
Committee Meeting

of

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

“The Joint Committee will discuss the Quality Single Accountability Continuum”

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

DATE: December 4, 2018
10:00 a.m.

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE PRESENT:

Senator Ronald L. Rice, Co-Chair
Senator Declan J. O’Scanlon Jr.
Assemblyman Ralph R. Caputo
Assemblywoman Patricia Egan Jones
Assemblyman Benjie E. Wimberly
Assemblywoman DiAnne C. Gove



ALSO PRESENT:

Rebecca Sapp
Executive Director

Ivy Pomper
Executive Assistant

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

SENATE

Hon. James Beach
Hon. Patrick J. Diegnan, Jr.
Hon. Declan J. O'Scanlon, Jr.
Hon. Ronald L. Rice
Hon. Samuel D. Thompson

ASSEMBLY

Hon. Ralph R. Caputo
Hon. BettyLou DeCroce
Hon. DiAnne C. Gove
Hon. Patricia Egan Jones
Hon. Mila M. Jasey
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 meet on Tuesday, December 4, 2018, at 10:00 a.m. in Committee Room 16 of the State House Annex, in Trenton, New Jersey.

The Committee will be receiving testimony from invited guests on the topic of the Quality Single Accountability Standards (QSAC).

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

Issued November 13, 2018

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

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: Good morning.

SENATOR RICE: We're going to get started. We'll probably have other members coming in; in fact, I see Senator O'Scanlon now, coming in.

Once again, good morning.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBERS OF AUDIENCE: Good morning.

SENATOR RICE: I am New Jersey State Senator Ronald L. Rice, and Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Public Schools.

Assemblywoman Mila Jasey could not be here this morning; she is my Co-Chair.

And I want to thank all of you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to be here. But given what you do, it's important, because those of us who set policy, and write laws, and promulgate those kinds of things -- at the end of the day, they impact what you are doing. And what you are doing is very important because you are raising our kids in the academic arena. And that's very important to us.

You know, we were joking back in the back there -- we were talking about that there is a meeting going on downstairs to deal with one issue; it's more in the criminal justice arena. And over here, we're talking about keeping kids from becoming adults -- being downstairs. (laughter)

And so that's why it's important.

I also want to say that it's been a long year, and it's been a very quick year. I did not realize we were at the end of the year already. And

this Committee has not met as often as it should, as we have done in the past. We intend to put together a schedule so that we will know, periodically, what we are doing; and that input will come from our members, based on what we think the priorities should be, collectively.

This is a Joint Committee, and I think that's very important. For those who are new to the Administration, and those of you who may be new in your capacities, this is a Joint Committee, which means that it is made up of Republicans and Democrats from both houses of the Legislature; the Senate and the Assembly, and both parties.

And with that being said, this morning we want to have some discussion on QSAC; and I think that's very important. And to me, this is personal, because QSAC is something that -- I spent a long summer on a board of about -- a commission of about 30 or 40 people throughout the state, putting together QSAC. It all came out of the whole notion of taking over school districts.

A little history for those who do not know it -- Jersey City, Paterson, and Camden were the first schools under State control -- not Camden, but Jersey City, Paterson, and Newark; and ultimately, Camden came under State control, and is still there.

As you know, Jersey City, Paterson, and Newark are going back to local control. We are in the process, in the transitioning now. But I was there-- I've been here a long time. For those who may not know this, this gray hair I have (indicates), it's not premature. (laughter) And so I've been here; and I was here when they first moved to take over the school districts that I mentioned. And I lived in Newark -- I still live there -- when they took over the District.

We felt that the whole idea in the takeover of local public schools is not -- should not be the State business. The State cannot run school districts; we have proven that over and over. In fact, in Paterson and Newark -- and I don't know the numbers for Jersey City -- I know the State came in and mismanaged over \$100 million. The first Superintendent walked away; got indicted in Florida for changing test scores; over \$100 million. Cami Anderson, over \$73 million that we could document; it was probably more. Paterson had the same thing. So we know that we cannot run public schools.

We also know that the State of New Jersey -- for my colleagues who may not know this -- never replaced the money that they messed up. So you have school districts that were being criticized about productivity, if you will, under State control; the State, basically, shortchanged us, say, Newark \$175 million to \$200 million -- that was documented. And then we start to cut budgets and formulas, which means that we were being diminished economically -- other school districts were too -- but no one ever made the other money up.

And so I just think it's fantastic -- contrary to what people may think, and what they read about -- who never come Newark -- what Superintendent Marion Bolden was able to do with nothing, working with the unions and the local people just to kind of keep us afloat and keep us balanced.

And that story should not be a story that repeats itself in any other school district throughout the state.

And the Joint Committee -- every year we get reports. And during that whole 20-plus years, as we got reports, there was always over

110 districts, out of 600 school districts, that fail many aspects of QSAC. In fact, Milburn, which is a very wealthy District, failed three aspects; but they were never intervened. And they recognized they were failing, and they straightened up. But the point is, the law was never used to do what they had to do. And that told us, based on what we were saying during those meetings over the summer, putting together QSAC, that some of the elements -- that Marion Bolden, and myself, and others thought should be in there, and we had to compromise and are not in there -- need to be looked at. Because we have wealthy districts failing areas such as Finance and the academic side of it; and you have poor districts doing the same thing -- it says something is clearly wrong with that picture.

And so this morning is an opportunity for this Committee to hear from each of, you who we have as speakers, to kind of tell us your story as to what you believe that we should be doing to try to fix "QSAC."

I can say this to you -- as I start to silence myself and let my members say "hello" to you -- is that the operative word during the whole course of putting together the QSAC -- it was *capacity*. So QSAC was intended to make sure that the State of New Jersey never takes over a school district, unless it was totally extreme where you weren't getting cooperation. And even then you don't take the district over totally.

QSAC was meant to be intervention. So if in fact there was a problem with the financing, then the State is supposed to go in and work with the district and the people in financing to figure out what that problem was and build capacity. So what it meant was, if I was running finance and I didn't want to cooperate, yes, you can get rid of me and put someone else there; but you don't take over the whole school district. And you build

capacity. Capacity could very well mean more money was necessary; it very well could mean that, maybe, the system needed to be changed as to how you were doing the financing. But you don't go in and take over a whole school district, and then come back and change test scores when people start to improve.

So the key operative words are *capacity building* and *intervention*.

And so, with that being said, let me just turn to my left -- my right, your left -- and ask our Assemblywoman to just say hello to you, and identify herself so you know who you're dealing with up here today.

Some of our members aren't here for different reasons. There's a hearing going on downstairs; we know some members are down there. But we want to hear from you.

And by the way, when you speak, you are being recorded. So, you know, whatever you say, I'm going to tell you keep it clean. (laughter)

Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GOVE: Good morning, and thank you all for coming, especially on this first -- well, not first, but this chilly morning. But it is December.

So thank you for coming; thank you for having this meeting.

I'm in the 9th Legislative District. I've been an Assemblyperson for nine years. And before that, in my prior life -- which is still there, and it warms me every time I go into a school -- I taught high school for 32 years, Southern Regional High School. So I say I'm a *former* teacher, but you're never a former teacher; you're always a teacher. And you care about kids; you care about education. And I-- Yesterday, I was a history teacher, so, as you know -- everyone knows that we lost President

Bush. And I was just -- I felt like I wanted to go back to school. Because I was watching it, and watching history in the making. And I just was, like, "Oh, I want to go talk about with my students," because I taught high school history and government.

So with that, education is in my blood.

So thank you for coming, and -- do I turn it over to Senator--

SENATOR RICE: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GOVE: --O'Scanlon?

SENATOR O'SCANLON: Good morning everyone; Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER LAMONT O. REPOLLET, Ed.D:
(off mike) Good morning.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: I'm looking forward to this morning's discussion.

And as ever, Senator Rice, you just-- I understand the basics of QSAC; but I wasn't clear on the history and overarching mission. So even this Senator -- who believes himself to be a fairly well-informed student of school financing -- already learned something this morning. So I thank you.
(laughter)

We know that the State of New Jersey, as badly as some school districts may be run -- and it happens -- it tends to not be any better than the folks we're trying to command and correct. We've seen that; it just doesn't work. In theory, it sounded -- at the time, I'm sure -- like a good idea to focus on both sides of the aisle. But it was a failure, I think, across the board.

So for us to make sure we do what we can to use QSAC the way it was intended, and to make sure that that doesn't happen, maybe not ever again; but only in a very last resort and only after, as Senator Rice described, we go after certain positions that are the weak links within these districts.

I'm going to bet we're going to hear from the Commissioner today, and he's going to sign on to that overarching mission.

So I think there's room here to improve. QSAC is definitely a constructive theory and practice; but it sounds like we can do better. And it sounds like we all can learn from the experiences of the school districts that we have already had experience with.

And I'm also -- I'm curious as to where we are with the current list of districts that have failed, and where we're going there.

So I'm very much interested; looking forward to working with you, going forward, in this coming year.

Thanks.

SENATOR RICE: Assemblyman Caputo.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Thank you, Senator.

Thanks for calling this meeting.

You know, obviously, districts suffer different stresses, depending upon their challenges in funding. And also what we forget is the politics that interfere with the delivery of quality education for our students.

You know, QSAC, or any other tool that the Department or the Legislature wants to impose, has to be done and applied in a way that doesn't discriminate against one district against another. And the fact is

that personalities, and desires of individuals regarding these ways of, supposedly, improving education interfere with that process.

What our objective is is to try to downplay that part -- or let's use the word *down* -- *reemphasize* the importance of the State's role, in terms of delivering a thorough and efficient education. And my experience is as someone who worked in a school district in Newark; I also served as the County Superintendent; and I also worked in the Department of Education. The Department should be the place where expertise is delivered and technical assistance is given to the district; it should not be a position where things are imposed arbitrarily.

So I'm very glad to hear that we're going to have various districts talk about their experience, so we can synthesize this information and be able to come up with a solid policy.

So thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Assemblywoman Jones.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Thank you, Senator.

I'm delighted to be the newest member of this Joint Committee. I've sat in on other meetings as a member of the Education Committee previously.

I represent the 5th Legislative District in the Deep South, if you will. (laughter) The jewel of the District is the City of Camden; and other Camden County municipalities, as well as Gloucester County municipalities.

Education -- clearly I don't have to tell all of you here -- is the most important tool in our toolbox for a greater state and a greater nation. And as representatives of the people -- as we are sitting here -- it is our job

to make sure that QSAC moves forward, as created by the Legislature, in a fair and even-handed way. And I agree with Senator O'Scanlon that I'm learning a great deal. I have said that ever since the first day I arrived in Trenton as a Legislator, I have never stopped learning; and most of it has been at the hands of our educational system. It is incredible the work we do; it is incredible the work we still need to do in a state where the education for our children is among the best. And we need to make sure that those who don't have the best have an opportunity to get it.

So that's our charge, I think, going forward. And again, to be fair and even-handed; and for us to do our jobs representing the public to make sure what they think they need is delivered.

Thanks very much. It's a pleasure to be a part of this group.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you.

Assemblyman Ben Wimberly just joined us.

We'll do a roll call in a moment.

Assemblyman.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Senator.

Good morning.

The Senator put everything in place. We've been talked about this, I guess, my seven, going on eight years now in the Legislature. Just a fair impact of the metric that's put in place to truly measure, you know, what should be done.

And as a 29-year employee of the Paterson Public Schools -- as I see our staff out in the crowd -- I've been through before takeover, after takeover, and I believe nine superintendents. (laughter) And I've seen

many people get rich off of these schools districts that were taken over. So if it's about the children--

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: (off mike)
That's right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --you know, where did we miss our mark on that? So that's the bottom line.

So when we talk about what could be done -- I knew, as a student and as a first- and second-year teacher, we went from an Administration of, maybe, eight; to now, at a point when we were at the height of takeover, of being hijacked by outsiders, we were probably up to 200 administrators -- people working.

And so let's be real about. I know, at one point, we had \$50 million missing from the Paterson Public School District that still hasn't been accounted for.

So I look forward to this, and I can't wait to hear the testimony.

Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: With that being said, we're going to begin.

First of all, may I ask the Executive Director to introduce herself for those who don't know her? Because you will be communicating with her, and she will be in touch with you on other academic issues, education issues.

And she can introduce her staff assistant.

Becky; and then do a roll call when you're finished.

MS. SAPP (Executive Director): Hello; my name is Rebecca Sapp. I am the Executive Director of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools.

My Executive Assistant is Ivy Pomper. We look forward to working with each and every one of you throughout the rest of the new year -- this year, and into the next new year.

Ready for a roll call?

SENATOR RICE: Yes.

MS. SAPP: Senator O'Scanlon.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: Here.

MS. SAPP: Assemblyman Caputo.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Here.

MS. SAPP: Assemblywoman Gove.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GOVE: Here.

MS. SAPP: Assemblywoman Egan Jones.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Here.

MS. SAPP: Assemblyman Wimberly.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Here.

MS. SAPP: And Senator Rice.

SENATOR RICE: Here.

With that, we're going to start our testimony.

I'm going to call up, first, a person who I think is doing a yeoman's job as a beginner, with what he has to work with and getting to know our system.

But he is not new to education. I've known him, in the past, going up and rising. I knew one day he would probably be Commissioner, or the Federal government would steal him or something. But we got him.

But I also know his role is going to change, in terms of addressing the problems we're talking about now in QSAC and other things. I know Assemblyman Ben Wimberly and I -- we sit on what's known as the *SETC*, which is the *Employment and Training Commission*. And there are a lot of things we're doing there that are directly related to the Department of Education.

