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# *Committee Meeting*

of

## JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*"The Committee will hear from presenters on the topic of autism"*

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

**DATE:** May 8, 2013  
1:00 p.m.

### **MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:**

Senator Ronald L. Rice, Co-Chair  
Assemblywoman Connie Wagner, Co-Chair  
Senator Linda R. Greenstein  
Senator Samuel D. Thompson  
Assemblywoman BettyLou DeCroce  
Assemblyman Benjie E. Wimberly  
Assemblyman David W. Wolfe



### **ALSO PRESENT:**

Melanie M. Schulz  
*Executive Director*

Sharon M. Benesta  
*Chief of Staff*

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

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Vito A. Gagliardi Sr., Ed.D. Board of Directors Monmouth-Ocean Foundation for Children, Inc.	4
Timothy P. Nogueira Superintendent of Schools Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission, and Director Monmouth-Ocean Foundation for Children, Inc.	4
Marie Gagliardi Board of Directors Monmouth-Ocean Foundation for Children, Inc.	6
Robert Baroska Principal Shore Center for Students with Autism	28
Joseph J. Annibale Superintendent Union Beach School District, and President and Member Board of Directors Bayshore Jointure Commission	32
Bernard F. Bragen Jr., Ed.D. Superintendent Hazlet Township Public Schools, and Member Board of Directors Bayshore Jointure Commission	33
Barbara DeMarco Representing Association of Schools and Agencies for the Handicapped	52
Thomas P. McCool, Ed.D. President and Chief Executive Officer Eden Autism Services	55

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

### APPENDIX:

	<u>Page</u>
Photos, and Newspaper articles submitted by Timothy P. Nogueira	1x
Press releases submitted by Barbara DeMarco	19x
Testimony submitted by Thomas P. McCool, Ed.D.	23x
pnf: 1-69	

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

We're getting ready to start our meeting.

I am Ronald L. Rice, New Jersey State Senator, and Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools, along with Co-Chair Assemblywoman Connie Wagner.

This morning's meeting is going to be chaired by the Co-Chair of one of our subcommittees, Assemblyman Wolfe, who is a long-time friend, number one, and a Legislator who has done a lot of good things for New Jersey. The three of us go back many, many years. We're probably three of the most senior tenured legislators here in State government. That makes us survivors. (laughter) We're seasoned -- we need a different term. The Education Committee always uses those little words -- I like the big ones like *seasoned*.

But we're going to get started, but before we do we're going to pledge allegiance. And so I'd like to ask everyone to just do that for us. Thank you. (all recite pledge)

And before we turn the meeting over to Assemblyman Wolfe, we just want to give our members an opportunity to say hello to you -- those who are here; others may be coming in. And I think that the subject matter this morning that Assemblyman Wolfe had asked us to make sure we considered during this session is very, very important.

But why don't I just turn it over to Assemblywoman Connie Wagner, Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools.

Assemblywoman.

**ASSEMBLYWOMAN CONNIE WAGNER (Co-Chair):**

Well, thank you, Senator Rice, and good afternoon.

And I see that today we have a good number of people here to testify. And I know that Assemblyman Wolfe has worked very hard on this, and we're anxious to get started here today.

SENATOR RICE: Senator Thompson.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you, Senator Rice. I'm delighted to have these folks here today.

I notice there are people here to testify who are from my former legislative district -- that's when I had the Bayshore area -- the communities of Union Beach, Hazlet -- Dr. Baroska and Dr. Gagliardi. So I have old friends here.

It's a very, very important subject we're discussing today. With the high instance we have of autism today it is one of the most significant challenges that is facing us.

SENATOR RICE: I'm going to turn this over, but I need to make an announcement, so I won't forget, to the members here and to others -- is that some time in the month of June -- probably early June -- the Joint Committee is going to have another meeting because this issue of autism is very important. But the whole issue of special ed and even disabilities and education is something we need a discussion on. So you may want to touch base with Melanie -- ask the date of the special education meeting that we're going to have.

Assemblyman Wolfe, it's your show.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you, Senator.

I'd like to thank Assemblywoman Wagner -- thank you very much -- and also Senator Thompson for being here.

Some of you may have not been before this Committee before or heard of our existence. Obviously, we're a bipartisan group; and a lot of Assembly and Senate members all involved somewhat with education in our duties and also our actual work. We get a lot done, but sometimes we're below the radar. But we have great staff, with Melanie and Sharon to help us out. And hopefully today this will be the start of a great dialogue for the entire Legislature. The purpose of having today's meeting is to really bring the legislators from both houses, of both parties, up to date, really, on some of the aspects that involve the issues of autism. I happen to live in a part of the state where there seems to be a lot of young folks and adults with autism. To me, it's very, very important. I know we work with the parents.

The way this meeting came about is that I got a phone call -- probably last summer -- and I saw the name was Gagliardi and I knew two Gagliardis: one was a father and one was a son, and the son I knew was an attorney who was litigating some issues in my former district, and the other one was the father -- Vito, Senior. He used to be the Education Commissioner for the State and had a great reputation, and still, obviously, very, very involved in issues of higher ed. We had breakfast together and he talked a little bit about the Ocean-Monmouth Educational Service Commission -- of which he was a member -- and some of the things that they were doing. Specifically, the services and concerns they had -- ancillary questions involving autistic services to their clients.

The Legislature, I think, really does not know that much about how the Service Commissions operate, so hopefully today we'll get a better picture of that. And also I'm really glad to see who's here -- people actually

know-- We have people from the Department of Education, together with people from the NJEA -- actually sitting very close to each other. (laughter) It's very, very nice.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: We're touching. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: That's great. Because, really, we haven't come together on a lot of other issues in the last year, so that really has kind of divided us. And I think this cooperation is very, very good.

So again, I want to thank Assemblywoman Wagner and also the Senator for allowing us to have this meeting.

A number of people have indicated they wish to speak; and so the order that we have here-- First, we'd like to ask if Tim Nogueira could come and kind of fill us in on some of the things that he's involved with. And then Vito Gagliardi, and Vito's boss, Marie -- his wife -- (laughter) the one who he reports to daily and gives him good advice, I'm sure.

**V I T O A. G A G L I A R D I Sr., Ed.D.:** How right you are, Assemblyman. (laughter)

**T I M O T H Y P. N O G U E I R A:** Good afternoon, Joint Committee.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thanks for being here.

MR. NOGUEIRA: Thank you so much; thanks so much for having us today.

Good afternoon, Joint Committee, Co-Chairs, members, and Committee Chairman.

Thank you for bringing up the Service Committees. What we have are two units that came together: one is the Bayshore Jointure

Commission, and the other is the Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission -- neither one of which receives any State, Federal, nor local taxes. The program we're going to talk about today -- the Shore Center for Students with Autism -- is the program that combines those two units. It's a Bayshore Jointure Program that's administered by MOESC, and it's for students in pre-K through high school.

We hope to present to you today some overviews that Dr. Gagliardi and Mrs. Gagliardi are going to do; we're going to talk specifically about the school; we're going to bring up some superintendents who use our services -- they're going to talk to you why programs like this are important. And finally, we're going to talk to you a little bit about the Monmouth-Ocean Foundation for Children, a 501(3)(c) foundation that has supported activities with the autism school and has some concerns about the adult populations.

With that, let me introduce for you again the former Commissioner of Education for the State of New Jersey, Dr. Vito Gagliardi, and his wife, Mrs. Gagliardi.

DR. GAGLIARDI: Thank you, Tim.

Good afternoon. I certainly want to thank Senator Rice and Assemblyman Wagner for allowing us the opportunity to come and speak to you. And a special thanks to Assemblyman Wolfe. And as he mentioned, this is all a result of a breakfast meeting that we had and a visit that Assemblyman Wolfe did make to the Shore Center for Students with Autism.

I'm well aware of the good works of the Joint Committee. This is the first time I've appeared as a private citizen, however. I believe it was

either once or twice as an employee of the State Department of Education that I did come before the Joint Committee. And the works that have evolved as a result of people listening -- like yourselves -- has been great, not only for State takeovers, but also some very specific legislation that you know more about than I do. But Marie and I are sure very appreciative to be here.

I'm not going to speak very specific about the programs that Tim and his staff do, but they're outstanding. Before I go any further, because there are very few people -- if any -- that don't know someone who falls within that autism spectrum -- whether it be a member of your family, a neighbor, a friend, or someone who you know -- it must be repeated from time to time, and sometimes when you speak -- or when I speak to people -- you just assume that they know about the statistics and all the rest.

But before I go into my brief, prepared remarks, I would like to reintroduce my wife, Marie. And Assemblyman, I don't know how you know that she is my boss, but you're absolutely correct. And that's why she directs me as to what I'm going to say in a few minutes. (laughter)

Marie.

**MARIE GAGLIARDI:** I'll also tell him if there's too much.

My role today, really, is to tell you a little bit about the Shore Center for Children with Autism and how it came to be. Assemblyman Wolfe has visited us; we hope the rest of you will sometime.

**SENATOR RICE:** Is her mike on? (referring to PA microphone)

**ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE:** Could you pull your microphone towards you? There you go.

MS. GAGLIARDI: Can you hear me now?

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Yes.

MS. GAGLIARDI: Okay.

When Vito was Commissioner of Education, one of his major initiatives was to bring attention to autism, and to (indiscernible) identification, and employee intervention for children with autism. And years later, Tim and Carol Morris -- who was then the Executive County Superintendent -- remembered our interest in this and contacted us and asked if we would be interested in chairing a committee that eventually would study and, perhaps, be able to open a school in Monmouth County for these children. And we agreed and, in September of 2009, were appointed co-chair of an advisory board that ultimately had about 25 members who came from not only the educational community, but the medical community as well. We had the deans of Monmouth University and Georgian Court, we had doctors, we had many superintendents -- some of whom are here today -- who became members of this committee.

Our goal was to establish a K-12 school -- public school, county-wide -- in Monmouth County that would service the students of Monmouth and Ocean County, and today we have some who are even farther away than that.

However, we realized at that time the need to service and provide services for students in high school and beyond. At that time -- and I think even today -- there are only three high school students (*sic*) of children with autism in all of Monmouth County.

DR. GAGLIARDI: Classrooms.

MS. GAGLIARDI: Classrooms; I'm sorry.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Could you say that again?

MS. GAGLIARDI: There are only three high school classrooms for children with autism in all of Monmouth County. And so our ultimate goal is to service these students.

After a lot of meetings, and site visits, and studies, and discussions over the next several years, with the cooperation -- as Tim mentioned -- of the Bayshore Jointure Commission and the Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission, and with the guidance of Mr. Nogueira, the present building, which is located in Tinton Falls, was opened and we opened the Shore Center in 2011.

