
Committee Meeting

of

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*“The New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA)
has been invited to present their NJ Vision 2020”*

LOCATION: Committee Room 11
State House Annex
Trenton, New Jersey

DATE: September 16, 2015
1:00 p.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey, Co-Chair
Senator Diane B. Allen
Senator Samuel D. Thompson
Assemblywoman Betty Lou DeCroce
Assemblywoman Donna M. Simon
Assemblyman David W. Wolfe



ALSO PRESENT:

Rebecca Sapp
Executive Assistant

Meeting Recorded and Transcribed by
The Office of Legislative Services, Public Information Office,
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SENATE

Hon. Ronald L. Rice
Co-Chair

Hon. Diane B. Allen
Hon. Linda R. Greenstein
Hon. Donald Norcross
Hon. M. Teresa Ruiz
Hon. Samuel D. Thompson

ASSEMBLY

Hon. Mila M. Jasey
Co-Chair

Hon. Ralph R. Caputo
Hon. Betty Lou DeCrocce
Hon. Sheila Y. Oliver
Hon. Donna M. Simon
Hon. Benjie E. Wimberly
Hon. David W. Wolfe

Joint Committee on the Public Schools

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MEETING NOTICE

TO: Members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools

**FROM: Senator Ronald L. Rice, Co-Chair
Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey, Co-Chair**

The Joint Committee on the Public Schools will hold a meeting where the New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA) has been invited to present their NJ Vision 20/20 on September 16, 2015 in Committee Room 11 on the fourth floor of the State House Annex, beginning at 1:00 p.m.

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

Issued September 1, 2015

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ASSEMBLYWOMAN MILA M. JASEY (Co-Chair): Good afternoon. I want to thank everyone for coming on such a beautiful day.

I'm very excited to have this Joint Committee meeting where we're going to be able to hear from our Superintendents -- from the Superintendents Association (*sic*) on *Vision 2020*. I think it sets the tone for the year for the Committee; and I hope that you will agree with me that once the presentation is over, we're all in a better place in terms of understanding where we're going. I always think that's a good idea -- to know where you're going before you're really on the road.

So to open the meeting, I'm going to ask for a roll call. And if each member would just like to say hello, that would be fine too. We're waiting on a couple other members, but I don't want to hold you up. And I'm sure that if they arrive they'll simply sit down quietly and listen in.

So thank you.

Becky.

MS. SAPP (Executive Assistant): Senator Allen.

SENATOR ALLEN: I am here, and I am excited that we are going to be examining this concept. I'm on the Education Committee, as well as this, and I feel very strongly that if we all work together we can make such a huge difference.

So thank you all for being here.

MS. SAPP: Senator Thompson.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Present.

Yes, I'm looking forward to hearing about your *Vision 2020 -- Our Children, Our Future*. We're continually striving to improve our educational system. And in order to get there, it is a part that we lay, like,

ground plans to advance to the future. So I'm very much interested in seeing what you have to say today.

MS. SAPP: Assemblywoman DeCroce.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Here.

And I'd like to welcome everyone here today. I'm happy to be before you and listening to the conversation that's going to take place. I see a lot of familiar faces out in the audience, and that's a good feeling for us, here, because we know that your interest is the same as all of ours. And the bottom line is better education for our children, and doing what's best for them.

So I welcome you today, and I look forward to the conversation.

Thank you.

MS. SAPP: Assemblywoman Simon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Good afternoon.

I just wanted to say to everybody, I hope you had a good summer. We're looking forward to getting back into the swing of things. I'm also on the Education Committee; I believe that we are all here for purpose.

I wanted to shout out to two of the Superintendents in my District -- Jordan Schiff; and also Kim Metz from Polytech. So, hi.

And I wish that we could clone Melanie Schulz; that's what I want to say. (laughter) We are very fortunate to be working together. I believe that Helen Keller said once, "Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much." So I really believe in partnerships. So I'm pleased to be here.

Thank you.

MS. SAPP: Assemblyman Wolfe.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you.

Hello.

Thank you very much. (laughter)

No-- (laughter) She told us to say hello.

I really want to thank all of you for being here. It's so nice, as a legislator, to have a blueprint of where a group is going; and we can, perhaps, work with you throughout the year and for years to come to look at the vision for education.

And I might add, for some of you who have never been here before, in this room -- and probably 99 percent of the times you walk in and it's dark because these blinds are always closed -- but it's a beautiful room, and they're almost all open so we can see what it's really like.

So thank you for coming, and hopefully you'll give us an opportunity to ask a few questions, and maybe we can help you out.

Thank you.

MS. SAPP: Chairwoman Jasey.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

And I too want to welcome you back after the summer -- although it feels like it was awfully quick.

I should also let you know that Senator Rice is not joining us today because he is in Washington D.C. But he is here in spirit, and I assure you he will read the transcripts.

I should also mention that we have a video presentation, and for recording purposes -- I don't think it's going to be a problem with this

crowd, anyway -- but we just want you to keep quiet during that time so that we can at least get the audio onto the record.

And with that, I will turn it over to Melanie Schulz, who is the NJASA Director of Government Relations.

Melanie.

MELANIE SCHULZ: Good afternoon, Assemblywoman Jasey and all the members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools.

It is an honor for NJASA to have this time with you today to present our Vision 2020 initiative; and hope that, when you leave here today, you will be confident that the school districts in New Jersey, under the leadership of our members, are making decisions that reflect the expectations of a student in this 21st century.

Leadership isn't a convenient sound bite for us to throw around whenever it is politically expedient to do so. Rather, it is the constant way in which we measure both our decisions and our actions. Without measurement and reflection, neither of these exercises would be of much value.

However, to do any of this, you need a plan -- a road map, and that is something we are going to speak about with you today.

Here with me is our Executive Director, Dr. Richard Bozza; our current President, Mr. Patrick Fletcher; and Mrs. Judith Rattner, who is the Superintendent of the Berkeley Heights School District. These NJASA members have led the way in the concept of Vision 2020, and will be speaking with you after you have a chance to see the video, which will serve as their prepared remarks.

Once the video concludes, we hope that you will have questions and a good discussion with us about what you have seen.

Prior to the launch of the video, though, I do believe that Mr. Fletcher is going to be making a few remarks.

Thank you.

PATRICK J. FLETCHER: Madam Chairwoman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here.

I think this is a stark occasion -- certainly for our organization -- because I think it's the first time that we're before you as a full group. Earlier today we had a meeting of our Executive Committee, and most of those members are with me today.

Behind us, though, you have a roomful of the finest leaders of public education in New Jersey here today. And I think that's a testament to how important we think that this effort is.

What you're going to see today is a video, and you also have a pamphlet, and they mirror each other so that you can have something to take with you for further consideration. It's broken up into six distinct parts -- both the productions are -- where we begin with our values and vision statements; we talk about the need for leadership; we talk about vision and what happens beyond; we have a plan that we'd like to lay out for you; and then, all important, we all recognize that you have to measure whether or not your plan is successful -- and we have some measurement metrics to bring in here.

We're going to introduce the video, and then, and at the conclusion of that, I'm going to ask Judy Rattner, who is the Co-Chair of

this effort, to have a few comments and then to lead us in the question and answer period.

