
Committee Meeting

of

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS SUBCOMMITTEE ON DATA, RESEARCH, AND EVALUATION

*"Dr. Donnie Evans, State District Superintendent of the Paterson Public Schools,
will present a report on the district to the Subcommittee"*

LOCATION: International High School
Paterson, New Jersey

DATE: January 9, 2013
11:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF SUBCOMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblyman Ralph R. Caputo, Chair
Senator Samuel D. Thompson
Assemblyman Ruben J. Ramos Jr.
Assemblywoman Connie Wagner
Assemblyman Benjie E. Wimberly
Assemblywoman Bettylou DeCroce



ALSO PRESENT:

Senator Nellie Pou
Assemblywoman Shavonda E. Sumter

Melanie Schulz
Executive Director

Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
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APPENDIX:

PowerPoint presentation
submitted by
Donnie W. Evans, Ed.D.

rs:1-75

ASSEMBLYMAN RALPH R. CAPUTO (Chair): I'd like to call the meeting to order.

First of all, I want to welcome Principal (*sic*) Stanley Sumter.

Welcome to Dr. Robina Puryear-Castro, Principal.

Did we lose a principal overnight? Is that what happened?
(laughter)

MS. SCHULZ (Executive Director): No, he is the Vice Principal.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Oh, I see. I just want to make sure-- You know how these things go.

We're going to have the presentation of colors. (presentation of colors)

Excuse me, hold up. We're going to have the Principal make a few remarks.

R O B I N A P U R Y E A R - C A S T R O: Greetings and salutations in the name of education.

It certainly is with great pride that I welcome all of you here today. It is very meaningful for the International and Garrett Morgan Academy families to welcome you.

There are many young people with us here today. At this time I would like for the presidents of the student government associations of the various high schools here in Paterson to please stand and be acknowledged. (applause) I thank you very much, young people, for representing your school families as well as you do.

Please take note of the young people in the rear of the room with the International and Garrett Morgan attire on. These are our

ambassadors, and they are here today to provide any services that you may need as you attempt to navigate through our building. If you need to know where any restrooms are, they are here to help you.

The mantra of International High School is “Seriousness of Purpose.” And it is our expectation that this day these young people will have an opportunity to see that in action as they learn, as we move forward with seriousness of purpose. (applause)

I would like to again welcome all of you to our home.

At this time, could we all please stand for the color guard.
(presentation of colors) (audience recites Pledge of Allegiance)

Thank you. You may be seated.

At this time I call to the podium the President of the Paterson Board of Education, Mr. Christopher Irving.

Again, please enjoy your time with us. (applause)

C H R I S T O P H E R C. I R V I N G: Thank you, Ms. Castro, for the wonderful introduction. I think it’s important to note -- Ms. Castro didn’t say it, but she was my high school teacher as well. (laughter) So she is not just a fine Principal, she was an excellent, excellent educator.

I’d like to welcome the Joint Committee here to the City of Paterson. On behalf of my colleagues on the Board of Education -- I just want to acknowledge those who are here. I do believe the only one I saw was Commissioner Corey Teague. And some of our other colleagues may be trickling in during the course of the day.

I want to take a few seconds just to kind of set the frame for this conversation. I’m sure Dr. Evans will give you an even further in-depth application for where we are in this district, where we’re moving to, and

where we want to go. But it's also important to understand the Board's perspective.

The truth of the matter is, this Board is charged with energy, more than ever, to make sure that student achievement be the sole purpose and focus in this City -- in this great City of Paterson. And we do this every single time we meet in committee, every single time we have a workshop, or regular meeting, or special meeting, or a special special meeting, or a special subcommittee meeting. The purpose is always in focusing on our children and how we get there.

I would be remiss though if I did not at least address the obvious, which is the Board's stance with regard to our involvement in the education -- the process -- of our children. I think without fail folks would be hard-pressed to argue that this whole experiment of State intervention in urban schools has not worked. I was 10 years old; I'm 30 -- just turned it -- oh my goodness. I was 10 years old when the State of New Jersey came into the school district. And now, as a 30-year-old man, I can tell you convincingly, over the last 20 years we still haven't gotten it right. And that blame is not just pointed at governors, it's not just pointed at the houses of the Legislature in our State. But everyone shares that blame; but then everyone should share the work in order to get it there.

I am a firm believer in the whole process of checks and balances. If anybody has taken a political science class-- Students who will take a political science class when you go to college, you will learn something about Madison's Federalist Paper No. 10. And anybody who knows Poli-Sci 101 knows that in the Federalist Paper No. 10, Madison talks about the systems of checks and balances. But the only way

government works is that you have to have the levels of government that can correct each other.

As the Legislature, you all know that all too well -- with some of the realities of working with each other and also working with the Governor's Office. But the only difficult part when we're talking about State takeover, especially within the State takeover districts, is that there are continuous checks but no balance. Imagine a system where you are elected by a constituency, you are given the same oath of office that we all take -- every single one of us, it's the same oath -- you sit into a seat. But you are constrained to truly make the changes or the impact and the input that you feel needs to happen. And I know this has become the *it* topic over the last year. I commend Senator Rice, Senator (*sic*) Wimberly -- Assemblyman Wimberly, excuse me -- Sumter, and of course our wonderful Senator Pou for the work you all have done to champion the cause of just bringing this to light.

But after 20 years, come on folks. We have to wake up. I think we have to get real. And I think we have to get real to the fact that it is a joint effort. It has to be a joint effort. I'm proud of the leadership that this Board has with the Superintendent. Dr. Evans and I work quite well together; the Board works well together. But we do that with the understanding that we are partners in this. And although he is a State District Superintendent, I can honestly say he probably exercised those privileges of veto power maybe a handful of times since I've been on the Board. And I think that speaks to the level of commitment that we share together. But historically it has not always been that way in this district. And so I am here to let the Senate and the Legislature know that this Board

is working tirelessly with the Commissioner's Office to put us in a place to receive aspects of control. But the truth of the matter is, I think all adults have to figure out and realize that the longer we leave out the community -- the folks who put people like myself into elected office -- the more we leave out a segment of how we're going to solve this problem. And until the community truly is engaged and involved in that process, and has the legal or statutory rights as the Constitution says we all should have, it makes this process even more difficult.

And so Dr. Evans is going to come up here and tell you about all the great things that are happening and all the challenges that are coming. And we support him in his effort in doing so. But we also support the Board's right to exercise its right to be a governing and sole operating board. And I believe that has to happen; I believe it should happen. And whether it's the Legislature who takes up Senator Rice's mantle that he put down, or whether it's the Board -- from the legal action that we've taken -- either work with QSAC or what we have pending in the State. But we are a Board fixed on making sure that we represent the parents who are here who have shown up, the students who are here who we represent.

I'm very fortunate to say my niece goes to this school. She's standing in the back. She's probably embarrassed right now. (laughter) She's right there. She goes to this school. She's an intelligent young woman. I'm absolutely proud of her every time I see her and see the work that she does. And I know that is because she is a Paterson Public School student. I grew up in this district; I came from this district. And I can sit here, 30 years old, and be the President of this Board. That means my niece, the young people to my far left -- they have the ability to do so as

well. But imagine what we can do if everybody sat at the table and were equal partners in this process. And I think that is the piece that we have to understand -- is that there has to be equality, and understanding what the problems are in education and fixing it.

I am going to step back now, because at some point somebody is going to give me the hook. Any time you give a politician a mike they'll go forever. You guys know. So I'm going to step back. I know Dr. Evans will have his presentation, but I'll take some questions from you after he's done with his presentation if you have some.

I do want to also acknowledge Dr. Jonathan Hodges, one of our other Board members, who just walked in as well.

Dr. Hodges, thank you.

And also my big sister on the Board, Commissioner Chrystal Cleaves, has just come. (bell rings)

I think that's my cue. (laughter) Thank you, and welcome to Paterson. (applause)

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I'd like to take the opportunity to commend you on a fabulous presentation. Obviously you're presenting all sides of the issue regarding running a school district like Paterson. It's obviously a very difficult task.

And I have to agree that the State has overstayed their stay, not only here but in some of the other districts in the state. True there are problems, but I think meeting each other as equals, I think, is more advantageous to the students and to the educational process. And it also gives the community a feeling that they have some input through their elected officials who are making decisions on an every day basis.

My name is Assemblyman Caputo. I wasn't born with *Assemblyman* in front of it. It was Ralph Caputo. I'm honored to represent the -- be part of the Legislature and represent my district in Essex County.

We have many of the members of the Committee who are here today. I'm going to allow them to make some remarks. We're going to start with Senator Pou.

Nellie.

SENATOR POU: I'm sorry, Assemblyman. I'm sure you meant Senator Pou. (indicating pronunciation)

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Pou, (indicating pronunciation) right.

SENATOR POU: Good morning, everyone.

First of all, thank you so very much.

Allow me also to welcome all of my colleagues. I am very happy and privileged to be here this morning to listen to the presentation that Dr. Evans is going to provide to this special Committee, the Joint Committee on the Public Schools.

Let me also begin by saying to Commissioner Irving, I absolutely appreciated your remarks. I think it's an important -- it's important for us to take note of the fact that we, too, have been looking forward for quite some time -- I can say that personally, having been born and raised in the City of Paterson, a product of the Paterson Public School system, having lived here practically all of my life. I, too, am looking forward to the day that we can, indeed, return our schools back to our local control. I think that is one of the most important things that we can all do today and moving forward.

I'm very happy and privileged to be part of spearheading and sponsoring that piece of legislation with Senator Rice. We understand the importance of that. I know that it's going to take a great number of people in order for us to do that. It's not just a matter of legislative action. While I absolutely understand and appreciate the importance of that step, I think it's going to, however, take everyone involved in doing so, as you very well put your remarks. You certainly highlighted those particular points and the importance of that.

But to the incredible student body of this great City of Paterson and the public school system, let me just say how proud I am to be able to come each and every time to any one of our schools and see the incredible richness of our students, the talent of our students. The needs that exist are certainly ones that we all understand. That is what we're here to do -- to listen, to hear, and to be in a position of being able to do something about that.

I look forward to hearing your remarks.

Thank you, again.

Welcome to my colleagues to our great City of Paterson and to one of our jewels right here, the International High School.

Thank you, once again.

Dr. Evans, I look forward to your presentation.

Thank you.

Thank you, Assemblyman Caputo.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Thank you, Senator Pou. I'm sorry for the incorrect pronunciation of your name.

SENATOR POU: It's okay.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Let's have Senator Thompson say a few remarks.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, this is one of a series of hearings that we are holding around the state in the various districts, again looking out there to assess what the problems are and what we can do to ensure that every student in New Jersey gets the kind of quality education they're entitled to. And so the information you present to us today is so important. We appreciate the Superintendent being here today to fill us in on the situation here in Paterson. I look forward to your testimony.

Thank you very much.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I'd like to have one of Paterson's finest -- Assemblyman Ramos.

