo-techs.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Right.

MR. McANDREW: Our pot of moneys come from two or three sources. It comes from county levy, comes from State aid, and comes from tuition, if a county vocational school district charges tuition.

SPEAKER COLLINS: And now if--

MR. McANDREW: All right. If they don't charge tuition--

SPEAKER COLLINS: --one charges tuition, Cumberland does?

MS. BARBER: No, they do not. Not for secondary students.

SPEAKER COLLINS: But one that does, would they charge that to an *Abbott* district? So let's say it's an *Abbott* district and let's say the city of Newark going to Essex County. Newark would have to pay a tuition for its students to go to Essex County.

MR. McANDREW: That's correct.

SPEAKER COLLINS: And then there would be the State supplement, and then whatever Essex County was paying.

MR. McANDREW: Right. Now, and those-- If you take a look at a rundown from county to county, you will see that some county vo-techs receive as much as -- I believe, Cumberland, you receive how much CEIFA aid? -- 79 percent, okay, to a Somerset, Bergen, Morris, Cape May, that receives nothing, other than categorical--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Did you say Somerset?

MR. McANDREW: I believe Somerset--

SPEAKER COLLINS: I knew he would take his glasses off.
(referring to Assemblyman Biondi)

MR. McANDREW: --and then a whole host of others that are in between. So, as a result, depending upon if you're high or low, it depends upon what level of contribution the County Chosen Freeholders kicks in versus also those districts that charge tuition, how much they're going to charge tuition. And with all of this, there's a very complicated formula that has been devised by the Department of Education in terms of how all of this is derived county by county. We all have to live by those types of formulas.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, it has to be an intricate formula, so--

MR. McANDREW: Most definitely.

SPEAKER COLLINS: --none of us will understand it.

MR. McANDREW: We're not talking about a one or two step.

SPEAKER COLLINS: No offense, Dr. Henry.

DR. HENRY: None taken, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER COLLINS: You may say whatever.

DR. HENRY: You did mention that these students who are coming to the county vocational schools from the *Abbott* districts bring additional needs. There is a comprehensive study in Essex County where the vast majority of the students coming from Newark into the Essex County Vocational School are below level, as measured by the GEPA. But because of the unique integrated academic program established by the Essex County Vocational School, those students then are qualified to pass the HESPA. So the school district has had to spend extra money on remediation, additional remediation programs, but the

money that was set up by the court decision does not flow to the county vocational schools for that purpose.

ASSEMBLYMAN BIONDI: Mr. Speaker?

SPEAKER COLLINS: No one has to be recognized to speak. Flow right in, Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN BIONDI: Let me just say that Somerset County supports our vo-tech with 65 percent of the funding. You had mentioned that the 400 *Abbott* school district children that you're educating is about \$6 million. Using the old math, that comes out to almost \$16,000 per child for the year. Is that--

SPEAKER COLLINS: No. The 400 was just in Cumberland.

MR. McANDREW: No. In Cumberland.

MS. BARBER: Just in Cumberland.

SPEAKER COLLINS: The \$6 million was the State number.

MR. McANDREW: About 10,000 students.

ASSEMBLYMAN BIONDI: Okay. What is the average cost per student per year for the average of all 21 vo-techs?

MR. McANDREW: Frankly, Assemblyman, I'm not quite sure what the average would be for the 21, but I would venture to say for a full-time vocational-technical student it's probably somewhere around \$12,000 per student.

MS. BARBER: I can give you an idea of what the *Abbott* parity aid is worth in Cumberland County per student. In Bridgeton, which is one of the *Abbotts*, a full-time student receives \$1619. So it's 1600, approximately, per student; Millville, 2300; Vineland, 1975.

ASSEMBLYMAN BIONDI: So it's somewhere around the two.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Darlene, before we go to Mr. Rufner, but -- not that I want you to be an expert now, and maybe I'm wrong -- but as I look at the three *Abbott* districts in Cumberland, I've always made the assumption that Bridgeton, of those three communities, is the poorest. Why would Millville be the one getting the most subsidy?

MS. BARBER: I'm not sure.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Would you have any idea?

MS. BARBER: I'm only taking that right off of the printouts from the--

SPEAKER COLLINS: From the State.

MS. BARBER: --State.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Right.

Mr. Rufner had indicated that he would like to make a comment. And even before you do, sir, if I may, if you would grab this moment to maybe explain a little to all of us of the outstanding program the ironworkers have, but also put you a smidgen on the spot -- what kind of young people are you getting out of our vocational schools? -- but that's after you make the comment that you had signaled me on, please.

R O N A L D R U F N E R: Yeah. I would just like to elaborate on some of the points that the panel has brought up. Actually, if you want to put it into a military analogy, Tom is the battalion commander, and I'm one of his sergeants out in the trenches. I don't claim to be an educator, and I'm definitely not a politician. In fact, what they've given me here is they've given me a license to tell the truth.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Then join the rest of us politicians. Go right ahead, sir. (laughter)

MR. RUFNER: We started out with four schools. We now have 15 schools in our consortium, 4 of them are comprehensive. Our accomplishments -- it's a win/win situation. Initially, when we started out, I can honestly tell you that the people that I represent, there was reluctance. They were afraid that the government was going to get in their bed. Well, needless to say, we sold them, the people that represent the training department, that there was no small print, that this was a win/win situation. What it's accomplished is, for the first time in the history of New Jersey, people from vocational schools -- principals, guidance representatives -- can actually call up business agents and have a dialogue. There is still reluctance in the state on the parts of labor, but trust me, with the supply and demand and the amount of construction we're going to have in this state, they're going to pull their heads out of the sand.