Gary McCartney could not be here with us today; he was the other Co-Chair of this. And as some of you may know, he's serving as the Fiscal Monitor for Atlantic City. So he's also involved down there.

I think it's important for you to understand why we engaged in this process in the first place. And when we did, we didn't think that 2020-- And we thought of a little play on words -- the year 2020, and vision being crystal clear. It was quite a while ago, and we didn't think 2020 was around the corner; but here it is. And I'm happy that we're in a position where we're able to bring this to some fruition today. And it's our theme for the year, for our organization, as we move forward.

The real purpose is because I think you, as Legislators, and our Department of Education often would benefit from the view of the people who are boots-on-the-ground, if you will -- the people who are in the trenches, the people who are leading local school districts, and the people who put into play the local policy and the local legislative decisions that are made. And we're hopeful that, at least at some level, we can make that connection; and that you, as legislators, can feel very comfortable in speaking with us, and we can speak with you freely -- which has always been the case, I think, thus far to date.

And I'd like to also just send some kudos out to the current Administration and the Department of Education. Under Commissioner Hespe's leadership, the Department has been very forthcoming in working with us in trying to minimize the impact of certain decisions; yet, at the

same time, have a maximum impact of the good benefits that come from this.

So with that in mind, those thoughts said, I'd like to introduce our video and begin from there.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: May I interrupt for just a moment?

It's actually a very good segue. I was sitting here looking at the audience and I realized that most of you are wearing a nametag -- which, obviously, I can't read from here. Could we just take a very quick moment for each of you to stand and give your name and your district? I think that would give us a better sense of who's in the audience -- especially when Assemblywoman Simon mentioned that two of her Superintendents--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF COMMITTEE:
(Indiscernible)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay, all right. We're in agreement.

So let's see: We could start over here, and just--
(off mike)

DR. SMITH: Tom Smith, Hopewell Valley Regional School District, Mercer County.

DR. ZUCKERMAN: Andrew Zuckerman, Lawrence Township Public Schools in Mercer County.

MR. RUTZKY: Jeff Rutzky, West Orange, Essex County.

MS. LONGO: Barbara Longo, West Essex Regional, Essex County.

DR. KING: Kenneth King, retired from East Orange, Essex County.

DR. McCARTNEY: Scott McCartney, Egg Harbor Township in Atlantic County.

DR. GRAVENOR: Piera Gravenor, Delsea Regional School District in Gloucester County.

DR. BIRNBOHM: Good afternoon. Carol Birnbohm, Lenape Regional High School District, Burlington County.

MR. RAFFERTY: Good afternoon. George Rafferty, Tabernacle Township in Burlington County.

DR. SERUDA: Jim Seruda, Northern Burlington County Regional District in Burlington County. We also service the families at Joint Base McGuire, Dix, and Lakehurst.

DR. BAKER: Jim Baker, retired, Middlesex Public Schools.

DR. SCHIFF: Jordan Schiff, Superintendent, Hillsborough Township Schools in Somerset County.

DR. TAYLOR: Good afternoon. Kathy Taylor, Ocean City School District, Cape May County.

DR. METZ: Kim Metz, Hunterdon County Vocational School.

MR. BRETONES: Pete Bretones, Egg Harbor Township, Atlantic County.

DR. DOLAN: Peg Dolan, Westfield Schools, Union County.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: Carol (Indiscernible), Egg Harbor Township, Atlantic County.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: And we missed one over here.

DR. ROCCO: Scott Rocco, Spotswood Public Schools, Middlesex County.

DR. MADISON: Hello; Linda Madison, Middlesex Borough School District in Middlesex County.

DR. ZYCHOWSKI: Good afternoon; Brian Zychowski, North Brunswick Township Public Schools, Middlesex County.

DR. GREENE: Ken Greene, Newton Public Schools, Sussex County.

DR. HUTCHESON: Craig Hutcheson, Kittatinny Regional School District and Hampton Township School District in Sussex County.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Are we missing any other Superintendents?

MR. KEMP: Ed Kemp, Mansfield Township, Warren County.

MR. CARRUBBA: Chris Carrubba, Belvidere and Harmony Township Schools in Warren County.

MR. PALMIERI: Vince Palmieri, Upper Township Schools, in Cape May County.

DR. SOLTER: George Solter, North Bergen in Hudson County.

DR. CAMPISANO: Good afternoon. I am not a Superintendent; I represent the higher education institutions in the State of New Jersey. I represent the 24 teacher education programs. Chris Campisano, Princeton University.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Hi, Chris.

DR. RICCIARDI: Denise Ricciardi, Assistant Superintendent, Ocean Township in Monmouth County.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay, so we have tremendous representation from around the state. And that bodes well for the conversation.

And I will now be quiet, and we'll listen to the video. (laughter)

(video plays)

(video pauses)

MR. FLETCHER: We're pausing the video here for a moment.

It's my pleasure to introduce Judy Rattner, who is the Superintendent of Berkeley Heights Township School District -- you saw her on the video, and she's also the Co-Chair of our organization -- who is going to talk to you a little bit now as we transition from what is the problem -- or, as we see it -- to how we can address it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Okay.

Red is on. (referring to PA microphones)

JUDITH RATTNER: Sorry.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Counterintuitive. (laughter)

MS. RATTNER: We so appreciate the opportunity to talk with you today.

And just as you well know, New Jersey is very diversified in terms of the school districts that we represent as an Association.

What you saw on the video, up to this point, really represents a great deal of research, a great deal of surveying of our membership, as well

as a great deal of discussions that helped to formalize the things that you heard previously.

As a Committee, we really focused on a quote from John F. Kennedy that says, “Children are the world’s most valuable resource, and the best hope for our future.” So having said all of that, I wanted to convey to you that there has been a great deal of thought, time, and effort spent on developing the 12-step plan that you’re about to see. By design, our focus is several fold: We will work to ensure access to learning experiences that promote growth; we will continue to encourage assessment design that enhances individual growth; we will continue to advocate for clear and creative instructional approaches; we will seek out and develop partnerships with stakeholders, as all of you had mentioned in your opening comments; and we will continue to attract, pursue, prepare, and support excellent teachers and administrators.

So having said that, the 12-step plan.

(video resumes)

(video ceases)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

I’m an audio learner, so being able to listen to it and read along at the same time -- I think I was able to follow it in a better way. And I really appreciate it, because it’s-- Some people, I think, would say it’s ambitious; but I would say it makes sense. And I think it’s necessary to

know where it is you intend to go, and how you're going to get there, in order to work effectively to accomplish that.

So I very much appreciate this. And at this point, would you like to add your comments, or would you like to open this up to the Legislators to ask questions? Because what I want here is a conversation, and I want us to all go away feeling as if, number one, we've been heard; and number two, that we have some plan for how we're going to get to this place.

RICHARD G. BOZZA, Ed.D.: If I could add some comments before your questions.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Yes.

DR. BOZZA: This really evolved from work that we had done as far back as 2005, and we published something similar in 2007 about our vision for public schooling. And many of us sitting around and having the conversation about how schools are operated kind of felt this pressure coming from the top down, without a whole lot of consultation of the people who were leading the educational process -- our chief education officers, our school board members.