ASSEMBLYMAN RAMOS: Thank you, Chairman Caputo.

It's wonderful being here. I don't know if many of you know this in the audience today, but I'm a Paterson school teacher myself. I've taught at School No. 15 for 15 years. I'm currently teaching at New Roberto Clemente. It's my 16th year there teaching 8th grade social studies. It's wonderful to be here to have this dialogue. We've had these meetings across the state, in Trenton at our State House as well, trying to find our best practices to educate our students throughout the State of New Jersey in our public schools.

I'd just like to echo the statements made by Commissioner Irving earlier. We've looked at, throughout the state -- whether it's Jersey City, whether it's Newark, whether it's Paterson -- the State-controlled

districts have not been working out in these districts for a number of years now.

We cannot ask our parents or tell our parents, “You need to get involved in our schools,” when the people they’re voting for aren’t involved in the decision making in those very schools they’re duly elected to have power over and to have edicts over.

Oftentimes in education in the State of New Jersey, and throughout our country now, decisions are often made in corner offices rather than with our parents, with our educators. It’s more of a top to bottom approach rather than a bottom-up approach. We have to get all of our community members involved, everyone involved, all the stakeholders involved; that way we can try our best practices, put our best foot forward to educate our children the best way we can in the State of New Jersey.

Lots of money has been invested to do this. Are those funds being allocated properly? We’ll find out. We have these test scores -- wonderful test scores that everyone takes every year -- that they become the Holy Grail basically as to what we’re doing, how we’re doing it. I’m not a firm believer in test scores, or test taking for that matter. I believe our funding there could be spent -- our funding there could be allocated with more -- reducing class size in our classroom and not having 30 kids in a room, rather than spending money on test-taking companies or these other companies coming; and we can put another 10 or 20 teachers in the classrooms. So that’s the point of view I often bring to the Legislature and the State House. Thirty kids in a room is not efficient education. I often bring that point of view, and I will bring it here again today. I know as my role as a teacher in Paterson -- I don’t often get involved in here because as I

was told, when you receive a paycheck from certain entities you're not allowed to say certain things -- because I have a direct financial benefit. I don't have much of a benefit, but I have a direct financial benefit here. But you know what? Things have to get said, and they will be said.

I appreciate the opportunity today, Chairman.

And I appreciate hearing Dr. Evans' statements.

But I definitely feel that reducing class size has to be front and foremost in bettering our scores, and moving our district forward and districts throughout our state forward.

I appreciate the opportunity, Chairman Caputo.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Thank you, Assemblyman.

Part of the team here in Paterson, along with Senator Pou, is Assemblywoman Sumter.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SUMTER: Thank you.

I'm serving as a guest on this panel, so I want to thank the Chairman for allowing me to do that here in my home district.

First, thank you to Principal Castro, and also to the Vice Principal who I share the last name of Sumter with -- Stanley Sumter. Thank you to all the students and parents who came out today. Because it's important that we show a presence. This is more folks than we typically see in Trenton. I see the PCEA here, I see NJEA representatives here. So it's a well-diverse representation, as well as the faith-based community.

I echo all of their sentiments, but I just want to share a couple of comments. Senator Rice wanted to be here today. I was with him yesterday morning. He had to meet with Reverend Jesse Jackson this morning, so that's why he's not here. Some of the things that we've been

working on in my year in the Legislature have been talking about local control being returned. We've met with Senator Lautenberg on this issue. We are not better off.

My husband is also a teacher at East Side High School. This building that we sit in used to be Grand Street projects, where I used to live. So I told them, in a joking manner, one of the rooms we were in was probably my bedroom. (laughter)

So we know what we can do with the resources when we have them. It's a beautiful building. But every school should look like International High School. So those are some of the struggles that we face. We have some of the oldest buildings for schools, which are supposed to be institutions of learning. We have environments that are not conducive for our teachers to deliver the service, but yet we want to hold them accountable for meeting a standard.

So I'd like to see all of those areas worked on. I know it's a tall order, but I believe we're up for the challenge. And I believe that, with the community, we can do it.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Thank you very much.

Before we get to the other part of the Paterson team, we're going to introduce an educator who is very experienced in the field of education, Assemblywoman Connie Wagner.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Thank you.

Good morning, everyone. Today I hope to learn some positives of what is going on here in Paterson. And I'm very, very eager to be part of this presentation today.

I spent 37 years of my life in education, teaching English and then moving on into guidance in a small district, a little bit larger district -- nothing compared to the size of Paterson. And now that I'm on the legislative side, I sometimes wonder when we pass legislation -- that everything seems so complicated to me. And I like to consider myself a pretty good reader, and yet sometimes I have to read what we have done three and four times in order to understand it. And I come up with so many questions rather than some simple solutions to the problems.

And I agree with Assemblyman Ramos. To reduce class size is a must, because we won't have success -- especially in pre-Kindergarten through grade 3. Everything tells us that if we don't give our children a solid foundation when they start, they fall behind every year.

I'm becoming convinced that nutrition is important in our schools, I'm becoming convinced that after school programs are just as important as what happens in school. So we have to treat the whole problem.

And we talk about parents being involved, educators being involved, and students need to be involved. Because I knew that after I taught a lesson, I could go to a student and say, "What did I do right? What did I do wrong? And how can I do it better?" They have solutions, but they just don't have the power. And I think that they needed to be included in this process of how can we make education better so that they can go out and get the jobs that are so necessary; and not only pass the tests but can love to learn. Learning should be a passion, not learning simply to pass a test. I think our focus needs to shift. And I know that I'm an

idealist, but I think that's where education belongs. I think it belongs right there.

So today I hope to learn some positives, and to see how we can help you and not deter you.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Thank you, Assemblyman.

Assemblyman Wimberly, the other part of the Paterson team.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Good morning.

Thank you, Assemblyman Caputo.

Dr. Evans, Commissioner Irving, Commissioners, staff, teachers, NJEA -- it's good to see the Passaic County Education Association here, Mr. Cheff.

Like my colleague, I grew up here in the City of Paterson. I'm a product of the Paterson Public School system. I'm a proud graduate of School No. 13 and MLK. And the greatest investment I made in the school district is that four of my children have attended school, and three presently are at Alexander Hamilton Academy.

As Assemblyman Ramos said, some of the things I've seen are the increase in classroom size. And one of the reasons I chose to send my kids to Paterson Public Schools was that the classroom sizes were conducive to learning. And I see it increasing, and it is a concern as a parent here in the school district.

And also, my wife is a school teacher -- a 2nd grade teacher at School No. 14, and taught at School No. 10; I think School No. 6 for 10 years before that. So our investment is a daily investment. And myself, going on my 24th year as an employee of the school district, I have been

afforded the opportunity to be in and out of schools every day, basically all year long, and see some of the concerns when you talk about classroom sizes.

Facilities is a major concern for me because if you're in a facility that is not conducive to learning, that deters you from the start. So if in the summertime your building is 100-plus degrees, how do you learn? If you can't lift up the windows in your classroom, how do you learn? If in the wintertime it's overly heated-- I was in a building recently, and the gym was so hot. I thought it was me. I said, "Am I going through some type of midlife crisis at 48 or what?" (laughter) But everybody else was having the same problem.

These are the things that we need to tackle -- that are the small things that are physical that we can address. And getting ground broke here in the City of Paterson for new buildings. Let's not just talk about it, and dream about it, and hope about it -- that we have some new facilities built.

And under the mentorship of Senator Rice, it's been great to learn so much about QSAC and talk to the school board members to understand that the only way the City of Paterson and the other districts in the state that are under State takeover can move forward is for the people who have the true investment of the children, of the grocery store, of the barbershop, of the local businesses -- if they actually have a say on how our district is run. Because those people are the people who care and will be able to move forward.

So I'm here not just as a member of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools, but as a parent, as an educator, and as somebody who

understands that we need to take control of our own. And when it comes to education, we have to be at the forefront, not somebody in a side room.

So I'm here to work with you, Dr. Evans, as you know -- and parents, students, and residents of our district and state.

Thank you.

I look forward to the presentation.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Thank you.

And, of course, we have Assemblywoman DeCroce.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Thank you, Assemblyman Caputo.

I'm honored to be here today with all of you. And I thank Dr. Evans, and Dr. Castro, and Mr. Irving for their -- well, we will hear more from the Superintendent -- for your comments. And most importantly being here--

I live in Parsippany, so it's not too far from Paterson. I grew up in this area. And prior to being a legislator -- which I've only been here for one year -- I worked at the Department of Community Affairs as the Deputy Commissioner. And I had the honor and privilege of working with Senator Pou. And it was important to me because I met with the officials of Paterson. And earlier, when we were in the reception room discussing just general conversation, I made a comment to my colleagues. The most important thing that I've found in my career -- and I was in local government for 23 years prior to that -- was that in order to do my best and to make decisions that are best for the people -- is to see with my own eyes and understand; not just sit at a meeting in Trenton, in the State House,

and listen to what somebody has to say, but be out in the communities and look, and see, and understand what's wrong and what needs to be fixed.

And I do know that Paterson has been working very hard to become fiscally responsible. And I know the Board of Education, as well, has been working very hard to be independent, of themselves, and that is-- All the respect I can give to them I will.

Most importantly, I do agree with my colleagues that reducing classroom size is important. It's important for the children. And not only that, I also believe that we need to give all the support we can to our teachers. There isn't anything more important than our teachers' relationship with our children. And in order for the teachers to be able to do that, they need the support and the help to do it -- and that is in classroom size.

I respect my colleague to the left and all the teachers. And my daughter-in-law is a school teacher. She's an 8th grade school teacher, and I understand what goes on in her district. But it's something I support. So I will continue to work with all of you. I look forward to working with Paterson. You have a beautiful community and a wonderful city. And I know that it will prevail and we will move forward. And this Joint Committee will take everything seriously, and we will try to do our best to help all of you.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

Thank you to all the members for their very exacting remarks and their feelings about public education, not only here in Paterson but in the state and the role of our Committee.

I'd like to introduce Dr. Donnie Evans, our State District Superintendent of the Paterson Public Schools.

Thank you, sir.

SUPERINTENDENT DONNIE W. EVANS, Ed.D.:

Thank you, Chairman Caputo.

Distinguished Senators, Assemblymen and Assemblywomen, and distinguished guests, it is our pleasure to entertain you here and meeting in Paterson. And I say that for two reasons. First of all, we firmly believe that the most important business of any community is the education of its youth. And your being here clearly demonstrates to us your belief in what we're doing -- that you share our belief in the importance of the education of our youth to the community.

The second reason is that I'm always pleased to talk about what we're doing in Paterson. We feel we're doing some great things. Paterson is on the move. You're going to hear some of what we're doing in just a few minutes when I get to the presentation. And as you will see by the initial outcomes that we're beginning to experience, change is occurring in dramatic fashion. And so I'm excited that you're here. I'm excited to be able to talk about what we're doing.