The working relationship that we have with management-- Initially, when I started, one of the requirements of the grant was that we take these kids out on the job sites and to show them what we're all about. Well, I went down to the Building Contractors Association with my hat in my hand only to find out that they were very interested. They are experiencing the same problems that we are. Management is concerned. Where are we going to get our supervisors? Where are we going to get our building managers? Where are we going to get our engineers? And they were very cooperative with us. And what we do now is we take students out onto the job site. We supply a mentor. They supply some supervision. Students can smell it, taste it, and see what it's all about. It's a first time in the State of New Jersey.

As far as we're concerned, this is not going to solve all of our problems, but it's definitely a potential source for manpower. Traditionally, the unions have always organized. This is the first time that we're actually recruiting. It's the same as if you're a scout going to watch some eighth-graders play football and you follow them, and potentially, they're going to become a pro. Well, that's what it's affording us -- to work with these young people and to tell them what we're all about.

We're trying to replace our retirees. But most of all, and what I've found in this three years that I've been involved in this, and I may be wrong, but it seems that in some cases the last thing that people seem to be conscious of are the students. Again, I have this license to tell the truth, see, because I don't have to answer to any constituents. I see it as a numbers game, and who gets the money, not the kids.

Okay. I'm going to call it the way it actually is. Traditionally, in the building trades, it was nepotism at its best. But then, of course, doctors and lawyers and Ivy League colleges and the office of the presidency of the United States, and on and on and on, nepotism is a way of life in America. As far as we're concerned, I'm going to tell you right now, the country club has burned down. They backhoed over the foundation, and we don't know where we're going to get the people to replenish our needs. So, it's a win/win thing.

Schools can now talk to the unions. Students have opportunities that was never offered to them before. Management and labor are working collectively, and it's not just arguing over what the package is going to be and how much we're going to get paid or lose.

Our accomplishments up till now: In the beginning of the year, we have an exploratory program through this grant. This year we had 263 students come into our facilities. There were 58 sophomores, which were potential juniors, because it is a two-year program, juniors and seniors. There were 95 new juniors, and there were 132 new seniors. Actual participants after they decided what they wanted to do were 163 students this year. What I do in the beginning of the year, I go out into the school system and I administer an ACT WorkKeys test. It's the same test that they would take to apply to our certified apprenticeship. I present them with the results -- the school with the results.

The ball is in their court. It's now up to the student. It's responsibility. If you're really interested or you think you're interested, they can seek remedial help in the schools. We provide books from WorkKeys to help them, and we've been very successful, and we've had very good response from the kids. Last year, we accepted 13 students into our apprenticeship that passed our tests. Presently, we have 45 applicants -- 31 have passed their steel-walking test, 2 failed, 12 are absent, and as of today -- as I left my house and I called, the results came in from ACT -- we presently have accepted 23, but this is pending on those that were absent.

Now, I get to my obstacles. A student that can find their way to the guidance counselor's office can find out absolutely anything they want to know about college and nothing about us. And it leads us to the fact that the vast majority of American four-year, postsecondary schools have, in effect, open admission. If you have a pulse and a high school diploma, you can go to college. My experience, especially with the comprehensive schools, is that there's a predetermined attitude with their administrators, their guidance

counselors, and the general public, that it's college or McDonald's. This is the mind-set in this country.

And I'm going to throw some -- because I know you people deal in statistics-- These are the statistics that I got from the schools as far as New Jersey is concerned. Of all the students that left in September, 30 percent dropped out. Four years from now, approximately 24 percent ever graduate with a four-year degree, and out of that, 3 percent to 4 percent ever follow the discipline that they've chosen. Folks, where are the other 70-some percent? There's something radically wrong here.

Again, I'm going to lay these statistics on you, because I know that's what you people deal in. I searched out into the Department of Labor, and it's the college mania questioning the unquestionable. The study claims that the vocational-technical high school diploma, which is free, you can add \$1036 to your annual salary. A four-year college degree adds approximately 6 percent, or \$1243, to a high school graduate's annual salary, and a lot of money has been spent by mom and dad to get that degree for that slight edge in your earning potential.

College statistics -- 33 percent of students will graduate in four years, 50 percent of students will graduate in six years, because they're not all accomplishing it in that four years anymore, but only one out of three will realize a career in an area where they have their college degree.

First paradox, out of 100 students in the ninth grade -- again, this is the Department of Labor -- 6 percent are going to drop out, leaving 94, of which 70 percent are going to go to college, leaving 65, which, after six years, 50 percent will actually complete college, leaving 32. Out of 32, 1 in 3 will ever

realize career success related to college studies, leaving 11. What happened to the other 89? There's something radically wrong here.

Occupations -- 1989 to 1990 there were roughly 8000 people with degrees in chemistry. The statistics from 1990 to 2005, they're looking for 3000. This is the jobs that are available. Physicists: approximately 4000. 1989 to '90 job openings: 1000. Economists: 23,949. Jobs available: 2000. Now we get to the building trades. A mason, 1989 to '90, there were actually 365 apprentices. Demands from '90 to 2005: 5000. Carpenters: close to 3000 between '89 and '90. Demand in job openings: 29,000 between '90 and 2005. Electricians--

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Excuse me?