And so we began to sit around and say, "What is it that we know, as people who are not only well educated, but well practiced in terms of working with communities, working with families, working with educators throughout?" To say, "How do we define what we need to look at?" And I would add that this is not an end point, but really a beginning point; it's a process that continues. In fact, a smaller subcommittee now is taking a look at what should various constituents do to help us to achieve the goals that we would like to achieve. What should Legislators do, what

should we do -- school leaders -- how can parents and students contribute; how might principals and board of ed members? And so we're looking through that to say, not only do we have these aspirations for what should be happening for our children, but we want to say, what might we do in each of our roles to help us to accomplish that?

And finally I would say that, as we look at practices, it's helpful through this lens of 2020 and beyond to say, "What might it look like when we get there?" I think if we had a time machine and we could go forward 20 years; and we got out and looked around, we would say, "Gee, what is it that we have?" Because I like to use a metaphor that I'd heard at a conference once that I thought was great. It's a sports metaphor, about the quarterback; timely this time of year. If the quarterback doesn't throw the ball to the person who's on the end of the line where they are, they think about where they'll be, and throw the ball to where they're going to be.

So I think as educators, as legislators, as the community, we need to take a look at that, because very often the things that we create -- either by our own practice, or policy, or legislative initiatives -- tend to cement in the things of today, and not necessarily look forward to the future to how we might do things differently.

So with those comments, we welcome your questions and your comments as well.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: I like the metaphor; and you're right. We need to be thinking about where it is we want to be, how we're going to get there, and what's holding us back. And I appreciate the fact that this is still an ongoing process; and that one of the things I appreciate about your plan is that it's clear that many different groups-- You had

everyone at the table, basically, talking about what are the issues, and how do we overcome them, and what's our vision.

So with that, I'm going to open the floor to my colleagues and give you a chance to ask any questions that you would like.

Senator Allen.

SENATOR ALLEN: Thank you.

There are a couple of areas that I'd like some information on that I think would be very helpful.

One is about, "You'll know you're doing well when parents are engaged as partners." I completely agree with that. And I know that many things have been tried to get parents engaged, and it's very difficult. What are we going to do differently to get them engaged? And let me say that I base some of this on a plan in Burlington City, where teachers, after about 3rd grade where it seems like the engagement drops off -- I don't know if that's what you all would say, but that's what we seem to find in Burlington City, in my District -- the teachers then start going out in pairs at night to the homes of those parents who don't come, and they get them engaged. Sometimes parents don't read well. Sometimes parents aren't well educated themselves, and so there are a lot of those issues; they're embarrassed to come. I'm thinking we need to do things along those lines; at least, that's something I've been trying to work on. But I'd like to know what your thoughts are: How do we get parents engaged?

DR. BOZZA: Well, I'll start, if I might, and then let my colleagues comment on their experiences.

Certainly, I think we see different levels of engagement, and I think you hit on a very important point. Depending on the socioeconomics

of a community, and depending on their level of education experience, we have -- in some places, have very great involvement, very high expectations. You can't find a parking space at back-to-school night and at parent conferences. And I've worked in districts where, literally, you would have to go on the streets to bring folks in.

I think embedded in our vision, particularly in those areas, is that there really is a community school vision. In other words, we don't just school children, but we may provide them the inoculations they need, with dental services, social services; where I think these artificial walls that have been created by -- these silos of departments, that try to bring services, are brought together in one place. And I think that's a very powerful way to engage folks. And it could be anything from childcare to social services.

And I think, as school leaders, depending on how we assess the circumstances in our communities, it's our responsibility to determine how to do that -- whether we require teachers to make home contacts, either by telephone-- Certainly, in many places now, the e-mail is stacked to here (indicating) with commentary, back-and-forth, about children. You can access information about children online that you could never access before: their grades, etc., their attendance.

So in many ways I think technology is going to play a big part, not only in how we can contact and engage people, but also in the changes that we see coming in education. And that's only part of the answer, but I'll turn it over to my colleagues to make some additional ones.

MS. RATTNER: The only comment that I would add to that is that we, as leaders in our communities, really know that each community has its own identity. And it really is essential for us to really tap into that

identity of the community, and really strive to make those connections in a way that's going to work effectively for each individual community.

SENATOR ALLEN: I know that many of us would love to work with you on some of these things, and I know that some folks have started, as you say, making the school a center of the community. I've seen that in Camden, and I've seen it in some other places as well. It is a wonderful way to make things happen.

I don't know what we need to make it happen everywhere, but we need to talk about it. We need to see what our responsibilities might be, as Legislators, to try to make that happen. Because it's my sense that if parents aren't involved, you can get a really good guess as to what's going to happen to that child.

DR. BOZZA: I think that's exactly right. We know, certainly, from a lot of research that the more parents are involved, the more we're going to get in terms of production for our children.

And I think that's-- The fact that we've identified that as being important doesn't mean that that's the answer -- and certainly, as I said at the beginning of the conversation -- and the circumstances are different.

You mentioned Camden, for example. One of their big accomplishments -- it seems, certainly, a long time coming -- but was just safe corridors to walk to school. It may be very different than other communities that you may represent.

And so we have to look at each community individually; we have to say, "Where's the starting point? How do we engage people?" A place such as Camden, I think, has certainly a greater need for social services than the community I live in. And obviously it's on points that

we've talked about, with regard to where are the resources to help us to accomplish that.

SENATOR ALLEN: May I continue with another question?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Sure; go ahead.

SENATOR ALLEN: Thank you.

You also talked about technology -- you didn't exactly use that word -- but digitally involved lesson plans, and so on, and so forth. So I have a question on that. As one of the older legislators, my use of technology has been slow in keeping up. I, fortunately, have a child who I put through as an electrical engineer, and I remind him constantly I did that only so he could keep me involved in the technical revolution.
(laughter)

But I worry about some who are in our education system, who came up -- I'm sure they're younger than me, but who still came up at a time when technology was not a big part of the curriculum for them. Are we making sure that our administrators and our teachers are up to the minute with all of this? Because the kids are.

MR. FLETCHER: If I may -- not only your first question, but the follow-up, and now this one.

You'll hear me as a broken record, answering almost any question that comes to us by saying that a lot of the solutions to these things are a function of leadership. Leadership in local districts is key to making these things happen. And leadership in the use of technology, and how technology is introduced at different grade levels, is an essential element of what's going on behind here (gestures), behind -- with all my colleagues behind me here. Because we recognize that whether we like it or

not, it's going to come; it's here, we have to go that way. And if you look at what's happening at the county college level, and even at the university level, many of the colleges and universities are requiring some form of online experience, so we have to do that as well.

And what we want to do, and need to do, is to continue to foster leadership in that. And our Association tries to do that with its own professional development, and its own promoting of partnerships with groups so that our skill set stays up-to-date; and then, in turn, our skill set is something that we can translate at the local level.

DR. BOZZA: I think one of the things that we find important is that we have this responsibility as an Association. We have actually-- The number of subcommittees that work -- one is a technology subcommittee. And we sponsor annually, in January -- and we have for 16 years now -- a technology conference we call *TECHSPO* where we have approximately 1,400 to 1,500 individuals there, either as presenters or participants. And the presenters are our school districts, sharing their best ideas with others who are in attendance. And it's very broad representation, from teachers to school board members. Many of our services are just, really, school administrators; this one is very broad. And we find technical people who come in, we bring in great speakers; and it's grown every year, and continues to do so.