It's still a work in progress, and we continue to search for funds and donations to expand what we already have. We had a gala Saturday night -- it was our second one -- where we're trying to raise money, looking for grants, and we're looking for any help government can give us as well. And Vito will tell you more about what is presently at the school and what we hope we'll have in the future.

Thank you very much for having us.

DR. GAGLIARDI: Thank you. Let me begin by saying that Marie is a retired school teacher with almost 30 years experience. And for that brief time when I was Commissioner of Education, she and the former First Lady Diane DeFrancesco visited as many schools and programs dealing with the autistic spectrum -- that I could never have accomplished. And they served as my ambassadors, if you will. And you can imagine I got very, very specific feedback from those specific visits.

Marie also mentioned the fact that it's been more than 20 years that our interests in children and adults who are classified as autistic has

evolved. When we began the figures-- And, by the way, the figures that I'm using today have been verified through the National Neurological Institute of Neurological Disorders. When we began to look at this, the number of children was 1 out of 120 -- that was in the United States-- It seems that the figure changes almost weekly. And, hopefully, when I prepared this the numbers are what they are today -- but the ratio could be different. In recent figures, it's 1 out of 88; and in New Jersey the latest figure that I was able to put my finger on is 1 out of every 50 students entering into school.

One of the things that has certainly grabbed my attention is the fact that boys -- male students -- are impacted almost four times as often as females. All of these statistics are important because if we turned back the clock to the 1940s and 1950s -- long before most of you can remember reading the history about this -- polio impacted young children 1 out of 3,000 -- 1 out of 3,000 -- and it was declared an epidemic. Now, I'm not saying that because the President of the United States happened to be impacted with this-- But a great deal of emphasis was placed on the attempt to find out the origin of polio and what would we do about it. And, thank God, as a result of many, many people working, but specifically Doctors Salk and Sabin, you know the good news story.

I guess one of the things that impacted my interest even more was while I was Commissioner of Education I was asked to be a guest speaker with COSAC. It was an organization that dealt specifically with autism programs and children. And it was in Atlantic City, and I said to Marie, "Let me go make my 20-minute speech, and then we'll go have dinner." And that seemed to be a very realistic goal. I made the 20-minute presentation in the room, and then as we were about to leave, they recessed

the meeting. And we stood in line for more than two hours listening to parents -- mothers and fathers, and sometimes single parents -- telling us stories that will be embedded in my mind until the day I die.

We heard stories of twins, triplets; how people sold businesses to move into an area in North Jersey that was close to where they lived, but it wasn't enough where they didn't have to relocate. And it went on and on and on. One of the things that I think was so devastating in my thinking was the fact that 24/7 -- whether they sent the child to school or not, before the child went to school -- their lives were impacted by these young people; and not knowing what is going to happen next. They start in one school, and then they reach another age, the school district sends them somewhere else. And, really, cost was not impacted by that. They paid their taxes and they left it up to the school to decide whether the youngster should be placed out-of-district -- and, most times, they were -- either in a public school or a private school. And, as I say, the number in terms of what the tuition was did not affect them one bit.

As Marie talked about how it came to be that we worked with Tim and his staff-- And, by the way, this is not a commercial, but it's true: Tim is someone who looks so far ahead in terms of what's happening next, that every once in a while we have to remind him to finish up the detail about some of the things that he's talking about. But that's a wonderful thing for the children that he's responsible for in his school district as a result of them being sent there.

I think one of the things that has impacted both of us is not only the planning that takes place, but the amazing things, if you will, that Tim and his staff -- at least his administrative office here today, and maybe

another teacher -- what they do and what they're planning to do, and the ability of them to get the additional funds to do what they do. Now, trust me: I know that there are many noteworthy programs in this state -- whether they be in public schools or private schools -- and there's no competition; trust me. There's plenty for everybody to deal with. I think one of the things that comes to mind is this: As State legislators, you would not allow a school to deal with any type of curriculum if they did not take a look at your State Core Curriculum Standards and Assessments. You rely on the Department of Education to do this, and they do it well. Right now, unless I've missed something, there is no structure like this. And although it sounds crude, these schools are doing what they believe is in the best interest of the children because it's contained in an IEP -- an Individual Educational Program. But there is no true structure in terms of, "This is what we're looking for here at this age group," and so on and so forth.

And it was a miracle-- If by some miracle, starting today, no other child was born with any symptoms in this disorder, there would still be thousands and thousands of children in New Jersey alone-- I read a fact the other day that in the country of China there are 4 million autistic children. Now, percentage-wise, that's not a great deal. But percentage-wise in New Jersey -- and I know we've been a leader; and I say a leader -- I don't mean that in a positive way -- that we've had special ed youngsters who reach 14 percent of our enrollment. Now, if no other child entered this school, we still are going to deal with these children until they're 21 -- legally -- but the parents are going to be responsible for these children until even after they pass away. And I guess every once in a while we have to remind ourselves of that.

Just a few more things. When I was a County Superintendent up in Union County, I was asked to serve on a task force that Governor Kean was interested in, in terms of child abuse and neglect. That task force became a commission. That commission triggered thoughts with the State Legislature; your colleagues at the time, in 1984, passed very strenuous laws dealing with the protection, identification, and the reporting of child abuse and neglect. I guess I'm suggesting that perhaps it's time to put people like that back together again because autistic children and their parents touch every department of State government -- every department of State government, including Corrections.

So I think the time is right to make this as a suggestion -- I respectfully make that suggestion -- and especially focus not only on what the schools may be doing now, but I know Tim and maybe others are going to talk about what happens to these children when they become adults, in terms of after they're 21, in the very basic needs that they have -- as we all have -- and how do we address it.

I'd be happy to respond to any questions that you may have right now. I've attempted to be brief. I could teach a semester just about what I know, and I consider myself a generalist. I am not an expert on autism, and I'm certainly not an expert on special education.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you very much.

I'd like to introduce Assemblywoman DeCroce.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: I apologize for being late.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Coach Assemblyman Wimberly. How did the team do?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Five out of five.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Well, that's good. (laughter)

SENATOR RICE: Giants, or that's your Paterson team? Oh, that's just a Paterson team.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Hackensack (indiscernible).

SENATOR RICE: Hackensack -- okay. That's not the Giants. You had me worried. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: I have to say that some people who came after we started the meeting -- that if you were on time, you would have gotten food. (laughter)

Thank you very much. Do you want to wait until we're all done, or do you want to ask questions now?

SENATOR RICE: I'd like to ask them now in case they have to leave.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Do you have a question?

SENATOR RICE: Yes, just right quickly: First of all, thanks for coming in, and it's good seeing you again, too.

DR. GAGLIARDI: Thank you, Senator.

SENATOR RICE: I don't know how long it's been since you retired. You ever think about coming back? You know, I might be able to work that out. (laughter)

DR. GAGLIARDI: I'm willing to speak any time, but thank you, Senator.

SENATOR RICE: I thought maybe since you changed your address, I could help you out. (laughter)

Anyway, on a serious note, it was indicated that there was only three classes addressing this issue in Monmouth County.

DR. GAGLIARDI: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: And my question is-- Let me preface my remarks by saying that autism is something that we don't really have a lot of discussion on. And, to be quite frank, in the black community there is not a lot of discussion whatsoever. And only a couple of years ago I found out that the number of African Americans, or blacks, is substantial with autism. But the difference is, it's not picked up on for a lot of different reasons: number one, because the environment we're in, in the school systems and the way we do things; but number two, sometimes it's not in the physical -- it's not so clear that there's a possibility in the physical structure, you know, if we look at a person or watch some of the movements. So I guess my question is, do you have any idea of the ethnic breakdown, by ethnic groups, in the three classes you do have?

DR. GAGLIARDI: They're not my classes; they're the three classes that exist in Monmouth County in the public school setting. No, I don't have that breakdown. I saw you all react to that, and you might say, "Where are all the children who we know about who come through the K-8 system?" And what happens is, there are a good number of children who went to private special ed. In our classrooms we have, sometimes, 6 children in a room with 6 classroom aides and a teacher. And that classroom space we would normally fill with 22 or 23 children. And you will hear in a little while from our superintendents who use our program that sometimes they just don't have the room to devote a classroom to 6 kids. So high schools and everybody else might have a size problem.

The second thing that they have is, autism's severe end of the spectrum is not the easiest thing to deal with and there are not always people who are trained well in doing that.

The third element is that when you get to the high school age, you get some kid who is 6-foot-1, 6-foot-2 -- boy or girl -- who can be a physically demanding person who teachers might not be able to deal with. We have our population in our school that is pre-K through 12, and I have high schoolers -- I have 17- and 18-year-old, 20-year-old boys. And those particular boys are pretty docile, and they would probably work in most schools. So those combinations of things -- there not being space, not having the expertise to deal with those children, and some children who are just outside the ability of the school to put into a normal day environment and control. Add to that being 3. It's not because they wouldn't want to take care of them or have them in their school district. They just don't have the ability to do so for those reasons.

But I don't have that ethnic breakdown. The only one that I read yesterday in the *Wall Street Journal* was how underrepresented are girls. Girls are a lower percentage. In Dr. Gagliardi's remark about the 1 in 50, in general, boys in the state of New Jersey are 1 in 29 -- are autistic -- 1 in 29. So when he tells you about 3,000 in polio, 1 in 29 sounds like a ridiculous number. But those are the numbers in New Jersey; we are number two in the United States with the number of percentage of autistic children. And we trail Utah -- and I don't know who lives in Utah, or how big it is, but I can't believe there are a lot of people in Utah. So we're virtually number one in the United States.

A very quick comment on that: We have great special ed laws, we have terrific schools, and people move into our state for our services -- that's what happens.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Excuse me; I know other people are going to speak, but I know when I visited with you -- just for the Committee -- I was very impressed. Everything that was something else, now in the school-- Right? I mean, the chairs are from--

MS. GAGLIARDI: Atlantic City.

MR. NOGUEIRA: Atlantic City.

Over here is the diner-- That's the diner on our school.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Right.

MR. NOGUEIRA: Those are the chairs from the Sands Casino in Atlantic City; we refurbished them. That is a real signboard. The kids go there to eat lunch every day. They sit down in a booth -- those kinds of things. We just got donated 30 brand-new seats from the Sony Corporation. We're doing a theater in the school so the kids can learn how to go into a theater and sit down in a seat, and scoot down the aisle, and have the place get darker. They don't have that kind of training, and it's very difficult to take a child into an environment like that and teach them that. Those are the things that we're doing.

So, you're right -- we're trying to make it into a town. When I bring the Principal up, we'll talk some more about the town and he can answer your questions.

DR. GAGLIARDI: May I answer? May I have five minutes, Assemblyman?

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Commissioner, certainly.