With that being said, I'd like to invite up, to give us his thoughts, Dr. Lamont Repollet, the Commissioner of New Jersey Department of Education.

Come on up, Doc. If you have staff you want to bring, you can bring them up, okay?

DR. REPOLLET: Good morning, everyone.

SENATOR RICE: Good morning.

DR. REPOLLET: Thank you for inviting me to testify today on behalf of the Department of Education regarding New Jersey's Quality Single Accountability Continuum.

Chair Senator Rice and members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools, I am joined today by members of my team, Mr. Robert Bumpus, Assistant Commissioner of Field Services; and Ms. Paula Bloom, Acting Director, Office of Field Services Coordination.

For more than a decade, QSAC has been in place to ensure districts are meeting the minimum requirements for district performance,

and to provide guidelines for initiating or withdrawing from partial or full State intervention.

Our agency uses QSAC to measure public school districts' performance and capacity in five key component areas -- Instruction and Program; Fiscal Management; Governance; Operations; and Personnel -- to determine the extent to which districts are performing efficiently.

As a former superintendent, I can empathize with the argument that regulations like these can be burdensome for already overworked educators. However, as the Commissioner, I recognize the validity of QSAC from an accountability standpoint. There has to be some way to measure the success of a district, especially when we are re-investing millions of dollars into school districts.

That's why, in 2017, the State Board re-vamped QSAC, adopting changes as part of a broader effort to streamline New Jersey's accountability systems, as well as accurately reflect State initiatives such as the adoption of New Jersey Student Learning Standards, State Assessments, ESSA school accountability, and the TEACH New Jersey educator evaluation system.

Many Superintendents and other stakeholders shared that the QSAC process was too cumbersome and time consuming for districts. Therefore, reducing the burden of the district evaluation process was the central principle of the 2017 revisions to QSAC regulations.

These revisions have allowed our Department to clarify what makes a quality education: To focus on growth and performance for all students throughout the district; to ensure point values and indicators reflect State priorities, and that scoring is easier to understand; to reduce

the number of overall indicators and further eliminate redundancy; and to ensure all accountability systems -- State, local, Federal -- complement one another to create a cohesive set of goals for students, educators, and districts.

Currently, the highest percentage of districts are below 80 percent in Instruction and Program; we will continue to focus on the differences between the previous QSAC district performance review and the current review.

Because we've incorporated student growth into the new QSAC measures, it provides an opportunity for districts that are below 80 percent to demonstrate that students are improving; and we reward districts that demonstrate gains in this area. We anticipate the changes made to the indicators will increase the number of high-performing school districts.

I understand some legislators may have concerns with a QSAC tool that can trigger State control of a school district. However, this is one of the mechanisms we have in place to intervene in struggling districts. Under our Department's regulations, a district under full State control must remain in that status for at least three years.

But as three of the four districts under State intervention move through the transition back to local control, our agency remains committed to embedding ongoing and meaningful support and technical assistance through the entire transition process.

The revamped QSAC system is well-aligned to empower districts to assess and remedy their needs on an ongoing basis, and to leverage Department supports available to meet those needs.

Our current approach to QSAC corresponds both with NJ 2.0 goals to continually assess, create, and execute improved educational outcomes; and Governor Murphy's vision of a stronger and fairer education for our 1.4 million school children throughout New Jersey.

I thank you, and I look forward to presenting our QSAC model -- this presentation, a slide deck -- for the Committee and for the public.

ROBERT BUMPUS: Good morning.

As the Commissioner indicated, my name is Bob Bumpus; I am the Assistant Commissioner for Field Services.

About 10 years ago, I was involved as a Field Superintendent going through the QSAC model. At that time, there were 300 indicators spread across the five DPR -- District Performance Reviews -- as indicated. And it was an awesome time for me, as a Superintendent -- Field Superintendent. I always felt somewhat vulnerable to the amount of regulations and statutes that I was sworn to implement. QSAC helped me, like a roadmap, to narrow it down to something that was more manageable.

Today, I'm very happy to inform the Joint Committee that from 300 we have reduced those indicators, through two revisions -- this is our third revision that we're implementing this year -- to 104 indicators spread across those five areas. We've done that through an exhaustive stakeholder engagement over these last 10 years.

I'm very happy to report to you that the most recent stakeholder engagement is unprecedented, in my last 10 years as a DOE representative as well, in dealing with QSAC. We went out and met with over 200 stakeholders, both internal and external -- internal to the DOE, external in the field -- as we revised these indicators across the five areas.

I like to think one of -- maybe let's call it, even, a *legacy* -- is incorporating our student growth percentile metric into our QSAC in the area of Instruction and Program. The Commissioner indicated that, for the most part, 90-plus percent of our districts hit the 80 percent mark, which is, let's call it the *passing mark*, in five areas of QSAC. And that's over the last 10 years. It didn't start out that way. But going through this process, over the last 10 years, we've enabled our districts to hit the 80 percent, or passing mark, in four of the five areas.

The most challenging area is the area of Instruction and Program. Because all of the other areas have input indicators, which we have a lot of more control over, if you think about it. And Senator Rice quite rightly, I think, indicated that it's about building capacity -- most (indiscernible) the fact that, over the last 10 years, we've worked with our districts; we've gone into our districts, through the County Offices of Education, to build that capacity so that those districts can hit the 80 percent mark.

And what we've done -- we've adjusted what I call the *output indicators*, or the first seven indicators in Instruction and Program. They look at student achievement; they look at chronic absenteeism; they look at high school graduation rate; they look at total population proficiency and growth, and subgroup proficiency and growth. This past year, leading into our new QSAC implementation for 2018-2019, we did an equivalency -- because this is a really a living document, it's very flexible -- we did an equivalency that allowed over 20 districts to hit the 80 percent mark in Instruction and Program. These are districts that, heretofore, could not meet that 80 percent mark. But because of the new indicators we used --

the indicators that are now implementing this year -- 20-plus districts were able to hit the 80 percent mark in Instruction and Program.

So the Commissioner, quite rightly, indicated that more districts, legitimately and authentically, will hit all five areas and be recommended by the Administration to the State Board for certification as *high-performing districts*.

Additionally, three State-operated school districts, over our tenure, were able to hit that 80 percent mark in Instruction and Program; the most challenging for these districts. Every district, every State-operated school district eventually hit the 80 percent mark in all the four areas. That challenge in Instruction and Program was overcome by equivalencies the State Board approved, under the direction of the Commissioner and DOE, at Newark, Paterson, and Jersey City. So those districts have gone into transition, a two-year transition phase to come out of a State-operated school district, because of hitting all five areas in QSAC. And we're very happy with that.

This slide indicates that continual improving cycle over the last 10 years. If you note the 2014 indicator, we actually-- Again it's a living document. We put a differentiated approach, where districts that had been high-performing in the three years hence -- because it's a three-year cycle; every districts goes through a full QSAC review every three years. And we evaluate, approximately, 200 districts through our County Offices every three years; but some of those districts that were high-performing -- we let them look -- we gave them an opportunity to look at 23 indicators, most of which were in Instruction and Program, because it had to do with the output indicators, student achievement. And if they met the mark in 20 of

those 23 indicators, they were given a pass for another three years. And we worked-- That's just another indication of our willingness to work with districts to ensure they're correctly recognized for the work that they are doing.

And I, for one, am very proud of the New Jersey Public School System, under your leadership. We know we rank very high across the country; and even if -- if you separated New Jersey out, we would rank high internationally. And I can't help but think that, because of QSAC, we've been able to put a foundation in place. Remember, the Commissioner said, "These are minimal indicators." But we've put a foundation in place, over the last 10 years, so that many -- most of our districts can rightly be recognized as high-performing.

And how do we do that? We wanted to clarify-- If you look at this slide, we wanted to be understandable. So how have we clarified our indicators? We developed, this past year, a User Manual that addresses every one of the 104 indicators that I mentioned earlier. So when a district does their self-assessment -- because that's what we begin with; we begin with a self-assessment -- and what the County Offices do is simply validate that self-assessment. And that self-assessment is made up by internal and external stakeholders, including board of education members. And before that is submitted to the County Office for its review, the local boards of education also validate that self-assessment.

But when a district is wondering about a particular indicator, they can go to this User Manual as a research tool; drill down and find out exactly what they need to do to hit the mark for that particular indicator. We also use that User Manual in our annual training of those 200 school

districts that I mentioned earlier, before they even begin their self-assessment.

So the County Offices of Education -- a good six to eight months of its work is really devoted to ensuring good engagement with our school districts within our respective counties. And I think that -- again, going back to Senator Rice's remark -- builds capacity; not only as a product, but through the process. I can't overemphasize that. We've been doing this for 10 years -- a continual process. Every three years our districts go through this process.

And what have we aligned it with? We've aligned it with the other Federal accountability standards, like ESSA. You know, as a public entity, we know that we are going to be held accountable through a monitoring process. So we've aligned it with ESSA. And what did we align with? We aligned with growth for our total population of students; our subgroup population of students, to ensure that not only are our school districts being recognized for absolute achievement or proficiency -- which is a high mark -- but also for its growth towards that mark. Because that's what education is all about, isn't it? It's about student growth.

We've also implemented our chronic absenteeism as an indicator of school culture. Many of our school districts have greater than a 10 percent chronic absenteeism rate, so we factored that in, in alignment with ESSA. And we've streamlined it. I've already mentioned that we've gone from 300, to about 110, down to 104. And by the way, we've added a lot of indicators into the area of Personnel, because our Legislators implemented TEACHNJ, which has been a great innovation to help us evaluate our teachers in a very coordinated, criteria-based way. So we've

had to implement that, and that put a lot more indicators in the area of Personal.

So even with that, we're still down to 104 indicators, and I'm proud of that.

Right now, I'd like to turn it over to Paula Bloom. She's our Acting Director of Field Services.

Paula

P A U L A B L O O M: Good morning.

SENATOR RICE: Good morning.

MS. BLOOM: Yes; so what we've been talking about is increased engagement in the whole process -- with the development of the indicators that we're using to monitor, all the way through the User Manual that Bob mentioned.

So some of the things I wanted to highlight that we've done over the past year-and-a-half to engage school districts, are listed on this slide with a goal to increase stakeholder engagement, increase stakeholder feedback. We've met with, as Bob said, over 200 educators and administrators. We've met with many New Jersey professional organizations. We've engaged in stakeholder feedback within the Department, so we have other divisions within the Department that have a stake in QSAC to ensure that districts are compliant with whatever regulation they feel is necessary.

We created a QSAC User Manual to improve consistency of monitoring among the 21 County Offices of Education. So not only will it help the districts understand what we'll be looking at for verification of

their self-assessment, but it will also help the County Offices understand and be consistent with what they are looking at for verification purposes.

And we've also, as Bob mentioned, conducted comprehensive technical assistance, and training, and orientation to the new QSAC indicators with all of our districts within the 21 County Offices of Education.

And we also continually try to find ways to support our districts around QSAC.

Further, this just reemphasizes that we've conducted a lot of stakeholder engagement throughout the state. We've gone to every corner of the state to gather feedback, both on the indicators that are now in our code, as well as the User Manual.

And I just want to, briefly, go over the QSAC process.

So every district is in one of three cohorts monitored every three years. So that's about 200, as Bob mentioned, in each cohort. The first step in the monitoring process is a district self-assessment. They must look at the indicators and determine whether or not they've complied with the language of the indicators, and be prepared to show us how they've complied, through our verification process. The verification process, to ease the burden on school districts, has been developed in a way that we'll be able to do it remotely as much as possible, without interfering in a school day. Where we need to, the County Offices will go in and meet with individuals of the school district to gather more verification if necessary.

Lastly, the districts are placed on a continuum. QSAC is the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum. So within the Continuum, there are two points to distinguish: If a district scores below

50 percent and if a district scores above 80 percent. Any place in between 50 and 80 percent is an opportunity for the Department to provide support in helping a district achieve high-performing status through the development of a District Improvement Plan. The District Improvement Plan stems from the indicators that the District did not receive points for and, therefore, fell below 80 percent.

So we don't look at it as a failing; it's more of an opportunity to provide support and increase the capacity of a school district in achieving high-performing status in all five areas of QSAC.

I kind of went over this, so I jumped ahead.

So this just reiterates what happens when a district scores above 80; they're certified as high-performing. And I want to note that *high-performing* just means that the district has met the minimum requirements of district performance. So the term itself could be deceiving to some individuals, or school districts, or board members. But *high-performing* is a statutory term; and we just want to reiterate that it's the minimum requirement for district performance. And then again, when the district scores below 50 and 79 percent, they develop a District Improvement Plan with the support of the Department.

The next slide is going-- I'm going to pass on to Bob, and these are the districts that score below 50 percent in any particular area.

MR. BUMPUS: So I was a history teacher as well, and I was pleased to hear Senator Rice talk about his involvement in that fateful summer, probably back in 2006 or 2007, when QSAC was put together.

And I know there were post-secondary people at the table; those 40 men and women who put that together.

I just want to thank you, Senator Rice, for that work; because again, I'm a proponent of this, because I believe it provides a pathway, a road map. And some of it, I guess, was precipitated by the notion of, "How do we get out of State intervention?"

And if you look at this slide, you'll see that it takes a lot to get into that status of State intervention. QSAC was probably invented, by some degree, to provide a pathway out of State intervention. And we are there; three out of the four districts that have encountered State intervention are now in their two-year transition plan, and we're very happy about that. We did, as I mentioned earlier, have to provide an equivalency in the area of Instruction and Program. But the equivalency that we did went through extensive vetting at the Governor's Office and within the DOE. And it met muster, and the State Board did approve those equivalencies.