The other thing I would tell you is my grandchildren -- all of whom are under 5; there are five of them -- magically know how to work the iPad and the phone, and--

SENATOR ALLEN: And you go to them for information.
(laughter)

DR. BOZZA: And I go to them for advice. The world is changing; certainly those credentials for people entering the teaching force now are certainly there. They're of an age where they come-- And I certainly remember when secretarial assistants didn't want to give up the manual typewriters and the correction tape, but I don't think anybody would go back. So we are making the transition.

And as we look at technology, this will be the key to changing many things: the personalization of instruction, the need to be in schools physically as much as we have been; and assessments, particularly. If I were to talk a little bit about assessments, I would say to you in 5 to 10 years we're not going to worry so much -- maybe even sooner -- about the test at the end of the year. Because we're going to have such great progress in assessing the skills and competencies along the way using technology that *final exam* is not going to be words you're ever going to hear.

SENATOR ALLEN: Thank you.

MS. RATTNER: If I could just add--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Senator Allen.

I'm going to go to this side; and then back to you, Senator Thompson.

Assemblywoman DeCroce, and then Thompson, and then Wolfe, and then Simon, okay? All right.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Thank you so much.

A couple of things -- number one, the discussion of leadership. Every Monday I put up, on Facebook, *Motivational Monday with Assemblywoman DeCroce*. And actually my quote this Monday was, "True leaders don't create followers; they create more leaders." So leadership is

very, very important. And that's up on my Facebook, and I think so true to what you're talking about today.

I did a survey this summer-- Over the summer months, I said to my staff, "Let's go out here and see what's going on in the District, and what are my constituents talking about." So we sent out -- we mailed out 4,000 pieces. And, you know, we did certain areas within the District; we have 13 towns. And actually I received 1,000 back; I received 1,000 back, besides phone calls.

The number one thing that came back was school funding; that, in my 13 towns, was of great concern.

I have spoken-- And many times at this Committee hearing, and in Budget, and sometimes I fill in on the Budget Committee, and some of Higher Education -- all of them -- but it always comes down to the funding -- the school funding. And many times I have compared the school aid to Montville; you're from Montville -- compared to Asbury Park -- and the disparity there, and how that hurts us tremendously. And you can live in a wealthy community. And in Montville's end, I believe it's around \$469 per student in State aid that the school receives, compared to over \$23,000 to Asbury Park.

So how do we deal with this? How do we get the teachers and even the parents to listen to what we're saying and be a greater part of this? Because it's just a very big off-balance there. So when I look at-- In your 2020 plan, you talk about funding -- so we know that's an issue, so we know that's number one; that's going to be number one in all of this. And number two is regulations and requirements that come down from the State -- from us, and from the Department of Education -- that cripple you. No

one really knows until they get down-- I've worked in local government for 25 years, so I had to work with municipal budgets and school budgets that failed, and came to me. So I understood the nitty-gritty things that, unless you're there, you don't get it. You have to be in it to understand it. So I know that's a great concern that hurts you.

And also, the year-round academic intervention. That, again, would be trying to work with the teachers, and how do we do this with the kind of funding that we have, and the incentive to have teachers be more involved that way.

So I look at those issues, and I really give you credit because you're bringing up a hard discussion. And these are difficult areas to try to figure out how to make it work. I have had meetings in my District Office with Superintendents, and I've encouraged it quarterly for my Superintendents and administrators to come in and sit with me. Because the only way is to truly understand what you need, and how we can help. And when we do pass a law and there is a great area in the law that's hurting you, we need to hear that to know. And I know Melanie is a great person for that, and she'll raise a flag, yelling at us that that's happening. But regulations come down. I worked for the Department of Community Affairs as Deputy Commissioner for two years. Regulations were old and antiquated, and need to be changed here in the State. And there are so many gray areas that decision making wasn't always good, because it didn't allow you to make the right decisions -- because there were gray areas. So there is a lot of work.

And I know all of us sitting up here, on both sides of the aisle, want to do the best that we can do in helping you because, ultimately, it's the children who benefit, and that's what we're all here for.

So I can only say those four areas, I know, are going to be a big problem. But the only way to try to get around it and figure it out is for all of us to work together. And I would encourage that maybe, out of this, an ad hoc committee comes together where we could work directly with you to discuss some of these problems, one-on-one, so we can break away and start trying to figure out where we need to clean up, and how we can do things to help. As a whole, as a Legislature, it's hard; but with smaller groups, I think we can accomplish more.

So I'm going to encourage Melanie to reach out to the Chairwoman, and maybe we can do something like that to start moving along on some of these subjects to try to get some answers.

So I congratulate you, and I look forward to working with all of you.

DR. BOZZA: I think you'd not be surprised to learn that in the most recent PDK/Gallup poll, that just came out in the last weeks, that the support for financing for education is the number one listed nationally. And I'm sure if you asked every Superintendent here, they would tell you the same.

And having -- beginning to have the conversation -- and this would be great for us because we advise our members to do exactly what you're doing -- to try to have regular conversations about this. We don't want to just come to you, shouting and screaming, when we're ready to blow up, that things are a problem. So that understanding of the issues is

certainly a beginning. And they are very, very difficult issues as we look at the funding. And we know the history of this law, which was meant to provide support where it was needed the most; and we just have not been able to do that because of where we are.

So that's certainly not a solution. We're all good at identifying the problems, but perhaps having these conversations we can find some intermediate things. Certainly one of the things that, on the finance side -- and I'll just highlight it -- is that every member who I speak with, from small school districts to large school districts, are certainly concerned about funding, the support from the State -- particularly the 2 percent tax levy cap, as things get tighter and tighter in spite of whatever other reforms go on. And we know that parents have been asked to do more -- whether it's from paying for athletics, or creating a foundation that supports, or PTAs doing the kind of work that they've always done. It's just been ramped up over the last five to six years.

MS. RATTNER: And I have a concern with respect to the fact that we, as educators and leaders, are also problem solvers. So we usually get handed things; that we work within the confines of what those dictates are. And we make things work, and we always put the children first. And that sometimes gives a false impression that everything's okay.

So I really do appreciate and welcome the opportunity to talk with you more specifically about things that really do have a very negative impact on children and their education.

MR. FLETCHER: And I would just add two items, if you will -- actionable things that we could do as we move forward. The first is when we engage in these conversations, I think we need to begin to think beyond

the one-year cycle. That's a very important issue for us. One of the things that's been a benefit, if you will, to the 2 percent limitation, is the not having an election on the budget if you're within the cap; because you can effectively plan now. You can plan; you don't have to stop when an election comes around.

The second thing I would just offer to you -- it's been an issue floating around for quite a while -- and that is that there was a cap inside the cap, inside the 2 percent cap; that's the administrative cost. Which is certainly an unrealistic thing in today's day and age, especially since you put, I think wisely, a cap on the overall budget. If that could be eliminated, it wouldn't affect taxpayers; it doesn't allow school districts to raise any more money. It only allows us to be more flexible in spending it inside the existing cap.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: I'm glad you mentioned that, because -- and I know Melanie's taking notes -- we have been trying to work on that issue of the cap-within-the-cap. So put a star by it, Melanie; we're going to bring that up again this year and see if we can't eliminate that to give a little relief there.