MR. RUFNER: Yes, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: Were they filled -- any of those quotas?

MR. RUFNER: These are the statistics that the Department of Labor is putting out as what was available between '89 and '90 and what is needed between '90 and 2005.

What I'm trying to drive home here-- And again, I'm only looking at this from the technical aspect of the building trades. I'm not even touching the other technical areas. It's supply and demand, folks. Mom and dad has been sold this bill of goods that it's college or McDonald's. If you dare tell them anything else-- I've worked in the inner city. I went to the hoity-toity areas where they tell me initially that if the board of education was ever aware that there was a member of the building trades in here, they would be very upset.

In the inner cities, I dare have someone go in there and tell mom or dad or guardian that your son or daughter shouldn't go to college. They've just been discriminated against, because they'd realize and they'd see what's being told to them for the last 30 years through our Federal government, that we're going to be a service economy, but the numbers don't jive.

Time and opportunity -- in 1950, 20 percent of the workforce were professionals. In 1997, 20 percent of the workforce were professionals. In 1950, 65 percent were unskilled. In 1997, only 10 percent are unskilled. In 1950, 15 percent were in the technical fields. Today, 70 percent are in the technical field.

SPEAKER COLLINS: And the definition of technical field is?

MR. RUFNER: Is the type of courses that are taking place in the vocational school, in the academies today, where they have preengineering, premedical courses, dental assistant, you name it. As far as I'm concerned, they can offer more than the average comprehensive school today.

DR. HENRY: Mr. Speaker?

SPEAKER COLLINS: Surely.

DR. HENRY: Usually it's below the baccalaureate level, the level of training below the baccalaureate.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Is the technical determinate?

DR. HENRY: Technical. But what is also happening nationwide, particularly in the IT industry or the information industries, industry skill certificates are replacing diplomas as the coin of the realm. For example, Cisco, which has 85 percent of the world's market share in networking technology, has three levels of certificates, the first one, CCNA, at the high school level. If you

had that certificate, you could go out today and get a job. If you had a college degree in information technology, you may get a job today, and that's the difference. Certain fields are now placing total reliance on industry skill certificates rather than the college degrees. It's by field, but we have to recognize this change is occurring.

SPEAKER COLLINS: No question.

MR. RUFNER: I'd just like to elaborate, and this is my personal experience. On a local level, State level, Federal level, when I speak to anybody that's associated with education privately, they all acknowledge that all students should not go to college, but there seems to be a problem in getting them to admit publicly that the king has no clothes on.

SPEAKER COLLINS: What was that? The king has no clothes?

MR. RUFNER: No clothes on, yeah.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Okay, go ahead.

MR. RUFNER: Okay. The numbers don't lie. We need -- and this is my opinion -- we need elected officials and leaders in education that have the courage and the diplomacy to educate the public, especially mom and dad, that after 30 years of "we are going to be a service economy," we have to inform them of our country's needs, of the many career pathways that do not necessarily need college, and where their sons and daughters can earn excellent wages and have rewarding careers. We don't have to discourage college, but is it really necessary for everyone?

I personally strongly advocate programs like this one that I'm involved in -- Youth Transition in Work -- and the enhancement of our technical schools to ensure their future and the needs of our society. Again, as

I said earlier, it's a win/win situation. If we stop arguing over who gets the money and the numbers that we can submit to the State at the end of the-- They don't follow up on how many of those kids drop out, but it looks good on paper how many went off to college. And the saddest part is, when I do job fairs, when I work with these kids one-on-one in classrooms, and I ask them, what are you going to do? What's your plans? "Oh, I'm going to college." In the inner cities, I ask them what's your SATs. They don't even know what I'm talking about, but I'm going to college.

How many schools do you apply to? None. But they've been programmed from elementary school: college, college, college. We have no glass ceiling in the construction industry. You can go as far as you want. I'm going to give you a little packet later on, and I purposely did this little check. And it's a check addressed to mom and dad, and on the back I did a breakdown on your potential earnings in the three years in apprenticeship versus two years at the College of New Jersey, two years at Brookdale, 64 credits, what it's going to cost you, and what your potential earning power is earning minimum wage.

I also address the fact that, mom and dad, your son or daughter is going to be more mature, better prepared for the college experience, and there's no glass ceiling. If you want to be an entrepreneur, you want to buy a truck, you want to be a subcontractor, go right ahead. We can provide more job security than almost any white-collar industry today. There's no downsizing with us. You pay your union dues. We have an 800 number. You can call our international anywhere in the United States where there's a job available. You got the hook. You've got a job waiting for you.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Let me ask you a few questions. Though you are speaking in the broadest sense, the number of times you've referred, at least I infer from your comments, somewhat personal -- do you have children?

MR. RUFNER: Yes, I do.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Did they go to college?

MR. RUFNER: It was their choice.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Did they go to college?

MR. RUFNER: Yes, they did.

SPEAKER COLLINS: All right.

MR. RUFNER: And I'll relate a personal experience. My son-- He was an honor student. He was in his second year. He says, "Dad, academia is not for me."

SPEAKER COLLINS: Exactly.

MR. RUFNER: He came home, and I said fine. You find what you want to do in life. He applied to the mason's apprenticeship on the Internet, was accepted, worked the winter as a mason, and he says to me, "You know, Dad," he said, "I love working with my hands, but I don't think I'm going to challenge my mind enough. I'd like to go back to college." I said, go right ahead.