I mentioned this earlier that, you know, further evidence of, I think, success of this process over the 10 years is that 70 percent of our districts, on a routine basis, hit all five of those minimum requirements. And the ones that don't -- it's because of these output indicators in Instruction and Program. If you take away that fifth one, like 95 percent of our districts hit the mark in foundational areas of good organization in school districts.

If you look at the next slide, these are some comparisons from the old Instruction and Program indicators that we've extensively talked about this morning, and the new indicators. So we put in there, on the right-hand column -- you notice we put in State assessments, because we go through many types of variations of State assessments. We don't want to

have to go back and amend our regulations every time we change from PARCC to the next iteration.

It's based on proficiency, overall, for subgroups, as I mentioned. But also, if you look at that third and fourth bullet, we put in there alignment with the ESSA, or the Federal plan for the State of New Jersey. I'm very happy about the student growth percentile; because as I said earlier, that gives recognition for growth of students in some of our most severely challenged districts. Chronic absenteeism is a challenge in those districts. To put that on the radar -- I think we're going to see a lot of working with the County Offices to build a capacity to improve chronic absenteeism for our more challenged districts.

DR. REPOLLET: Let me just stop you for a second.

MR. BUMPUS: Sure.

DR. REPOLLET: So just to intervene.

So as Bob indicated, you look at the indicators of July 2018, versus the previous indicators. I can honestly say, as a former Superintendent, I look at the left side and I say, "That's a tool that is set up to catch you," right? Because when you are in districts that are low-performing districts -- as the State would say, *perpetual low student achievement* -- the bottom for you is extremely low. But if you're doing great things such as building capacity, as the Senator said; you're looking at Governance; your Board is starting to do the right thing; you're looking at Personnel -- however, you're going to struggle for years. And my colleagues will talk today, I'm sure; you're going to struggle for years to get to the point where you are "seen proficient," right? When you're looking at 10s and 20s in the test scores, getting up to 85 is a herculean task to do within three years.

But the new model allows us to kind of look at the growth of the student. And I think sometimes we tend to forget-- I'm more student-centered in my approach in how I treat things, and how I look at them through my lens. And you'll see that, because of that growth percentile, a lot of districts that in the previous years have done great things -- but may not have been labeled a *high-performing school district* because of Instruction and Programming -- but yet, when they revamped the entire curriculum, when they put teachers in place and put educators in place, and do all the things that they need to do and they show growth, they're not getting recognized.

So I think out of today we're talking about this -- and my colleagues will probably talk about it more -- that is the most important piece that we see that's different from the previous QSAC.

As you said before, we're constantly-- It's a continuum. We talk about ACE, Assess and Create, which is a model we use to look at ourselves continuously; this is the way that we're going to get better. And I'm sure in three years we've going to find other areas, such as chronic absenteeism -- other areas that we need to improve on. But I want to just, really, kind of highlight that area right there, and that's the change. And I hope that my colleagues today-- Because that equivalency waiver, measuring in those growth percentiles, allows districts -- such as Newark, such as Patterson, such as Camden, and a lot of districts in between -- to move to the next level and not be failed, and not be considered a low-performing district.

MR. BUMPUS: Thank you, Commissioner.

The next slide, in Personnel -- we had a lot of changes to this, as I mentioned, because of the enactment of TEACHNJ and the regulations of AchieveNJ. Go down those bullets -- you'll notice that it's going from *compliance* to *support*. We really want to build capacity of our evaluator's within school districts to evaluate with a greater inter-rater agreement. In fact, we're doing that as well with QSAC. We did two simulations -- one with Cherry Hill and one with Somerville -- just to help us get on a 0.8 or a 0.9 inter-rater agreement. That's a very high inter-rater agreement.

So what we've done with AchieveNJ is put them into the QSAC model to ensure that it's implemented with fidelity. We believe that this is really an important element.

If you look at that next-to-the last bullet, it might be -- this may be one reason why a lot of money was wasted in some of our State-operated school districts. We want to ensure that there's a legitimate position control roster, so there are no phantom teachers out there, or phantom educators; that everyone is aligned with a position control roster. So we've factored that into our Personnel area as well.

And we want to continue with very important compliance activities, like criminal history checks and physical exams for incoming teachers.

DR. REPOLLET: And just another thing. We talk about-- Rater reliabilities is an area-- I think Assemblyman Caputo, we talked about making sure that districts aren't discriminated on based off their zip code -- I'm just paraphrasing something -- where you have some districts-- We're now trying to ensure that our Department, and individuals who work within those County Offices, see through the lens of what the manual

indicates. We want individuals from Cape May all the way up to Sussex County to be able to look at education, look at these five areas, and come up with the same assessment. I think in the past, when you look at districts that are coming, you'll say, "Oh, wow, the training is different," because if you speak to one educator in one county-- Because educators talk; we will get together and say, "What did you do? How did you--" And they'll talk about those things. So what we want to do is-- So we're now making sure that our individuals get quality professional development. In the past, the professional development may have been sporadic at best. Now it's more sustained to make sure that the rate of reliability, when we go into a school district, is the same no matter what zip code you want. So that is one of the areas I wanted to, kind of, just talk about, as far as what we're going to do to get better to ensure that districts are getting their fair share.

MR. BUMPUS: And before I pass it to Paula to conclude our presentation, I just want to mention that this Commissioner has emphasized the County Offices so that we're fully staffing our County Offices. Remember, this work really emanates from the County Offices.

So I want to thank the Commissioner, publicly, for doing that. We're well on our way. I think we have only three counties that don't have an Executive County Superintendent, as opposed to, maybe, 12 or 15 prior. So we're making really good strides there under his leadership.

Paula will conclude our presentation.

MS. BLOOM: So Instruction and Program and Personnel were the largest changing areas for our newest QSAC. So this slide just summarizes what would be found in the areas of Governance, Fiscal, and Operations.

And that would, really, conclude our information for you today.

DR. REPOLLET: Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Okay; so we're going to -- of course, the Commissioner is here, and I know you may have to leave -- give our members a chance to ask some questions.

But let me just say a couple of things mentioned. And I'm happy to hear you say, Commissioner, more or less, that you give us some credit. The one thing that Dr. Bolden and I argued, along with a few others, when we put together QSAC-- And those indicate how we measured. And we said that -- and we saw the effect of what happened, because we were right, but we never got it.

And so when you start talking about 80 percent and above, 80 percent and below, what happened was when you take a district like Newark, and you go in there, and you look at the scores, and you say, "Okay, in this particular category of indicators, you are 40 percent." And then, a few months later, you're at 60 percent -- we never got credit for it.

And then we reach 80 percent, and then 90 percent; the State will come in and change the scores to give us a failure. We knew that was because they wanted to rip the money off. There has to be something in place to say, "You cannot change scores," okay? They wanted to control budgets. We can document that; we called for an investigation, some of the people here. I took 22 Legislators, and lawyers, and Civil Rights leaders to go see Arne Duncan to investigate what was going on; it never happened. We asked the State Attorney General to investigate. We asked the Department -- the Board to do their job. We asked the Commissioner; no one did that.

So you have to ensure that there's integrity in the process; and that there is credit given when we have to intervene for those improvements.

Also I want to mention, for the record -- because this is factual stuff, okay? -- is that you have to hold County Superintendents, these Super-Superintendents, accountable. They're political folks; and in Newark, I can tell you that they actually took the school assets, the school buildings-- They manipulated stuff through EDA, and charters, and everything else; that we asked for an investigation. That's where the Pink Hula Hoop came up.

But when you look at the process that the attorneys looked at, and we went to Arne Duncan on, there had to be things approved by the County Superintendents in order to-- And it was never done -- at least they claim they never approved it -- which means that they couldn't have moved forward, but they did anyway, with the process. And that was, like, \$25 million from EDA. I mean, it was just a lot of crazy stuff.

Those of us on the Joint Committee, and me, personally -- who's been involved with this from day one, takeover to where we are now; and seen things that are real that everybody turns their heads on -- we're hoping we have a Department of Education Commissioner who is going to maintain integrity. If that means bucking the system and personally going to the Feds if we see any improprieties, then we will do that.

And I think that you're the person for that, and I think the Governor is committed to that.

So I think those two things are important as we move forward. If not, regardless of what we do with QSAC, it's not going to work because

of a bunch of political bosses, and people behind the scenes, and a bunch of money folks; which is going to continue to hurt this corrupt state.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: (off mike) All right.

SENATOR RICE: So Assemblyman--

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I was the one-- You told me to be a nice guy. (laughter) And you put some gray hairs on my head, taking me all over the country with these investigations.

You know, I think you have to know a little bit about the history. And I think the Senator is correct when he tries to bring his perspective, because he worked so hard on these legislative proposals originally.

You know, the Department of Education -- and I'm not talking about the present Administration -- historically, because I worked there many years ago, they had hands-off in Newark. The County Office never really had much jurisdiction in dealing with the City of Newark. That was done directly with the Department. We were all told -- except for me, because I had to do an investigation -- prior to me that they -- "Don't interact," okay? And that was a very sad situation, because the County Superintendent's Office became very weak because of that. You can't have those standards where you deal with Caldwell as a County Superintendent, but when it comes to Newark -- because Newark happens to be Essex County and politically charged at the time -- that you don't deal with the future of the children who are being educated there. So that was always a major problem.

And now we've pushed forward the camera; let's push it forward to today. I'm pleased that we see that we have a more authentic evaluation with the variables that have been inserted into the process. But the weakness that I see -- and I want to be convinced otherwise -- is even though the County Superintendent legislation has been changed, where they now are Executive County Superintendents, basically representing the Commissioner of Education in that county; have the staff, as has been stated here, to do the monitoring. Because I can self-evaluate all I want. But if I don't have someone to monitor the process and validate that, probably the integrity that Ron is talking about will not occur. And then you'll have these vague pictures of what occurs and what does not occur; basic differences in how these things are viewed.

So I understand that you want to staff the County Offices with a higher propensity of people who should be placed there. But they have to have the training; they have to be respected too. Because some of those people have less experience than the people in the local districts who end up solving these problems. They're going there to learn, because they don't know what they're doing either. So in other words, when they go to the local district -- with all these mandates, as we talked about before in other issues -- most of the time it's the LEAs who show and demonstrate how to practically solve many of the problems or the mandates that have to be implemented. This has to be merged. The people at the County level -- if they're going to be charged with the monitoring process -- have to be able to know when to provide the technical assistance from the Department or from whatever agency that's necessary; and to work with people cooperatively in the local district. Otherwise, this is where we end up,

revamping things 10 years later; having districts labeled failures, when they shouldn't be labeled failures; or they should be labeled failures, and they're labeled successful. You have to remove all this subjectivity out of it, and get people back into the process of solving educational problems.

And you only do that when there's no fear, when there's an open process, when people can join hands and say, "Yes, I know about this; I can help you." Because if that doesn't occur, people back off and get defensive. And then what occurs -- I hate to bring up Newark all the time -- what's occurred in Newark has been a travesty for the kids. And even though the intent was good, in terms of providing alternative education, what the community went through and what kids had to go through, in terms of the Stater takeover -- that should be investigated, okay? And I'm glad that it's been cleared out. We have some good people who have survived it.

But personally, that -- as we talked about, as Ron mentioned -- the integrity of the system is most important. If there is no integrity in the system, then people distrust it; they're not going to buy into it and they're going to do their own thing. And that's what we have to avoid.

So rather than a question -- it's really, basically -- if you want to answer in terms of what your plans are, in terms of the staffing, I'll be glad to hear it.

But I've seen that happen before -- that staff has gotten larger, it's been reduced, it's been eliminated. They've gone to Regional Educational Centers -- everything changes from year to year, based upon whatever the needs are of some political force, one way or the other. And I'm not someone who is not familiar with the political process; but I know

what should take place, in terms of providing the best education we can for the kids who we're charged with.

So I'll leave it open to you.

DR. REPOLLET: So one of the first tasks, when I walked in January 29 -- I think the question was, "What type of professional development are you doing at the Department?" Because, as you stated before, and I'll say this-- And my attitude has changed a little bit, being here 10 months. But we felt, as local education agencies, that we knew what was going on in the field of education more than -- I can say not the Department, but those individuals who interface with the field, such as the County Office, such as the Regional Coordinators as well.

So those are some things that I came with my own biases, indicating we need to really look at how we evaluate districts in these zip codes -- right? -- because, at times, people thought it was (*sic*) fair.

So one of the challenges we had for the team was, we need to empower our County Offices; not by staff, but by professionalism, right? Not by staff, but by capacity. We need to make sure we have individuals in there-- So if you are a County Specialist -- right? -- you understand educational pedagogy. If you are a finance person, the County BA, you understand finances. If you are a child study -- a County Child Study, you understand the laws. So our goal is to make sure we get that.

However, what we've done is ensure that not only just those areas of expertise, but the County Administrators themselves -- that they go through a training. Because like you said before, we wanted to make sure that when they go into a building, I don't want to go in there as a Department of Education; and everyone looks at us and says, "Well, we

know more than you.” I want us to be the experts, right? We’re the State education agency; it’s our job to be the experts.

So that’s when we talk about fully staffing. And what we did was we directed those individuals from the RAC. So we all know if you’ve been a former Abbott district, or you’re a Comprehensive Targeted School, you understand the RACs, right? So what we’ve done is that we dismantled and restructured the RAC to fit current educational systems today.