Let's see -- Senator Thompson is next, followed by Assemblyman Wolfe, and Assemblywoman Simon.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you, Madam Chair.

In your plan you indicate to, "Develop a robust and challenging curriculum for all content areas that is infused with digital learning opportunities, characterized by instructional delivery designed to be responsive to a wide array of learning styles."

And of course, in the earlier discussion with Senator Allen, a good deal was talked about the utilization of technology, and the need to, etc.

In the last year, of course, we had a lot of comments and testimony come forward with regards to the proposal of PARCC testing. And one of the things kind of stood out in some of the discussions I heard there -- that a fair amount of the problems seem to come about because the PARCC testing was all to be done on computers. And it seemed to indicate that a number of schools didn't have adequate facilities to handle this.

Is the hardware -- the availability of it and so on -- within the school a significant problem that needs to be addressed in order to carry out what you're thinking, in terms of moving into more of the digital learning opportunities, and technology, and so on?

MR. FLETCHER: Unfortunately, Senator, the answer is -- it depends. And it really depends on the district, and it really depends on what districts are fortunate enough to have. I know, for an example, in my school district that it's absolutely not a problem because every student is issued a laptop at the beginning of the school year so that they have the ability to do that. But my colleague sitting next to me does not have the ability to do that with all of her students and, therefore, there is system individual differences.

So it depends on what the issue is; however, as Judy said before, one of the strengths of our group of leaders is that they look at a problem and find a way to solve it. So our people are finding the way to solve that problem when we're faced with the actual issue of administering an online exam.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Yes, I was kind of astounded, again, at some of the comments that came -- about the problems that were there because you had to utilize computers, and so on, to do it. That, in this day and age, and the need for the kids to learn the technology and so on -- are we adequately serving them in that area as it is? And certainly that's an area I think we need to give a good attention and focus to.

Your 12-step plan that you've put out here has excellent objectives in there. Of course, the real devil is going to be developing implementation plans for each of these. And that's going to be the real challenge that's going to face you. And, of course, if we can assist you in any way in doing that, we will be more than happy to do so.

You indicate among the challenges you face is the never-ending task of legislative mandates -- both fiscal and human resources -- for the primary mission of educating children. Let me say that, actually, I think sometimes we come up with mandates that you really favor.

MR. FLETCHER: That's true.

SENATOR THOMPSON: They say, "This is what you want; let's do it." And if you have problems with those mandates, then I would encourage you to come forward and speak with us, and so on. If we're proposing something that you see real problems with, you let us know; and, you know, we'll try to cure that.

And, on the other hand, if there are things that are happening out there in individual districts and the way of getting it done is through legislative mandates -- come talk to us and we'll try to help you out.

DR. BOZZA: You'll be happy to know that you're not alone in that. We've complained to the State Board also (indiscernible). I met with

five board member; they said, "What can we do to help you?" And I said, "Nothing would be good." They were very insulted. (laughter) They said, "But we want to help you, we want to help you." "Well, you know, sit back for a while; let us do our work, and we'll come back to you."

SENATOR THOMPSON: Well, I suspect a number of things you want to get done here -- that you might need a little legislative help for, and we'll be receptive.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Senator.
Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Thank you, Chairwoman.

Bear with me, in my comments, because they don't follow any logical thought, okay? I just took down notes as you were speaking.

But again, I was very impressed with your presentation -- it was very well thought out, very well presented -- and also the material that you've given to us.

And I was very impressed this morning. I had to get up very early -- I think 5 a.m. I was turning on the New York City channel. They didn't have the Eagles; the Philadelphia Eagles. They don't get them in New York City. (laughter) But anyway, this was Channel 2, CBS. And Mayor de Blasio was being interviewed. I don't particularly like things that Mayor de Blasio does all the time; however, he has a new education initiative where he wants to get involved with technology. He's going to provide \$14 million for all the schools in New York City. That sounds nice. I don't know if that's enough money, but I think that's a good start.

And the other thing he talked about was having a reading specialist in every school; which, again, I think is a very laudable concept

and maybe that's something we could look at here in New Jersey. But that's not really why you're here, but I think that's a very interesting concept.

I was thinking as you made your presentation, I remember years ago there was a big effort involving reciprocity -- with competent people from out-of-state being able to come to New Jersey to get involved with the schools because of people retiring in New Jersey. And is that still a problem?

DR. BOZZA: It is a problem to a degree, I think.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay.

DR. BOZZA: Because New Jersey prides itself on high standards and making sure that when people come in, regardless of their certification-- So we still, I don't think, have overcome that barrier.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay. Maybe we could help you with that.

The other thing is, the issue of the retirement of people from New Jersey who go out of state because of higher salaries and the salary cap. I know there was an effort to have some type of massaging of that requirement, but it hasn't really moved forward, correct? Correct? So should we still keep pushing that?

DR. BOZZA: Absolutely.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Okay.

DR. BOZZA: It's certainly-- I had a conversation with one of our colleagues here today saying, "I have very capable people who work with me, and earn more than me, and would never consider being a Superintendent of Schools," because of the factors that you are indicating.

And this assembly has spoken on this issue; you've called a meeting right here with the Joint Committee, heard testimony, and I think come to a reasonable position that whatever purpose they were to serve, as unfair as they were initially, that their time has passed. But as you know, these are regulations that are administered and put in place solely by the Commissioner of Education; the State Board of Education has no role in this.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: I was very concerned with that. I have, in my District, a very energetic Superintendent; a young man, a Ph.D., loved by the community. He contacted me about a year ago and asked if I know of any openings where he could teach, maybe at some colleges, because he was at the limit; he has three kids. And he's been offered a job as a Subject Supervisor in a district where he would make more money than he would as Superintendent where he is; he doesn't really want to leave. So I think that that's something that -- each of us legislators, I'm sure, has people like that who we really have to keep in focus.

A couple of other things that I was very struck by -- you made the comment about the State Commissioner of Education and his office. And that's the second time in two weeks I've heard that comment -- about the, I would say, cooperative attitude; I guess I would say that. Not the, "You have to do it this way," but "Maybe we can work together." I think if that is really what's going on, that's a big improvement -- at least from a legislator's point of view. I think in terms of your goals, that is something that we certainly can perhaps work with you also. Because I think the cooperation-- Rather than butting heads with the Commissioner, which we

have very often done in the past -- it's very, very difficult for us to deal with because it's not really accomplishing the things that you want to do.

The other thing that I think is very important-- I've spent three days in Hoboken in the last two weeks for personal reasons -- really, for pleasure, actually -- that really was (indiscernible) Hoboken in my life; really impressed by the development and the change. But also I began to think about tax abatements and how they impact upon the schools. About how all that money that goes -- that the developer pays doesn't come to you; it goes to the municipality. And you have more and more kids, more and more housing, and less and less for the schools. And I think that's something that we, as legislators, also have to begin to look very much at. I mean, in terms of economic development it's very important to get companies to come in and invest in the inner cities, and to provide housing. But I think that in terms of the burden it places on, not only the State, but on the suburban towns that I represent, is also of concern to a lot of us.