I want to thank the individuals in the audience for being here and being a part of this discussion. Many of them have been introduced already. In addition to those who have been introduced -- and I'll refer to some of them again as I proceed -- we have some of our PTO Presidents here. In fact, if they would stand, raise their hand, and be recognized, I would appreciate it. (applause) We have a representative from the Arab American Civic Association, Dr. Korsh (phonetic spelling) (applause). We

have the President of the Paterson Pastors Workshop, Reverend McDuffie (applause); the Executive Director of the Paterson Education Fund, Irene Sterling; Joe Cheff has already been recognized. We thank him for being here as well. (applause) And I thought I saw Sasha Wolf -- there he is -- with the Paterson Education Association. There are Board members who have already been identified, and there are members of our cabinet who are sitting mostly here in the front. If they would raise their hand as well -- including our Deputy Superintendent-- (applause) She must have stepped out for a moment, our Deputy Superintendent.

And if I could speak about those folks-- We're talking about a talented group -- at least in relation to me -- of young people (laughter) who are helping us to continue to make major changes in our district. And I appreciate their work, and I appreciate everyone else -- the support that everyone else brings to bear.

The education of our youth and the ways that our students need for it to occur does require the entire village. And as you can see by the representation just in this audience here -- and there are many who would like to be here who, for some reason, couldn't -- the village is with us. They are working with us to that end. Everyone -- the groups that I have identified are in partnership with our district to help us implement some aspect of -- many of the initiatives, if you will. And I will allude to some of those as I proceed. But I do want them to know how much we appreciate it as well.

I have much more to say, but it's probably better that I frame it around the presentation. So it's maybe a good point, Mr. Chairman, if you agree that we transition into the presentation.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Certainly.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: I believe copies of the PowerPoint, that will frame my discussion and guide me through the comments that I'm going to make, have been made available to the Committee. And there are a few extra copies that are being distributed as well. (begin PowerPoint presentation)

Actually, I want to go back to the first page in the presentation. The picture -- and I alluded to this when we gave our annual report to the State Board in June -- that picture is symbolic of what we are about in the Paterson Public School system. That is one of the graduations that we hold in the spring for our youngsters who have earned our diplomas. But helping our students to be one of the participants in that activity is what we're about; but it doesn't stop there. Our mission, as you will see in just a moment, is to get them into college and help them to be successful in college, as well as their chosen careers. But that picture is more than a picture. It is symbolic, if you will, of the work that we've undertaken in our City.

In the next few minutes, these objectives will drive my comments. I want to describe, very briefly, the characteristics, challenges, and needs of the children of the Paterson Public School system. Because what we're doing is designed specifically to address their needs, to review our strategic plan -- we refer to it as *Bright Futures*; it, too, drives what we are doing in the school district -- to describe past and present initiatives and strategies, to improve conditions and outcomes, and then to review some of the outcomes that we are currently experiencing.

This is a snapshot of our district in terms of our student population. And these numbers are from the beginning of the year. They change, obviously, because students are in and out during the year. But this is where we were at the beginning of this school year, and the distribution of our students across special populations. And then the number of teachers and total staff that we have in our schools to meet the needs of our students.

Historical challenges that we've been confronted with in the school system that we are working to address -- and, again, are experiencing tremendous success -- include, obviously, test scores. Improving them greatly is part of what we're about because they have been challenging for us. Our students, in large measure, have not performed to our expectations. And you will see, again, we're making tremendous progress in turning that around -- improving our graduation rates, getting more kids into college. And my bias is that every student in the Paterson school system will be prepared for success in college. Many of them are quick to say, "Well, every kid is not going to go to college." If they and their parents decide not to go, that's their call. But I don't want the reason they didn't go to be because the Paterson Public Schools didn't prepare them. And then, obviously, attendance rates: There is a relationship between student attendance and student performance. School culture has traditionally been a problem in our school district; a culture characterized by low expectations. And, again, we feel we're making tremendous progress there as well. Family and community engagement: While we've experienced a tremendous amount of success in that area, there is a lot more work to be done. Our facilities continue to be a challenge. In fact, the Department of Education and the

SDA -- the Schools Development Authority -- have characterized the facilities needs of the Paterson Public School system as being the greatest in the State of New Jersey. Fiscal management: We've made tremendous progress in that area and are doing quite well, actually. Internal and external communications continue to be a challenge. And, again, we're making tremendous progress. And our district-level operations and capacity has been -- and we've turned the curve on that one. And then growth and student enrollment. In fact, this is the first year-- I'm into my fourth year here in Paterson, and this is the first year that our student enrollment didn't increase significantly. We've leveled off. Our population, I think, is about 100 students different this year as compared to last year. In the previous years it's been 800, 1,100. There have been significant increases. But then that occurred after years of decreases over the past decade.

Our strategic plan that I alluded to earlier is referred to as *Bright Futures*. And it is a plan for the children of Paterson. The children are our future. And so this is about helping our children not only to have a future that's brighter than might otherwise be, but also help them to be prepared to do a better job with this country than we have. And we think we've done a pretty good job, but we want them to do even better.

Driving a lot of what we're doing are our core beliefs. And I've highlighted a couple there -- or three of them, and I only want to refer to the second one. There are too many people in this City, in this nation who think youngsters who are predisposed to at-riskness cannot learn at high levels. We challenge that. I don't believe it. It is our job to prepare our youngsters to be successful. And so if they're failing, it's our failure.

Our vision: to be a leader -- not a follower -- a leader in the State of New Jersey in educating the state's urban youth. And our mission, as I've already alluded to, is to prepare them for college, to prepare them to be successful in any college or university in this country and in their chosen profession.

These four priorities drive all of the goals and initiatives in our district, and they are a part of the strategic plan. Effective academic programs is our primary priority. We want programs that are research-based and outcomes-driven. Safe, caring, and orderly schools: Everyone knows that youngsters will not succeed and achieve to their potential if they don't feel safe in the classrooms in this district. Our teachers cannot perform to their potential if they don't feel safe. So it's incumbent upon us to make sure that our schools are safe. Family and community engagement: We have to have our families and our community partners working with us. Again, the reference to *it takes a village* is never more applicable than in our work. Efficient and responsive district operations: I've never seen -- and I've seen many, many school districts; I've served in various capacities in a lot of places, including serving as a university professor where I studied a lot of school districts. I've never seen an effective school district that didn't have an effective district office. And so that particular priority is aimed at making sure that our operations at the district office are effective to support our teachers and our principals in the work that occurs in our schools.

And for each one of those there are a number of goals that I won't spend a lot of time with. You have the PowerPoint -- the hard copy -- and you have them listed there. Those, obviously, then frame the initiatives

that we're implementing across the district. And there are an array of goals associated with each one of the four priorities.

I joined the district in May of 2009. One of the first endeavors was to develop a strategic plan. It took us actually five or six months to do that. And by mid-year we had developed it and began to implement much of what was in it. These are some of the initial objectives or initiatives, if you will, that we implemented.

The high school renewal effort was the biggest. We spent a good amount of our time -- probably most of our time as it relates to restructuring, changing our high schools, restructuring them, creating schools of choice, looking at the curriculum. And we're still working on the curriculum in our high schools.

Looking at the fact that we had -- particularly in the case of East Side and Kennedy -- two large comprehensive schools, at a time when small learning communities seemed to be making tremendous progress. And we had small learning communities in Paterson as well. So we made a decision to fundamentally change them, but also change what was going on in them. Changing also some of our lower-performing elementary schools became a part of that. And expanding opportunities for youngsters who were challenged by traditional schooling arrangements, if you will -- youngsters who needed something different than what our traditional high schools were providing. So we expanded our alternative schools.

Full-service community schools was one of the major initiatives that we initially led the charge in developing here in the City. We reorganized at the district office level. We embraced the work of Larry Lezotte and Ron Edmonds that is characterized as the Effective Schools

work, and implemented an Effective Schools Initiative for Paterson. And it's referred to as the Paterson Effective Schools Initiative. And we began to also work on family and community engagement.

As a result of that -- the outcomes -- the initial accomplishments or outcomes were, obviously, the restructuring of East Side High School from one comprehensive high school into three small learning communities of about 600 students each. And each one of these schools within East Side -- and now in Kennedy -- have their own principal, their own leader; it's a separate faculty; it's a separate administration that supports the principal; and each one is driven by a theme. They are thematic programs. And Kennedy followed. East Side was the first and Kennedy followed. And so that represented a major, major change.

We converted all of our high schools to schools of choice. Youngsters entering the 9th grade choose the high schools that they wish to attend. They are not assigned unless they decide not to choose; then we will assign them to a high school. And I believe about 90 or 95 percent of our students get either their first or second choice. They have to give us three choices in priority order. And for us, that means that youngsters are where they want to be, they are embracing a theme that they're interested in, and that translates into improved student achievement.

We expanded the alternative high school arrangement that we had. We had a capacity of about 75 students -- or for 75 students. It's now up to about 400. That doesn't mean 400 are enrolled. We have a capacity for 400. We have about 360 students enrolled in alternative programs at this particular point in time.

And then we restructured, similarly, some of our lower-performing elementary schools. And by restructuring -- and in some cases we changed the configuration or, in other cases, we restaffed them. At least 50 percent of the staff are new. And in most cases there is new leadership in the school as well.

And you see a reference to SIG there, actually. Two of the schools -- Dr. Frank Napier Jr. and School No. 10 -- were successful in acquiring school improvement grants at roughly \$6 million each. And for each of those schools, there are a number of school improvement initiatives that drive -- or support, rather, that work.

Full-service community schools: These were the first three that we developed. School 5 was actually the first, then we added School 4 and New Roberto Clemente. And this year -- this coming year we're going to be adding more as well -- two additional schools. And I will talk more about that as I proceed.

We reorganized the district office, created a student-operated credit union at Kennedy, and parent organizations in each school. When I came in, many of our schools didn't have parent organizations. Today, each has a parent organization. And then we implemented the Effective Schools Initiative that I alluded to. And then we were successful in acquiring some grant support to help us do a lot of the work. Some of this I've already mentioned.

In the 2010-11 school year, we then shifted our focus and began to focus more on elementary schools and then on other areas that needed improvement in the district to accelerate student achievement. And these became objectives -- all of which are aligned to the objectives you saw

in the strategic plan or the goals you saw in the strategic plan: building healthy school cultures and climates that support student achievement. Redesigning critical processes and procedures: Many of our processes and procedures were problematic. Some of them were decades old and hadn't been reviewed, or changed, or modified and were based on information and technology that was outdated and required reconsideration. We revised teacher -- or are in the process, actually, of revising teacher and administrator evaluation systems consistent with the movement to that end across the state. Implementing high impact academic interventions for low-performing students: And that targeted students whose performance was significantly below proficiency, going beyond what we were offering in the traditional academic program and offering additional supports before school, in some cases during school, and after school to help those youngsters achieve at higher levels on a faster timeline. And then strengthening the district's assessment system: We had an assessment system that goes beyond the State assessments, but that provided information or data to teachers on a quarterly basis to help them monitor progress of our students. But it wasn't serving us as well as it could -- again reflecting on previous technology and old ways of doing things. So we sought, then, a new system to be able to help us do that. And then a heavy, heavy, emphasis on that last bullet: building capacity among staff. There is no question -- and research is very definitive on this and has been for as long as I've been reviewing it -- that the number one factor associated with student achievement is the quality of instruction that the students get in the classroom. That translates into the quality of the teacher. It's the number one factor. It has been for a long time and still is. Most

researchers will tell you that the number two factor associated with student achievement is the quality of leadership in the school -- the principal. Between those two, they represent at least 60 to 70 percent -- in some cases even more -- of what it takes to move a school, to help students achieve to their potential. Now, there are other factors. Don't get me wrong. Parent engagement is a factor; some of the at-risk factors, particularly poverty is a factor; disability is a factor. But the two most impactful factors are the quality of teachers and the quality of leadership in that school.