DR. GAGLIARDI: Senator, in terms of breakdown, I know that the Department of Education can furnish you that information. But I happen to know, up in Union County where I served as County Superintendent -- because of relationships that I had with staff -- a substantial number of African American and Latino children, just out of Elizabeth and Plainfield alone, are substantial in number. And, of course, when you add in Hillside, Roselle, Linden, and those other communities, if you're looking for an item that is equal educational opportunity -- and I say that with all due respect -- autism is it. It's color blind; it's more than Lady Liberty. So the numbers are available, I'm certain -- as up-to-date as they possibly can be, from the Department of Education.

SENATOR RICE: The concern I have -- and then I'll end on this -- it's something that -- Melanie, make a note -- we need to look at further. Maybe get the Education Committee to do it, too. But my concern is all this talk about failing school systems, particularly in the urban communities. And I've always argued for years is that we're not slowing down; we're making some bad assumptions. We made assumptions, as you know, going back many years ago in our generation that if kids weren't learning there was something wrong with them. Then we find out that they were being impacted by the lead in the water, okay? Today, we have other conditions impacting -- on the health side. We think it's something else, but what happens is that the violent crime -- we're talking about guns and gun control; we're not looking at causation of violence, primarily because some of the conditions that have impacted from a health perspective we're not picking up early enough. And then there are different degrees of autism. And that's why I said it's not obvious sometimes, and then a

youngster grows up and we wonder why things start to shift in their lives. And so I'm very much concerned, and I want to end by saying that I spoke with Assemblyman Wolfe and he's going to talk to you more, because you're correct -- we may need to be putting together some legislation to get some things done because usually we ask and it doesn't occur. I don't care what Governor is there; usually we ask, and if we don't put it in law and then mandate it to some kind of degree, it's not going to happen.

But thank you, Assemblyman.

DR. GAGLIARDI: Thank you.

SENATOR THOMPSON: I have a question that's more related to not the education that the children get when they're diagnosed with autism one way or another, but rather picking up on the diagnosis to know that they need these special ed (indiscernible) concerns, right?

SENATOR RICE: Yes, we're missing-- You're right, we're missing a large number out there, and then we're thinking, because of what we see and hear in certain communities, that it impacts more on this group than this group. You know, it's like sickle cell, you know? We kind of relate it to certain groups -- blacks, Jewish, etc. -- and then you find out, "No, it isn't really that limited." It's more substantial in other groups. And that's my concern -- is that we're missing a lot in the process.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Failing to pick up the kid, rather than once you pick him up.

SENATOR RICE: Yes, exactly.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: I know we have other speakers, but maybe someone else will talk about this. But I was interested in-- Because I know, because he told me -- but for the Committee -- you were

telling what it cost to educate these children in the Special Services Commission -- how much each district has to--

MR. NOGUEIRA: Well, there are certainly, as you know, different costs in every district and the per-pupil expenditures. Our tuition is \$46,600 per year. I want to remind you that we're a public school system. We follow all the rules of 18a; the only thing we don't receive is any tax dollars. But if we were a private, special ed school -- which we're not, and there's 178 at my last count in the state -- we'd be the 14th lowest tuition in the State of New Jersey. And, hopefully, you're going to hear from my participating superintendents of why that's an impact to them.

It's very costly. With that not only goes the tuition, but there's the transportation. You know, we're putting kids on little busses -- I can't tell you, 20, 25 buses come to my school. You do that. Then you have specialists -- OT, PT, and speech that they get. And then we're about to start, on July 2 -- I have to check with my Principal behind me -- our extended school year where the kids do another 30 days with us. So this can be tremendously expensive.

And there are, as you well know, private special ed schools that start at \$100,000. It is not a misnomer to say that you can have a preschool child walk into your district, and that could be a million-dollar child -- easy. So now, for our 12-year experience -- 13-year experience -- they go out and do that -- that could cost \$1 million to the district. And again, we're second in the nation, 1 in 29 in boys, 1 in 50. So there's a whole body of kids out there right now in schools -- there is a wave of them out there at different grade levels. And there's a span to the spectrum of autism, as you know. You ever watch *Big Bang Theory*? Sheldon is way at

this end; Sheldon is way over at-- He's got two Ph.D.'s And he doesn't have those social soft skills; but he's way there. And then on the far end, on the other side, are the children who don't communicate, who aren't talking, who aren't interacting, who don't make eye contact. There are those kinds of kids. So we have to get better definitions of who they are, can we deal with them? We talk about them as autism versus Asperger's. Some school districts can handle the kids who they have; others, for various reasons, cannot. And that's why you have only three classrooms and so many private, special ed schools, and several very good -- I hope we're one of them -- public school districts that act like a regional center to bring people in.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I just have one question, Dr. Gagliardi. And that is you mentioned the adults with autism. And, you know, I live in Bergen County; there are many good public and private programs. But if there's one thing that I am hearing and one thing that I do see, I do see many autistic adults who are living at home with grandma, and then mom taking care of the autistic adult. They have no skills -- unemployable. Do we have an idea of the number, and what should we be doing with adults who have escaped us?

DR. GAGLIARDI: Well, it's interesting that you bring that up. And Tim's going to speak to that in a few minutes. But I think I can say, without any hesitation or doubt, that what you're seeing is just the tip of the iceberg. You know, years ago we didn't have any-- When I first started teaching, you were either educable or trainable. And you could tell the trainable kids just by looking. Educable-- Believe me, there were autistic kids there because Dr. Asperger came up with that terminology and the

symptoms back in 1946 or -- 1984 (*sic*), rather. So it's been around a long time.

So I guess one of the major concerns that we have is that these children become adults and they're going to outlive their parents and their grandparents without skills to employ themselves. And that's another impact on taxpayers. But what about these individuals? What worth is there?

So I'm going to turn this over to Tim because he, in our discussion, came up with the thought that right there, in Monmouth County, the next step in the planning phase could be dealing with these adults after age 21.

MR. NOGUEIRA: We have a foundation -- the Monmouth-Ocean Foundation for Children is a 501(c)(3) that currently has a three-year mission to support the Shore Center. So we have done things such as raising money for a playground; we don't have a playground. We're raising money for an outside playground. We hope to finish the theater that I mentioned to you before. After we do those two things -- and our building is a huge building: lots of classrooms, air conditioned gymnasium -- lots of things in there. It's a really nice building -- we have a piece of property next to the building that is 20 feet away that I'm going to talk to the Foundation about taking on as a mission and building a daycare center for 21-year-olds-and-up autistic adults. The building could end up being reasonable because I have the air conditioned gym, I have a computer room, I have all those things in the building itself, and if it was so close -- 20, 30 feet away -- we could easily use it.

The parents who we deal with come to school-- The mothers come to school in the morning exhausted because most of them sleep with their children because they're afraid that the child is going to get up and hurt themselves or get out of the house. So they come to school exhausted in the morning. Some of them have had to physically restrain the child. We take the child all day -- the child is with us. And the mother gets the child in the afternoon. And if you have any disabled adults in your family -- mentally retarded or anything like that -- you know there are periods of time that you can leave that person alone. You can't do that with an autistic child. If we had one here, we would not leave them in that room. They would be here next to us. So you're right: You get a 21-year-old student; you get a 45-, 48-year-old parent. They are going to stop working and they're going to stay home. What are they going to do? And fellow taxpayers -- this is what's going to fall to us when the parent passes and these healthy adults -- who are not capable of taking care of themselves -- are going to be with us. And we know they're there in education because we have them. We have classrooms full of them, we have buildings full of them. They're here. Our discussion -- no blame; please don't take it that way -- there is no State plan to deal with that. We do a fabulous job in instituting every special ed law, putting every benefit that we can to help these children, and then at 21 we cast them off. They still exist; they're going to be there, their parents are going to pass, and they're going to be our responsibility.

We leave it to entrepreneurs and foundations to make these and build these daycare centers. That's who's building them. If I can talk my Foundation into it, that's who's going to build them. We're going to get

people to contribute and somebody to donate this and that, build a building. And then we're going to run it off whatever funds those poor parents can get from Social Security or whatever kind of funds to run it. That's who runs these programs. There is not a State plan. No one has said, "What do we do with these 21 year olds? We give them a diploma and say goodbye." And we know we're dealing with pre-K through high school. What am I doing with the 21-year-old? I know he needs help. I know he needs support, I know the parent needs us. And I say, "See ya."

So there is not really some long-term vision on this. And it doesn't matter whether we like it or not -- that bus is going to unload on all of us and we're not going to know what to do with these people. Healthy? Some of them have some abilities that we could use in some kind of work program -- limited; some of the others just have to be cared for on a daily basis, every day but Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving -- you pick out the holidays; every other day the parents go into work, trying to work their jobs, support their families, and pay their taxes. They're not able to do that when they have a child who is severely disabled.

So that was going to be the end of the speech today, but you got me into the middle. But that's kind of the place-- We're going to tell you how the school works, but that's kind of the place that we're talking about that we believe -- and we hope that you're interested -- in. Not necessarily with us; we're just the point of the arrow, as they say. We're just trying to get your attention. And maybe the Committee discussions that bring in folks who are affected by it, parents who can sit here and tell you about it, people who run those kinds of daycare centers can tell you the need. They're in a much better position to explain the 21-plus than I am

today. But I think that's a discussion that has to be had, and I do believe that you're, perhaps, the best Committee that should be talked to about it. So we hope that you'll consider that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Do you want to bring up people as you--

MR. NOGUEIRA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: --need them, or do you want me to call up their names? How do you want to do this?

MR. NOGUEIRA: Yes. Could I just bring up--

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Sure.

MR. NOGUEIRA: I'll bring up Bob Baroska, my Principal.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you, Doctor. Thank you, Ms. Gagliardi.

MR. NOGUEIRA: In your packet, if you look on the side, you can see a bunch of pictures just like the ones I have up here. This is the Shore Center. If you go through them, that's what the place looks like. All the streets are named: there's Belmar Boulevard, Spring Lake Lane, Rumson River Road, Asbury Park Place. And what happens is the children walk around the place, and above each classroom is a shake shingle roof made by the Monmouth County Voc kids; and they're like houses. So we're teaching the kids how to get around a town because you can't really do that with children -- you can't get them around the town.

So we take the academic skills and we try to blend them in to life skills as well. We have a bedroom where the kids make the bed; we have dressers full of clothes. They take the clothes out, we wash them, we dry them, we put them back. They go to eat in the diner -- all those things

happen and we're trying to bring the skills in. In September we hope to have what they call the Shore Town Mail, where the mail is going to be delivered to every classroom and kids are going to have to find, "Please come to the diner, please come to here." They're going to have to do those kinds of things.