SPEAKER COLLINS: He had that choice.

Now, let me ask a question that may have happened. If when that young man, your son, was in high school, if the guidance counselor called you in and said, "Mr. Rufner, your son is not college material," how do you think you would have reacted to that?

MR. RUFNER: No. That would offend me. But what I'm asking the guidance counselor to do--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Right.

MR. RUFNER: Let's use an analogy. A Marine Corps officer, good to go, tough, smart, does not want to sit behind a desk or a computer, does not want to be locked in some little module. He likes to be out there. He likes diversity. He likes going from site to site. We know that those kids are out there in those schools, but they're learning nothing about people like myself. This is what we're questioning. You as a guidance counselor, if you know your audience and you know John or Mary and you know these individuals are not people that you're going to sit behind a desk--

We have a gentleman in our local who did two years at the Naval Academy. He decided it wasn't for him, went out and framed houses for a while, and now he's a successful ironworker. Almost immediately, he went into supervision. We have a lot of schoolteachers that decided, well, I can earn more money here, and they're very content. They're very happy. We have a cross section of society. My argument is with the schools and this mind-set. Trust me, I have no problem with the guidance counselors. They've got their marching orders, and I know where they're getting it from.

It starts with the real estate agent. In our community, 98.6 percent of all our students go on to college. Mom and Dad now go--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Now, let me just stop you there--

MR. RUFNER: Yes, sir.

SPEAKER COLLINS: --if I may, because we have to go on, and we'll have to go back to this.

MR. RUFNER: Yeah.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Why do you think that those real estate agents say that?

MR. RUFNER: Because they're buying into what we've been sold for the last 30 years.

SPEAKER COLLINS: No. They want to sell homes. And you know who wants to buy those homes? The people who want their children to go to college. So I understand your premise, but I still have a couple of comments that I have to make.

You used the word courage, when our leaders get the courage.

MR. RUFNER: Yes.

SPEAKER COLLINS: I hear that a lot. To me, courage is on the battlefields when there's a war. Courage is not what we need in this.

MR. RUFNER: Not when you're running for office, sir, when you're running for office, and you have to answer your constituents. There's no difference in our industry.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Right.

MR. RUFNER: A business agent doesn't necessarily tell his constituents the truth. He tells them what they want to hear.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Let me just say, I don't view that as courage, though. I'm using the word courage. Whatever the truth may be is always in someone's judgment. And as you've analyzed this, and you have every right to do it, and I, as someone who definitely believes that college is not for everyone-- We are going to run into a shortage of people who have skills that I will say, very bluntly, I do not have for whatever reason how I got to where I am. But

with the judgments that you have described with regard to salaries, that may not be what moves every person. Do you know, I have a great respect for ironworkers, the money they make and so on. I could not be an ironworker, because I could never walk those beams, and if we move to electricians or whatever.

And the last thing, in the broadest sense, and you went back to 1950, if you look at the -- how this society has evolved -- I, as a first-generation college student on either side of my family, that was the evolvment -- after World War II, after the Korean War, how people wanted to move forward. Where we are today is the evolvment of this society. Where we should go is something else. Whether legislative leaders should do that, educational leaders, or maybe those parents who take a broad perspective of where they are is all part of the debate. But to indicate that this is a scheme, though I was a member of the higher education community, and I can see it's an economic engine as much as anything else--

MR. RUFNER: I agree.

SPEAKER COLLINS: But to give people the choices which you said every child should have, I don't know as we get that when the declaration, which you, yourself, sir, said would even offend you, "No, your child is not for college or this one"-- Let them seek their own level, and I think that would be better for society.

MR. RUFNER: I'd like to answer you.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Surely.

MR. RUFNER: Do I think tomorrow that our government is going to say, "Oops, we've sold you a bill of goods. A lot of your sons and daughters

really shouldn't go to college or we should offer them technical areas where they can earn an excellent living?" No. Through attrition, if they start within the next, say, five to ten years and we slowly program our society into reality, then it will work. But right now, what I hear from you is that, no, we should stay with this -- college is the only answer. And it's not, I disagree.

SPEAKER COLLINS: No. I surely did not say that. I surely did not say that. But I will not join you and make statements that every child is not for college. We can all say that. But when the rubber hits the road, when the courage is needed, to use your term--

MR. RUFNER: Yes.

SPEAKER COLLINS: --is to go to the Rufners and say, "Your child is not for college," and everything changes. I assure you, sir, I have been in the admissions office at colleges, I have been a legislator for 16 years, and when it comes to this person's child or that person's child, everyone can have a theory until it is their child. And you, yourself, in all honesty, agree.

MR. RUFNER: All educators can do is provide information. You have a student that goes into a-- We have students that are great need students and come into our program. They come in because this is what they wanted to do in life. Through this program, it's the first time they've had an opportunity to even hear about us. The argument has always been if you work in construction you lose all this time. Yeah, they make a lot of money, but they lose a lot of time. Well, that's also a myth. If you do a breakdown on the numbers, which I will also give you in the packet here (indicating), it shows what you can earn working 26 weeks, three-quarters of a year, a full year, and

in the State of New Jersey, not that we encourage it, what you can collect in unemployment.

You can earn an excellent living, and it's not for everybody.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Exactly.

MR. RUFNER: Construction is not for everybody. Neither is college for everybody. So don't misinform these kids. Give them the option, say, this is what's available--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, these will be philosophical differences, but I do want to ask one question, and I saw Brian--

Is, in your lifetime, is the vocational education programs here in New Jersey better today than 25 years ago or worse?