So this is what we sought. This represented a shift from what we were doing up until the end of the 2010-2011 year. And we began to focus more closely on these things after taking care of what we felt were some very basic needs like reorganization and some of the things you saw previously. That translated into the creation of a number of initiatives. And you see a reference with most of them to the items I've identified on this list of objectives, so you can see what we've put in place to address specific objectives.

We've created the Paterson Innovation Zone, which is a data-driven initiative to help teachers to be more effective in taking the data -- the test scores and other data that we have for our students -- and then applying that to their lesson planning, and then have their lessons represent those needs or what the data was telling us the students need. And the focus of that, obviously, was teacher and principal capacity building.

The Common Core: Everyone knows that across the nation -- I think it's still 48 -- I'm sorry, 46 states that have adopted the State Common Core, and New Jersey is one of them. So we are implementing that.

I alluded to the assessment system. Renaissance Learning was the robust assessment system that we embraced. I've already alluded to the Effective Schools model, which helps us with our climate and culture. The performance-based assessment systems -- I'm sorry, evaluation systems for both teacher and administrator are represented, there again building teacher and principal capacity.

We ended social promotion last spring. Last summer we had -- I guess it was around 2,000, 2,200 students in a summer program in grades 3 through 8 because they did not demonstrate, for us, the growth that we wanted to see -- the academic growth we wanted to see during the 2010-2011 school year. And as most of you are familiar, there were too many situations. And in several school districts we have youngsters being promoted for reasons other than achievement. We stopped that. Students need to grow if they plan on moving through our system. Now, we know we need to provide lots of supports to help them. Don't get me wrong, we're not leaving it totally up to the student. We're wrapping around a tremendous amount of services during the year. And if they're in the summer program that continues.

Special ed and English Language Learner programs: Just over a third of our students -- roughly 34 or 35 percent of our students are either in a structured English Language Learner program or a special education program. For us that means that we're not going to achieve our academic goals as a school district unless we significantly improve student achievement among those two special populations. To that end, we engaged Montclair State University a year -- more than a year ago now to come in and do a comprehensive evaluation of our special ed programs and

to give us recommendations for improving. And that has been completed. Ms. Perone and her staff, who is responsible for that area, have developed now a plan and are implementing it for improving special education programs. Similarly, the University of Pittsburgh came in and did the same for us for the English Language Learner programs. We received the results of that study a few months ago -- actually two or three months ago. And the plan is now being developed to be able to improve significantly the performance of our students who are in structured English Language Learner programs. And, again, the focus there is building teacher and principal capacity to accomplish that.

Early literacy is a major initiative for us. The goal: all students reading by grade 3. We are partnering with a number of entities -- at the top of the list is the Paterson Education Fund -- to be able to accomplish that through a wide array of strategies that we will implement, some of which we're already beginning to implement to make that happen.

And then continuing to restructure some of our schools -- and that means reconfiguring them, restaffing them, creating magnet schools and other venues through which we can implement high-impact interventions for youngsters who are performing significantly below proficiency. And we're focusing on culture and climate there as well.

I alluded to the Innovation Zone. This is just a snapshot of what that's about. It is data-driven. We have the University of Pittsburgh coming in working with our teachers and principals on building capacity to improve teaching and learning in those classrooms. And they're involved in about -- well, actually, exactly 25 of our schools in making that happen.

We also benefit from involvement of the RAC Approach, and you'll see more about that as I proceed, in terms of positions that are in place to support the work that we're doing in our schools as a result.

At the district level, APQC -- the American Productivity Quality Center -- is helping us with process redesign. I alluded earlier to the fact that we were reexamining our processes and procedures, and restructuring them so we can be more efficient and more effective across the district.

And then we have a number of consultants from a variety of sources. Seton Hall University, the University of Pittsburgh, and a number of other places -- William Paterson, Montclair -- are helping us with leadership management and assessment support, again so we can build capacity both at the district office and at the school level to improve student achievement.

And then district-based and school-based supervisors is one of the latest things that we did, and that was an artifact of the work that we're doing with the RACs. We have people now, who traditionally would focus at the district level on districtwide activities, who are now assigned to schools to work with principals and help principals and teachers to get the job done.

I alluded to Priority and Focus schools a minute ago. We have six of the Priority Schools. You may recall the Priority Schools are among our lowest 5 percent on New Jersey ASK across the state. And then Focus Schools are schools where there are achievement gaps. When you look at subgroups within the schools, I think you know that. And this represents the group of schools that are targeted for that work in our district.

This is what the Innovation Zone is about. And the implementation of it has not gone beyond the Innovation Zone. We started out by looking at our strategic plan and doing some goal setting and benchmarking. Where do we want our students to be? What is the data telling us? And where do we want our students to be academically as we move forward? And that's the first two steps that occur there. And then we engage teachers and principals to do the same thing: Look at students in their classes or in their school, benchmark where they were, and set academic targets for moving forward. And then we provide professional development to the teachers to improve teaching and learning, deliver it, and assess it. And if they need to cycle back and do it over, that's a part of it as well.

I mentioned the University of Pittsburgh Institute for Learning. That's just a brief snapshot of what goes on there.

Renaissance Learning I alluded to as the robust assessment system. It's being given, as you see there, on a quarterly basis and provides a lot of feedback -- strong feedback to teachers relevant to how students are doing, not only on a particular subject like English Language Arts, but it drills down into specific concepts where students strengths and weaknesses may be problematic.

APQC I alluded to. And we've yielded some financial savings as a result of that, that I will allude to in just a minute.

The Ten Dimensions of School Effectiveness and the Effective Schools model-- You see the 10 areas that we are focused on which, again, provide a healthy school culture when done right, which support teaching and learning in the school. And this is an example of surveys that we give

across the board -- actually in each school, the entire instructional staff -- the certified instructional staff, all of the paraprofessionals or noninstructional staff, 25 to 100 percent of parents, 25 to 100 percent of students, depending on the size of the school, are asked to complete a survey to rate the school on a number of dimensions so we can assess the culture. And all of that is used to arrive at a culture index, which we use to work with principals then to help improve culture if we need to.

I've already alluded to the fact that we have a number of partners associated with us. The evaluation systems -- the teacher evaluation system and the administrator evaluation system is continuing to evolve. The major difference here is not only on some of the practices and constructs on which they're evaluated, but test scores are now being used. And similarly with teachers. And those test scores, again, are being used as a part of the evaluation.

Now to the data. These are outcomes that we realized last spring from the administration of HSPA. And these results represent scores for first-time takers of HSPA -- only first-time takers. And, again, I said earlier that we started with the high schools, and now it's beginning to bear fruit. But researchers will tell you, when you engage major efforts to improve student achievement, it takes from three to five years to realize the full potential of those. So we are into the second and third year of implementation of the high school restructuring and you see the results. We are realizing significant gains. When you look at the 2011 data for HSPA, that's when it was-- It was administered in March of 2011 as compared to March of 2012. We are very proud of that. It shows that

what we've done with those high schools is working. The aim was to improve student achievement. It is occurring.

And the Innovation Zone I alluded to-- One of the outcomes of our work with Innovation Zone is that the schools in the Innovation Zone-- One of our goals with the Innovation Zone was to accelerate student achievement among the lowest performing schools; and this focusing on the high schools only. Again, we've been working with them longer. And this slide, when compared to this slide, tells you very quickly that the Innovation schools are achieving at a faster rate, which is what we intended with that data-driven model.

We also are experiencing increases in our graduation rate. There was a different graduation model or method for calculating graduation rate until just over a year ago. But when I entered the district in 2009, I asked our staff to calculate our graduation rate not only using the preexisting model that the State used, but to use a cohort model. I had worked in states where the cohort model was the state-of-the-art. Now it's the state-of-the-art nationally. And so we calculated both. So we kept those figures. So when we moved over, we were all ready to compare for previous years. And you see what it was in 2009 using the cohort model, and then 2010, 2011, and then this is preliminary for 2012. We expect, actually, that 2012 figure to go up when all of the considerations that go into it are calculated, recalculated, the data is cleansed, and so on. So we're especially proud of that as well -- the fact that the graduation rate has gone up. There is still a lot more work to do because we want it much higher. But nonetheless, we're proud of those increases.

You want more kids in college? Guess what's happening? More kids are applying to and are accepted into college. And this is data for the last two years. And as you can see, it's increasing. It's significantly increasing. Now we need to follow up and make sure those kids are there, and are doing well, and will graduate.

This is for our elementary schools. Again, we started a year later than high schools in our K-8 schools. But still we're experiencing some success there as well. The grades highlighted in yellow represent significant success. We identified districtwide targets -- academic targets -- using that model I shared with you earlier. And those represent grade levels that met those targets. And so what we're seeing now -- we're in, for some elementary schools, the second year of implementation, for others the first year of implementation. Already we're seeing some early signs that it's working. And across the board, when you combine or disaggregate the data a different way and look at 3 through 5 and 6 through 8, there's a very clear message there, particularly with grades 6 through 8. We had already done some preliminary examination of the data and saw that we were challenged with grades 6 through 8. So one of the things that's happening in the district now is that we have a middle school pilot underway to see if, in fact-- My experience is actually totally in the middle school arena, until I got to Paterson, in terms of how schools were configured. They were elementary K-5, 6-8, and then 9-12. And most of our elementary schools are K-8. There are some different school configurations and better therein. But we are looking very closely at what's happening with 6-8, and we'll be making some decisions very soon about expanding the middle school approach. We do have a pilot underway.

Other outcomes and accomplishments that we're experiencing: I just alluded to the middle school pilot. I already mentioned ending social promotion, the support staffing for Priority and Focus schools. The school-based supervisors was one of the items that I mentioned. Each one of those Priority schools now have a culture and data leader, as well as coaches or mentor teachers that they didn't have previously to help them achieve at higher levels. The Focus schools have one mentor teacher, depending on the area where the achievement gap exists, as well as a supervisor -- a school-based supervisor to work with the principal and teachers to help lead the charge in improving student achievement.