Fifty-four students from about 18 schools come to us from Middlesex, Monmouth, and Ocean, and a few other places. Bob currently has on his desk 12 intakes; that means another 12 people who are interested in coming to schools. I'm going to open up a classroom before the end of the year and I'm going to create another classroom over the summer, and that may or may not help us for the fall. We may have more than that. It's a very good program, a lot of dedicated people. A good number of my children have 1:1 aides -- I mentioned it before. These are the kinds of children who end up being sent to us from public school districts, and they get a single classroom aide with them. So in many of my classrooms there is a teacher, there are 6 students, and there are 6 aides -- 1:1.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Do you pay for the aides, or does the district?

MR. NOGUEIRA: The district pays for the aides. That would be in addition to the tuition.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: In addition to the \$42,000?

MR. NOGUEIRA: Forty-six thousand -- right. It's about \$35,000 for the aide.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Wait, wait. So that would be on top of that?

MR. NOGUEIRA: Yes, it is on top of that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay.

MR. NOGUEIRA: Plus the OT/PT at the end of the year is.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: What is at the end of the year?

MR. NOGUEIRA: The end of the year is-- Excuse me, the extended school year program is also in there. What's that -- \$6,000?

DR. GAGLIARDI: Six.

MR. NOGUEIRA: Six thousand at the end of the year.

Now, that is not unlike the system that happens in the private schools, and that is -- and there are people here today who can explain better than I can -- but there is a base tuition and all those other things are added on. I hate to make an analogy like this -- forgive me -- but it's like buying a car. "You want the tires? We're going to charge you extra." But they are. (laughter) So there's the base tuition -- that's how it goes -- there's the tuition, then there would be things like extra speech. We offer speech included; I think they get two times at speech, two OTP, and two PT. That comes with the tuition. If the child needs it five times a week, I have to have a specialist come in, so the district gets charged for that. So this is not unlike what you would see in any other setting. But you must remember that my base -- my \$46,600 -- is the 14th lowest if I was one of the 178. I don't mean to bash them, and I'm not making controversy here. But all I'm saying is the districts that comes to me -- the public school districts -- see it as a value, (*a*) in the quality of the program, we hope -- and you'll hear about that -- and number two, in what has to be expended for this child. And I have to tell you, Bob and the Bayshore Jointure Commission has done this long before I got there. Over the years that they

have been in business they have sent 50 students back to the district -- 50 students have gone back. Meaning they work with the district, they help them train some of the people there to better be able to handle the child. We do that kind of transition period, and then the child goes back to the district. That, in my opinion, is not common; not every child can do that. There are some children too severe and they will stay with us through their entire career. But it does happen, and I have to give them a tremendous amount of credit for the work in trying to get the children to go back to their home district and into a normal program.

What I mentioned before -- just very quickly -- is we have people who come to us from various places. We have parents who came to us from North Carolina. The father worked at Lowe's in North Carolina and came to visit a relative up here and came to our summer picnic at the school. He saw the school, just at the picnic, had a hamburger, put into Lowe's to get transferred to Eatontown, and he is now in our school. People move into New Jersey -- not just for me -- they move into Marlboro, they move into all places that have some good programs. They come into us; we're known throughout the United States -- all the autistic programs in New Jersey -- and they come to us. Our special ed laws are among the best; the children get the best care in the best programs. They come here.

So when we talk about those numbers, we're not necessarily all home-grown people who are doing 1 in 29 and 1 in 50. We shouldn't think, in New Jersey, this is just happening to us. We're getting people coming to see us because of the work we're doing.

So that's the (indiscernible). Did we leave anything out about the good works that we're doing in the school, Robert?

**ROBERT BAROSKA:** Senator, I wanted to address some of the questions that you had.

In our school we have about 10 African American students. And the number is about 20 percent -- really 20 percent of individuals with autism are African American; about 5 to 8 percent are Hispanic; and about 4 to 5 percent are Asian; and the rest are considered white.

The other thing that you said really touched me -- about expectations of students in the urban districts. I think the thing that goes wrong with people with autism and also individuals with disabilities is our expectations of them. Sometimes we have lower expectations and we don't challenge them enough and respect what they can do. We'd rather focus on what they can't do.

I think that's something that our school really tries to do. When a student comes to our school, I think the first thing you have to look at is the parents are traumatized, "I have a child with autism." And they read and they know this is lifelong disability -- it's not going to go away. In other words, their parents said to me, "When the light goes on at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, now that child's mine for the rest of the day." So for 6 hours we're educating that child. What we try to do in our school is real simple, okay? We have a child on the spectrum. You have to address three major issues as you would in our life. It's a behavioral component, an educational component, and a social component of life. How do we educate a child, how do we deal with their behaviors and that social component? That's so hard for a child with autism to deal with.

We develop a program for that. We have the parents involved in the program. The parents come to our school and they learn how their

child is being toilet trained. They learn how to deal with behavior -- that they can go out into the community. And we have all the specialists work with them to work on their life skills, eat at our diner. In our diner, it's very-- We try to develop, as Tim said, typical settings for our students. So in our diner where our students eat there's noise, there's clamor going on, there are people bumping into each other in the halls. So we get our students ready for "the real world" -- the real world of living at home, going to a communion, going out on a picnic with their family, going out to the mall. So we're developing all these skills -- whether it's life skills, whether it's social skills, etc. -- speech, communication. So we take this child along up to age 19 and 21. And they have all these skills that they developed. As an example is, we have students working at Monmouth University now. They're not just working in some back room; they're working in the library, they're working in the Athletic Center, they're working in the school cafeteria, they're working in offices. And most important, also they're having lunch with college students so they can interface with typical peers. And also there can be college students there who say, "You know something? When I can start my own business, maybe I can hire that guy or that girl." So we're interfacing as much as possible into the real world.

Come 21, now, there are no programs for them. So we help develop all these skills as we've had our skills when we graduated from college or high school or community (indiscernible) vocational -- we developed all these skills. And then we needed a mentor or trainer, even, after that -- and we all had them to push us along. But for people with disabilities it stops, and there's nothing there or available.

I know someone from Monmouth County who actually started his own company for people with autism to fix computers. He has eight people working for him. I saw him a year ago, he gave me a hug and said, "Bob, thank you for making me a millionaire, because I have all these people in the back who have autism -- they're working, they're putting computers together. Friday afternoon, I shut the lights off and at 12 o'clock we have pizza, we go bowling, we have movies, and I pay them all \$40,000 a year."

So there are ways, but we have to challenge not only people with autism -- we have to challenge ourselves to look inside ourselves to see what can we do more to bring out more in them, to help us, and help them. So it's there for us.

Thank you very much.

MR. NOGUEIRA: You know, we, over here -- Retro Fitness has given us two gyms. That's a Retro Fitness OT/PT room for the younger kids. And in your pile there's a picture of an adult one for my older kids.

I'll tell you a quick story. The architect came over, when that room didn't look like that, for Retro Fitness and they donated everything. There has to be \$80,000 worth of equipment in those two rooms and it looks just like a Retro Fitness. But the architect came and he was doing measurements and all that stuff, and I was in there with him. And one of the teachers came in with about an 8-year-old boy and they were trying to get the 8-year-old boy to go from food reinforcements -- you know, here's a piece of something that's good -- to time in the OT/PT room to be good. "You do your work, you get 5 minutes." So the teacher comes in the room, and I'm talking to the architects, and they go over by the bean bag and the

teacher says to this student, "What do you want me to do?" Well, I didn't see that the student came in with an iPad. And the kid reached over and hit the iPad and the iPad said, "Tickle me." So the teacher tickled him and he laughed. And he pressed it again, and it said, "Tickle me." Now, we teach sign language because we have some kids who don't speak, so we teach them sign language. We used to teach them language. Now the iPad becomes the thing to use. Now, this same teacher did one more thing. You know when you get into reading groups -- you're in a group and you'd read a paragraph, and you'd read a paragraph, and you'd read a paragraph. Well, little kids are reading a sentence and reading a sentence and reading a sentence. This little boy wasn't able to do that because he didn't speak. So the teacher recorded his sentence on the iPad so when his time came up he pressed the button and the iPad read the sentence and he was able to participate. So we didn't leave him out -- he was participating. Hopefully, one day, he'll speak to us. He's not doing that right now, but we're working on that socialization and all of those kinds of things.

So that's what this school kind of looks like. And we will send you all an invitation to come into it.

Do you have any questions for us on these items?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I just need a clarification.

Do you have any, like, internships with any of the local government or businesses?

MR. BAROSKA: Yes. What we do-- We have something with Monmouth University. What Tim set up through Monmouth University -- we have the jobs set up. We're going to have 14 different jobs next year set up for our students from high-school age. In return, Monmouth University

sends us interns and we are training these people to work with our population -- from a behavioral aspect and an education aspect. So it's a joint venture.

MR. NOGUEIRA: With your permission I'd like to bring up two of the superintendents who participate.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Sure, very good. Thank you.

MR. NOGUEIRA: The first one is Joe Annibale. He's the Superintendent of the Union Beach schools, and he's also the President of the Bayshore Jointure. And the second is Dr. Bernie Bragen; he's the Superintendent of the Hazlet Schools and he's a member of the Bayshore Jointure Board.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Are you going to tell us about the Union Beach school? How is it going? Do you have a school?

J O S E P H J . A N N I B A L E: Senator, we're getting there. We're knee deep in it, and we're hoping that by June 3 our children return back to Memorial School, so we're keeping our fingers crossed.

Well, good afternoon, again. My name is Joseph Annibale, Superintendent of the Union Beach School District. Members of the Senate Education Committee (*sic*), I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to come before you to speak on behalf of the Shore Center for Children with Autism and the vital role it plays in Monmouth and Ocean Counties.

I've been a proud member of the Shore Center since 2008. And the Shore Center provides educational programs for students with autism. The dedicated staff is made up of a cadre of special education teachers, paraprofessionals, behavior specialists, speech and language specialists, physical and occupational therapists; physical education, art,

and music teachers. Students who attend the Shore Center for Children with Autism receive an education individualized to their unique behavioral and learning needs, focusing on strengthening their social and academic skills necessary to live and function within the family, school, and community settings.

And what I want to do is step aside from my script here and really talk about the value that this program has for a school district like myself. I'm a small district; I have roughly 750 students, pre-Superstorm Sandy. And for a district like myself we need to be fiscally prudent 24/7. And a program like this offers us the opportunity that when we come across a student we need to put out of district, it's an avenue that we can go to and know at the same time it's feasible and cost-effective.

I'd like to add, quickly, by saying autism continues to rise nationwide. And in New Jersey we are leading in the statistic with about 1 in 50 children diagnosed with this disorder, like Dr. Gagliardi mentioned earlier. However, it's comforting to know that part of this spike is due to increased awareness and detection, and New Jersey continues to increase resources to treat autism. However, as we all hear, it's not enough and we need to continue the research and service on autism and really make it a high priority.