We spent six months out in the field; our Field Services has been to all 21 counties, and met with all 21 County Roundtable Offices and Superintendents; spoke to individuals; went into schools; had conversations. And as of January, we’re going to have a RAC that’s gone from 14 -- going from 40 individuals to about 14 individuals, to be more efficient and lean and be more experts in their field. Because we know it’s important that we have those individuals who are not going in with a stick. Our attitude is we’re going to go in with the olive branch. However, because we’re a State education agency, at times we may have to have the stick, but we’re not going to lead with it at all.

Our goal is to make sure that we go in and say, “How can we become partners; how can we collaborate?” And that’s why you’re going to see a lot of collaboration, a lot of engagement. As I said, we’ve been to 21 counties; we’ve been engaged with everything, from charter schools to assessment, because we know-- And me, as a practitioner, understands the experts that we have out there. So if I can merge the expertise in those individuals in the field, with the expertise we have here, and some stakeholders who have expertise in areas, then we can actually get and solve a lot of problems.

I think, at times, we kind of work in isolation; but if we all look at our student-centered approach and make sure that, collectively, like you're doing today to solve problems -- is best for our students. And that's the direction the Department is going. So when I talk about the Department of 2.0, I'm talking about *progressive*, meaning a mind shift, a growth mindset. I'm talking about *adapted* being adapted to the needs of our students; and a *response* -- a response to the needs of our districts and our community.

So that's where we are right now, moving forward.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Just as a follow-up: The technical assistance part -- how strong are we in terms of providing, you know, quick response in terms of dealing with -- providing that assistance to a local district?

DR. REPOLLET: So I'm glad you brought that up, because we've restructured our Field Services to answer some of those questions.

We have created two new offices: an Office of Professional Learning; we created an Office of Professional Development; and we created an Office of Civic and Social Engagement. We even now have a tool, starting January, when you contact the Department of Education; and within 48 hours, someone is going to get back to you, give you direction, give you some advice, and some supports that you need to make sure-- I think that, over the last six to seven months, I think the field has seen a shift in how the Department responds to their needs.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Thank you, sir.

DR. REPOLLET: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: Senator O'Scanlon.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: Commissioner, thank you for being here.

DR. REPOLLET: How are you doing, sir?

SENATOR O'SCANLON: And thank all of you for that presentation.

It definitely does sound like we're moving in the right direction. The idea of focusing on -- I think each one of you mentioned it today -- shifting the focus; rather on *gotcha* or, "How can we catch you up?" and have that be the message communicated to Administrators, it's "How can we help you? How can we figure out areas where, maybe, you're weak, we can help you perform?" And that's what we're all here for, right?

DR. REPOLLET: Yes.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: Because, ultimately, that translates to better education for the students we're all supposed to be serving.

So I appreciate that very much.

I did check in with an Administrator, who is very close to me, in a school district that has challenges -- this morning on the way in, knowing that this person -- and they just went through QSAC, an assessment -- knowing that this person would not mince words (laughter). If there was a problem, still, with your system, I would hear about it.

And she had nothing but good things to say. Her District was enabled to pass, and it was probably one of those districts now (indiscernible); I don't know that number but I -- just praise throughout. So I know for a fact, in appeal directly from a person I trust, that what you're telling us all today is true, and that's really encouraging to me.

Commissioner, thank you for being so responsive to my office. When you came in, we had an initial discussion. But we really are -- we're a pretty high-maintenance office; we're reaching out to departments on a regular basis. You guys have been nothing but responsive to my staff, and I appreciate that.

One thing, for the record -- I know the answer to this; I just want to make sure it's on the record -- you did a great job letting us know a lot more districts have met our standards. But we just need for the record to reflect that that's because the students are actually performing better, not because we're lowering the bar and helping people get over it. I just want to make sure we said that, overtly, because I know that's what you're trying to say. It just didn't come completely through directly in your presentation.

But it sounds like we're definitely headed in the right direction, philosophically and practically, on the ground; and I appreciate that.

DR. REPOLLET: Thank you.

MR. BUMPUS: Thank you.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: I'm going to have two members-- I want to say something before they speak, because my job is to maintain the substance and the integrity of the process. So I'm not the most loved Legislator in the State House, okay? (laughter)

SENATOR O'SCANLON: Except by present company.
(laughter)

SENATOR RICE: Yes--

SENATOR O'SCANLON: We love him; you know that.
(laughter)

SENATOR RICE: So QSAC -- the intent of QSAC was to create a better quality of education for all these students and make sure things work; and therefore, to prepare them to go to higher education, whether it's on the vocational side or the college side. So therefore, the connection between QSAC, and the public school system, and community colleges, and colleges, becomes very important. There's a direct relationship there.

And so when you talk about these County Superintendents, you have to make sure -- because they are political, and the relationships-- That's fine; if they want relationships, that's fine. But they are held accountable for what they are supposed to do. Because if you look at-- Newark is a good example of what we went through, and all the stuff I said before about test scores being changed. That was all political stuff; it's all about money. And in the meanwhile, no one in the Legislature wanted to pay attention, because it doesn't harm them. And then some were doing things in their Districts that were benefitting them; they didn't want to be a part of pushing that button.

But Essex County College also had a problem; and that's our feeder school from the QSAC schools -- district schools, okay? The problem at Essex County College was financial. The Superintendent sits on their Board. So how can you have a financial problem that's being investigated -- that type of problem, where people are making complaints all over the place -- and yet, it's not picked up until the agencies got involved from law enforcement? You understand where I'm coming from? That doesn't make any sense. And maybe, too, Superintendents shouldn't sit on the County School Boards; because they have to, eventually, oversight that stuff.

So you need to take a look at that area and come back and address it; because we are supposed to be addressing -- and I haven't got to it -- how we do the appointments. Because, traditionally, these appointments are basically coming from the County Executives and people like that. And maybe that's not the best way, etc., okay?

But, you know, I hate to give you that news, and I know the people here may not like it; and folks who I'm talking about -- they know who they are -- may be offended. But I don't care, because the kids are gangbanging and dying every day.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: (off mike)
That's right.

SENATOR RICE: And we're not doing education; we're losing a lot of taxpayer dollars. And as long as those kids are failing out there-- The taxpayers can throw them out of office; if I have to raise the dollars to keep trying to feed it to them, to try to get it back on track, I'm going to do it. And we shouldn't have to do that; we should be able to manage a lot better.

So with that being said, let me go to Assemblywoman Egan Jones; and then to Assemblyman Wimberly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Thank you.

I admire the tenacity of Senator Rice; and I'm glad to be among his Committee members here.

On behalf of Assemblywoman Jasey, my colleague -- who I spoke with last evening -- I have a couple of questions that you've really already answered, but I just want to affirm them for her that we're doing that.

And one is, how does QSAC align with Federal accountability indicators? And I think you indicated, with ESSA, that we have worked that in. Is that -- that's correct, right?

DR. REPOLLET: Yes.

MR. BUMPUS: Yes, I had mentioned in my presentation that we did an alignment with ESSA, particularly in the area of including growth, that mSGP metric, with subgroups and total population groups; and also chronic absenteeism. So chronic absenteeism, in ESSA, was our additional indicator, and it addresses culture. So we had to find a metric that might give us some indication on how well the school was welcoming to parents and welcoming to students; and ways and means to get those kids in school. We know that the longer they're in school, under a good instruction, the more they're going to learn. So we wanted to look at that as our cultural indicator in ESSA, and we put that into QSAC.

We went through an elaborate cross-divisional, intra-divisional process when we developed this most recent iteration of QSAC to make sure that alignment was very tight. It's those two areas where we really tightened it up tremendously.

DR. REPOLLET: And that is big, especially with consolidated monitoring, which is all the Title Funds. So now you have the Title Funds, looking at how you're appropriate through the finances and the students; and now you have the QSAC. So we, kind of, looked at those together; so now if I'm going out and looking at different indicators *here*, then you know I'm going to meet the same indicators *here* in a consolidated monitoring report. And those are the two big tools that districts (indiscernible); one, you have to give money back, and you have corrective action plan; this one

here, if you don't do well in efficiency or oversight, then you have to have a District Improvement Plan. So we kind of looked at those areas where it was just part of that.

MR. BUMPUS: One other area, if I may--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Sure.

MR. BUMPUS: It was the tiered interventions and support. Because we had to make sure there was a tiered intervention system, not only for students as individuals, but also for our curriculum (indiscernible). We wanted to make sure that we were using data well to inform our instruction to make sure that all the standards were being addressed, and to make sure the students who were struggling -- we didn't lose them in the process. We wanted to indicate that really early on so we could provide interventions.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: There were four school districts in the state that were taken over, correct?

MR. BUMPUS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: And three are now working their way--

DR. REPOLLET: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: --out of that.

DR. REPOLLET: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: So it is only the Camden School District that still--

DR. REPOLLET: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: --remains under a State takeover plan.

DR. REPOLLET: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Correct?

MR. BUMPUS: And they're the most recent.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Right.

DR. REPOLLET: And we're working with the Interim Superintendent to create a plan to get them to the point where Paterson and where Newark were in the previous years. So we're actually working on that.

So when we talk about interventions, we've been using QSAC as a way for us to put the intro; and then, as we move along through this model and through consolidated report, and the different presentations and different metrics, we get to the point where we can make, hopefully in a couple of years, to make that same request to the State Board to transition Camden out.

So in our minds, the Department of Education-- Like I said, when you talk about a stronger and fairer -- and the Governor talks about that, that means equity across the board for all districts. So that means that, right now, we're looking at working with Katrina; we will be more, in the next coming months, to really try to get to a plan to get to a place where we can transition.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Excellent.

Another question is-- And I was personally delighted to hear that there is much more significant involvement by the County Superintendents. I thought that was significant and appropriate.

But to the Chairman's question about there being some political issues with those positions, would you ever consider a private outside entity doing these reviews?

DR. REPOLLET: Right now, I wouldn't consider-- Right now, as far as oversight on my part, and accountability on my part, I know that Lovell down in Camden is working; and I think Katrina can speak to that, the Interim Superintendent McCombs can speak in regards to her transition, and how our County Superintendent has been working hand-in-hand with her to ensure that we get to that level.

So it's all about accountability on our end. And we're creating a system where we have checks and balances throughout there; and we also have goals. So if they are meeting their goals and we hold them accountable, then, I mean-- Of course we understand this is politics in general. But we do know that we can have a system in place that would have checks and balances to ensure that we are achieving our goals as a Department of Education.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Well, I have to tell you that, as a legislator, along with my colleagues, we have a lot of confidence in the Acting Superintendent in Camden; and are delighted to have her working as hard as she is, every single day--

DR. REPOLLET: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: --from the day of her first stepping into the role.

This is another question from my colleague. Is the facility information from QSAC shared with the Department of Education's School Facility Section? And is this, in any way, used to help determine which

districts are most in need of, and able to support, construction and repair projects? And if not, why not?

MR. BUMPUS: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: I like a short answer. Yes; good. (laughter) Now comes the explanation of the “yes,” right?

DR. REPOLLET: I think “yes” is fine. (laughter)

MR. BUMPUS: So we have two facility checklists: one is 100 percent checklist, one is an 80 percent checklist. We also have a five-year plan that has to be -- a long-range facilities plan that has to be renewed every five years. And from that long-range facilities plan, many-- And it touches maintenance, and it touches security; it touches every aspect--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Right.

MR. BUMPUS: --of facility maintenance.

That is what generates-- And it includes a demographic study as well. That’s what generates plans to improve facilities, going forward -- even if you go out for a referendum. Those facility checklists are done on an annual basis--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Annually.

MR. BUMPUS: --so even if you’re not going through QSAC--

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: You’re still going--

MR. BUMPUS: --you need to put a Statement of Assurance in to make sure that your School Safety Team and your School Facility Team have gone through the facilities on a consistent basis.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Thank you.

One other question; it may be timely or not. But we’ve seen a plan put out about school districts and some consolidation. How would

that help to do a better job of evaluating, if we were to reduce the number of school districts in New Jersey?

DR. REPOLLET: I think the rubrics we have in place, the tools we have in place are still the same; so I don't think that would change. But, however, we are hearing rumblings about it; so we have some internal conversations -- nothing to the point where it's a priority. But we are looking at ways, internally, from a legal standpoint, so we can be prepared to come to the legislators and offer our advice.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Thank you.

That's all, Chairman.

SENATOR RICE: Assemblyman Wimberly.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Thank you, Chairman.

Commissioner, good morning -- still, I believe.

DR. REPOLLET: Good morning.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: First, I want to thank you for all the work you've done in my District, in Paterson; and being so accessible to me and the other legislators when it involves Paterson.

A couple of quick questions. One question is -- and I think this needs to be made loud and clear, probably to not just my District -- what could prevent a school from returning to local control?

DR. REPOLLET: So you look at -- you have-- If you're in takeover, I think it's, what, three years status? A three year status. Right now, I have not been in a situation where the (indiscernible) has taken over, so I don't know the politics behind it, or the rationale. But I've been looking at-- The law indicates that your failure on QSAC and consolidated monitoring report; you're looking at your finances.

So a couple of things: Finance -- misappropriation of funds, what you're doing with funds; and Instructional and Programming and Governance. I think those are the three major areas that, if you're failing in Governance, you're failing in Financing, and you're failing in Instruction and Program, then that means kids are not learning. And that means that the resources that are allocated for those students are not going to those students. That means-- So that means that the Governance is not doing their fiduciary responsibility to ensure that they put practices, and policies, and regulations in place to benefit kids.