I said that we realized savings from the work of APQC and process redesign. Last year we saved \$2 million because of that work because we developed tighter processes and procedures, we took better advantage of technology which had an impact on the number of people it took to drive particular processes. But overall we saved about \$2 million just from that one exercise.

A second Affordable Care Grant was achieved very recently from the U.S. Department of -- well, from the Federal government in the form of \$500 (*sic*) to continue to expand our full-service schools work. And then financially, our finances have "improved greatly." And, in fact, that's a quote from the management letter that we received from the auditor -- that we're good. We are in very, very good shape financially as it relates to being able to support our needs from year, to year, to year, based on the anticipated revenues and then anticipated expenditures that they projected in looking into our future.

I will note these next steps and then a couple of quotes. We, first of all, need to complete implementation of the improvement initiatives, particularly at the elementary level. As I mentioned, we're in the first year of implementation of some of the initiatives in the elementary schools. In other cases we're into the second year. So we need to go ahead and bring that to fruition so we can see the same kinds of gains in the elementary that we've seen in the high schools.

Bright Futures: That was developed as our plan for 2009 through 2014. And 2014 is right around the corner. So it's time for us to go back and take another look and revise our strategic plan in preparation for the years to come.

Our theory of action, particularly for the Innovation Zone, has been managed instruction, which means that the district office made major decisions regarding curriculum, instructional strategies, and so on; and that schools improve and demonstrate that they can make a lot of those decisions to the extent that student achievement improves. Then we shift to performance empowerment, which really increases principal autonomy in making some of those key instructional decisions.

And then we develop a long-term facilities plan. I alluded to our facilities needs. Those needs, in some cases, have continued to be a problem. But we need to develop a long-term facilities plan to, once again, quantify and qualify what our needs are and begin to secure whatever support we can get to make them happen.

I will end with one of my favorite sayings by Ron Edmonds, who is the father of Effective Schools -- the Effective Schools movement: "We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children

whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need to do that.” We know what good teaching looks like. We don’t have to guess. We know what it looks like. We know what effective leadership looks like. “Whether or not we do it, must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven’t done it so far.” And that continues to drive me and others in this district to help our students succeed.

But I will also add a quote from Ron Ferguson. Some of you, I think, are familiar with Ron Ferguson’s work. I was sitting in a seminar with Ron five or six years ago, and he mentioned this statement -- the fact that, “The best economic policy for any community is education.” And in today’s economy, it’s incumbent upon us that we do everything possible to help accelerate improvements in the economy, and that includes helping our children become more self-sufficient, to go to college, to get the kinds of jobs that not only will help them realize their goals, but to help our community realize its goals as well.

And that concludes my presentation. I thank you for the opportunity.

So, Mr. Chairman, I’m not sure what format you want to use for questions.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: First of all, I want to thank you for your presentation. It was quite comprehensive. Obviously you’ve done a lot of research and a lot of thinking about where the district should go in terms of achieving more progress for all of the students.

I’m not going to hog this thing because there are a lot of people here who have questions, but I do want to ask a couple of questions before I proceed. One of those is regarding school funding. What was your actual

cut in terms of school funding for this school year in the State of New Jersey?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: For this school year the reduction -- which initially was large, but then it changed as we proceeded through the summer and into the fall -- it dropped to \$3 million, \$4 million.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: It dropped.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Initially it was much larger than that.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: It was a larger drop? It was a larger cut?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: What happened? Did the Commissioner reinstate it?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: We were allocated additional funds.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Under special conditions? Was that-- That was not the State aid figure that you originally received in other words.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: That's correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: And then it was restored -- some of it was restored.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: That ties into -- I think I'm correct in terms of student attendance -- am I correct -- the way it's calculated based upon the State budget?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: That is one of the considerations. However, this year -- and I need to call on my Deputy to assist with this explanation because it's somewhat complex. This year the impact is not as great as it could be. The greater impact is going to be over a three-year period where we potentially will lose \$16 million.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: That concerns me. And I know we're all part of that process, but the budget was what the budget was. We had to fight -- all of us here, I'm sure -- to reinstate certain language in the final budget decision that would allow for litigation in terms of urban school districts or any school district that would be short-changed in terms of that formula. Because that formula that was in the budget, as most people know, was not passed by the Legislature in that form. We had a clarification there.

So doesn't that represent somewhat of a hardship in terms of you achieving the goals that you set forth in your presentation -- the major cut in State funding for your school district?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Any time we lose funds--

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Pardon me?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: I said, any time we lose funds it represents a hardship, yes. And what it means for us-- I mean, there are some basics that we have to provide and will provide, regardless of how much funding we get -- such as enough teachers to be able to do what we need to do and enough principals to run the schools.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Did you have layoffs last year -- teacher layoffs?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: No teacher layoffs, no noninstructional layoffs?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: No.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Not one?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: We thought we might have to, but we didn't. Now, I will say that we did reorganize for different reasons. Around some of these initiatives you saw, we reorganized our schools to be able to address some of the unique needs. But for this year, no, we did not.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: As I said, I don't want to take up everybody's time. But I think one of the basic problems that we don't see here that you recognize, that you've surfaced in your presentation, is the condition of your schools. There has been criticism in terms of -- within the district and also by the media -- regarding some of the horrendous conditions that were found in a number of the schools in Paterson. And the fact that this is a State-controlled district really concerns me, because that's-- Part of the reason you're a State-controlled district is because the Constitution requires that every child in the state receive a thorough and efficient education. And that the Commissioner has taken over -- prior to this Commissioner; but as was stated here -- 20 years in many cases -- that the State will control the educational process.

How do you interact with the State with regard to those conditions -- unsafe conditions in terms of what has been documented?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: We communicate regularly with and make requests of, on a regular basis, the SDA -- the Schools Development Authority -- because they are, as you know, the entity that is in place to address our major facilities needs, whether it's new construction,

or a major renovation, or some special situation that is characterized as a special project that may need some help. But we communicate with them. They support us often and give us the funds we need. But in other cases, for their own reasons -- because they have criteria -- they may not.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Has there been any kind of audit in terms of facilities from the State of New Jersey regarding the conditions of the existing buildings where our children are being housed and supposedly educated? Has there been any look at that? Has there been an assessment here? Is there a document that has been produced by an outside consultant or by the State of New Jersey regarding conditions of those facilities?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: The last assessment that I'm aware of was a year-and-a-half ago. Chris Sapara-Grant is our Facilities Director. On my behalf, he works closely with the SDA. But the last facilities assessment -- and that was the one that I alluded to in my presentation where I indicated that our needs were the greatest in the State of New Jersey -- that occurred one-and-a-half-years ago. I am not aware of any others since then.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I would think that would be incumbent upon-- I mean, it's a year-and-a-half old, but I'd like to see the Committee receive a copy of that report for Senator Rice, who is not here and I think would be very concerned about that. Any educator or legislator here would. I think we should take a look at that. I wouldn't want to go into the schools unannounced, but I think it might even call for a legislative panel from either the Education Committee -- which I serve on -- or this Committee to go in and take a look at those conditions.

Because we can't look back at this three, four, and five years from now and find people unhealthy because of the conditions we permitted to exist. So I think it's incumbent upon us to understand what the conditions of those buildings are.

Has anybody from the SDA come here to this district to review the conditions?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: They've been in all of our schools?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Not all. Actually, Mr. Larkins himself came just over a year ago and visited several of our schools with me.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I would like to see somebody come from the State to every one of these schools and take a look at the facilities in these schools to see whether they're in a position to have people in them on a day-to-day basis, especially our kids.

I'm going to pass it on to anyone on the Committee. I have a lot of questions, but I'm going to let other members of the Committee talk about some of those.

Assemblywoman DeCroce.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Yes, one question: When you were talking about that there were no layoffs of teachers, what about retired teachers?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Oh, we had 73, 74 retirements over the summer and into the beginning of this year.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Were those positions replaced?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: They were. And what about on the administrative end?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: I don't have the figures for retirement for administrators. But actually, because of the school-based supervisor positions that I've just mentioned, as well as looking at how we've changed some of our schools, there has been a slight increase actually.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Assemblyman Ramos.

ASSEMBLYMAN RAMOS: I'd just like to take it back to Commissioner Irving's statements earlier in his presentation. Has the Department of Education given you any guidance on how local control could be achieved in Paterson? Have they given you any steps? "If you achieve X, Y, Z, this is the timeframe we're giving you. This is when it can be done by so you can obtain local control." They gave Newark a timeframe. Newark reached some of those goals and they recently reneged on their commitment in Newark. Have they given you any timeframe?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Yes. Well, not timeframe, but the *how*. In fact, it's been made crystal clear to me that for local control to occur, we need to start by significantly improving student achievement. That's the first and major thing we need to do. And the changes and improvements need to be continuous over time, not just on one occasion. It needs to be sustained. And, in fact, some of what you saw in terms of our initiatives was an outgrowth of the discussions that I've had with the Department on that issue, in looking at the kinds of things that we could do to accelerate student achievement. But that was the major measure.

Now, obviously, our fiscal conditions-- If we sustain where we are -- and we are in an extremely good position in terms of income versus outgo, if you will, we've met the standard that was set for us there and are working real hard to maintain that. That was another big one for us.

And then around some of the other DPR areas, if you will, that are associate with QSAC, we simply need to maintain the areas where we've done well. And where we haven't -- where we scored less than 80 on the reviews, we need to make sure that we get as many, if not all of them, above 80 as soon as possible.

ASSEMBLYMAN RAMOS: Thank you, Chairman.

I'll come back with further questions.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Assemblywoman Wagner.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Yes, Superintendent, I can see that you've made quite a bit of improvement on the high school level in the scores. And truly the teachers, and you, and the principals are to be commended for that. I see the middle school is something you need to address because it's not as successful there.

I've been doing a little bit of reading and research on how other countries are looking at the problem of how we educate our children. And the one thing I have noticed is that in some of the countries that are more successful than us, it is groups of teachers who have the same students and that they conference, and that they conference once a week so that a student is not falling through the big cracks.

What training do we provide for teachers and conference time so that students don't fall through?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: The area where we may fall short is the conference time. We have a number of students who are using what's called *looping*, or in some places is called *continuous progress*, where youngsters who enter in Kindergarten stay with the same teacher perhaps through grade 3 and then another teacher may take them through grade 5 or 6. And that's a school-by-school decision. We have not imposed that on schools yet. And I say *yet* because as we -- each year, when we're looking at specific models and specific needs for individual schools, we do entertain the notion of requiring that they do certain things that they may not be doing. And looping is one of the things that we look at. But at this point, we're not requiring that our schools organize that way. But we have many who have chosen on their own to do it. I find it to be a highly effective model, I really do. I've been involved with it in other school districts. In fact, there are some districts that have adopted that districtwide, and it works exceptionally well. So we are looking at that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: And just one more question. The role of technology in your classrooms -- how do you approach computer use or online learning? Are you doing anything with that?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: What we're doing probably is not above the norm in what we see. In each one of our classrooms there are computers, and teachers have integrated into their instruction in the classroom the utilization of computers as a support. And we're very quick to say that computers don't teach students, teachers teach students, and the computer is there to support what the teachers are teaching and to reinforce. And that's how we expect them to use it, and that's how they are using it.