MR. RUFNER: Without a doubt, they're better.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Therefore, society must be moving in that direction.

MR. RUFNER: But there seems to be some sort of a problem now as to where we're going to head and who's going to get the money. Share-time students may not be able to go to vocational schools.

SPEAKER COLLINS: And that is a perfect segue to two things: one--

Because Darlene, I know that you have a tight time frame--

MS. BARBER: Yes.

SPEAKER COLLINS: --and though Brian had indicated that he wanted to say something-- And Tom, please keep in mind whenever you have to go, you go.

MS. BARBER: Right. I do want to say--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Because one of the reasons you're here is you had indicated some concerns when you testified publicly with regard to the financing, so--

MS. BARBER: Right. I just want to--

SPEAKER COLLINS: --whichever way we want to go.

MS. BARBER: I just want to comment before I leave.

SPEAKER COLLINS: And surely, Mr. Rufner, you're more than welcome to continue in this discussion.

MS. BARBER: I want to comment on a couple of things. I've been in public education now for about 18 years. I've been in a vocational school district for two years. I have two children, both children went to college, but my son, through the four years of high school, worked for an electrician. He got the hands-on experience and didn't attend the vocational school, but did both. He did the hands-on, and he also did the collegiate experience.

After being in a vocational school for two years, I can honestly say that I think it's a good experience for any student to spend time in a vocational school. And I can honestly say in Cumberland County that we have at least two school districts that we have an access problem. We have a problem where guidance counselors are sheltering students -- is a good way to say it -- students they don't want to see the programs of the vocational school.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Now why do you, without naming the schools or the personnel, why do you, Darlene Barber, think that happened?

MS. BARBER: I've been informed from our public relations person, who goes to the school district and tries to gain access to talk to students and is told there are only a select number of students he can talk to.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Right. And that is as offensive as anything I can think of and goes along with what Mr. Rufner is saying under this mentality, that certain students do this and other students do that.

MS. BARBER: I just feel that there are some students, whether they're secondary or postsecondary, who will work better with their hands and being better hands-on employees and probably not attend college.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Absolutely.

MS. BARBER: But that's where the problem is, it's in the access. And that's an area that has to be addressed and maintained -- is in the law.

SPEAKER COLLINS: But how would you do such a thing, or maybe that would be fair to Dr. Henry, who is the representative -- if I may, Tom? -- of the vocational educational programs in the state in the Department of Education, which of course is the total umbrella of education. I mean, is this--

MS. BARBER: I think that's why you're seeing more and more cases based on that.

SPEAKER COLLINS: I have understood what Mr. Rufner said and what you have just described, the way we slid into this with potential threats of lawsuits.

I mean, it is so offensive, if I may have, on a personal sense-- And he graduated with Becky Fashmire (phonetic spelling) -- I don't know where you are with that -- but my neighbor was 20 years old when he got out of high school. He had been let back four times. He had a reading problem, as we find out later. I spent 30 years in higher education. He is the smartest person I have ever met. He is skilled beyond all my dreams of all kinds of areas and probably

has-- Well, he was a bridge walker, so I guess he could walk on iron. He is the brightest by far. The educational system missed him with regard to helping him in reading, but he would be someone not ready for college or not prepared or whatever. Yet, if he were, I'm telling -- I share with Ph.D.s, they couldn't carry this man's gray matter.

So there are so many who reach their own level, and that's what I do believe. There should be opportunities, and I'm very concerned about what I've heard today. I can't speak for others. But this access is a real problem, I see.

MS. BARBER: I just want to say--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Tom--

I'm sorry.

MS. BARBER: I just want to say, because I am going to have to leave, that if anybody does have any questions about the finance, I'll be more than glad to provide information.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Yeah. Maybe we can just hold this, because I would like to hear a couple of finance questions. If you could say, again, and for the transcript and so on, what were your particular concerns with regard to Cumberland County or maybe more expansively with the funding process, Darlene?

MS. BARBER: The major concern that I presented in my testimony was the concern over parity aid and the *Abbott* districts.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Which Assemblyman Roberts has brought to us.

MS. BARBER: That was -- and we did review that. There is plenty of information available for that. One of the other issues that I brought up was the issue of postsecondary students and full-time equivalents in my testimony. We talked about the fact that we do serve a major postsecondary population in Cumberland County. We have a lot of people that are unemployed in that county, and we do bring in a lot of people and provide those services to them. We have a lot of students that are in our full-time equivalent program, which is an evening program. And what we're just saying simply is that we wanted to have the consideration of full-time equivalence like they have in the community college setting. That if a student attends enough hours and there's four students equal to one, that we have the ability to claim the State funding for that. That was the other issue that I addressed in my testimony.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Right. Now, were they -- one other question, Darlene -- and Assemblyman O'Toole, no longer a member of this Commission, was particularly concerned with regard to-- If you remember, and I think you testified on Essex-- Were you here when Essex County -- on the first session we had when they were here and really had some concern? Was their concern, as you remember, the same as yours?

MS. BARBER: Yes. He also addressed, I think, the difference in the core curriculum funding, too, for *Abbott* districts--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Yeah, that's right.

MS. BARBER: --and which I didn't address in mine.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Okay. And we have that in the transcript.

MS. BARBER: Right. There is a difference in the whole aid picture for *Abbott* districts and county vocational schools. And Dr. Henry could probably--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Would any of the members -- she is a business administrator -- any particular question you may have of finances that she -- Darlene does have?