Finally, again, I appreciate the ability to listen to what you're saying, and I also was impressed by what you said about the interpersonal relationships. They are very important, as we go forward, in these perceptions of progress.

And I will leave you with a recollection that I have of, years ago -- there was a story on the Philadelphia TV about a teacher who was named the Superintendent of an inner city elementary school. It was all rundown; nobody wanted to go there. And the first thing she did was have a meeting with the parents; at least those parents who would come. And at the meeting, she had gallons of paint and brushes. And the first thing they did -- I think they went into the restrooms and started painting the restrooms.

Those people just thought they were coming to a meeting, and she put them to work. (laughter)

And gradually the parents bought into that building -- not so much the schools, but that building, and what their kids were doing in that building where the environment was very, very positive.

So I'm not suggesting that we have a crusade to clean bathrooms. (laughter) But, I mean, in terms of involving the parents, that was a very unique way and it really led to a very positive educational attitude and environment in that particular Philadelphia school.

So thanks for listening to us, and I'm sure we'll be here for a while today to listen to you; and hopefully, we can work together.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Assemblyman.

Do you want to make a comment?

MR. FLETCHER: Just a quick comment, Assemblywoman.

Thank you for bringing up the issue of the salary cap. I know it's often a difficult thing to talk about.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Right.

MR. FLETCHER: And it's difficult for us too, because we don't want to be viewed as people who are just out there looking to take money from the public trough; that that's the point.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: No, I didn't mean to imply that you had dropped the ball. That wasn't--

MR. FLETCHER: I know you didn't. And I know you didn't, and I appreciate that.

I think just from an Association point of view, from a person who faces the issue as well, all we're looking for is fair compensation; that's all. It's not necessarily a fact that we have to make more money than someone else in the school district.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Right.

MR. FLETCHER: That's a fact of life. It's just fair compensation. Because there are Superintendents across the state who are treated differently than public school Superintendents; and that's almost like institutionalizing an inequality. And that's, I don't think, what we intended to do. I certainly think the idea of trying to control costs is something that we all face. We all do it; especially locally with collective bargaining. It's the biggest thing that we can do to impact that -- is to collectively bargain with our associations to keep the tax burden down.

So if we can get beyond the fact that it's just looking for more money, that's not what it is. It's fair and equal compensation for a job; and I think that's the point that we would just like to emphasize.

ASSEMBLYMAN WOLFE: Right.

MR. FLETCHER: And I appreciate you bringing it up. Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Right. And I think it would make sense to spend a few minutes on this issue because, as I'm sitting here looking at my notes and your plan, one of the themes that's definitely coming out of our conversation here is, we don't want to get in your way; we want to get out of your way. However, we also want to understand how we, as legislators, can actually support the work that you do. And I think this is one of those issues. The Superintendent cap and the cap-within-the-

cap are two issues that have been brewing and causing problems for a number of years. I know in my particular district I have a town that is going into their third interim. That doesn't make sense on any level, in terms of leadership, in terms of stability, in terms of planning -- that just doesn't work.

So I'm going to ask my colleagues if you want to weigh in a little bit more on this issue before we move on.

Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Yes.

A question I have -- because this has come into my District Office many times, and it involves interim Superintendents. And correct me if I'm wrong, but a Superintendent can retire and go into a district for two years, and collect a salary which is greater than, obviously, the limit on the salary for Superintendents; stay there for two years; get out, go to another district. And some of them have been swapping back-and-forth. Now, that bothers me tremendously because when I see that happen, to me it's more about the money than about the students.

I want your opinion on that, as to what you think having this swap-around every two years, and you're constantly running with interims. To me, the thought is, if you're paying somebody right you're going to have them not retiring as often and, therefore, keeping them in place. But this interim situation that's going on-- And I've had teachers, very frustrated, talking to me, saying, "You know, they don't seem to really care because they know they're only there two years and they're out, and they'll go someplace else, and then they'll come back." They're not truly vested into

the district because they're only temporary. And they're collecting a pension check, and they're collecting a good salary to do this.

So it's real; it's a discussion we need to discuss, and we all want to be honest with each other. And it's something that has to be put on the table to talk about. So what is your opinion on that issue?

DR. BOZZA: Let me start out by talking about what the regulations allow.

They do allow for school administrators to be -- that's not just Superintendents; every other administrator position -- to be employed for a year and can be renewed for a year; but no more than two years in any one district. There are districts that, as you say, have successive interims. So we believe that it's important to get stable leadership as quickly as possible, number one. And certainly we're telling you that salary caps are limitations to that because people will retire and pursue other things. At any given point in time, there are approximately 50 interim Superintendents, which is a large percentage, throughout the state. And we think, by the way, that they do serve a valuable service to school districts, but we don't think that that period needs to continue forever. And certainly, school districts should be about the business of getting a permanent leader as quickly as possible.

And interestingly, in our conversations with focus groups with the Department of Education, one of the groups that -- the Principals Association and our Association -- the principals were adamant about this. They don't want change in leadership, they want stable leadership. And I think we can all understand why that is, and the impact that it has on the community.

I wouldn't comment on the quality of leadership in interims, because that's for the individual districts to determine. And people see it differently. And certainly we have individuals who do great service, who I know, who are very closely connected with us. And we try to help districts do that. But I do think that there needs to be an incentive to get back to a full-time regular leader; that an interim is just that, for the smallest period of time possible. And I think most people agree with that.

And certainly people have raised questions with regard to the pension issue. But there's a reason that, going back to when Commissioner Gagliardi was there, they felt it was important to have a stop-gap measure. The question you're raising, and we're agreeing with -- is it a stop-gap measure, or is it something longer?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: I appreciate that, because in local government they do have that with CFOs, and they have a certain time period they have to put somebody permanent in there. So I think that's something we should talk about more. And Melanie, I'm sure, will bring that back to us, and we should get into the dialogue on that very issue.

Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you. Sounds like an action item for us.

MS. SCHULZ: Might I just add that I look forward to that conversation with all of you. And I appreciate your point of view on this, and your thoughtfulness.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Assemblywoman Simon -- who has been very patient.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: That's all right. (laughter)

Some comments, and some feedback, and then I'd like your opinion on a couple of things.

One is, your bullet point of developing instruction to reflect teacher-directed curriculum. Love that. I get many calls from teachers who said it's not like the old days; they've lost the autonomy over their classroom. They're told what to do; they're instructed what to teach. So getting back to a teacher-directed curriculum is healthy. It's healthy for the school, it's healthy for the children. So I applaud you for that.

A touchy subject: LIFO. I'd like your opinion on that: last in, first out. I'd read a stat on remedial instruction, post-high school, where 20 percent of children who go to four-year colleges need remedial care; 60 percent who go to two-year colleges need remedial. The measureables that you speak of -- can you expand that? Because we look-- You know, the third rail is talking about the PARCC test; but we know, through those stats of the kids needing that remedial, that something needs to be done. So when I look at LIFO-- You know, we're all parents; many of us have heard the stories of going into the new school year and Johnny gets this teacher. And, "Oh my God, just don't get *that* teacher. They're either coasting, or they have tenure, they really don't care about being there."