Now, for youngsters who require more individualized approaches -- and that may include some of the youngsters who may have a disability, or may be otherwise predisposed to at-riskness, or youngsters who don't have a disability but whose performances are low, there are specific programs -- instructional programs. Again, they're teacher driven, but they may require more time and more interaction with the student between himself or herself and the computer. But generally speaking they all use it to support their teaching. And depending on the needs of the kids, that runs deeper.

Now, we have a couple of additional situations where we have integrated in a larger way the use of technology in the instructional program. At our new gifted program, for example, we have decided to -- and made sure that each one of our students had iPads as a part of the instruction. And they have them there on their desks as teachers-- Again, teachers are driving the instruction, but it's become a part -- more a part of instruction in those classrooms than in other places. We are entertaining actually a model that is led by -- I think it's Verizon -- at Kennedy High School and the Academy for BTM -- Business, Technology, and Marketing. And it's going to be used for marketing. We just reviewed it yesterday in our cabinet, and we've approved the use of the model to move forward. But they're going to actually use this to develop some marketing skills. Because that particular program focuses on marketing in addition to some other things. And each one of the -- each class, or a group of students, will receive the new Samsung tablets to use in the same way that the iPads are being used.

So there are examples where it's beginning to rise, but we really have the desire to do it on a much larger scale. In fact, one of the conversations we're having now is, do we want to replace all of our textbooks with technology, with iPads, or Samsung devices, or Kindles. And in some cases, depending on the cost of the textbooks, it may be less expensive for us.

There are other considerations, obviously. But, yes, we are using it in a limited way, but we are looking at expanding.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: And just one more question on the class size. Can you give me an idea of what the average class size is for an elementary school, 2nd grade, 8th grade?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: It's consistent with our staffing model. We staff Kindergarten at 21 students for a teacher and an aide. We staff the primary grades at the same number -- in some cases it's 20 depending on the students -- but with just a teacher. And then for the middle grades it goes up to 23 to 1 and the high school is 24 to 1.

Now, the problem occurs that when principals begin to create their schedules, and they have even and odd numbers of kids for particular courses -- particularly the-- It's more problematic where you have higher-level courses, where you may have fewer students than the 23 or 24 in the middle grades or the upper grades; which then is offset, in some cases, within a particular school by a larger numbers of kids who aren't in those unique courses. And we've actually invested in some software that we're hoping will help with that as it relates to scheduling our high schools. Our high schools are where it's more problematic. It's not the only place, but

that's where it's more problematic. But we're seeking solutions for it to be able to address it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Thank you.

Thank you, Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Thank you.

Assemblyman Wimberly.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Dr. Evans, first, it was an outstanding presentation, and here everyday what they learn -- everything that is going on is outstanding. Just like some of the things I see -- there's probably the current person going around -- I wish more people could share in it, because everybody doesn't watch Cablevision, everybody doesn't come to the School Board meetings. But that information's (indiscernible) whatever way your staff -- which does a great job disseminating information. I think it would be helpful, to the perception of the school district, that that information gets in the right hands.

One of my concerns is on the budget. What impact would the RACs have on the budget as far as, will there be cuts to any particular programs?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: No. There may be some program adjustments but not cuts in terms of budgets.

You saw a wide array of strategies and initiatives represented on the slides. One of the questions we're asking ourselves is: How much is enough? Principals and teachers have limited time and limited focus as it relates to the numbers of initiatives. And we already had a full cadre of initiatives. So as we add the RAC strategies, which are good strategies by the way, that forces us to question: Do we need that plus something else

that either we're doing or we're considering? And that's where we are now: looking at each one, looking at outcomes that we expect for each one. And we're making some tough decisions about the extent to which we may want to increase one or decrease one, or add something else. But it's not cutting a budget, per se.

Now, I will say that there has been some reprioritization of some of our Federal dollars, but it was moneys that were previously not available to us. One of the options we were given as a result of the RAC intervention was that moneys that typically went to private providers to do after school programs -- we were given more flexibility with that money. And that actually is funding some of the additional initiatives. But the initiatives that we are operating have not been reduced.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay. When you say *reprioritize* adjustments such as Title 1 money for after school programs, are there any other impacts on programs that have been in place that will be readjusted?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: The only other example that I can think of is a program that we have with Seton Hall University supporting our SIG schools. And the question is the one I just raised, in terms of do we need that many interventions in two schools.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: We haven't answered that question yet, but obviously we have to. Because there's a limit as to what teachers and principals can do. That's really what it comes down to.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: I'm going to let Senator Pou talk a little bit more about facilities. But just to make a general comment, I

see a long-term plan. I'm very interested in a short-term plan. I mean, with so many 100-year buildings, and asbestos, and buildings that have been deemed not -- 40 years ago saying that they should not be used, and it's 2013 and we're still in those buildings. I just want to know what the short-term plan is. But I'm going to let the Senator talk about that a little more.

I have just two more questions for you. One question is: school safety. It hasn't come up today. And even in the Governor's address yesterday I was pretty surprised that that didn't come up. It's everywhere, all over the papers. What is the plan? We look at urban areas as, "That can't happen to us," sometimes when I talk to some people. "We don't do that type of stuff here in our town." But what is the plan in place? I know you have a very competent staff with Captain Smith leading the way and stuff like that. But as somebody who drops their child off every day at 8:00 in the morning, it is a different feeling. It's definitely a different feel as a parent, as a concerned resident. What is the plan? When you have places that have no violence, or you have probably crime rates that are astronomically low, putting armed guards in place, armed police officers in place, sending out what is the strategic plan for safety and what is going on-- And maybe you've talked offline about this. I just really want to know. And I'm sure you probably can sit here and talk forever, and I don't want you to do that. But I would love to receive from this committee what is the plan for the City of Paterson when you talk about school safety, and that we do not take for granted that, in general, when you talk to people -- "That can't happen to us." That's not acceptable. I want to know what the plan for school safety is -- and a comprehensive, written-out view. I know

I've spoken to Commissioner Irving, and he's going to have a seminar on that -- or something coming up next week--

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Community forum.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --community forum in reference to that. But I think, in general, that really needs to be -- to put people at comfort -- that we need to know it's more than just, "You're safe."

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: I'm going to provide you an overview, and I'm going to ask Ms. Shafer, our Deputy, to join me to give some specifics about where we are as a district currently.

One of the things that occurred after the events in New Jersey -- I'm sorry, in Connecticut, was to immediately initiate a review of our current practices, and programs, and initiatives in place. And I asked Ms. Shafer to lead that, and then go a step further and begin to solicit input from others to be able to feel that we've taken advantage of expertise and interests beyond the school district; and then develop a plan or a report, if you will, that includes not only what we're currently doing, but the kinds of things that we're considering based on the input, based on our own thinking about where we are; and project into the future. That report will be presented to the School Board tonight in our January workshop. It is prepared. Ms. Shafer led that. But I'm going to ask her to talk more specifically about what we're currently doing in terms of security guards, in terms of keying, in terms of those kinds of things.

D P T Y . S U P E R I N T E N D E N T E I L E E N S H A F E R:
Thank you, Dr. Evans.

We're currently looking at what we have in place. And in those areas we're looking at security personnel, security training, security

assignments, bus safety, facility issues when it comes to keys -- internal and external access -- the positioning of security guards in regard to either a buzzer on the door to enter the facility, surveillance cameras throughout. We're looking at all areas -- what we currently have.

We have had a meeting already with the union, and they gave us some recommendations and considerations, so we're looking at that. As the Superintendent said, we're going to meet with the Board tonight and let them see what we currently have and get input from the Board. Next week we're going to meet with the community and get input from the community.

And then we're going to look at all of the recommendations that come forward and put a more cohesive plan together. Both the Superintendent and I want to be able to say that we have done everything possible to ensure the safety and security of the students and the staff.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Excuse me, have you thought about silent panic alarms?

DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT SHAFER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: You have.

DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT SHAFER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Because some of the members on this Committee, along with myself, have sponsored legislation regarding them.

We don't know whether some of the districts have done it or not, but we'd like to bring that up in the near future. And I think in some way it could be helpful.

DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT SHAFER: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you.

And the last two questions quickly -- and it's not even so much that I didn't see any concerned community where ours is -- dropout prevention. And I know you put an emphasis on it before.

One of my major concerns is just, when you drive the streets of Paterson or you walk the streets of Paterson-- Numbers are one thing. But the concern is still the astronomical dropout rate of black and Hispanic boys in the City of Paterson. And not so much as the dropout rate -- where are they? And in turn, when you talk about the economic investment of education being important, we cannot forget them; because we're going to pay one way or the other, if it be vocational training--

I don't know what the answer is. And the educational minds that you have around you I'm sure could work on it. But the reality is that I see the numbers you place up there, but so many have fallen through those nets that I don't think we're addressing those needs. I know that's a conversation for another time, but I just wanted, for the record, to put that out there. That is reality -- that these guys are still standing on the corners, they're still dropping out of school. And that has to be addressed. Even though they are not on school roll, it is a school issue. Because one way or the other, they have an impact on your student population -- our student population.

And even with the number increase-- I just want to commend the teachers. When I see numbers go up like that, and teachers not working with a contract for three years or more -- and Assemblyman Ramos could probably tell you. I think it's unbelievable that numbers can increase.

And the morale for the staff and the administrators is where it is without a contract. So imagine if they had a contract.

Thank you.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I was going ask that question. I don't know why you took it from me. (laughter)

Senator Pou.

SENATOR POU: Thank you.

Thank you so very much.

First of all, I, too, want to commend you, Dr. Evans, for the presentation that you've provided us. It's always good for me to attend one of these activities or events, because I really do learn a great deal in terms of what is going on in Paterson. I have had the pleasure of attending many of your evening sessions in the various other parts throughout the school district. So certainly this, once again, has been extremely educational and informative.

We've been talking back and forth and listening to some of your responses to the questions. I think if I go back to the earlier statements that many of my colleagues talked about-- I think perhaps four or five out of the entire panel talked about classroom size as being a number one issue, and I want to go back to that for just a moment. Because in your transformation initiative that you talked about in your report -- and you made reference to your earlier years when you first came to the Paterson school district and how you're now in the process of having to update your plan.

I think, first of all, that's wonderful. I think it's important to point out that we have continuity first and foremost, which is the one thing that we've all been talking about here in Paterson. So congratulations to you for sticking tough -- staying tough on these issues and being able to put that forward.