So me, if it comes to my table, those are the three areas I'm looking at highly, because I want to make sure that we can provide a thorough and efficient education. But it has to be over a period of time, right? Because we understand there are ebbs and flows, and things are cyclical when it comes to education, right? So if you have, maybe, over a three-to-five year period, then there's a red flag. Red flags should go away after the second year. There's always a red flag because, as a State agency, we owe it to our constituents and individuals out there to make sure that their taxpaying dollars are going towards a quality education, and not being misappropriated.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Well, Commissioner, my concern, like Senator Rice's, is outside interference.

DR. REPOLLET: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And that's Governance. When you have a school district that you couldn't find anybody to run for School Board; and once we are going back to local control, we have 20 people running for the School Board and most of them couldn't find an

address to one school -- that's a concern that I think the State needs to look at.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: (off mike) Yes, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Because when you have outsiders trying to run your school district for financial reasons or for political reasons, the children will lose every time.

DR. REPOLLET: Yes, yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: That's the bottom line. And as a legislator, in particular in my District, that's something that I will make your office aware of--

DR. REPOLLET: Please do.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --because that is a major concern. Because you have to look at these people who are elected to these offices. If they are not holding up their responsibilities in these offices, they should be removed from office.

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: (off mike) All right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: So if you only show up during campaign season, and you have not been to one committee meeting, you have missed 8 votes out of 10 votes, then how are you really accountable when it only comes to, "I'm voting for the Superintendent; I'm voting for the budget."

So these are the things that we need to be made aware of.

DR. REPOLLET: And I am definitely confident that in the districts that are gaining local control, the highly skilled professionals

which we are going to bring on or we're looking to bring on in Jersey City, and we're looking to bring on in Paterson. But I'm very pleased with the work that's being done with Ms. Nelms; she's a highly skilled professional. I think the guise that she gives as a Superintendent, and the guise that she gives the Board kind of keeps them as instructed.

We're not going to tell you what to do; we're going to advise you. And if you go down that track, there's going to be-- We talk about the olive branch, and we talk about the stick. So if you go down that track that we advise you on--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Well, I'm talking about the stick.

DR. REPOLLET: Yes (laughter). But we're always going to make sure that we're having--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes.

DR. REPOLLET: --those honest conversations. I think that--

So we're going to use the model in Newark, in regards to the expertise that Ms. Nelms is doing, and making sure that-- And she'll probably oversee all of the highly skilled professionals. Because we talk about making sure we have one lens when we look at evaluations; and that's going to also tell me how we build capacity.

So I think it's very important that we get the right people in those positions to ensure that red flags go up a lot sooner than later.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Okay. And I don't mind -- I will offer assistance; so don't worry about the red flags. You'll get (indiscernible).

On the other end, with your Department and this Administration -- I want to know where you are with charter schools and their QSAC requirements. Will they just give an evaluation; will they be held to the same standard? As you know, in many districts like Paterson and Newark, they are receiving funding that, you know, many are concerned about, because it takes away from some of the stuff that the public school kids are getting.

DR. REPOLLET: Right.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: And many of these kids are not, you know-- We have outstanding charter schools; but if you have a waiting list of 1,400, it becomes almost a system of chance, you know? So you're in a lottery system. Where are they being held at, as far as these requirements when it comes to QSAC, under your Department and this Administration?

DR. REPOLLET: Well, right now, we currently don't have them in QSAC. However, they have a rigorous evaluation, too; they do. I mean, if you look at-- We can have that conversation in the future, Chair; be able to look at that. They have a rigorous-- I think people, kind of, get a misunderstanding exactly of the tool they use, versus the tool that public schools use.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Are you comfortable with your tool?

DR. REPOLLET: Right now, I'm going through the process of evaluating everything, right? So we're currently in the middle of our charter schools. But I'm going to go on record as saying the Governor is about high-quality schools. Whether you're traditional public schools,

Renaissance, vocational schools, charter schools -- it's about high-quality schools. So tools, such as QSAC -- and we're constantly looking to make that better; the evaluation tool -- we use that.

Now, after this process, there will be a report that we're going to send out with our charter schools. And there will be action items, and those action items will be consistent. And if we hear the voice of evaluations in charter schools, then we are going to have to revisit that in phase two as we look to build that.

So it's part of the process; however, right now, we're very confident in the tool that we're using right now. I think it goes back to the fidelity of the tool. I think it goes back to the individual using the tool; I think it goes back to the political side of it as well.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Yes; and like I said, I have no problems with charters schools, or anything else. But I think any educational institution that is receiving money from the State of New Jersey--

DR. REPOLLET: Should have a single--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --they need to be evaluated fairly. And this includes parochial, private schools. If they're getting money for nursing, and busing, and for computer stuff, then they should be accountable to the DOE for what's going on. So if they have an issue there, be it outside of that, they do get money from us, contrary to what people think.

DR. REPOLLET: Yes.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: You know? So I'm glad that's on the radar for you.

And like I said, I appreciate you, thus far, as our Commissioner; and I look forward to continuing to work with you.

DR. REPOLLET: Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: So, Commissioner, we're going to thank you and your staff for coming in. I know this is going to be a long day for us, because we have a lot of testimony.

DR. REPOLLET: Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: I do want to say, for the record -- Assemblywoman Egan Jones had brought the subject up -- we are going to have a meeting, and call you back, on charter schools.

DR. REPOLLET: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: And to be quite frank about it -- and let me go on record to keep the integrity and the substance in this -- the politics of charter schools stinks as well (laughter), as well as who the big folks are nationally, versus the little folks. And so we're going to have to do something with that.

And so you can start paying attention to it now, because I think you know what I'm talking about.

DR. REPOLLET: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: Okay?

With that being said, thank you very much.

We're going to, next, call up--

DR. REPOLLET: Thank you, Chair; thank you Committee.

MR. BUMPUS: Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Sure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: We're going to, next call up Debra Bradley and Heather Moran.

And after they come up and give their testimony, then we're going to be calling up the Superintendents of these public school districts that were taken over as part of QSAC.

And so before you testify, I just want everyone to know -- the Superintendent is leaving. I know Assemblywoman Egan Jones raised some issues that the Co-Chair, Assemblywoman Mila Jasey, wanted questions answered. But she also wanted me to extend her greetings to all of you who are here; and to let you know that even though she is home, kind of recuperating from some light operations, or issues, that she's watching.
(laughter)

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: She's very present.

SENATOR RICE: All right; with that being said, Ms. Debra Bradley, Esq.

D E B R A B R A D L E Y, Esq.: Now you made me nervous.
(laughter)

SENATOR RICE: Okay; all right.

MS. BRADLEY: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee.

I'm Debbie Bradley, the Director of Government Relations for the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association.

And with me today is Heather Moran, our current President, and the Principal of Logan Middle School in Gloucester County.

I appreciate the opportunity to share the perspective of our members on the issue of New Jersey's accountability system for our public schools, NJQSAC.

The Legislature constructed the QSAC statute as a strong framework for district and school accountability in order to fulfill your role -- your constitutional role of ensuring a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout New Jersey.

We want to commend you, Senator Rice, and this Committee, for the work you've done in developing the statute, and continuing to track it, over time, as it's implemented in our districts.

Our comments -- the comments you just heard really were sort of on a macro level; we're going to bring the discussion to a micro level, in terms of what QSAC means when QSAC comes to town to a local school building.

The structure of the QSAC system provides a process to monitor district compliance with State standards, to identify struggling schools, to establish a system of tiered intervention through the Department, and to track improvement through local improvement plans.

This is an effective framework; but as has been acknowledged by the Department, there have been implementation challenges in the Department's past efforts to effectively support schools that are at risk, to monitor districts uniformly across the state, and to provide expertise and constructive feedback to struggling districts and educators.

The Department just talked about a new approach; and we welcome it, and we're seeing it ourselves. As the current Department works to establish this new approach, it's important to address, however, past

capacity issues, including the need for staff with instructional and field experience who go out to assist districts; to address the need for quality staff training at the Department level; and to establish procedures for uniform DOE monitoring approaches as they implement the system across the state.

And I think the Department just acknowledged they've made outreach efforts along this line; the User Manual being one of them. Their efforts at cross-system reliability are also important, and we applaud all of those steps.

State regulations, developed by the Department and presented and adopted by the State Board of Education through a public hearing process, provide the details of what happens at the school level and how we implement. As has been noted, the Department just recently adopted changes to our regulations that are going into effect this school year for the first time. The goals that the Department outlined were very appropriate, clarifying the indicators; aligning our multiple accountability systems at the local, State, and Federal level; simplifying the system; and eliminating redundancy so districts can actually focus their time and efforts on the instructional needs of their students. So we applaud that effort.

Our members, as I said, are just going through the system for the first time. But Heather's was one of the districts that went through the system last year.

So I'd like to turn this over to her to talk about what this meant at her school level. And then, at the end, I have a few recommendations for future consideration.

Thank you.

H E A T H E R M O R A N: Good morning; my name is Heather Moran, and I am the proud Principal of Logan Middle School in the Logan Township Public School District, as Ms. Egan Jones said, in the Deep South County of Gloucester. (laughter)

Our Pre-K to 12 District serves 861 Pre-K to 8th grade students onsite, and our high school students are served by two high schools within our County.

We are extremely proud of the academic growth we've made over the last few years in both mathematics and ELA, as measured by our State assessment. Our staff is fully committed to student growth and to our District goal of ongoing professional learning in the area of equity. Our focus has been to make our classrooms and schools more equitable for all students, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, or ability; and we are currently working to make our curriculum culturally responsive.

These changes require all hands on deck, and have collectively been the focus of our staff's instructional efforts to benefit all our students.

I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective on the new New Jersey Single Accountability Continuum and its impact on school-based instructional effort.

Let me begin by stating school principals understand the need for accountability, and we are not afraid of the hard work of any initiative or any process that has a direct, positive impact on the quality of a student's educational experience.

I also truly appreciate the efforts that are underway to balance the need for accountability with a less cumbersome and time-consuming

compliance process, though I really do believe there is some work to be done in this area.

Recently, my District was the first in our county to use the new QSAC indicators, and I am happy to share what that means at the school building level.

Extensive preparation is needed even before the process starts. Schools and district leaders need to review the 134-page QSAC manual, over and over again to become familiar with the five required sections, various indicators, and to develop a list of all the documentation needed for verification. Once a solid understanding is established, the lead Administrators assign tasks for data compilation to all district and school-based Administrators -- from the Special Services Supervisor, to the Curriculum Supervisor, to the Business Administrator, and to the building principals.

In addition, many administrative assistants are given long lists of materials to gather and label appropriately. This data is then uploaded to the NJDOE system; and this is often data that has been previously given in many, many other reports that we must do throughout the year.

Internal meetings are scheduled; and reviews of the procedures, scoring, and local materials are ongoing. And ultimately a site visit takes place after all the materials have been submitted and the checklist finalized.

This process obviously takes an enormous number of staff hours; and as you can see, it's extremely compliance-focused. Unfortunately, what it does is, it results in a major diversion of school and district effort from our instructional goals and our forward momentum on

other local goals. It prevents me, as a building-level Principal, from interacting with my staff and students in the way I normally would.

The process occupies even more time for my Curriculum Supervisor, who is truly my right-hand person when it comes to improving instruction in my building.

Planning learning activities for teachers, discussing observation results, dissecting data about individual students in need -- these are just a few examples of the things that we do on a regular basis that have truly changed what our student achievement levels are in positive ways. In a small District like mine, where everybody wears multiple hats, the QSAC process significantly impacts my ability to do these things on a regular basis.

In terms of the new QSAC system itself, there are a number of things which do positively set it apart from its predecessor. First, the use of technology. To submit documentation digitally has made the system far less cumbersome from a data collection perspective. Once an organizational structure is put in place to name documents in a formal way, people from throughout the District can help amass verification materials easily and get them to the person who is managing the process. From my perspective in the building, this was far easier than making sure physical materials were available for review.

I am also really pleased that we were able to use the most updated standardized test information, as that was the key piece in making sure that my District passed in the Curriculum and Instruction portion; and it captured the school's academic growth over the past four years.

However, there are still some clarity issues with the new QSAC system. There are places where a disconnect occurs between the documents

requested for verification and the description asked for in the short narrative piece at the end of each section.

There are times when a district collects all of the checklist pieces of documentation and then the bottom portion says, “You can have all the points if you submit these two things.”

There continues to be a great deal of redundancy between reports that are required throughout the year, and then again at QSAC -- HIB being one that pops to the top of my mind.

Finally, the Curriculum and Instruction piece of monitoring does not reflect best practices of the nature of the curriculum itself as a collaborative and changing document. Instead, QSAC requires extensive details in every curricular area, delineated and highlighted accommodations, career-ready practice, 21st century skills and technology. If a curriculum document is truly the result of teacher collaboration through the unpacking of standards, accompanied by a true study of student work product, it is never a finished product and therefore may not have every detail at that moment included. This is especially possible in a small district where you may only have one or two staff members in different areas outside of the norm of reading, writing, science, and social studies.

In closing, I do see real NJDOE efforts to improve the QSAC process. I do understand the need for a compliance process to ensure that all students in New Jersey have access to a high-quality curriculum and instruction, and a well-run and managed school system as a whole. Yet we must balance this need with the fact that the time-consuming QSAC process can sidetrack the quality conversations and instructional work that are occurring in a district.

I recommend that the NJDOE work with districts to develop an ongoing data collection system that truly eliminates redundancy. Efficiency can be enhanced through Statements of Assurance in some areas, as districts have done in the past. Compliance in these areas can be ensured through a system of spot checks, rather than a full-blown review, if the district is, in fact, meeting standards.