Thank you.

**B E R N A R D F. B R A G E N J R., Ed. D.:** I guess that's on, right? (referring to PA microphone)

I, too, want to thank the Committee for allowing us this opportunity to speak.

As the Superintendent of the Hazlet Township Public Schools, we're a neighboring district to Union Beach. We were not severely impacted by the storm, thank goodness.

What we try to do, and what we've tried since I've been there -- this is going on my seventh year; I was Assistant Superintendent before Superintendent -- is to try to keep most of our special needs students in the least-restrictive environment, which is in-house, which is in their district and, when we can, in their home schools. And we have a number of programs in district where we do that for those students, as Mr. Nogueira said, across the autistic spectrum who are not as significantly impacted as some of those others.

But there are those students who we cannot provide the resources in a public school setting. It's not cost-efficient, nor is it feasible. We currently have four students attending the Shore Center for Children with Autism in our different age groups. So we would have to have dedicated classes and all the resources in place for each of those students in our individual classrooms or individual schools. It's just cost prohibitive.

And what the Shore Center provides us with, as Mr. Annibale said, is a cost-effective way to provide appropriate services for those students who we otherwise are not capable of providing for in district. It's a vital role for us, and it enables us to meet those child's needs as specified in their IEP and yet still be cost-efficient for our taxpayers -- as Mr. Nogueira said.

They don't receive any funds from the State or Federal government. Their funds come from tuition which is charged to the sending districts, and we raise money-- For us, 75 percent of our money

comes from the local tax base, and 25 from the State coffers, And we try to be very cost-effective and diligent in the process of making sure we're getting the best bang for our dollar. And programs such as the Shore Center for Children with Autism that's run by the Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission provides us that option. They do an exceptional job. I can't think of a school that provides better services for the students that meets those needs, and yet as Mr. Nogueira said, it's the 14th lowest in the state. So for us, it's a great option to help us provide as broad a program for our students who really need it, and yet still be cost-efficient with our tax dollars.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: I have a question. You said you had four children who were enrolled in this school?

DR. BRAGEN: Correct.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: So Tim was telling us that it's \$46,000, plus \$35,000?

DR. BRAGEN: Approximately, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay. Now then, do you get money from the State for that or do you take that out of your budget? Do you have a special line item for that?

DR. BRAGEN: We have line items for out-of-district special education students. When I came on the Board and came on as Superintendent in Hazlet Township, we had about 40 students who were going to out-of-district placements to various programs; that's down to 26 students now. And some of those students were at Shore Center and have come back.

But in answer to your question: We do have additional money for special education students -- be it extraordinary aid and IDEA funds, which we do get. It's not a significant amount; it's nowhere near full funding, which has been promised since I've been in education -- 45 years -- (laughter) from the State and Federal government, but it is-- For extraordinary aid when the students are over a certain number, we do get funding from the State and we're grateful for that. Those four students would qualify for that.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: So the money you got for those students who are currently at that school, would that money be based on money you got a year ago? Or is it based on--

DR. BRAGEN: It's based on the October counts and the numbers that we submit, and then we fill out the extraordinary aid money-- It's the actual cost over the cost of the school year where we get additional extraordinary aid funds for those students. Don't misquote me on the number; it's around \$45,000 match. If we spend more than that on a particular student we can apply for extraordinary aid.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Yes, just two questions.

You said that you had four. What just happens in September all of a sudden when you find out that you have seven? How does that affect your budget, and what do you do?

DR. BRAGEN: It's a Superintendent's nightmare. (laughter) We joke about the triplets who move into district that all require an out-of-district placement. How do we plan for that? We budget a contingent amount -- maybe \$200,000 should that happen. And, if that doesn't happen, we use that as surplus revenue to offset the budget for next year.

So we do provide for a contingency should that occur. You have to, because as you said, if that happens we have to find the money, we have to find the appropriate placement. So we plan accordingly. Is it enough? It's been so far. But--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: One other question, if I may.

At what age does a child come to your attention that all of a sudden you realize, "Okay, I have to now educate this child." I mean, are you getting them at 3, 4? I mean, what--

DR. BRAGEN: It's a great question. Typically, for the students who we found are significantly impacted, they wind up going to the Shore Center for Children with Autism. We know about those students early on. They've been involved in an early intervention program before they reach age 3. Once they reach age 3, it's the schools' responsibility to educate them. And, when we can, we have an in-district preschool disability program where we do service an autistic population and we try to meet their needs there. If we can't, sometimes as young as that age they wind up going to an out-of-district placement.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Betty.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Yes, I have a question.

When you just stated about children 3 years or 4 years of age who -- in preschool you identify them. I'm familiar with Landmark College up in Vermont. Are you familiar with Landmark College?

DR. BRAGEN: No.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Okay. That's a school for children with special needs, but it's an accredited college that they can go

to, to get a diploma. If the school system is not properly educating the children, and when they graduate from 12th grade it's my understanding -- and correct me if I'm wrong -- that the family can apply to a college like Landmark College, which is very expensive, and sue the Board of Education; and the school district has to pick up that cost because they have not met the requirements that the school needed to graduate them at. Because there were several students at Landmark College who were from New Jersey, and those districts were having to pay because the families had sued them for not having their children at the skill levels that they needed when they graduated. And that college, I have to think, right now is probably around \$90,000 a year. Am I accurate in understanding--

DR. BRAGEN: I'm not aware of that. I'm not going to dispute that. I'm not aware-- That hasn't happened to us, specifically. But for our students, we educate them according to their IEP needs which are determined by the Child Study Team and that everyone agrees upon that. And for the majority of the students that attend the Shore Center, they're not participating in the HSPA testing -- they took alternate proficiencies to demonstrate their competencies. So I would think that that would not open us up to such a lawsuit. But I'm not aware of it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: And I'm not saying you; I'm saying that if we don't look at overall picture, this is something that could really be an expense to the State in the end. Because I'm pretty certain that if we look into that issue, you're going to find that it's kind of accurate.

DR. BRAGEN: Agreed. And I think, as Dr. Gagliardi and Mr. Nogueira spoke of before, the need for programs for students that age out,

who are beyond 21 -- whether that's in a group home setting or a work environment that is supervised -- there is a need that's going to become larger and larger as time goes on.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you very much.

I'm sorry -- Senator Thompson has a question.

SENATOR THOMPSON: The first question is real easy. The Shore Center, where is it located -- what town?

MR. NOGUEIRA: Tinton Falls.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Tinton Falls.

MR. NOGUEIRA: Shalto Road, Tinton Falls, around the corner from the mall.

SENATOR THOMPSON: And you mentioned -- I think the number was you have 26 students are out-of-district, or so on?

MR. ANNIBALE: That's correct.

SENATOR THOMPSON: And you have 4 who are going to Shore Center. The 26 others -- they're not all autistic? They cover a spectrum of special ed, or what?

DR. BRAGEN: That's correct. They range from--

SENATOR THOMPSON: But some of them are--

DR. BRAGEN: --preschool disabled, multiple disabled. Some are on the autistic spectrum, some have a variety of disabilities, cognitive impairments, and different things such as those.

SENATOR THOMPSON: And they are sent out-of-district, quite possibly because -- well, in some cases, it's just a case of -- we get them who are not autistic -- their problems are not things that can be handled there, etc. Say some of them are autistic. In those cases, in the case that

they're being sent elsewhere because of the discussions between the parents and the district, and the parents want to go somewhere else rather than this, or-- What's the determination here, whether they're going to the Shore Center or going to be sent somewhere else?

DR. BRAGEN: It's typically an IP decision where the parents are involved in that process -- but they don't make that sole decision, either. It's a collaborative approach.

SENATOR THOMPSON: I realize it's collaborative, but it comes about because of the discussions that people don't feel that that's an appropriate place for them, even though they are autistic. That they have even greater needs than could be handled there or something. And on the other hand, are there some children who are autistic who are in the normal educational system because they're not so--?

DR. BRAGEN: Yes.

SENATOR THOMPSON: So we're talking about the total number of autistic -- 1 in 50 or 1 in 29 -- then we cover the spectrum of those who could be served in the normal setting to those who couldn't even be served at Shore Center.

DR. BRAGEN: That's correct.

SENATOR THOMPSON: And I assume that the 20-such others, or so on, who you're sending out of district, other than to the Shore Center -- the cost for those is much greater than it is at the Shore Center. Would that be accurate?

DR. BRAGEN: That would be accurate. I don't have the exact numbers, but the Shore Center is one of the lowest cost placements that is available for our students -- yes.

SENATOR THOMPSON: We have this here in Ocean Monmouth. Are there similar centers like this scattered through the rest of the state. Do you now the answer to that?

MR. NOGUEIRA: Morris Union. There's a school up in Morris Union that I tried to copy because I think they're ideal. They have, believe it or not, a mall theme. You actually walk down a corridor and there's a flower shop and the kids go take their math there. And you walk down a little further and there's a hardware store and they do their English in there. It's kind of that idea, much the same as bringing the life skills that we talked about. But our -- and I'm sure there are others; I don't have the complete span. But as far as public schools are concerned, of having a single building that has a regional usage, Morris Union Jointure -- which is, again, much like the Bayshore Jointure -- has a school, an autistic school, much like ours on a little bit larger scale. They have a full diner -- meaning a silver diner sitting in the middle of the building.

SENATOR THOMPSON: There a number of those scattered around through the state?

MR. NOGUEIRA: There's not that many. There are some, but not that many. There are more special ed private schools than there are public "regional" schools.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Is this something we should be taking a closer look at, whether we should have one of those?

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Yes, we should -- yes.

SENATOR RICE: I think so.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Where is it in Morris Union? Because I'm out of Morris County.

MR. NOGUEIRA: I don't have that address; I'll get it for you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: You don't know which town it was in?

MR. NOGUEIRA: I've been there; it's a big, giant building in Morris Union--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: (off mike) (Indiscernible) the Morris Union Jointure Commission school happens to be in Warren, which is not in Morris.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: That's why I didn't know. (laughter) Okay -- now I know.

MR. NOGUEIRA: That's the name of the Jointure; I didn't mean to mislead you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Okay, thank you.

MR. NOGUEIRA: You're welcome.

SENATOR THOMPSON: When we consider the cost that we're putting into this type of program, if these are more cost-effective, then to make our dollars go a little further, and if they serve the students better, then it may be a direction we ought to look strongly at.