That being said, however, in this transformation initiative for 2011 and 2014, I did not see any of the school facilities plan in any level of detail. And you and I have spoken aside many times with regard to the progress of the school facilities plan. And I'm happy to see that there are folks from the Schools Development Authority-- In fact, I'm almost sorry that I don't see the Executive Officer here, Marc Larkins. I would have a host of -- many questions for him on this particular issue. But if you could, Dr. Evans, provide us a little bit more detail in terms of what is, indeed, the progress of the school facilities plan that we have, for quite some time, been talking about, we've been waiting for. And we are still in the waiting mode, if you will, where there has been no significant shovel-in-the-ground type of projects for Paterson that we have been long waiting for.

So if you could touch upon that.

And then I'm going to ask you, please, Dr. Evans, that you also include in your comments how we are addressing some of the important issues that were talked about. I think the Chairman, Assemblyman Caputo, raised the question in his opening remarks with regard to some of the articles that have been posted in the newspaper recently with some of the health violations. In particular, I know that School No. 4 -- that there has been a sizable number -- a significant number of violations that were so quoted and identified. So we have some serious problems still. Could you

talk to that? Because I think it's important as legislators that we find a way of trying to eliminate the bureaucracy of what entities such as the Schools Development Authority may pose to school districts such as ours when, in fact, if they're not working timely with us in approaching that-- But it also is incumbent upon you, sir, as the leader of this educational system here in Paterson, to make sure that we are moving as quickly and as forcefully as we can.

Thank you.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Let me begin with the plan itself. We are in the process of identifying a facilities planner to help us to develop a five-year facilities plan to replace the current plan, which is very close to expiration.

SENATOR POU: I'm sorry, sir. Could you just talk about the current five-year plan that is about to expire -- has yet to reach any or achieve any of that particular plan in place. Is that not the case at the moment?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: There are two facilities in particular which are -- and there is activity already underway for those schools. That's the Hazel Marshall facility and School 16. The SDA is involved and moving forward on those. And if you go to the site for School 16 you will see demolition underway, clearing the site and getting it ready. And very soon you will see activity at the Hazel Marshall site. And so there is activity. And that will result in us having two new elementary schools, to address both overcrowding that exists in that part of our city as well as some issues associated with standards -- educational standards that must be met in this century. Some of our buildings aren't up to par in terms of

meeting those standards. And that was part of the reason for those two schools being included in that initial proposal. Those are the two most obvious results of that initial plan and our efforts to get something underway. We've been working hard and pushing hard, if you will, with the SDA on those two facilities. In fact, when Mr. Larkins was here, we took him to those sites as well as some other sites. And he saw firsthand what the need was and agreed that we do have a great need. And he has indicated that whatever support he could give us he would.

Now, beyond that, as I mentioned-- You asked where we were with the five-year facilities plan in terms of developing a new one. There are facilities planners that engage the entire community as well as the school district to look at our needs and develop a comprehensive plan that includes all of the needs that surface when they come in and take a look. That usually is a 6- to 12-month endeavor. In fact, in my last school district it took 11 months for the vendor that I worked with to develop a plan, to go in and do a very credible job and represent all of the needs that we communicated and that they saw, to be able to address that. And so we should have that vendor on board within the next couple of months and start that formal process. And we will be soliciting participation in that across the community. Obviously there will be internal stakeholders: the School Board, and members of my staff, and teachers, and principals. But we'd like others in the community, including Senators and Assemblymen and Assemblywomen, to participate in that endeavor as well to get a new plan. It's unfortunate that in some cases when we elevate our needs beyond a certain point the question surfaces: Is it in your plan? And some of the needs that we're talking about are not in the plan because that initial plan

has not been revised, of recent at least, although we continue to look annually at our facilities needs and communicate them to the SDA. And then as specific problems surface we communicate them to them as well. And I can't say that they have not helped us, because they have. They really have. However, it's not as much as what we really need to be able to address all of our needs. So we're planning to that end.

Now, you asked another question regarding -- I can't remember exactly what it was.

SENATOR POU: Let me just pick up on something that you said, Dr. Evans. You talked about the fact that you're in the process of updating the existing five-year facilities plan, and it took about 11 months -- the last one. So you can anticipate that maybe sometime within that same timeframe would indeed be perhaps the case. And I appreciate the fact that you've included that you will be reaching out to those major stakeholders, including the community around us -- those who are impacted and just those who are interested in the overall process -- to be included in that. And I think that's a very key component of the success of any kind of plan going forward.

With respect to this particular plan that you're talking about -- the updating of that -- I have just-- Perhaps you can relate this to the two same issues. One is that-- When do you anticipate beginning this process? And what is your expectation for the completion of that?

And then along those very same lines, you mentioned the two projects that were in process with the existing five-year facilities plan. When do you expect completion of those two facilities that you just described?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: The latest information we received was that one would be ready for the '14-'15 year and the other for the '15-'16 year.

SENATOR POU: So if we think about that-- When did we start those, eight years ago maybe? The plan was in place for five years almost, about maybe a year before that to take it and put it in place, about two years to maybe talk about it. I know that some of the Commissioners who are here would say that it's almost now certainly closing in on a full decade before we actually get those two -- our students inside those two particular facilities.

And by the way, Dr. Evans, I say this not because I believe you have -- or any one of us who are here have anything to-- I'm not saying this as a matter of blame. I'm saying that we need to make sure that the Schools Development Authority officials understand the importance of what it is that we're doing here. We have taken way too long. Our original legislation -- back in '98 I believe was when we first reauthorized the first \$8.6 billion bond -- has come and left us, and we're still talking about school construction in a city that has continued to grow, in a city that has continued to create a lot of problems as a result of our aging facilities -- and most especially, as was pointed out by everyone, class size being the number one problem of creating the ability--

And I believe, Dr. Evans, your statement was that 60 to 70 percent of accomplishing achievement in any school system relies upon the quality of teacher, the quality of leadership. And the only way that you can ensure that that's the case is if you are able to ensure that the environment

that our children are in -- are in a learning environment, or that is conducive to a learning environment.

I think Assemblyman Wimberly talked about the safety end. With today's changes in terms of society -- with the safety -- you're now talking about closing school classroom doors for the safety of our children. You have windows that are not able to open, you have inefficient energy systems in many of our aging schools -- you now have classroom heat to the level of anywhere from 95 degrees or so, which is -- and I'm just using that as an example -- or, in some cases, below freezing weather; but it's more the inconsistency of these energy problems -- where the learning environment, even within that one classroom, is inhibiting those children, as well as the teachers, to be able to do their job as effectively as they would want to.

So those are the reasons why, Dr. Evans, I raise this issue today. I commend you and the faculty of the Paterson school district for doing an incredible job of trying to get us to this point. But if we are going to achieve all of those bright ideas that you talk about in your overall plan, we're going to need to push harder, and we're going to need to make sure that the Schools Development Authority understands their responsibility to our students, our residents, and the taxpayers of the State of New Jersey is, indeed, making sure that they're doing their job. And I want to send that message loud and clear to the Executive Officer, to the Board of Trustees that oversees those plans, and make sure that they understand that we are still waiting almost a decade later for two schools yet to be completed. And we're now in our second plan for our five-year -- which actually comes out to be almost a 10-year facilities plan. That is unacceptable.

So, Dr. Evans, I hope that you continue to put this, as part of your transformation initiative, up on the top of the chart, because those things are very important.

I also want to make mention to you that I think there are a couple of things that you talked about-- You talked about the school culture survey. Is that what you call it?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Yes, culture survey.

SENATOR POU: You almost mentioned that it's a requirement of your administration to ensure that it is filled out by every administrator, teacher, and the parents or other-- Is that what you said, the parents as well?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Yes. The purpose is to assess the culture at the school level. And we ask 100 percent of the faculty -- the certificated faculty -- to complete an instrument; 100 percent of the noncertificated faculty; depending on the size of the school, from 25 to 100 percent of students, and 25 to 100 percent of parents to fill it out. And we take that information, score it, and then determine a culture index on a 1 to 5 scale, 5 being the highest and 1 being the lowest. And we want each school to cluster somewhere in the neighborhood of 3.5 to 5. But the point is, once it's benchmarked, we want it to increase.

SENATOR POU: Through the Chair, have you utilized that in changing those plans accordingly based on the findings of the survey?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: It's used to revisit with the principal the culture in the school and identify areas that are problematic; for the principal to address and to make stronger, as it relates to youngsters and whether or not they want to be in school; or teacher-specific issues. We

want schools to be welcoming to parents. It identifies problems in those 10 areas you saw in that Effective Schools model. The long-term goal is to make sure that as principals are evaluated, it's one of the things that's included.

SENATOR POU: One last question, I promise. The anticipated completion of your updated facilities plan -- when did you say that--

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: I would expect by December of this year we should have the initial draft. That is if the timeline that we're working on now, in terms of acquiring the company to come in and actually lead that for us -- that we should have a draft to be able to vet and make decisions about what we want to do at that point. What they will do is prepare their recommendations for us. And then the Board, and I, and others will be asked then to look at and determine which of these recommendations we're going to move forward with.

SENATOR POU: The updated plan, the new one.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Yes, the new plan. That's correct.

SENATOR POU: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Let me say, your passion is obvious. Being the Senator from this district, I understand your concern.

I want to just follow up before I ask somebody else to ask a few questions. The State Inspectors from the Department of Labor were here. That means the State of New Jersey understands what the violations were in School No. 4. Am I correct?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Yes. That was the other question.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Yes, you received those indicated violations.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Are there students in that building at this time?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Yes, there are. But literally days after they came and made their assessment, all but six -- I think there were 91 identified--

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Right.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: All but six were corrected. And the six that weren't corrected had nothing to do with students -- didn't impact on students.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Here is what concerns me: We've all been involved in education. I worked for the State Department of Education, I was County Superintendent, I've been in the Legislature off and on for more years than I want to tell you. And it seems that the only time something happens is when somebody files a complaint, there is outrage, or whatever.

But we all have a responsibility. And I'm not blaming you as the Superintendent. We get numb to these things. These kids are going into these buildings that are unsafe, unsanitary. Maybe they don't have all the textbooks they need. Maybe they do, maybe they don't. And no one does anything about it.

Now, I was involved in the investigation in Newark years ago when I was the County Superintendent, and it was controversial. And for a short period of time, many think positive things didn't happen. Maybe that's what it's going to take for Paterson. I don't know. Maybe we're going to have to have on-site visitations with the proper personnel to look at all of these conditions, good and bad, and then come up with some recommendations to assist you. Because you've been excellent in terms of diagnosing what is wrong with the system. Your problem is to try to get the resources, and the people, and the cooperation to get it accomplished. That's the hard part. I mean, we can all find those things that are wrong. How are we going to correct them?

Now, this was an article that appeared locally in a paper about a particular school that I'm not familiar with. But if my kid was going to this school, you would have a headache. I will tell you right now, it would be very traumatic for me to understand why the system and why the State of New Jersey hasn't done anything about this. The planning is great. But we're talking about-- I'm talking about existing buildings where kids are specifically going to school now. Are those schools, those facilities right for those kids? They don't have to be brand new. But if they're not safe, then there is something wrong with how we're administrating, something wrong about the way we're conducting business.