MR. McANDREW: If I may, Mr. Speaker, if I could just add a couple of issues--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Sure.

MR. McANDREW: --with funding, as we were talking about in terms of the county contribution at the -- by the board of chosen freeholders and the different State aid levels that we will have. Our State aid is based upon the aggregate of all of the communities in our county, not where the students necessarily come from. And so, you take, for example, like Monmouth County, we have four *Abbott* districts. But yet, Monmouth County, on an aggregate, is a very wealthy county. The aid that I get is based upon the total aggregate, not just in terms of where those students come from. But if we find out where these students actually come from, it's not necessarily from the most wealthiest.

So there are -- definitely needs to be, I believe, a look at how county vo-techs are funded when the Legislature again reviews, at some point in time down the road, funding laws.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Usually yearly we do that.

MR. McANDREW: Yeah. Usually--

SPEAKER COLLINS: We just can't get there.

MR. McANDREW: Usually what happens, Mr. Speaker, is that there are 600-some-odd school districts in New Jersey, and there are 21 county vo-techs. The law is developed, and then we're an after sight, and we have to go around and do a little log in here and a balancing here just to try to keep where we are. None of the funding laws are ever designed, and neither probably they should be, to handle just the 21 county vo-techs, but we do need to be looked at differently. Because how each one of us are being funded, how each one of us are forced to almost be entrepreneurial within our own counties in terms of how we get support, is not a -- in my basis, a good State policy. Because, in essence, we're left to kind of fight for ourselves in terms of how much the county freeholders can or what they think they can afford to give us versus how much we can charge local school districts tuition. I think it's kind of inconsistent for half the county vo-techs to have to resort to tuition-driven charges to local districts, and the other half not because of the funding sources -- both State aid and county freeholder contribution. And that's the reason why this happens. All right. And so something needs to be looked at.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Thank you.

Tom.

DR. HENRY: One of the issues that we had not touched on: In the design of a county vocational system there are some programs that were purposely concentrated at the county vocational schools because it makes economic sense. And as we look at vocational education on a statewide basis, there is a need for certain statewide programs -- maybe one, two, or three programs in the whole state. There may be programs needed one per county, but we don't fund those programs according to their cost. In the higher

education system, there are differential program cost considerations. But any program in a county vocational school in any of the health sciences -- five times the average cost of any other program.

We've been talking about nursing shortages. To give students scholarships to go to a nursing program only makes the problem worse. Because when I was at a county college for 24 years, every nursing program student we took in, we lost \$5000. So you giving that student a scholarship really hurt us. So, down the road, we must consider that there are certain programs which are going to have to be funded at an entirely different level of funding in order for those programs to survive. The nursing crisis is one you may want to look at now. Because unless we can fund the programs at their real cost level, we're not going to have any programs left, either at the nurse aid program, practical level, RN level, or the BSN level. So that's an adjunct to the whole funding issue.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, let me go back to Mr. Rufner's theory -- an accurate, factual statement, I will say -- with regard to pressure on school districts to produce college graduates. Has this ever been -- and I don't want to get the inner workings of the Department -- but something that has been discussed at the Department of Education, Tom?

DR. HENRY: Frankly, no, because everybody in the Department of Education has gone to college and firmly believes it's the only way to go.
(laughter)

SPEAKER COLLINS: How silly are they?

DR. HENRY: We do have, however-- But I have to give the Legislature credit. The program that Ron has talked about -- the Youth Transitions to Work Partnership Program -- which allows schools to work with

businesses and unions to expose students to careers, was established by the Legislature. You started the program, and it has been very successful, but every industry today in this state is crying for skilled labor.

On March 31, there was a construction industry career day at Liberty State Park. The architects, the engineers, all the skilled trade unions were there, all looking to interest students in their careers. And it's just not the skilled trades, it's everybody within the industry looking for help. How we expose students and parents to a variety of career options for students is the major issue. Whether you want to call that school to work, school to career or an apprenticeship opportunity--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, let's not call it school to work, because--

DR. HENRY: Okay.

SPEAKER COLLINS: --we don't want to go there today. We might be going there another day.

DR. HENRY: But again, it's making everybody aware of the realities of today. It's not college or noncollege. It's lifelong learning--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Now you're there.

DR. HENRY: --and how do I get the skills and upgrade those skills periodically to be marketable.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: I have a question for Mr. Rufner.

MR. RUFNER: Yes, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: The youngsters that go through your school, how many of them actually get a job within the building trades?

MR. RUFNER: Pardon me, I didn't hear the whole question, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: The youngsters that go through your schools, how many actually get jobs within the building trades?

MR. RUFNER: Right now, we don't have enough men to man the jobs. The projected work in the State of New Jersey, if it remains the same, we're in serious trouble. And it's not just us, it's all the trades. We're all out there hustling, trying to get people to come into our industry.

ASSEMBLYMAN DeCROCE: But are all the youngsters that are attending your schools getting into the unions?

MR. RUFNER: The ones that pass the test, yes. This isn't carte blanche -- you come there and you become a union member. The only thing we did, we made an advanced standing -- if a student in their junior and senior year maintain a grade *B* average, they're automatically accepted. The only thing that they'll have to do is pass the drug test and the steel-walking test because of the nature of our industry. Ninety-eight percent of all students that take the steel-walking test pass it. We have yet to have a female refuse to do it, but we've had men.