If such changes occur, educators can re-focus our efforts on the quality of a student's educational experience and a collaborative approach to school improvement and support. This would be a game changer for our students and schools.

Thank you for your consideration; and I will do my best to answer any questions that you may have.

Thank you for your time.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you very much.

I just want to say that I know your Mayor is very concerned; you have a very fine Mayor in Logan Township--

MS. MORAN: We do.

SENATOR RICE: --Frank Minor, who's a hands-on person.

MS. MORAN: He is.

SENATOR RICE: In fact, he was concerned about the school formula too, and he brought some things to our attention that made sense.

Let me assure you, also, that I'm directing staff to make sure that all these comments that we receive -- that, number one, they're taking notes, even though we're being transcribed. But also the written testimony be packaged and sent directly to the Commissioner so that his staff can

review. Because they did talk about redundancy and the kinds of things they're doing to cut down.

So what I'm hearing you saying is that, maybe, you have not seen that yet; and I'm not sure what it all means, okay?

MS. MORAN: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: With that being said, let me shift back to Ms. Bradley.

MS. MORAN: Thank you.

MS. BRADLEY: A few brief recommendations, in addition to Heather's comments.

The first has to deal with the Department of Ed, and what the Legislature could do to support a very real issue that we face, which is the Department's technology infrastructure. One of the reasons that we have to continually upload the same document for QSAC that we upload during the year for another program or another accountability system is that the Department's technology internally doesn't talk to one another. So you'll have one program where you're submitting data, which you have to, then, repeat again and again. So that's one issue that we wanted to bring to your attention that would actually help local school districts. Because we wouldn't be spending staff time re-filing and finding the same data over and over.

The second would be, as Heather mentioned, to develop a data collection system that's an ongoing one. So that if districts, on an annual basis, are filing certain reports -- like HIB or whatever -- it would become part of something like a portfolio that could be put on file for each district so that, over time, when QSAC monitoring system comes into play, you

have a base of information that's already on file. It would help districts identify their gaps; it would help identify issues where there are -- that need remediation locally that, in fact, could give the district a heads up before the system even starts with the Department coming in. And we think that would be something that could happen once the technology issue is addressed.

And her last point -- that a Committee of our organization and principals, who got together to talk about QSAC -- what they said was they would love the fact that the system could be a more formative system. So that by the time you went for QSAC, it wasn't a matter of just checking the boxes that you met this standard, had this process in place. Instead, that it would be something that would help the district grow itself. And having a portfolio approach, an ongoing look at our data is something that most districts do all the time anyway. But if the compliance system could actually help districts grow and be formative in nature, we think that would be a real positive piece for schools.

Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you very much.

Your recommendations -- do we have them?

MS. BRADLEY: Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: Okay; because we're not only going to give this to them right away. We're going to also make sure they get a copy of the transcript; that's the new direction for the staff, in case we haven't been doing it, throughout the rest of our (indiscernible). I don't have to say that at every meeting, okay?

MS. SAPP: Not a problem.

SENATOR RICE: All right?

Okay, thank you very much.

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you.

MS. MORAN: Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Okay, next we're--

Excuse me, before you leave.

Anyone have any questions?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GOVE: If I may, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR RICE: I'm sorry. Assemblywoman Gove; yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GOVE: Thank you; thank you all.

Again, thank you for coming and for your presentation. Because we need to hear from the Department, but we also need to hear from the people who are in the trenches; and I know that. (laughter)

So my concern is, we need to evaluate. I think we're all in agreement with that. It's just how do we get there and how to make it more efficient.

And you said there's a lot of redundancy there, and I am concerned about that. And if we can all talk to one another.

My other concern is -- because when you have a lot of these things, how much time does it take out of the teaching day and the instructional process? And that's what I'm concerned with, as a teacher. Yes, you might have to do this on the side; but at the same time, are we taking in-service days because we have to do this paperwork? Or-- That's my concern -- is the instructional. How much time does it takes out of-- Well, we hear from the principals, because you'd be rather be there than

sitting here doing paperwork. Because I think that's what you need -- the interaction.

So my concern -- and I'm not putting you on the spot; maybe I just want to publicly say this -- I'm very concerned about-- It's great to have this, and we all need it. And the portfolio approach, I think, is good because aren't we doing that to the students themselves to grad-- I did to high school for -- you know, let's create a portfolio to help them in the graduation process and in going into life.

So that's my concern -- is the instructional aspect, the redundancy; and the experts in the school can't do what they are supposed to do.

So with that being said, I'm just making that comment. I don't want to put you on the spot (laughter), but that is-- I'm just concerned about how much are you lacking now with the instructional day.

So, thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Senator O'Scanlon, and then Assemblywoman Egan Jones.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: Thank you both for being here. I've worked with your organization.

The bottom line -- just to pick up on Assemblywoman Gove -- if the resources swallowed by the assessment process itself are so voluminous and burdensome that they actually stunningly, negatively impact the quality of education that it's supposed to be assessing, that's a big problem. (laughter)

And we have heard this now for a number of years, as we've wanted to be able to compare school district to school district, which is a

big benefit to parents. So I guess my question is -- and I think it gets to what Senator Rice had mentioned before -- we can deliver transcripts and deliver these messages, but is there no mechanism where the Department -- and this isn't just this Department; the previous one too. This is not partisan at all -- but is there a mechanism where you folks get to sit down with the Department folks who are deciding what changes to make? It seems to me there should be a formula -- a mechanism there. If there isn't one, we need to all make sure we create one. I would encourage the Commissioner to create one. I think he would be more than open-minded for that.

MS. BRADLEY: I can say that there is a process. I mean, the State Board, as I said, revamps the regulations; and has just done so.

And the Department does meet with stakeholder groups. We have met, over time, on some of these issues like QSAC; and I think there has been a genuine effort. As they just indicated, the number of indicators was dramatically reduced, and they're working on some of the other concerns.

But they're responding to comments made from the field -- the fact that, you know, you live in North Jersey and South Jersey, you might have a different approach to your monitoring system is something that was raised by stakeholders. So they've come up with the User Manual; they're doing pieces to address inter-rater reliability.

So yes, there is a system for it; it's formal and informal.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: Well, that's probably good, right?

MS. BRADLEY: And this is part of the process as well.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: Okay.

As long as that exists, that's a good thing.

You mentioned technology, and our woefully inadequate investment in technology in this Department. And I'll tell you, virtually in every Department it's a real problem.

I don't know the answer, because we have a budget that is a disaster; it's a ticking time bomb. And the sooner we do things -- like the next round of reforms that Democrats and Republicans are calling for here. Until we do those things, don't count on us fixing technology, because the resources aren't there. But you're helping us understand the -- how much our failure to act to fix our budget problems genuinely affect the services we provide to our constituents, one of the key ones being the education of our kids.

Lastly, one of the reasons why you know that you've made the progress you have over the past few years -- and Heather, I heard you say *proudly* -- and you can actually know that is because of, right now, it's a PARCC assessment. So I know those are very controversial, but that's one of the ways you know, right? And look, I'm not a huge fan of over-testing, or-- But we do need to know--

MS. BRADLEY: We do need to know.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: --and that's interesting that you say that. I'm hearing from more and more teachers, more and more Administrators, how there's real value there. And we should be very careful as we proceed, with whatever reforms are going to happen, that we don't lose the, now, number of years of valuable information.

So I think-- I see you shaking your heads; I'm glad you agree. Make sure you make your voices heard, because that debate is going to be

heated. And we all need to help folks -- both sides of the aisle, both ends of the philosophical spectrum -- to understand there's value there, and not throw the baby out with the bathwater.

So, again, thanks for being here.

MS. BRADLEY: I agree.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: Very good.

SENATOR RICE: Go ahead, Assemblywoman Egan Jones.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Yes; just really a comment, and a follow-up to what the Senator just mentioned about the technology system.

My other hat in the Legislature is on the Budget Committee. And I can only tell you that, in the last budget process, we heard repeatedly from every Department about the lack of appropriate technology. And in the world we live in today, it is utterly frustrating that we have to deal with redundancies in these fields when it should be just data entry.

So I am going to ask that our Budget Chair request from every one of the departments, including the Department of Education, a budget for bringing us into the new century. You know, we're trying to teach all our children about computers, and coding, and robotics. We had robotics in the hallway yesterday, and yet we're still-- As government, we're always slower than every place else.

MS. BRADLEY: Yes, exactly.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: But it's time to move forward on this. Because no child's education should suffer because we have to take time to reevaluate ourselves.

So thank you for your testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: You're welcome.

Let me just say, as you exit, that if the State can have these marijuana conversations about how they need to change the technology, then we certainly can change the technology and find the money for education. We contradict ourselves too many times; and unfortunately, both houses get sucked into that stuff.

So I'm on the record saying that. I don't need money for marijuana; I need money for technology and education.

With that, you can exit, okay? (laughter)

MS. BRADLEY: Thank you.

MS. MORAN: Thank you very much. (laughter)

SENATOR RICE: The next people, as we talk about the hands-on -- and as Assemblywoman Gove said, you know, people in the trenches -- we want to call up now the Acting Superintendent from the Camden City School District, Katrina McCombs. If she's here, come up.

We're also going to call up, with her, Eileen F. Shafer, Superintendent of the Paterson Public School District; and also Roger León, Superintendent of Newark Public School System.

And I understand that the Jersey City Superintendent -- these are the districts that were taken over and have been a part of QSAC from day one -- I understand Jersey City, for the record, was invited and initially indicated that they would be here. And then we received a message they could not be, because something else came up.

Okay; I need to have Roger León up, the Superintendent of the Newark Public School System. I should have Superintendents up here. Who's the fourth person? Excuse me; yes, okay.

Roger, you come up; you're a Superintendent. I want the Superintendents up here.

Now, let me just see -- so we need some technical people. Who is the young lady who just got up?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: (off mike)
(Indiscernible).

SENATOR RICE: Okay; you were to operate the machine, that's what you were there for?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: (off mike) No, I'm the Deputy Superintendent of Camden City Schools.

SENATOR RICE: Okay; if they need you, we'll call you right up, okay?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: (off mike)
(Indiscernible); thank you.

SENATOR RICE: All right, okay.

We're going to see what these Superintendents know.
(laughter)

So, first of all, let me thank the Superintendents. I know that all three of you, interestingly enough, have some new roles; and we actually gave you stuff that you inherited. And we also gave you responsibility of taking something that those of us in the State have had control of for over 20 years -- with the exception of Camden; and Camden is about three or four years, I think, or more now, etc.

And we're telling you to fix and redirect it. So we just need to know where we are. I know that, if I recall, Paterson was taken over before Newark; is that correct -- in the process?

So why don't we give Paterson an opportunity to talk first.

EILEEN F. SHAFER: Good morning, everyone.

SENATOR RICE: Good morning; it's good seeing you again, too.

MS. SHAFER: You too.

My name is Eileen Shafer; I'm the Superintendent of the Paterson School District.

I've been in the District for 27 years; which means that I have been there through the whole time under State control.

I want to begin by thanking everyone on the Joint Committee on Public Schools for this opportunity to speak to you today.

I want to thank the Committee Chair, Senator Ron Rice; and I also want to thank Assemblyman Benjie Wimberly who, as a member of this Joint Committee, has been fighting for the students in the great City of Paterson, and their futures, for a long time.

I just want to introduce a couple of folks who are with me today. My Deputy Superintendent, Susana Peron; Sandra Diodonet, Assistant Superintendent; Joanna Tsimpedes, Executive Director of Curriculum; Theodore "T.J." Best, Director of Culture, Climate, and Nontraditional Programs; and our Public Relations, Paul Brubaker.

Also with us today is Rosie Grant, our Executive Director of Paterson Education Fund. She is one of our greatest advocates of our schools, the students, and the families that we serve.

And we also have Linda Reid, who is the organizer of the Paterson Education Organizing Council.

We all greatly appreciate the meeting you are holding here today to consider questions about QSAC's purpose, effectiveness, and the impact on school districts.

As you might expect, we are particularly interested in the question of whether QSAC is an appropriate tool for determining whether or not a public school district should be taken over by the State.

But it must be said that that question begs another question: Whether QSAC is an effective means of helping State takeover districts restore themselves to local control.

But we're coming into this discussion from the perspective of a public school district that has been under State control since 1991. During that time, tens of thousands of families did not have a voice in major decisions that affect the education of their children. So what role did QSAC play in helping Paterson Public Schools emerge from the State takeover?

In a 10-year period, from 2007 to 2017, Paterson Public Schools went through 9 QSAC cycles; in 10 years, 9 QSAC cycles, all of which lasted several days, took resources away from our core mission of educating students to fulfill QSAC requirements.

All of you have the PowerPoint in front of you.

And so the agenda that I want to take you through in these couple of slides is, is QSAC meeting its intended goals, is it measuring school quality, is it unduly burdensome, and is it a tool for determining State takeover? And we will also offer some recommendations.

So QSAC versus Paterson's reality: Paterson was expected to meet or exceed State targets on standardized assessments, without taking into consideration the challenges faced by the District. And those include 90 percent of our students are economically disadvantaged; 30 percent of our students are classified as *special populations*; and expectations of ELL students' participation on State assessments upon entry into the country.

Now, that is a growing population for us. We have students coming into the District on a daily basis who may have gone to school for a number of years and then dropped out for a period of time, and then they came to us. They may never have gone to school, and could be 16 or 17 years old. But they have to take the State assessment; they cannot read English, nor do they understand or speak English.