What is your opinion about a fresh, new teacher coming in with enthusiasm and the measureable of being a great teacher -- versus getting rid of that person, rather than somebody who's been there and kind of stagnating. What's your opinion on that?

DR. BOZZA: First let me say I don't think enthusiasm is restricted to the young. I'll say that as an older individual involved in

education. (laughter) And my wife, who's a teacher, would smack me if I said otherwise.

So having said that, we certainly believe that the evaluative process should determine who, if there is a reduction in force, are going. And it shouldn't be just longevity -- that effectiveness is a condition of everyone's employment. And that our school principals, our school Superintendents should be able to do that in a fair and realistic way. And so I am certain that the current system is very predictable; you know what date you were employed, you know if you leave otherwise; and I'm sure that it scares people to know that there might be some other factor that doesn't seem to be as controlled.

But if we're talking about the interest of kids, and we want to have the most -- and that runs throughout our presentation -- we want the most highly competent people who we can put in place to work with the children. And so we believe that our Superintendents, who have to make these recommendations, ought to have at their disposal the opportunity to consider performance, not just longevity.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay. I appreciate that.

Just for the record -- I was not implying that all people older, because I would have to include myself, and I am very-- (laughter)

DR. BOZZA: That must be on me; I felt compelled to say it.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: --and I am very enthusiastic about a lot of things, including education.

The second one: I'm going to piggyback off of something that several of us have spoken about -- the fair school funding. Really, it's disturbing to have the Supreme Court in the driver's seat on that one.

When we have schools -- I mean, and all of you have, I'm sure, your own personal feelings on Abbott Districts -- we have 31 schools that are getting 65 percent of the funding, and they're failing, right? I go into the Camden schools, and the Catholic partnership schools are educating their kids at \$9,700 a student. Now, they don't do -- they're not strong on the Special Ed. But the point is, when you send money down to the State House -- let's say, Princeton -- they send \$100 million; they get \$3 back. So, you know, what-- And many of you -- I know that Dr. Schiff in Hillsborough, and I have Dr. Metz in Hunterdon; they run lean and mean. But it gets harder and harder. And I know that, on average -- I think 101.5 came out a couple of months ago saying that the average student fee for education is \$19,211; 50 percent of that goes to the salaries and benefits.

So my question to you is, what do you think about consolidation? Because from where I stand -- and I'm not an educator -- if you throw more money at it, that's not necessarily the answer, right? So I'm going to give a medical analogy, because that's my field.

If you go into a cardiac OR, and you're going to have what they call a *CABG*, a coronary artery bypass graft surgery, and you take out \$10,000 and you hand it to the surgeon -- and that's Mr. Smith. Mr. Miller is down the hallway in bay number 2. Do you think by Mr. Smith giving a \$10,000 check in an envelope to the surgeon it's going to yield a better coronary artery bypass? No. It depends on the surgeon, it depends on the team, and very often for our schools -- for Superintendents and their entire team -- they can have the most amazing operation and care greatly about the children, but the funding is an issue.

So, you know, asking taxpayers for more money or saying that it's a lack of funding -- maybe it's a misappropriation of funding. What do you think about that?

DR. BOZZA: I was in attendance at North Hunterdon when you had your Committee meeting there, and these conversations took place with regard to consolidation.

There are a couple of things. First of all, I'd like to just put some facts out there. People find this hard to believe, but when we look at the percentage of the dollar that is spent on administration, New Jersey is actually the fifth-lowest in the nation. And people are surprised to hear that. But we average approximately 9 percent, according to the Federal statistics -- which look at things fairly and equitably -- compared to 10.7 percent for the average of the nation. And we've bounced around over the last seven or eight years, either the fifth- or fourth-lowest.

So the overall spin -- when you look at dollars, we don't want to compare dollars with Alabama or Nevada where the cost of living may be very different. So we look at the percentage of budget; we think that that's a fairer perspective.

The other thing that we find, interestingly, is that people often assume that K-12 districts spend the least administratively -- now, I'm just talking administratively. It's K-6 districts. And that's often because on the administrator side -- the principal is the Superintendent, is the -- I kid around -- put the coal in, in the morning, to get the heater going; you know, they do everything.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Like Tim Conway in the old days?

DR. BOZZA: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: (Indiscernible) retirement.

DR. BOZZA: Exactly. So you will recall that when Commissioner Davey was there that there was a requirement, that came initially out of the Legislature, to take a look at what might be likely combinations. And I think that's really around the time we kind of really began very seriously looking at what they might do differently. And so there were some combinations that were suggested to be studied.

And we, as an Association, held seven or eight forums around the state. And we invited in legislators in the area, we invited in the Executive County Superintendent who had to make the recommendations, we brought in demographers; and we had a good conversation about this. And interestingly, in some places we found that it really split communities. I'm talking now about the personal perspective of people.

So what is our position on consolidation? It should be among those things that are absolutely studied, and people get to consider what they might want to do differently.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Okay.

DR. BOZZA: So we would absolutely support that, but the important part is knowing as well as one can -- I think as North (*sic*) Hunterdon did -- what the outcome will look like.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Well, and that's it -- it's not for everybody, right? But it is worth the open discussion point. South Hunterdon had -- it was West Amwell, Lambertville, and Stockton. And what they did is they went about their feasibility study, and then they had this conversation with the State and it was an understanding that they

would get reimbursed for certain items. And what happened was, at the end of the day, it wasn't as reimbursed as successfully as they thought.

So I sat down with the Department of Education and they were very willing to have South Hunterdon resubmit their expenses. The thing is, is that for schools to consider that-- You know, it's like tri-fold. It could be financial benefit. The other part is, for several regional high schools, sometimes you have a sending district; and sometimes those sending districts are on all different academic pages. And by the time the kids get to 9th grade, nobody is really aligned. So that academic seaming is also improved.

But what I had suggested to the Commissioner was to have a small team of consolidation -- just to have that conversation. And after speaking with the Department of Education and sitting down with South Hunterdon and saying-- You know, they spent \$500,000 -- not on the whole consolidation, because, you know, they bought computers, and they bought a lot of things -- but just for the feasibility side and a couple of things -- about \$500,000. And I said, you know, we have 590 school districts in New Jersey. Even if 100 were looking at the potential of consolidating -- just to streamline some increased efficiencies, academic seaming -- that's \$50 million. Why don't we have a small team within the State House? Because we're trying to incentivize consolidation, incentivize new ways of thinking in order to put more money into the classroom, right? Why don't we have a consolidation team where you have a planner, where you have a feasibility person? And this way, you know, the schools could add in -- and they have that skin in the game. But not every school district

has to spend \$500,000 -- which they don't have. Where are they getting it from?

So like you said, it's not for everybody, but it's worth a conversation. And I'm glad you're so open to everything that we spoke about.

So thank you.

DR. BOZZA: Yes, and thank you for correcting me. I was saying *North* Hunterdon when my brain was thinking *South* Hunterdon.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: That's okay.