MR. NOGUEIRA: I don't know what this data-- It's a very good question, Senator. I don't know what data there is; I don't know of any report there is that would 1) identify every public regional, and then talk about the gradations. We had a 14-year-old in our program last year -- a beautiful kid -- the 14-year-old was doing well and he became increasingly aggressive. We use Dr. Vincent Carbone, an internationally known expert on autism who consults with us. Our teachers get 36 days of in-service -- 36. He comes two full days to spend with them and with the

parents in the evening, and one of his people comes into our building and spends 36 school days working with our staff. It's a tremendous amount of in-service, but the needs are great and this is what happens.

But coming back to this 14-year-old -- he was doing fine, but he became increasingly aggressive and we just could not control him -- meaning two or three people would have to hold him down when he had his episodes. And we were just not able to do that. So the parent agreed we had to find another placement that was more able to handle his aggressiveness. That does happen with some of the children as they get older.

SENATOR THOMPSON: I do have one final question here. We hear these stories -- we read about them, and so on -- about-- We know that children suffer from autism and have serious problems. But at the same time, we hear these stories about some of them who are virtually geniuses in certain areas. And what is being done for those -- when we find a child who is an absolute genius in some area -- to be able to allow that child to move on and so on?

SENATOR RICE: They go to the \$90,000 college. (laughter)

MR. NOGUEIRA: Yes, that's right -- he's right.

Well, we take them academically where they can go. You know, we have all the materials, the reading materials, New Jersey Core Content Standards, computers, iPads -- you name it, we have it. If the child is able to do that, we wouldn't hold them back in their reading group -- we'd move them on. And there are some kids who, just as you say, have some excellent academic skills but they have zero social skills, zero soft skills. They don't know how to sit next to somebody, but we work with

them on that particular area. We do music, we do art, we do phys ed, we do all the experiences, and if a child has an aptitude-- As a matter of fact, the other day when we had-- The Lieutenant Governor came to visit on Monday and I thought she might hear it -- we had the kids in one of the rooms and they were practicing instruments, and some of those kids were doing quite well.

So in any school setting you would try to nurture and expand on the abilities that the child has. And you're absolutely right -- there are some children who have a singular talent for something. They may not have the whole package, but you try it and encourage that because that's the vehicle you use to help them with the social skills, the soft skills, how to interact with other people. Teachers always use tools. I use that ability; that's what we do.

SENATOR RICE: I'm going to ask your assistance -- and Melanie and the staff -- to get with you at some point in time and help us generate a list of questions that we should be asking in order to retrieve some data. We need to get a better look at this picture in terms of the needs, the need assessments, costs, what the regions look like statewide; you know, how many regions do we have -- you know, we can't just say three and it winds up now you need five, you know. We really don't know. Maybe some ethnic breakdowns and gender breakdowns. Because a lot of this stuff is not being reported, it's not being picked up. I know in the minority community you are not going to hear black folks -- that's the best way to put it -- and my Latino brothers and sisters, too -- I don't hear them running around talking a whole lot about autism. But the feeling is that a lot of those families have it within the generation of children; they just

don't know it because somebody has diagnosed them with everything else. We have so many problems that it's like, "That's what you have." Well, here's one more you can add to us, all right? And I think that's important because the next session -- for the members who just came in -- in June we're going to have a session on special education, because it's important to know how all this comes together; because we're isolating things to some degree and some things we maybe not need to be isolating. We can kind of save dollars and do it all in the same environment.

And there are some things that just need to be isolated. Because this course is bothering me, if you're talking about \$46,000, and another \$35,000 added to that, and then maybe some others, depending on what kind of tires you want on your car. And the need is very substantial. Well, we can't turn our backs on it. We have to figure out how to make it cost-effective, to some reasonable degree, to attack the problem. If not, we're going to grow generation after generation after generation, and we're going to continue to have these problems that we're having. And then we're going to be trying to figure that it's the person -- that there's something wrong with the person -- not mentally, or biologically, or disability. They just don't want to work, they just love games. You understand? They love drugs, you know? And it's not any of that. So we just need to get together. Melanie, would you--

MR. NOGUEIRA: And you know, if that number bothers you, it's the 14th lowest. (laughter)

The other side is, I read not long ago a management book and it talked about that if you want to find out what the problem is -- this is going to your point, Senator Rice -- they said the first thing you should do

is measure things. How many cups are being used at the water cooler? How many pencils are being used? And if you measure everything and find out all those numbers, those start to point to you what the problem is. You just have to measure everything.

And some of your questions are well taken. I'd be more than happy to participate. But some of those are how many X, how many Y, how many Zs, and those things might point to a direction that the State needs and maybe things at least to very much talk about and consider in the future.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: And I apologize -- I had a phone call, and while I was gone in came Senator Greenstein.

There's food out.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: He's trying to push that food.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: To the Superintendents -- another nightmare question, I'm sure. What are your transportation costs? And that's in addition to the \$46,000, right?

MR. ANNIBALE: Yes, yes. Transportation costs are significant, and that all is applied to that equation. So you know, it does propose an issue. But again, we work very, very closely with the Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission and, obviously, be fiscally prudent in looking to put a student on a bus that's already going there to try to cut costs -- is the way we do it. We work very, very closely with Mr. Nogueira and we accomplish that.

MR. NOGUEIRA: We coordinate bus routes -- 1,100 bus routes; we deal with 10,000 children a day; 92 school districts; 31 bus

companies. So where we can, we help them coordinate. In some cases they have to use their own buses because they're singular -- yes, numbers, right? They're singular schools, and sometimes they have one or two students. And to put them on a small bus is an expensive thing to do. You can't get around the numbers.

DR. BRAGEN: In an answer to your question -- it could be \$20,000 to \$30,000 on top of that. We try to work with Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission because they do coordinate a number of routes throughout the county. And if we can piggyback on a route that's already going to the school from a local area, or even from our own town, it significantly reduces that cost. A solo route from (indiscernible) in Hazlet, which is probably 15 miles from the school, could be \$20,000 or more.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I liked hearing about your partnership with Monmouth University -- with the internships and the college students and having them employed there. Do we have enough college programs set aside in New Jersey for teachers of autism, and are there -- I'm going to try to pin you down -- are there any schools that are better than other schools? You might not want to answer that one.

MR. NOGUEIRA: We know Monmouth University, and they brought up a Dr. Stacy Lauderdale, is her name, and she's the head of that department. And I think we've had -- Bob, correct me -- I think we had 21 -- we only have 54 students -- but we had 21 junior practicum and senior students in our school. So there are quite a few. I can't tell you how many schools or universities are doing it; it may be another question that we want to measure, and how many graduates are coming out with autism-- But

certainly that's an important number, to go back to one of the issues I talked about before. There aren't always trained people to deal with some of those disabilities, so that goes to one of the three reasons why people come out of their own district. That's a good question.

DR. BRAGEN: And Monmouth University works really well with us and has a number of partnerships with schools in Monmouth County. They're open to our suggestions.

In answer to your question, I don't think there are enough people who graduate with experience working with autistic students. And there's not a specific certification for that. The certification is teacher of students with disabilities -- which is really broad and overly general. And from my perspective, as a Superintendent, in all the schools in New Jersey, there are not enough teachers coming out with the experience to work specifically with autistic students.

MR. NOGUEIRA: So that brings up an old saw -- and I'll say it one more time, and I've never said it to you, but they're all tired of listening to it -- I have no understanding why we don't have people double certified in this State because they're either going to be special ed or they're included in your class. They should come out and be regular ed and special ed. And if that takes another year or six months, so be it. There's not a lot of reason for this. When you say that we're going to do inclusion, that person should understand special ed and how to accommodate. We've talked about this; I've heard this talked about in the education-- I've been doing it 40 years. I've been listening to it for 40 years, and somebody should stop this and make them double certified and call it a day.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: We have Benjie, and BettyLou DeCroce.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: I just want to say thank you. Because I know many circumstances of teachers who are interning, then they go in and they're part time -- because they're new teachers and there are openings, but they can't go in because they don't have that certification. And I think that every teacher should -- to be able to identify in a classroom a child that has slipped through the cracks and it wasn't picked up that there was a disability -- so they are a lot more educated in being able to identify that. So I thank you, because that's something I've thought in my own mind for a very long time. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Benjie.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLEY: Also, I have a teacher with a handicapped certification. I taught special ed for nine years. And one thing I can say is that working with or even recreational stuff with autistic kids and handicapped kids -- it's a tough field. The one area -- in particular in the inner cities I can tell you that there are always postings for special education. One is, the ongoing thing about special education -- between teachers, between ourselves -- is you always say, "We should get two years for every one year that we teach." Because I've taught at every (indiscernible) -- you name it, I've been there -- it's not an easy thing. It would be a great recruitment tool for higher education to get into. And particularly in the inner city, black and Latino men. It's very difficult. After nine years of doing it, I will tell you it's probably prepared me for everything in life, and it's also humbled me for everything in life because

I've also been with kids who really can't help themselves in certain situations. And it's kind of a reality check.

So the work you guys do is much needed. As Senator Rice said, in the inner city in particular, they're probably misdiagnosing so many children that if we ever did have any type of lawsuit it would be ridiculous. Paterson is facing something now because they're not, probably, servicing kids in identifying them in a timely manner, in 90 days when they're supposed to. We have kids who are just hanging on. And then you have kids who have behavioral issues who they're rushing through special education just so they can keep them self-contained. So there are so many issues in misdiagnosing situations that we really have to work together with -- through legislation, through leadership. We need the Administration to really up and talk on the issue that is really important. And like you said, it's not a color thing, it's not a race or a gender thing. I mean, these numbers are pretty staggering. I know autism is high, but it's something that we all need to address, obviously.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you, Assemblyman.

Do you have some folks who you want to bring up?

MR. NOGUEIRA: No. I got into the Foundation and the plus-21 early.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay.

MR. NOGUEIRA: That was most of the presentation today. We're happy to answer any other questions.

But I do want to tell you how thrilled we are to be here, to have the opportunity to speak to you. You can see that everybody who came up

today is very deeply involved in this, and see some of the problems. But we think the thing that is needed is further discussion. We certainly need to learn more from each other and from our other folks in the state who have knowledge about it, to talk about some of these problems.

This is not a curable thing. People have to live with it, have to adapt to it, but it doesn't go away. And it's not going to go away from the face of education, nor when they become adults.

We thank you very much for your time today.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you.

Is there anyone else who would like to speak?

DR. ANNIBALE: Senator Thompson, if I could address on last comment.

And I just wanted to end with another very nice story. You brought up extraordinary students on the spectrum. Here in Union Beach we have an elementary student who, when it comes time to take the New Jersey ASK, he has to have the APA -- Alternate Proficiency Assessment accommodations. But for mathematics, he scores at 300 every single year, consistently. And case in point -- and I'm glad you brought that up because I wanted to share that story.

DR. BRAGEN: That's a perfect score -- a 300.