And then we were underfunded \$280 million; that underfunding caused increased class sizes, the elimination of art and music. The elimination of art and music happened the first year that we were under State control; and we never regained it, until this September when we opened our doors. And now every elementary child has art and music.

We eliminated afterschool programs, intervention programs. We were not able to purchase textbooks, computers, and other materials; and we also eliminated some Media Specialists.

The QSAC model in Instruction and Program arbitrarily sets target scores for us to achieve, rather than looking at student growth measures.

Oh, is QSAC burdensome to complete? In the past, there were as many as 120 indicators for each one of the areas, requiring extensive

documentation. And again, between 2007 and 2017, we had nine QSAC cycle reviews, which lasted several days.

And you can see from the chart -- some of them were either initial placement or interim review, or full review cycles; all of them taking days away from instruction. Days of putting together boxes of materials -- endless boxes of materials, in a room that we would lock every night because we did not want anyone moving a document, because it would just mean more time out of the classroom.

Once we collected all of the evidence, we then did mock reviews and we tested each other. And then we took that to the streets of our 54 schools to make sure that everything was aligned.

It was a tremendous amount of time; and during a lot of that time, between 2010 and 2017, I was a Deputy; and we were meeting twice a week in order for us to prepare. And now we're not only collecting the documents, but now we were uploading and putting them on line -- so similar additional time.

So, is it burdensome?

With limited direction in the past, the District had to guess and prepare documentation as evidence that the evaluation team may ask for. Now, during those nine cycles, unfortunately, the teams changed. So from one year to the next, you thought you had the proper evidence; and the next team came in, and that evidence was no longer the proper evidence. So you thought that you had what you needed; you didn't go back and address it again. But the team -- this particular team -- was looking for something else. So the teams were not consistent.

In preparation of the evaluation, our daily operations were interrupted, shifting the focus away from the core business of teaching and learning of the 29,000 students in our District.

Preparing the schools for the visits was also timely, consuming, and disruptive for both the District and the School Administrators.

Schools went through the same issues with different teams. So the schools had the documentation, and a different team came through and they were looking for other documentation, again taking a tremendous amount of time away from students.

So is QSAC meeting the goals for which it was designed?

It was designed to ensure a thorough and efficient education; to comply with State and Federal mandates; to identify strengths and weaknesses of a district; and to identify areas that the New Jersey Department of Ed could provide support, assistance, or intervention.

So unfortunately, the intervention, and the assistance, and the support were not always readily available. And so just one indication was, in changing teams it became more difficult. It was not supportive at all.

So QSAC should not be used to do the following: penalize districts for unrealistic expectations, such as State assessment targets versus student growth; determine State takeover without providing intensive support and intervention where it's needed; and establish mandates without providing funding to fulfill those expectations.

This year, we are seeing much more support from the Department of Education than we have ever seen in the past.

What are some of our recommendations?

Regarding assessments, we need to look at growth measures, rather than targeted scores. We need to design a grading scale based on evidence submitted regarding the DPR area. So, for example, if you had a third of the evidence required as completed or on target, then maybe you would have *targeted intervention*. So for all of those 120 indicators, if you had a third of them, we're suggesting you have targeted intervention. If you have half of the evidence, then you have *intervention*; and if you have three-quarters of the evidence, perhaps you're on *probation*.

If you do not improve over a period of three years in that specific DPR area, then you would have *State intervention* only for that area. Should you have three DPRs in State intervention, it would mean *State takeover* for those specific DPRs, but not all five.

Once you score 80 percent on any DPR area, you would exit State takeover status for that specific DPR.

So, for example, there were a number of years that Personnel and Operations hit 80 and above. But we did not come out of State takeover for any area at all. So you remain for those five.

And then as the teams change and the evidence request change, those areas have a possibility of going back down below the 80 percent. So it is a vicious cycle when it's done that way.

And any DPR area meeting the 80 percent threshold should not meet punitive measures.

In the past, it was all or nothing; and we are recommending to you that each DPR area be dealt with individually, once they achieve 80 percent.

The only time that the local Board of Education loses authority is if Fiscal, Operations, and Governance are all under State intervention at the same time.

If you have one area out of those three, you're on probation; if you have two areas, targeted intervention; and if you have three, then the Board would relinquish power and act only as advisory.

So, is QSAC an appropriate tool for a decision regarding State takeover?

There was a report, back in 2003, from the Commissioner of Education; it was called the *Working Group on State Takeover*. And a quote from that report said, "While uniform standards should apply to every district, no one would suggest that the districts with the most difficult educational conditions should have to perform at a higher level than their suburban peers."

And I think the Senator opened up the discussion today by saying that there were over 100 districts that failed QSAC; but I don't see 100 districts in State takeover.

Additionally, it was said that the early move toward State takeovers of failing school districts had more to do with alleged mismanagement and corruption at the local level than it did with student underperformance in these districts. But who got hurt? The community, the parents, and the students.

The report, and subsequent QSAC data, indicates that the move to State takeover of the four districts wasn't evenly applied across all districts in the state.

So I would ask that you would please consider our recommendations. Both the Deputy and I lived through 27 years of State control. It's not a fair process for our children, our community, our staff, and our parents. And it makes it very difficult to be committed when the folks who are in the community don't have a voice.

Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you very much as well.

I'm going to ask the Committee members, who have questions, to hold them until we get through the Superintendents, etc.

Next I want to move over to the other District that was taken over, subsequent to Paterson -- since Jersey City is not here -- and that's Superintendent Roger León from Newark Public School.

R O G E R L E Ó N: Good afternoon.

SENATOR RICE: Good afternoon.

MR. LEÓN: Honorable Co-Chairs Senator Rice and Assemblywoman Jasey, and members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools, thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you this afternoon.

Joining me is the President of the Newark Board of Education, the honorable Josephine Garcia, and the honorable Reginald Bledsoe, Board member; as well as my School Business Administrator, Valerie Wilson, Executive Staff, and concerned citizens who find the education of Newark's most precious resource, our children, important.

I am Roger León; and since July 1, 2018, I have had the honor and pleasure of serving as Superintendent of Schools in the School District of the great City of Newark, New Jersey; which, as you all know, was

returned to full local control, effective February 1, 2018, after 23 years of State operation and State intervention.

The process of the return to local control is continuing, pursuant to a Transition Plan established by the District and the Department of Education, and issued in December 2017.

I have spent my entire career -- indeed, my entire life -- in the Newark Public Schools and in the City of Newark. I was first employed in the Newark Public Schools as a substitute teacher in the District in the late 1980s when I was still in college; and later hired as a teacher, several years before the infamous State takeover. And then I was promoted to Principal and Assistant Superintendent, before this appointment to Superintendent.

Thus, I have lived and worked in Newark's public schools through the entire process of State takeover, State operation, and the gradual return to local control, pursuant to the law known as the *Quality Single Accountability Continuum*.

Newark's capacity for local control of its schools, as measured by QSAC's five components of school district effectiveness, was assessed many times since the law's adoption in 2005. The QSAC assessment process is challenging for district administrators and their staffs. You heard this morning from one Principal, from a district the size of one of my schools, and standards reviewed had less number of indicators than Newark has ever experienced before. And she shared how consuming it was. It requires the compilation of voluminous documentation.

Some say the work required to do that is not the best use of employees' time; and QSAC reviews should be less frequent in high-performing districts. But I submit that the task is not that onerous. I

cannot say whether it is the best use of time in other school districts, but I know that in Newark we have completed the assessment efficiently and successfully many times. In my opinion, the result was worth the effort.

Authority was returned to the District in the area of Operations in 2008, in Fiscal Management in 2014, in Personnel in 2016, and finally, in the areas of Governance and Instruction and Program, in September 2017. Local control became effective February 1, 2018, subject to completion of the District's Transition Plan.

Of course, all of the five components of school district effectiveness are important and essential. By definition, instruction of students is our core mission and reason for being. How well we instruct our students, and the evidence of student learning and achievement, must be the most important measure of school district success and capacity.

Unfortunately, we saw in Newark that, for a myriad of reasons, QSAC's benchmarks in the area of Instruction and Program were simply inapplicable and not an accurate indicator of school district effectiveness. There is universal agreement, as far as I know, that school district effectiveness and capacity for local control cannot and should not be determined by reference to students' scores on standardized tests of student achievement, as QSAC's quality performance indicators do. To avoid any confusion, or any doubts about this testimony, I strongly believe that student achievement must be an indicator; it is now, as it should be. However, growth should be a criterion too; not including growth as an indicator may unfairly, inadvertently, and even negatively label school districts across this state less than what they actually are.

Student achievement is important; but growth matters. Therefore, Newark submitted an Equivalency Application to the Department of Education -- just like our two other sister school districts -- requesting that the effectiveness of its instructional program be gauged through a variety of student performance measures, specifically focused on the current needs and circumstances of the School District and its students.

The Department approved that Equivalency Application in 2016; and those measures, in addition to QSAC's quality performance indicators, were the benchmarks used to determine Newark's effectiveness in the area of Instruction and Program, and its readiness for return to local control.

This is a large part of QSAC's success story in Newark: The fact that the Department of Education saw fit to grant an exception to QSAC's requirements through the Equivalency process. I understand a similar process was followed in Jersey City and Paterson.

I urge this Committee, and the State Legislature, to consider this fact in your review of QSAC and its provisions.

In the all-important area of Instruction and Program, given the complexities of the lives of our students and their families, school district effectiveness should not be determined solely by reference to students' scores on standardized tests. Instead, as the Department found appropriate, the use of multiple measures of capacity and effective Instruction and Program should be encouraged, if not required.

I submit to this Committee that Commissioner Repollet and his staff have served as supporters and allies of the work in Newark, from the day of his start and since the evening of my appointment. I would be

further remiss if I did not thank Essex County Superintendents Feinsod and Zarra, and their respective staff, for their strong support of Newark's schools.

I want to commend and also thank the Newark Board of Education, the hard-working employees of Newark Public Schools, members of the community for their undying support, parents who have entrusted their children to our care, and most of all our 55,000-plus students in Newark. All to say, the real progress in Newark, and arguably, all of the other school districts in New Jersey, remains in the critical work that happens with, as I always refer to my students as, *the single most important heartbeats in our classrooms*, at each of our respective schools, across every single school district.

I will be the first to share that we have much more to do in Newark, and my students deserve us all to be the very best, all of us.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you very much, Superintendent, and for the job you're doing since you've taken over.

We have certainly seen some real progress; we have to work with these school districts too, from the State side. And I'm sure that many of my colleagues probably aren't paying attention -- until they find some reason to be critical of the district; then they will start paying attention. That's been the history here; I can say that, being here 33 years. So I've watched them come and go.

But just-- Superintendent, just stay strong and stay focused, okay? You have a good Joint Committee here; we do understand.

So with that being said, you've heard from two districts -- which we are very fortunate, in one sense, to have two Superintendents who actually live in those districts and work in those districts, from the time the school districts were taken over until the transitioning back.

Now we have another school district that was taken over -- I tried to stop it, but it was taken over -- and that's the District of Camden. And we have an Acting Superintendent there, who now, hopefully, can talk to the Superintendents in the takeover districts, if she has not yet; get to know them. Because there may be some bumps in the roads and some things that we have already taken a beating for and the heat for that you can avoid, you know?

But why don't you tell us what's happening in Camden? I get, you know, mixed reviews, and I get good reviews, as to where we are in that takeover process. I get the politics too, so I need to be in the record with that. But I just need to know where we are.

KATRINA McCOMBS: Good morning, Senator Rice.

Again, I'm Katrina McCombs, the Acting State Superintendent of the Camden City School District.

I'd like to, first, thank you, and the Committee Members for inviting Camden City School District to be included in your hearing to review the Quality Single Accountability Continuum.

I'd also like to thank and acknowledge Camden residents and advocates who joined us this morning and share the District's desire to return to stable and sustainable local governance. I appreciate their presence here today.

As a 25-year veteran educator in Camden, I am familiar with the QSAC tool from my time as a Principal, Early Childhood Director, Deputy Superintendent and, most recently, as Acting State Superintendent. I look forward to sharing my feedback from the Camden perspective with you today, and I have come with my Deputy Superintendent, Dr. Taryn Fletcher; and Chief of Staff, Wayles Wilson. We are here to help answer specific questions you may have about the current rubric, or the transition to the new measures.

As a graduate of Camden City School District, a proud graduate of the Class of 1987 at Camden High School, and someone who believes deeply in the limitless potential of our students, I believe, first and foremost, that it is critical the State holds all school districts to high standards, because that is what our students deserve.

In the same way I use evaluation tools, test results, and building walks to hold each of my school leaders to high standards, QSAC does the same: holding every Superintendent accountable for delivering a full and fair, thorough and efficient education to the children we serve.

By this measure, QSAC meets a critical goal for New Jersey school districts -- to provide a consistent way to hold districts accountable to students and families.

In my previous role as Deputy Superintendent, I was most recently responsible for completing the QSAC self-assessment for Instruction and Programs under the old rubric. This year, I am overseeing all aspects of our self-assessment under the revised rubric. While we are still in the middle of completing our 2018 self-assessment, I believe that the

revised rubric is providing a more robust measure of school quality, specifically in the area of Instructions and Program.

The biggest shift in Instruction and Programs has been to include more indicators that measure both the outputs and the inputs of high quality instruction. If QSAC measures both how we prepare and execute our instructional program, curriculum, lesson plans, college and career tracking, and how that preparation translates into student achievement, the measures become more useful in understanding where a district is doing well, and in what areas we need to continue to make improvements.