DR. BOZZA: And I think, as you know -- I think those communities, relatively, looked alike with regard to tax impact and those kinds of things. And that's not always the case. And so if in two communities one will be a loser and one will be a winner, you know right away that you have one community set against spending more taxes than they already are for the school system they have. So there are obviously things that need to be examined; and that we would support 100 percent that examination.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SIMON: Absolutely. Again, thank you very much.

Thank you, Chair.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you, Assemblywoman.

Assemblywoman DeCroce, did you want to comment?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Just one little comment to make.

And when you're talking -- the Assemblywoman was talking about consolidation of districts. When I was at DCA, I was -- Shared

Services was part of my Department. And I was in Hunterdon. And there was funding at one point for feasibility studies and what was happening. The money was there; districts and towns were taking the money to do the studies and had no intention of doing it, but just wanted to make people think they were doing some good things.

It's kind of what caused the funding to go away, because it really wasn't happening. Very upsetting, that is; but very factual and true it is.

But when we were out there talking about consolidation -- and right away people get really nervous. "I don't want to consolidate my town with your town." But one thing that we did talk about, that seemed a lot more to think about, was the consolidation of administrative services -- whether it was school administrators, staff, sporting. Consolidate those services together to help save money. So that may be something that you think about and put into play-- A little deeper thinking of, instead of the consolidation of the entire district, if we can start trickling down a level and consolidating some administrative services and like that. It may be something to look at to help with funding. So there are other things that you can do.

But I think it's something you should, at least, think about, Melanie -- maybe, throw that around. It may work, it may not work, but it's something to talk about.

MS. SCHULZ: Assemblywoman, I am going to forward to you a list which I have-- I will forward it to everyone on the Committee, through Becky -- of a list of Superintendents who actually are leading

sometimes three and four districts. And it's a pretty extensive list. So I will get that out to you before we (indiscernible).

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Yes, and I'm talking about even going lower than Superintendents, you know -- administrative and CFOs -- which CFOs do share with town, treasurers do share with towns already. But administrators -- take a look at things like that.

MS. SCHULZ: I'd be happy to do that.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DeCROCE: Thank you.

MS. SCHULZ: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: Thank you.

I think we have one more comment from a legislator, and then I actually would -- I think we could talk about this all day. But I want to respect everyone's time; I want to get those of you who are in Cape May and Sussex counties, and places like that, on the road before it's too late.

So I'm going to ask my fellow legislators to give a final question or comment, and we're going to wind it up in about 10 minutes.

SENATOR ALLEN: Thank you.

I love your Vision 2020. You're hitting all of the important points.

What I want to see, though, is how we're going to achieve it. We all can agree that it's great, and we all can agree that we need to be there. But it's going to take a lot of work, I think, to do that, and I don't know what you're planning on your next steps to be; and I'm not clear on exactly how you want us to be integrated in that process.

I do know that, as you hear from the questions, we all have different areas of interests and concern, and you can use us, as Legislators,

in that. We wouldn't be here if we didn't care about what you're doing. So you can use us in that as sort of an entrée to our system. And I feel that I speak for everybody when I say please do that.

But I, for one, would like something from you that says, "Here's what we're planning to do; here's how we're going to flesh this out; here's where we can ask for your help--" Those kinds of things. What exactly will we be seeing, in general, and when, and how can we be involved?

DR. BOZZA: The step we're now involved in is doing precisely that: What might we ask you, as the Legislature, to help us; and what might we do, as school leaders; what my teachers do, principals, others?

So we have a small subcommittee that is outlining those things. And, of course, just as you're not surprised by many of the items here, because you're so deeply involved with them, part of it will be identifying those things that we can do together, that we can support. There are topics that you talk about -- the Education Committees here at this Committee; we certainly want to be able to provide feedback. But we are going through a process that I would say within -- certainly, in the next four to five months we'll have congealed a little bit of our volunteers' time to say, "Gee, Legislators, you could do this to help us." "Governor, you could do this." "Commissioner and your staff, you can do this." And as well, for us as leaders, what should we do differently or better.

And part of that is, I think -- if we can get back to that metaphor of looking forward -- is trying to see, where do we want to arrive? What might it look like? I think if we were to -- not to do it now, because our time is limited -- but if we could talk about educator evaluation; if we were to talk about what the classroom might look like; the effective

technology, what does that mean for assessment of kids -- I think the world looks very different, and we don't want to put in concrete the world of today and yesterday.

SENATOR ALLEN: Thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JASEY: I think that's an excellent-- First of all, I want to thank the Senator for your question, because I think that's a great way to wrap up what I think has been a very informative opportunity for us to learn. And hopefully you're getting the message that we, as Legislators, really don't want to be barriers, or we don't want to stand in your way -- we want to get out of your way. But what we're saying to you is, if you come to us and tell us what are the things that we can do legislatively to enable you to achieve your goals, we are more than willing partners in that.

And I want to applaud the Association for becoming so proactive, for coming to us-- I always think it's better to establish relationships and gather information before there's a crisis, before there's a problem so that we can have informed conversations and we've built a certain level of trust between us in order to move forward.

So I want to thank you for that, and I want to thank Melanie for recommending that we have this conversation at the beginning of the year. The other thing, only because it's the one thing nobody came back to -- but Senator Allen raised the concept of *community schools*. And I would encourage my colleagues to look further at that. I've had the opportunity to visit some community schools; and at a time where sometimes the debate becomes very contentious about charter schools, regular public schools, and

parochial schools -- we have different models out there. And the community school model is a public school that is in and of the community.

And when we talk about parent engagement, I know that in my years on the school board, this was always an issue. “Well, you need to get the parents involved.” And my question was always, “Well, how do we do that? How do we do that?” The idea that teachers are going into the community in pairs-- My daughter is a teacher; she did that as a teacher. It’s not an easy thing to do; it’s a very time-consuming thing to do. Having been a public health nurse in a community that was not always a safe place to be, sometimes you need an escort to go with you to make those visits. And that time spent can be very productive, but it’s not always very practical.

So the community school concept is one that, to my understanding, would work well in many different communities because it is the place where parents go for other things besides the school. They go for clinic services, for health care; they go for social services and referrals. And by going there for these other services, they develop a relationship and a sense of trust, and then become more involved and more engaged. The mobility in the community tends to drop so that you don’t have people trying to get out, but rather they want to stay. They take a stake in their community.

I’m sorry; I’m sure every educator in the audience already knows all this. But I’m saying this because it’s something I think that we need to look at and find ways to support this concept. It’s not particularly expensive; it’s just a different way of doing things. It’s the idea of keeping that building open almost 24/7 -- not entirely. But the idea is that people

know where the school is. Everybody knows where the school is in their community -- whether it's rural, urban, suburban, they know where the school is.

So I want to thank each of you for coming. This is a busy time of year, I know, for you. You're only probably in the second week of school in your districts. So I'm sure you have meetings tonight to get to, and you have other things that you need to be doing. But we thank you very sincerely for coming this afternoon, for sharing your time with us. And I would hope that, perhaps, we can have a follow-up meeting -- I don't know, maybe at the end of the year or at this time next year -- to hear more about how far you've come, what you're doing; and hopefully we'll be able to talk about the things that we've done to support your work.

So again, I thank you. And have a great school year.

ALL: Thank you very much.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)