SPEAKER COLLINS: How many females are in the--

MR. RUFNER: In the industry right now?

SPEAKER COLLINS: --steelworkers or ironworkers?

MR. RUFNER: I'd say roughly 10. It's tough to maintain--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Ten people.

MR. RUFNER: Yeah. I mean, if you want to use the analogy of the electricians are the Air Force, we're the Marine Corps.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Right. I know.

MR. RUFNER: You know, it's that type of situation. It's not for every woman.

SPEAKER COLLINS: I'm personally intrigued, as someone afraid of heights. Ninety-eight percent pass the walking test? How high up is it when you're--

MR. RUFNER: It's twenty feet.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Oh, I can do 20 feet. I might be looking for employment in January? (laughter)

MR. RUFNER: I'm going to give you this packet and when you see the bottom line, you might be, yeah.

SPEAKER COLLINS: I'm looking forward to it.

DR. HENRY: We have been very successful in recruiting minorities into apprenticeable occupations over the last five, ten years. We now have, statewide, 24 percent of the apprentices are minority.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Now, Tom, are you saying in the construction trades?

DR. HENRY: All apprenticeable occupations.

SPEAKER COLLINS: I'm not talking about education now. In other words, in Mr. Rufner's ironworkers, you know, all the electricians and all, you're saying 24 percent of what I call the trades, the trades in New Jersey, are minority?

DR. HENRY: Minority.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Do you go with that number, Mr. Rufner?

DR. HENRY: Four percent are female.

SPEAKER COLLINS: What was that again?

DR. HENRY: Four percent.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Four percent.

DR. HENRY: We have a long way to go there.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Well, again, if you're under -- Mr. Rufner and I, where we agree -- the choice of individuals, well, they'll eventually get there.

MR. RUFNER: I'm going to tell you one thing that these students experience when they come to us. It's a reality check. We are the real world. I do it when I go in the classroom. I will not tolerate them laying on the desk. You cannot wear a hat, and that's on their turf. They don't talk when I talk, and I explain to them it's called respect. I'll listen to them when they speak, and in turn, I expect them to listen to me. When I go into schools where it's predominantly Hispanic and they speak Spanish in the classroom, I speak to them in German. And I apologize for doing it, and I tell them how ignorant it was of me. And since we're in America, we're going to speak English -- Is there any problem with that? -- and I get my message across.

They come to our facilities, and we have no problem whatsoever. People that represent the schools are amazed that the same students that come with us, while they're there, they act like ladies and gentlemen. That's because we won't put up with the nonsense, and we know in the schools their hands are tied.

SPEAKER COLLINS: You are correct, sir.

ASSEMBLYMAN BIONDI: Question?

SPEAKER COLLINS: Sure.

ASSEMBLYMAN BIONDI: Enrollment in the vo-tech statewide, is it up or declining?

MR. McANDREW: It's-- I would say, using my district as an example, we have been growing anywhere from 5 percent to 8 percent a year for the last 10 years. But what if the students actually going into-- And as Ron had indicated that there definitely appears they're not going into what we would consider to be, 20 years ago, traditional vocational-technical types of programs, particularly such as your trade occupations, even your transportation, such as auto mechanics, auto body. Fifteen years ago, I had seven auto mechanics' programs in my district. Today, I have three, but I'm still in a growth situation. Some students are going into the telecommunications areas, into the allied health science areas. And, yes, whereas 20 years ago, eight out of every ten graduates in my vocational school district went directly into the world of work and the majority of them in the area that they were trained, today, about seven out of ten go on to further their education, either at a community college or at a technical school or on, occasionally, a career academy's four-year college/universities.

So we're definitely seeing more students being exposed to vocational-technical education, but vocational-technical education today and tomorrow is not what it was 32 years ago when I first walked into the Monmouth County Vocational School district as a guidance counselor. All right. So big changes have been taking place, and it will continue.

Ron's concern is, and it's a legitimate concern, and as the dollars that the State of New Jersey and the Legislature put up for construction hits the street to build new schools, there is going to be a labor shortage. There is no

doubt about it. There already is a labor shortage. And when these schools begin to be built, somebody is going to have to figure out how we're going to get these employees to the job sites, ones that they can find.

ASSEMBLYMAN BIONDI: So your enrollment has increased. Do you take a different approach in your 9 through 12? Have you taken a different approach than the other 20 counties in your sales approach, if you will, to the eighth-graders? How are you getting the word out that you are there and what services you provide? And I think you need to get to the seventh- and eighth-graders to make the preparation.

MR. McANDREW: The one thing about the 21 county vo-techs is that we are really schools of choice before the terms school of choice ever even hit the streets in terms of what we know today in terms of the legislation for school of choice. The students, adults -- whatever level -- choose to come to us for whatever reasons. And, yes, and in some communities and in some schools, we have more difficulty getting access to students. The State Board of Education and Department of Education is assisting us on that very much in their new rules and regs for vocational education. There is some very heavy access language to provide career information to students, not only at the high school level, but at the middle school level.

So we hope that we will see a better general educational program about what is available as options to young people. The message that needs to get out to the public about vocational-technical education is that it's not the way it was when they were in school or when we started out. When I started out 32 years ago in Monmouth County Vo-tech, 32 years ago -- a shared-time vocational-technical program -- we didn't really care about the academic

preparation or the skills that that young person needed to do as an auto mechanic or as a carpenter. Today, that's 100 percent the opposite. We spend as much time on mathematical, science skills, working in teams, all of those types of things that are successful for any young person to be successful as they grow into an adult we concentrate on.