DR. ANNIBALE: That's a perfect score.

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman, if I may.

There are a couple of things I just wanted to say for the record.

First of all, thank you, Chairmen of this Committee, for having you here. I think it was very important. But then I wanted to just reiterate to the Chairman on this, that we meet and maybe get us to start thinking

about what legislation looks like. And then, in terms of the double certification -- I think it's something we need to look at, and so I'm going to take the liberty of asking Assemblyman Wimberly to, maybe, take the lead on looking at some potential legislation and maybe work with some of the members of the Committee and others you need to in that field. Because we may have to do an incentive thing. We may have to say, "Okay, we'll do a pilot, and then if you finish school with a double-whatever, we'll give you a bonus or something, or we'll pay," I don't know -- you know what I'm saying? Because you always have to have a stick with a carrot and that kind of thing to get people interested in it. And if you could do those two things. And Melanie, if you work with them and maybe OLS, and maybe we'll come up with something that makes sense that we can introduce to the Education Committees and get some more hearings on it after we fine-tune it.

So I just wanted to say that for the record, okay?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Dr. McCool is from the Eden Institute -- he's the Director.

DR. BRAGEN: Thanks a lot.

**B A R B A R A D e M A R C O:** Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman. I'm Barbara DeMarco with the Association for Schools and Agencies for the Handicapped, now known as ASAH, because we generally don't use the word *handicapped* at the present time. And Dr. McCool is the President and CEO of the Eden Institute, which is considered not only one of the premier specialty institutes in the state, but actually in the country and in the world.

And it's a real honor to have him here to talk to you about autism, specifically.

But before he speaks, I just want to make a few comments, as I represent all of the private schools in this state that service students with emotional, physical, and developmental disabilities.

This discussion should not be about public versus private; there is a need for both. Many of the students in private schools need a specialty that they provide -- whether that be autism, whether that be cerebral palsy, whether that be another mental retardation. If it is one of those, that's what these private schools do -- they specialize. Generally the Jointure Commissions, the Ed Services Commissions, the County Special Services schools are generalists -- meaning they serve a variety of different types of students. This discussion should be about quality, it should be about results, and it should be about cost. And as it relates to quality and results, ASAH does monitor our students when they leave our private schools, and we will provide you with that document to show you that many of our students are very successful adults; and perhaps that can be used as you look for transitioning issues, and what is done so that these students are full-functioning adults in the workplace.

The next issue is cost. When you do cost -- and Dr. McCool will speak about this -- make sure you're comparing apples with apples. That when you hear the tuition rate for a special services school, does that include infrastructure? Does that include the State benefits plan? The tuition for private school includes all of that. So make sure the comparisons are apples to apples.

And finally, if I were to encourage you, I started in 1990 as the Director of Legislative Services for the Arc of New Jersey -- so I have been an advocate. If I were to look at these issues, I would tell you that you need to be in the inner city. We miss more of the urban poor than anybody else. And those kids are the ones who probably have a parent who isn't aware that they have rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act or the Federal law, which says the child's needs should drive the placement and the education -- not the bus. There should not be a discussion about what that bus looks like; it should be about getting the kid on, and getting the kid off with all the skills they need.

The other thing is early intervention -- and this is the other point I will make. What we find with kids with disabilities is that school districts will keep the children when they're the youngest -- they're 5 years old in kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade -- because they're easier to keep -- whether it's the child with Down syndrome, the child with cerebral palsy. And mostly, as it relates to autism, if you get that child and provide those services early the learning curve is just like a regular ed kid -- straight up. But then it levels out. So we need to get them early. And the reason the schools districts keep them -- they're easier to keep and it costs less. But actually you will be saving costs at the end of their educational years if you intervene early with a child, specifically with autism. And I've seen this with my own eyes as I have some very dear family friends. And the mother was in there at the age of 3, 4, 5, 6 -- and that child is now an international film model. You would have never thought that. So it can happen.

But I would tell you I would focus on what you can do to get services into the urban centers, how to educate those parents as to their

rights so they don't just sign off on an IEP for whatever the school district says that child needs, and get to those kids early.

And with that, I'd like to introduce Dr. McCool.

**THOMAS P. MCCOOL, Ed.D.:** Thank you.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity. We've done the statistical information already -- it's included in my testimony. But I want to mention that, yes, this autism spectrum disorder does include quite a number of people who are at the higher end of that spectrum, and who do not need extensive special ed services or adult services if they can get the proper educational services while they're in school.

I want to tell you about Eden. Eden's mission is to provide-- Is to really improve the lives of children and adults diagnosed with autism -- and their families -- through the provision of community-based lifespan services. We started in 1975 at Princeton with 14 families -- how many programs are started. The 14 families and Dr. David Holmes, the founder, rented church space, started a special ed program, and really were early pioneers in the field of autism. And they developed best practices and an Eden curriculum, which is used not only in New Jersey, but around the country.

Currently we serve 70 children in a school that we just opened about a year-and-a-half ago in Princeton Forrestal Village. And the school itself was a great collaborative effort between a number of parties, but we were able to spend two years just designing the model autism education program and what the facility needs to look like for educating children with autism. We used tax-exempt bonds and we constructed the facility and opened it in October 2011. And I'd invite you all, if you have an

opportunity, to come and see the program because it's a place where miracles take place every day,

But in addition to the school program, in the 1980s, when those children with autism -- as they have a tendency to do -- became adults with autism, we opened adult employment programs and adult residential programs. And all of the graduates who have graduated from our school program have been made available to be enrolled in either our work program and/or our residential program. And from our strategic planning point of view, we have built capacity to be able to serve all of our graduates over the next 10 years.

But special education in America, as it was talked about before, is guided by the IEP -- the Individual Education Program. So even though Eden is listed as a private school, we're really an extension of the public school system. Public schools develop the IEP, and from that IEP they make a determination that for some reason schools like Eden can do a more effective or more efficient job of educating or meeting that individual child's needs. And although we've talked about costs, I didn't make copies of it but, on the DOE website, there is a list of all the private schools and their tuition rates. And as was said, these tuition rates are all-inclusive, so that our tuition rate includes the regular education, your extended school year -- and in most cases all of our children have the extended school year -- and includes all of the therapies. All of our children have built-in speech and occupational therapy just as part of their program.

So the IEP process is what really drives this. And I think what we want to emphasize is that we believe that we're part of a public-private partnership. We work with public schools to help them meet their legal

responsibilities and we think we can do a great job. Some of our students do return to public school. But again, as was said, the children we're serving are really on that more high-needs end of the spectrum. We have 70 children in the school; 80 percent of those children do not speak. Even though they have the capacity to speak, they don't. And like many other programs, we're using iPads and other devices to help them communicate because we think communication is really the key to helping behavior problems. You don't see it on television with all the high-functioning people with autism being highlighted, but the children who we're serving are highly destructive, self-injurious, and aggressive. And it's a very staff-intensive program, which does certainly add to the costs.

One of the things that Eden did: We realize we can't serve all the children who are referred to us. We have over 100 children on our waiting list right now. So we developed Eden Outreach Services. We actually go to the schools that are referring kids to us and attempt to train their staff on how to work with the kids in the schools so they don't need us.

One of the things we found as we've gone through this process is, even though teachers and other staff in the schools have gotten training -- for the most part getting trained in behavioral intervention -- we find out that you really -- what's lacking in a lot of these schools is that there is no curriculum. They're not really teaching skill acquisition, they're so focused on behavior. So over the years Eden has developed a curriculum which we make available to schools around the state. And about two years ago, for Autism Awareness Month, we presented our curriculum, free of charge, to the Newark Public Schools. And we worked very closely with the Newark

Public Schools because I think they're doing a phenomenal job with education. I'm trying to remember the name of the people we work with; I wrote it down, but -- but they're really great. And to actually go into Newark and see those kids in the school, it was nothing -- it was not what I expected. They were well behaved, highly structured, well disciplined, and the teachers were doing a phenomenal job.

What kind of befuddled us was we made an offer to donate computers to Newark Public Schools so that they could use our curriculum online, and we were told that they are not allowed to accept donations of equipment like that, so they couldn't have it in their schools. So that's something-- I don't know what that would mean, but maybe they were too old or something. But we get a lot of stuff donated like -- a lot of stuff -- and these were actually very good computers, and we felt it could work.

In the packet I distributed I did list the partners that we have. And as was said, we work not only with organizations in New Jersey, but we are (indiscernible) worked with education programs across the country.

Preparing for adulthood -- I mean, that really is what we try and begin working on as soon as a child enters our school. Obviously, our first focus is managing their behaviors so that they can be socialized, and also acquire skills where they can be used in some kind of employment. In our school itself we have a small store modeled after Wawa. Wawa Corporation has been one of our biggest supporters over the years; in fact employ a majority of our adults in our employment program.

So we really think that -- what we're trying to do is to get these kids from age 16 to 21 while they're in our educational program into as many employment opportunities as they can. We, right now, have kids

working at Salt Creek Grille in Forrestal Village, putting the silverware in the napkins and turning it up and getting that ready; helping set up tables. We have a number of them who work in the eating clubs at Princeton University, believe or not, preparing vegetables and things for salads; they're actually using the knives and chopping things up. We have a number at Wawa, we have a contract with Princeton Theater where we clean the theater every day. And all of this is helping to give people an opportunity for employment.

We do work with the school districts -- particularly the Princeton School District -- to identify potential employers. We have a Business Advisory Council, which is made up of local business people, and their job is to help get the message out that our people with autism are employable and can actually be a benefit to their organization.

The Council has done really an incredible job and we've now started something called a designation as an *autism-friendly workplace*. We started it at Wawa where we actually go in and train the staff as to what is autism, what to expect, not to overreact to quirky behavior, and how to reinforce positive behavior. Last year Princeton BMW came to us; they had hired a person with autism who they were, frankly, having major problems within the social aspects of the job, not the actual business end of the job. And so we've trained all the people at Princeton BMW, and on the wall is an Autism Friendly Workplace certificate from Eden that they're very proud of and they tell people about. So that's good.

So I think getting the workplace adapted is something we need to do. We had to get employers to know that it's not a charitable thing alone; that these adults and young adults can be productive, and they can

do work that they have difficulty bringing people in to do, or retaining employees over a long period of time -- fairly routine in the kinds of work -- stocking shelves, sweeping, cleaning -- very, very routine kind of work these guys do. They love it, they'll be there every day, they love their job. And once they learn something, they don't forget it.

So I think, in summary, we really have to use the public partnership model to increase capacity. We have large numbers of kids coming through the system, and with that IEP process we have to get these kids into the best place that we possibly can and that we can afford.