I'm not saying that you are for that. But you have to let us know -- in spite of the fact that you have a position -- what we can do to help you try to get those issues resolved. Just saying everything is good doesn't work because those things keep going on, and on, and on. And all we do is have planning, planning, planning. The next superintendent comes

in, the next senator comes in, the next assemblyperson. And in the meantime, these districts are moving backwards instead of forward. Everybody who comes into these positions feel they all have the answers. It's a whole change in philosophy. I've seen the Department of Education change their ways 20 different ways in 20 different years, confusing guys like you, teachers, administrators, and everybody else concerned. We don't have a consistent policy. The policy should be to assist in any way that we can to help educate our kids in the proper environment. This is not equality here. We don't even know-- Are there charter schools in Paterson? How many are there? How many do we have?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Four.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: How do you interact with them?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: We actually work in partnership with them. They operate separate from us, but there are things that we do together.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: This bothers me -- this article. I don't know how far this goes in terms of other facilities.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: If I may comment on that.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Yes.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Two comments in general. The first one is: Our schools generally are extremely safe, they really are.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Extremely what?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Safe. They meet the safety standards. And, in fact, there is a committee in place that includes teachers and other individuals so that when they see a violation they call it to our attention and it gets taken care of.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Then why does somebody have to go to the Department of Labor to get this corrected?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Well, interestingly-- That's my second comment. This is the building that flooded that was closed the entire 2011-12 year. A major renovation had to occur because of the flooding, so it was like opening a new building. It really was. And we had the building inspected. We actually did have it inspected, and it passed inspection. And then obviously when teachers and others get into the building and they see things, that's when those things begin to surface. But simultaneous to our learning about it, calls were made beyond us and so it was elevated to another level. Now, the interesting thing is, by the time it got to the newspaper, it had been corrected. So the timing would suggest otherwise.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I see.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: But that building is in extremely good shape and has been renovated.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I feel relieved.

Thank you.

Assemblywoman DeCroce.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Thank you.

I have a few questions. We touched today -- many of us -- on the size of the classrooms. What I would like to see submitted to the Committee is a breakdown for each grade, every classroom and how many students are in each classroom. I would like to see that. I want to see how large they are across the board from K-12.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: I get that report once a month, so I will be happy to send it to you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Thank you.

Another question: In your presentation, you talked about the Zone schools and that they were performing better than the others. What support do they receive that's making them better compared to the others?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: The Institute for Learning, and the principles of learning, is the primary strategy. They are reteaching teachers how to teach. That's what they do. And they work with the principals to show them how to lead and evaluate effectively the principles of learning as they are implemented in the classroom. That's the major strategy. Now, that's coupled with regular assessments. I mentioned Renaissance Learning as the assessment. We actually started with them limited to the Innovation Zone schools, but we were so impressed with the quality and utility of the data we decided immediately, "We should do this districtwide," and we did. But the work of the Institute for Learning is the primary difference.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: I want to go back to my first question because in that report under special education -- and under the presentation that you gave you said in the district there are 3,500 students in special education.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: What I would like to see is the classified students who go to a resource room compared to the number of students who are housed in a contained classroom.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: I would like to see that as well.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: We will provide that for you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Okay. And the last question is: When you talked about Seton Hall giving you support, and information, and some reports, who pays that bill?

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: For the most part, we do.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: The school district does.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Yes. The biggest service they provide is mentoring vice principals, and principals, and district office staff. They come in and spend time coaching and advising them on how to improve practice as an administrator. That's the biggest area of that. Then the second area is in Schools 10 and 4. Those are the schools we just mentioned -- that one of the Institutes at Seton Hall is actually in those two schools assisting with coaching and helping principals with leadership skills.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: And you pay for that.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN RAMOS: I have one question.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Go ahead.

ASSEMBLYMAN RAMOS: One of the benefits of being on the Committee--

The first thing I want to say is that in the last 10 years we've probably had, like, five different superintendents in the district. So I was extremely pleased to see Dr. Evans get his contract renewed because the district sorely needed that consistency. It was mostly that a new

superintendent came in and, “Let’s reinvent the wheel.” Another superintendent came in three years later, “Let’s reinvent the wheel.” In two instances we had the same superintendent for one year. We reinvented those wheels both times he came in for just that one-year interim. So it’s good to see a little more consistency in the district. I think the teachers needed that; I think the students definitely needed that.

But in terms of-- One of the things we get to do on this Committee is we get to see what my colleague Assemblywoman DeCroce often calls *best practices* in other parts of the state. And we have a number of consultants here that you brought on board and paid by the district. And what we see in other parts of-- What I see -- I’m going to try to answer Assemblywoman Wagner’s question as a middle school teacher -- and what I see as a deficiency with our students -- where we’re lagging -- oftentimes there-- What I’ve seen traveling throughout other districts is that oftentimes-- And my students know how to read. Read out loud -- they could read it. I ask them what they just read -- they won’t understand what they just read. So our biggest issue is reading comprehension skills, and understanding vocabulary skills, and spelling skills, and what an adjective is, and grammar skills, and the basics.

In our angst to reform and to change, we forgot to KISS it. And we all know what the acronym for KISS is, right? Keep It Simple, Stupid. We forgot to do those things. So when my kids get to the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade and they don’t know what an adjective is, or what a noun is, or how to use proper punctuation at the end of a sentence-- And we backtrack. When I talk to -- when we travel through the state seeing 1st

grade teachers or 2nd grade teachers, what we're not doing here is basic spelling -- spelling, and basic grammar, and building upon that foundation.

Because when we take the STAR assessment test -- when the students quarterly take that STAR assessment test, the first six questions are the focus questions, and that tells them their ability for the next 26 questions. And oftentimes there is no writing on the STAR assessment, there is no reading long-term passages on the STAR assessment -- there's just a couple sentences here -- and when our kids answer those questions, they don't have the vocabulary to get those higher scores. And for our students who do do well, and they have a mathematic problem -- and they're able to be at the 8th grade level, mostly they do a little better on those six focus questions -- it takes like a 9th grade, maybe 10th grade level. Now they're answering questions that they haven't been taught whatsoever. They get into basic algebra and geometry questions. They haven't seen them because they haven't been taught before. And when they answer those-- And then they get those answers wrong, and their scores go down. And that gets reflected. And a lot of time we want to do our data analysis here, but we don't see the types of questions they're answering now are being raised a little bit. We just look at the overall score. And a lot of our students, they feel -- they get a little dejected that they were doing well, doing well, all of a sudden they reach their high level -- they're doing great to reach that level -- but all of a sudden they got a score there -- they weren't prepared to take. So I would reassess the total STAR assessment and what we're doing there with the STAR assessment -- how we're evaluating our students with the STAR assessment. I would take a total remake of that.

But let's take it back to the basics. In our 1st grade classes, our 2nd grade classes, 3rd grade classes, spelling -- but of the subject area -- knowing what nouns are, what adjectives are; to get basic grammar back so we can improve our students' writing and reading comprehension skills. When they read those paragraphs, they can read them; but when we say, "What does that word mean now?" they say, "I don't understand the question." Most of the time, when our students -- they read the whole thing, get to the question portion of it -- "I don't understand what the question is asking me." But when I verbalize it in a language they understand, they say, "Oh, I know what that is." I can ask the same question and change a couple of words there four different times. They'll get it right the first -- on the next one they say, "I don't know what this means." That's where we lose it. We need the reading comprehension skills. And that starts with the basic vocabulary, spelling, and then grammar; and then how to do proper sentence structure and proper writing structure. So I would totally reevaluate the lower levels of that. Because when they get to our grade level we're not doing that so much. So I would reassess that as well.

But, again, I appreciate all the work you're doing. And I can't speak on the contract portion of it. I'm a benefit of it. But let's get that resolved. (laughter)

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Thank you.

If I may comment-- Thank you for your comments. The research -- or the observation you made with regard to reading and comprehension being a major issue is supported -- albeit in a limited fashion -- in the research. Actually, I was a part of a research initiative, in another

school district where I was, where we were looking at high-performing students versus lower-performing students to identify why the lower-performing students were lower-performing students, and where were the skill deficits. By far, reading comprehension led the list. And particularly among youngsters who live in high-poverty environments. And there were some strategies that resulted from that, some of which we're looking at here -- or actually are implementing. One of the big ones had to do with lower expectations for their performance. And we countered that by introducing a lot more rigor to the program and obviously making sure the teachers had strong command of what to do in terms of teaching those kids, just as you know. And ultimately they improved. So what you're observing is pretty consistent with the research, and we're paying attention to that.

ASSEMBLYMAN RAMOS: And this is why I take it back to my opening statement where I said -- not so much the Department of Education -- bureaucrats will sit in an office and they'll just give edicts from on high. You have one, two, three, four, five -- eight consultants here, when I could have told you this in about five minutes from my test-taking -- when they're trying to take my quiz and my tests. You didn't have to spend this much to get this analysis -- the grand analysis -- on reading comprehension. We could tell you reading comprehension is a problem with all of these things. So often we have-- And down in Trenton, in the corner office of DOE -- "We want to do this now. We want to change this now." And it just gets filtered on down from the top to the bottom instead of the bottom going up. It's the reverse order philosophy we need to take place here for our students' achievement and to really see what's happening in our classroom, as opposed to the corner office down in Trenton.

But I appreciate the work -- your efforts.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: In conclusion, I want to thank you. I think you made a tremendous presentation today. You informed us. It was very, very valuable in terms of us understanding the challenge you have and the educators have, parents, and teachers, students, etc., in trying to achieve success in an urban education environment. No doubt this is a lifetime of work. It's never going to be solved in two minutes. But there are things that are urgent that we have to deal with. And, of course, your approach is very valuable. But we want to help you in any way we can, so we want to hear from you. I'm sure the Chairperson and Co-Chair would like to hear -- and Senator Rice and Assemblywoman Wagner -- on anything we can do in terms of assisting. I'm going to talk to Senator Pou about possibly visiting some of the schools and seeing them up close. I think it's important that we get to that level where the educational process occurs -- that it's not just discussion, as Assemblyman Ramos said, at some higher level. We're not at a higher level. We're responsible for the education in the classroom. And we want to make sure that it's being delivered.

So I want to go back to the President of the Board. I think he was correct in terms of meeting each other as equals in this. There are no titles. It's a collaborative effort. And when it breaks down it becomes, "I'm bigger than you, you're smaller than me, you're over here." That doesn't work. The collective approach will always be the most powerful approach -- from parents, from teachers, from administrators, and legislators, commissioners, governors, whatever -- to deal with this. We all have a role

to play and we know our limitations. But we also have that underlying word -- a *responsibility* in all of this.

I want to thank you for being a very, very elegant representative of the Board of Education and the students here in Irvington (*sic*) -- Irvington is where we're going next -- Paterson. I thank you personally.

And I know the members of the Committee feel the same.

SUPERINTENDENT EVANS: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Meeting adjourned.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)