So we are not a watered-down academic program. We are a different program, a different option for those youngsters that would like to go in that type of a direction. Our concern is to get more educators to understand that there are more ways to provide an education to a young person, particularly at the high school level, than just the traditional way. And that's why the practical arts created-- When they eliminated that, they, in essence, said, "Vocational-technical education had no business at the secondary level."

SPEAKER COLLINS: They were just confused momentarily, as we sent them that message. (laughter) I'm sure we'll continue.

Are there any topics or anything that you would like to share with us as we sort of bring this to a close?

MR. RUFNER: I, just to reinforce--

SPEAKER COLLINS: Surely.

MR. RUFNER: --with the gentlemen who was speaking about it and possibly clarify that gentlemen's question as to why and how we choose apprentices into our program, 34 years ago when I started in construction, it was the Wild West. Today, OSHA rules. The bottom line is money. Management does not want to know your first name. They agreed to pay these wages and these benefits, which are outstanding, and in the industry we call it eight for

eight -- eight hour's work for eight hour's pay. And if we cannot supply them with the right type of people, eventually they're not going to call us anymore.

When I speak to your students, I-- Because they don't have a clue to what we're all about, I use the analogy of you're a singer or a dancer or a movie actor and you've got an agent, and they procure a job for you at a theater. You get down there and tap-dance, sing, whatever you do. I always ask them, who do you think signs your check? They all think the agent does. Well, it's the guy who owns the theater, and that's management. That's why we -- and I try to impress on them that it's our responsibility to send the right-- Plus, we have a selfish interest, because that man may employ me tomorrow. If he stops calling -- guess what? -- that's one less employer we have. That's why we're very selective about who we pick and how we pick them.

DR. HENRY: The critical difference between vocational education in this state and the core curriculum content standards, when we developed the standards, we went out to the entire state community and asked a question -- what should a student know and be able to do after 13 years of education? And we had everybody -- educators, higher education, parents, business and industry -- on panels answering that question. Vocational education, since 1988 in this state, has been geared towards industry standards. The State Board of Education has directed us -- develop programs based on industry standards. Educators are not allowed in that process. Get the industry to tell us what they need and then convene the panels of educators to figure out how to do it.

Our end to program tests, our industry licensing test or skill examinations-- Cosmetology -- by imposing cosmetology licensing standards at our programs, we have raised the state passing rate from 53 percent on the

licensing exam to 86 percent. We don't allow programs to continue in operation unless they have at least a 70 percent pass rate. So we're trying to adhere to industry standards much more than any other state. I think that is why more students are going into vocational programs, because they see there is a greater relevance to that kind of learning than the other alternatives presented.

MR. McANDREW: Just a couple of things, and one is a summary. We certainly will hope that the Commission and the Legislature as a whole looks at the overall funding for the county vo-techs, because -- and in particular, the *Abbott* district issue, because it definitely is a concern.

Another area which also involves funding is that the Legislature has a number of initiatives that are primarily funds -- higher education in terms of science and technology efforts. The 21 county vo-techs represent, in my biased opinion, and I believe in the Department's opinion also, more-- We have incorporated more reform. We have led technology change at the public -- in particular at the 9 through 12 level. Sixteen of our 21 county vo-techs are the -- house the educational technology centers. So we look for those to be continually funded.

We provide that leadership, but it is costly in terms of continuing to do that. Just as higher education comes to the Legislature and recognizes that if you want New Jersey higher ed to be a leader in terms of science and technology, you need to fund them -- I believe you do that and you do that well -- we look for something similar to that. Our types of high-cost programs are very expensive, and they are unique to the K-to-12 educational process. If dollars were spent to provide those types of programs that are recognized as

needed in our quality programs, there needs to be a way to sustain the funding for those particular programs.

I certainly appreciate being invited to come and speak in front of this Commission. I would certainly be available in the future or to provide any type of technical assistance to any of your offices or any of your staff.

Thank you very much.

SPEAKER COLLINS: Anybody? (no response)

Joe? (no response)

Well, let me speak on behalf of the Commission. Thank you for joining us today. It has been quite educational, as every one of our hearings has been.

I was saying to Ted, who has been through a lot of hearings, you never know where a hearing is going to go.

And Mr. Rufner, with your experiences and your commitment and your presentation style, I would like to take your course, and I've taught a lot of years. But it led us in one direction. I'm very pleased.

And Tom, I'm sure that we will continue to stay on this in regard to the practical and fine arts. Maybe not so much such a challenge to you, but it will be to the Commissioner, who I've spoken with.

And the whole area, fully realizing the one side of knowing guidance counselors and the pressures like, you know, "Hey, how come my child isn't going to" -- not just college, but depending on the community, use your term, hoity-toity, whatever that means. I don't know. (laughter) But it's not how many went to college, it's how many went to Ivy League colleges and so on down. But this denial of access and so on, Mr. Who Thinks He Knows

Everything, once again, has been proven I know very little when you get to particulars of all kinds of things.

So thank you very, very much for your input, and we're going to somehow put a lot of this together, through the rest of this year, and hopefully, though I think legislation for whatever the topics would be may be a dream, but at least the groundwork that maybe something could be done next term, if appropriate.

Thank you very much. Thank you members of the Commission and the audience.

Adjourned.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)