So I think before we make decisions, as Barbara said, we need to really to do an apples-to-apples comparison of cost. Because I do know that Eden is very expensive -- it's a very high-cost program because it's labor intensive. We have at least-- We have more staff members than we have students, because most of our children come with 1:1, the teacher oversees the program, plus we have speech and occupational therapy, and physical education. And all of our teachers are certified. And I think one of the things that -- we've had a couple of legislators from New Jersey come through since it opened, and we get the same question in how do these people get trained, the teachers? We train them. Nobody comes to us really capable of working with these kids in that environment and so we provide the training -- and not only for our staff, but we do go to other public schools and help them put autism programs within their school.

Now, this morning I was speaking with some people at the Department of Ed because transportation is a major cost and a major issue. And we had a referral yesterday for a 4-year-old from Toms River who is in desperate need of services. And yesterday morning I had a parent come in

who is representing six parents from an hour-and-15 minutes away -- I forget which towns they are -- down near Freehold -- asking us if we could start a school there and do some things. And what the Department of Ed is really promoting -- and I think it's a really good idea -- is to take the expertise of schools like Eden has in autism and actually set up a satellite within the public schools. And the model is that it's an Eden program -- or a private school program -- but it's within the public school. So you eliminate the cost of transportation and you have the expertise, but you have the accessibility to the non-disabled children as well.

Last year I was in Washington testifying at a hearing and I was chastised by one of the people because New Jersey is cited every year by the U.S. Office of Education for having the most number of identified children in out-of-school placements. And we were able to respond to that in two ways -- and this is what Barbara talked about before. In New Jersey we do outcome studies for all of the private schools and we can demonstrate the effectiveness of the special education program. And we've also done cost studies as best we can to do apples-to-apples comparisons as to what it costs for private special education in New Jersey. And it appears to be, with the information we have, that it is cost-effective and, not only that, the outcomes are demonstrating that we have an effective system of special education. So I think we're very fortunate in New Jersey that we have excellent programs in the public schools and in the private schools, and we work together well. I've only been in New Jersey here since 2005; I worked for 20 years in California before coming here. I have to say-- And people complain. The Department of Education, the Division of Developmental Disabilities -- they all, who I come in contact with, are interested in doing

the best job they can with the limited resources they have. And they're very good to work with. So I think we're very fortunate. And one of my other roles is I'm President of the National Private School Association, and we have meetings a couple times of year. And I sit with private school operators from across the country and, frankly, it makes me even more appreciative of what we have in New Jersey.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you.

Any questions?

SENATOR RICE: Mr. Chairman?

Let me apologize for Newark not being so cooperative, but we have a whole different situation there that exists and we have-- Even the black police officers do scholarships, and they can't get them to the kids. But yet when I come here and argue about why we should have control of our school district, my colleagues in the legislature -- not those here -- ignores that and don't fight hard enough. But we're going to make that happen.

But you made some points that become important in this whole analysis of what do we do economically to help address the situation. And what you are really indicating is that, yes, there's a large population of individuals or population of students out there with autism. But I also hear you say that there may be a large population that may not need to go the \$100,000 route. They could very well be addressed, because of the degree, I guess, of autism, within the system itself, which means we either look at -- to try to find out what that number is; because they are functioning halfway or pretty good, overall. But there's this one problem -- that some may be

need behavior modification, like you said, or some other little tweaking; and computers that we don't want to accept in Newark, okay? But we accept Bill Gates' computers -- let me tell you that -- and turkeys, too, under the same system.

So my point is that we need to take a look at that number because-- And I also hear you say that -- and let's get back to this whole thing you mentioned about the double certification --- that you're training people-- That the biggest problem is that the teachers -- I suspect that even though it's special education, they still don't have enough of what it takes to really work with the problem. Is that what I hear you saying, too?

DR. McCOOL: Absolutely. I think when you sit in a classroom and you learn about autism, that's a very limited experience. I think that until a person is in a classroom with a child with autism who is really identified through the IEP process what their needs are-- So that it's behavioral-- I can tell you that the number one problem that we're referred -- the children have, who are referred to us -- is toilet training. We have kids come at 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 who are not toilet trained. And we've yet to encounter a child who we couldn't toilet train. But it takes intensive staff time to work on that, and it has to be a priority. So we make it a priority and we address it.

So I think that it's almost -- it's really difficult, in an academic setting, to provide that. We need to look at other ways. Now, I know in California what they've developed is, under a special ed certification they have things called *authorizations*. And authorizations are sub-certifications under the special ed certification. And there are courses available -- and I refer you to contact a guy named Lou Vismara who works for the President

pro tem of the Senate in California, because he masterminded that legislation. He has a son with autism. And there are 14 courses with very detailed competencies that have been laid out to get an autism certification in the state of California. And there's a level 1 -- you just take the courses and that gives you a certain level of expertise. But to get a level 2 you have to actually do a practicum -- you have to be in the setting where you're working under the supervision of someone who is certified, who is able to be certified. And I think that's the only way it really works. The teachers who come to us -- they learn very quickly because they have to. But we're providing ongoing support and supervision and education for them because they come with a good background in academics, but it doesn't really make it in the classroom.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: I have two questions. You mentioned that you met with the mother of the 4-year-old in Toms River. Was she self-referred? Did she come on her own, or was she referred by the Toms River School District? How did she come to you?

DR. McCOOL: She was referred by the school district.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: You mentioned all the services that you're able to provide. Do you charge the district, do you charge the parent? How do you recoup your costs?

DR. McCOOL: Well, the Federal law says that it's a no cost to the parent. So all of our-- We are-- Again, the system, as I look at systems across the country, the New Jersey system is actually one of the best ones. You actually have to prepare a budget, you give it to the Department of Education, and they come up with a rate. It's published on their website so everybody can see that to make it competitive. At the end of the year, they

do an audit. The audit says you either -- what your real costs were, and if your costs were below that rate, you return that money to the school district. If it's within 10 percent higher, then you can bill the school district for that.

But even within that, there are very strict parameters within which you can spend on any single line item. So it seems to be very controlled from that perspective, but it also makes it competitive so that when we look at Eden, we probably are in the top 10 in terms of the cost. But we're also serving that population that has been through the system with other options tried, and we are the most appropriate.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay.

Yes, Benjie.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: If Newark will not take the computers that you have, (laughter) speaking on behalf of the City of Paterson-- We'll talk afterwards, and there will be no denials. We will take them all.

DR. McCOOL: I'll give you my card. (laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: How did your school get started?

DR. McCOOL: Well, 14 parents were talking. They were in public school programs and a couple were in private school programs. And they felt there were no services in 1975. And so the story is they met in someone's living room and decided to start their own school. They recruited David Holmes -- who was, I think, at Princeton Child Development Institute, but I'm not 100 percent sure -- and asked him to help start the school. They hired a teacher; the first teacher was Carol

Markowitz, who's still with us. And they rented space in a church in Princeton -- and I visited in the 1980s when they did that. The parents built partitions, and every Monday morning the staff and some of the parents went in and set up the partitions -- because it was one big room -- into classrooms. And every Friday afternoon they took them down. And then in about 1987 they purchased a building -- it wasn't a school -- at the corner of Route 1 and Harrison, which was an old telephone switching station. And that was the first real school.

The first group home was started by that same group of parents who took out a mortgage and bought a home, and then donated it to Eden so that we could operate as a group home. We still have that home.

So it's parent-driven. And our governance -- we have a Board of Trustees, as all nonprofits do, but our Board is predominantly parents.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: How many group homes do you currently have?

DR. McCOOL: Right now we have 16 group homes, although three of them are really condos -- 2-bed, 2-person condos. They're still licensed as group homes but we call them apartment programs -- but they're all licensed group homes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: And that's around the state, you're talking about, or in isolated areas?

DR. McCOOL: Yes. No, we're in within a 30-mile radius of Princeton.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Do you have a dropout rate or something? How do you--

DR. McCOOL: Interesting. Probably because of the parent influence, Eden has a zero dropout rate. So we have never discharged a person because of behavior or other issues. We did have a withdrawal this year for the first time -- because of transportation. It was in our adult program. The parents were required to drive the child back and forth, and it just got to be too much.

SENATOR RICE: What's the average income of the parents? Are these wealthy people?

DR. McCOOL: No, and that's-- No, they're not. Our parents range from single parents on welfare to fairly affluent -- but the whole range.

SENATOR RICE: Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I think I'm in (indiscernible).

Did you have any resistance from the community when you -- for the group homes?

DR. McCOOL: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: Yes, I would think so.

DR. McCOOL: Interestingly, the last one we opened-- Well, the last three that we opened were 2-person condos in condo developments and we had zero problems. The one before that, about six years ago, was in Lawrence and we purchased the home and then we notified the neighbors. And then we had meetings at St. Ann's Church for all of them to come in and learn about what we do. And they were all angry that we didn't tell them before we bought the home; but it was obviously that we needed to buy the home first.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN WAGNER: I was thinking more of a financial resistance. I mean, you don't pay taxes, right?

DR. McCOOL: That's correct. And yes, we do-- And it's interesting, coming from California, this was a new experience for me -- from the time we purchase a home until we actually open it, we do pay real estate taxes. And so the township that controls our certificate of occupancy is the same entity that we're paying the taxes to. So the last group home that we opened -- it took us 14 months from when we purchased it to get a certificate of occupancy.

SENATOR RICE: That's because you're for-profit. You're for-profit, right?

DR. McCOOL: We're private.

SENATOR RICE: Yes, that's why you're paying taxes. You know, the home rule, you know--

DR. McCOOL: Well, we're a private, nonprofit, so we don't pay taxes. We do pay a fee to the townships in lieu of taxes. Yes, we do.

MS. DeMARCO: I just wanted to remind you guys that you just had a bill signed into law that creates a special ed funding task force. And hopefully some of the answers that you're looking for, Senator Rice, I hope that task force is able to provide you. It is composed of all the professionals in education. So I take-- There is something that, hopefully, will be on the horizon and it can be very helpful to the Committee.

The other things is the two reports that I spoke about, as did Dr. McCool -- the one for outcome and the one on cost. I will make sure that ASAH, Gerry Thiers, the Executive Director, gets them to Melanie so that you each get a copy.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: I'm looking around the room and I have to tell you that I don't come to all these meetings -- but all of us don't come to every single meeting -- but we have a majority of our members here today who have been here. We've had really great testimony from you and the previous folks. And hopefully we'll be able to do more than just listen to what you said.

I want to thank all of you--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF COMMITTEE:

(Indiscernible)

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Anybody else want to talk before I send you home? (laughter) (no response)

All right, then also I want to thank the Chairs, Ron and also Assemblywoman Wagner, for letting us have this meeting today.

So there's still more food. (laughter)

I'll see you. Thank you. Good night.

**(MEETING CONCLUDED)**