As a District, there is no doubt that QSAC evaluations and self-assessment require a great deal of time and energy for District Administrators to complete. However, the time we spend preparing QSAC results is a way for our teams to come together to norm around the critical work streams that deliver for our schools and students. In the new rubric, electronic document sharing and a reduction in the total number of indicators will reduce the number of staff hours dedicated to the QSAC review and evaluation.

In Camden, we have made marked progress since entering into State intervention in 2013. Our graduation rate is rising, our proficiency gains have been steady and incremental, and our student growth scores are rising. Our personnel management processes have improved, and we have made significant investments in modernizing our processes, protocols, and ways of working.

Many of these improvements have been captured in our QSAC evaluations. As a leader on the ground, I do believe that our return to local

control must be both stable and sustainable. QSAC is a critical tool for measuring our progress toward that goal; but it is not the only consideration, specifically as it relates to the timing of a return to local governance. As we work to address challenges and broken systems decades in the making, QSAC is a guide and support to help us stay on course.

The guidance provided by QSAC evaluations is most effective when it is partnered with the resources and supports of the State and County, that can help us to deliver a corrective action plan that brings about meaningful, sustainable improvements to district processes and operations.

I have been extremely lucky to have the support of the Commissioner, the Department of Education, and a strong County Superintendent and County BA, who are actively rolling up their sleeves, helping Camden review our QSAC findings, and working together to find ways to make the changes necessary to lead to a sustainable return to local control.

And I will continue to underscore *sustainable*; because it is not in the best interest of our students, it's not in the best interest of our community, it's not in the best interest of our city to not ensure that we are moving back to our local control in a way that is thoughtfully executed and that is sustainable.

So I would like to thank you for your time; and, again, I will also, when the time is appropriate, share any of my insights and answer any questions that you may have.

Thank you for this time.

SENATOR RICE: Let me thank you very much, too.

If I heard you correctly, you've been in the Camden school system for at least 25 years.

MS. McCOMBS: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: Is that correct?

MS. McCOMBS: Yes, in addition to being born and raised there, yes.

SENATOR RICE: Exactly. So I think that, really, the benefit and the challenge as well is that these districts have been taken over for a long period of time; the newest district is Camden. But those who are running these districts now are New Jersey residents who have been in the district. And so they are seeing the good, the bad, the ugly. They know the political relationships; believe me, they may not say that, but they know in each of these districts, okay? They have seen the harm done to good people, and they have seen things that, maybe, we don't even know. And that's a benefit, because you have a sense of what should be done and how to make that work.

And I also know that Ms. McCombs -- she has, kind of, a little different situation there, given the politics of things. She has the Renaissance schools too; which came through us. And we refused to do that in Newark; even though he wouldn't take it out of the legislation, we just refused to do it for a lot of reasons.

But all these institutions are educating our kids. And the focus is on education, so we have to make them work -- the ones in place.

And so we are just so happy to know that we have this type of leadership in place right now. We believe and like to think that you can stand the test. It's going to be challenging; but I'm going to leave you with

what I always tell people about my position. I don't have a problem -- I don't have to be the Senator; but as long as I am, I'm going to do the best I can. So you may not always be Superintendents, from what I've seen from this process, if you stand up for kids, and parents, and taxpayers. But we have your back if you do a job right.

With that being said, let me open it up now for questions and answers from our members.

Why don't we go to this side first, and start with Paterson, since Paterson was first taken over, okay?

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Unfortunately--

SENATOR RICE: And then Ralph and--

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: --1991 is a long time ago. Like I said, I was a second-year teacher when we did come under State takeover.

But I want to commend Superintendent Shafer, and all of the Superintendents who presented today. I think the one common thing is that you've already made your investment in the school district and the community, as Senator Rice pointed out. I think that makes a big difference. After going through, I believe, eight Superintendents; and unfortunately, some of them just did not have the investment of our communities and the best interest of our children and our staff at hand. Because they can relate, day-to-day, to going to the beauty parlor, going shopping in the neighborhood, or growing up with somebody's aunt and uncle -- that you have to be accountable, to at church; you have to be accountable to -- in your community, wherever it may be -- the coffee shop. And I think that makes a major difference in this.

The one thing that you didn't point out, Superintendent Shafer, is -- and I just wanted, for the record -- to know the last eight years, we've laid off over 526 employees. So that has been lost in translation. And many times my argument has been, during that eight-year period, Paterson also paid -- had a 55 percent increase of property taxes. So at one point, not only did we lay off that amount of teachers, we had a period of time where we laid off 125 police officers and increased the property taxes close to 27 percent, I believe, in that year. So a lot of people are misled that we don't pay our fair share.

We are a community that is a community of angels, as I've always said. We take care of everybody's drug problem, we take care of every homeless problem, we take care of every shelter. We have only two-thirds of our property, I believe, that is taxable. Everything is non-taxable, because we have the County buildings, we have over 300-plus churches, and we're only 8.4 square miles.

So I just want to commend you for the work that you're doing; and I just wanted for the record to understand that we are presenting this and coming back under local control even under these circumstances. If we weren't underfunded by \$280 million, if we weren't understaffed by 526-plus, imagine what our kids could do.

And Assemblywoman, as you said, if we were technology-savvy in each of these buildings-- We have 19 buildings that are over 100 years old; 19 buildings that are over 100 years old. And believe it or not, I think we're just getting our third shovel in the ground, our fourth shovel in the ground for a new building. And we are the second-largest public school

district, behind Newark, because we have 30,000 students. We actually have more public school students than Jersey City.

And I just know that, with the leadership of Senator Rice and the people here, and the leadership of our Governor, that, you know, at some point, hopefully, we are made whole; and more importantly, our children get what they deserve. Because even under these circumstances, I have read about children from our school district going to Ivy League schools; I've read about the continued success of many of our programs -- the robotic programs -- to the other day when the Governor was at Panther Academy, and the programs that are coming forward.

So each of you continue to fight. And, you know, the fact that you are home-grown -- I think that makes a difference. People on the outside may not understand that, but I think it is so important for somebody in a school district, who is a kid, to look up to somebody and say, "You know, they know your children; they know your aunts, your uncles; your people who are home-grown." And continue to recruit teachers and Administrators from within, because it makes a major difference.

The fact that I pay property taxes in Paterson -- it makes a difference; I'm going to be involved. That's going to be -- there is no option. Elected official or not, the fact that I pay property taxes, and that I have to walk there, and I have to be there -- it makes a difference. Teachers who jump on the highway and leave; and Administrators and Superintendents, in the past, who got on the Parkway and the highway, and some even on planes to visit us on a weekly basis -- they did not have the same invested interest.

So continue; make a major effort to recruit from within. Make an effort that you go to your local colleges, and those kids who are in the programs who are on track to become educators -- that you encourage them to come back home. Don't make them feel like strangers; make them feel welcome when they come home. And it is not hometowner; it is the right thing to do.

So thank each one of you for your presentation.

ASSEMBLYMAN CAPUTO: I'm taking over, temporarily, with the permission of Senator Rice. I'm taking over temporarily as Chair; he'll take it back in a minute. (laughter)

I appreciate those remarks; I think they're passionate and authentic, and I appreciate them.

You know, one of the things I want to say before I recognize anyone else, I'm totally impressed with these Superintendents. I know everyone is saying that, but I think you need more of this -- more of your public visibility. Because people have to understand the difficult job that you have. It's almost, like, herculean, really; it's amazing. And you have the passion, and the desire, and the know-how to try to deal with this.

You know, when you work with the State, or anyone else, and try to assist the school districts, there's a hole there because the resources aren't there when you identify the problem. So you have to do it within the budgetary restraints in the district. And sometimes that's a very difficult hurdle to overcome, as Roger knows.

So somehow, there has to be a link, once there's a joint decision between whatever State monitoring occurs and what problems are being resolved locally, to make those requests -- not unreasonable requests, but

actually necessary requests to fill that void. You know, the State should have given you all a check the minute they walked out, or when they walk out, you know? They should have probably cut you a check.

But you know what? We have to look towards the future. And I think with this new optics and sincere efforts of these local Superintendents, I think a lot of good will come in the future. Because I don't think we had this kind of honest, authentic -- I use the word *authentic* -- positions taken by people who really know all of the nuances that go on in the district, besides what's on paper. It's what you don't see that is more important, sometimes, than what you do see. It's the feeling you have, the respect that you have for the students and the community, that drives you. Otherwise, none of you three would, probably, want to be in those jobs. You have to really feel something very strong that drives you and gives you that encouragement.

So, you know, I'm proud to meet some of you. I have not met all of you; but I know Roger; and I definitely respect his ability. The fact that you survived shows you what kind of resourcefulness you possess, through all those years of difficulty. It's amazing, just absolutely amazing. Because we have all been in difficult positions; I don't think I could have done it. It's very, very remarkable.

Does somebody else-- Oh, you're back; you're back in charge
Okay.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Sure; thank you, Acting Superintendent.

This is a person who's thoughtful, diligent, and has always been a part of the community of Camden. And I think that is very important, as we move forward.

And she enjoys the support of most of the community, of the legislative team, the County team; and I think that will -- that sense of working together will help Camden not repeat the years that Paterson struggled; and I think the fact that there has been a review and a reduction of all of these things that the State looks at to move us forward. Camden has steadily been climbing forward.

And her role is interestingly different, because we do have a significant number of charter schools, and Renaissance schools -- a different form of a charter. And the leadership needs to work with all of them. They are all public schools and they all use public dollars. I would like to see a little more input on behalf of the local community on how we do that, moving forward, so that everybody is on the same playing field, if you will.

I know we have some wonderful successes in Camden; and we need to make sure that every school -- whether it be a Renaissance, a charter, or a wonderful public school -- moves forward with our students.

The leadership is the most important thing; and this Superintendent spent her summer meeting with all of the student groups, parent groups, all over the City of Camden, to take their pulse, to understand how they felt, moving forward. And I think it's significant on behalf of the students there.

So I just pledge you my support in any way you need it; and to the people of the City who would like to have a more vocal share in how we move forward in the City.

I think Camden is an interesting place because, unlike Newark, Jersey City, and Paterson, it's smaller. So we should be able to do this, because we really all know each other. And I look for real success with this Acting Commissioner (*sic*) who someday may be-- Not *Commissioner*; excuse me. Don't tell the other fellow I said that. (laughter) Superintendent -- hopefully she'll be the one who will take the role as we move out of this State takeover period.

MS. McCOMBS: Thank you, thank you.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Thank you very much.

And to the others, I applaud you. I think you all have the toughest job in the world; and I am amazed -- I had no idea Paterson was in that position since 1991. That's incredible.

Anyway, so thank you; thank you for all the things you do for the kids.

SENATOR RICE: So we're going to pick up our pace.

I just want to ask the Superintendents to make sure we get copies of your testimony, if you will.

Senator, Assemblywoman?

SENATOR O'SCANLON: Superintendents, thank you very much for being here.

I guess, overarching, it helps to accept the moral obligation that all of us have. None of your districts are in my Legislative District. It doesn't matter, right? There is a moral obligation on the part of every single person in this state to ensure that every single child has access to a thorough and efficient education, regardless of the zip code in which they were born, or the color of their skin, or their ethnicity. It doesn't matter.

I'm really encouraged to hear the level of enthusiasm and commitment by the people at the tops of each of these school districts, and hear about the progress that's being made. And I congratulate you all on the effort as you make progress towards local control.

Also I have to call out Assemblyman Wimberly, who's been a great spokesperson, certainly, for Paterson; and for every one of the school districts that are challenged, as you all are. It's been a number of years now -- we served on Budget Committees together. So that has really helped, I think, educate everybody in the State of New Jersey, with the challenges that you're facing.

Given all that -- and we talked about resources -- it gets back to a core theme that I'm going to touch base on, regarding every one of the challenges that New Jersey faces; and that's resources. We are all bound by the laws of mathematics. And until we get our State fiscal house in order, no one should be promising you additional dramatic increases in resources, or even small increases in resources. That's a real challenge; and we all have to come to the table and realize that the way we're going to get there is if we get our larger fiscal house in order.

But let me pledge to you that it's exactly this type of cause that I'm fighting for; and also taxpayers in New Jersey, which are already the highest taxed people in the country. We have to balance all these things.

But I'll let you know whenever I'm talking about these things, in the back of my mind are the resources that are needed to provide the education that the kids in the most challenged districts in our state deserve.

So we will continue to do that, and fight for that.

So thank you, again, for being here; and I wish you a lot of luck as you take over control -- well-deserved.

SENATOR RICE: Assemblywoman.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN GOVE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for coming.

I just have to say one thing, and I piggyback on Assemblyman Wimberly, and even Assemblywoman Jones, Assemblyman Caputo.

You have so much invested there. It's your home, and that's what you said, and I've been thinking about that. Because I know what it's like. I taught in my community where I went to school. And there's just-- I didn't have the same issues, but what I'm trying to say is, I think you have so much invested there that it's yours; it's your place, and you want the best for it. And you can see what you've done, all of you, and I think need-- I think that's what more districts need, are the people who have -- like you said, some fly in -- who are invested there. If you're invested in your community, you're home, you will go to the supermarket, you go to the gym, the church. It's all about that.

And the other thing is you are the best role model for the students -- that they can see how-- "Hey, listen, if they did it, I can do it."

So congratulations in all that you have done -- your successes to help the children of your community.

So thank you.

SENATOR RICE: So I want to thank you also.

And I just want to reemphasize what the Committee members have said, collectively. Out of all the things we have said, coming from the

community you become a valuable asset to making this process work for us, even with limited resources.

I want to remind those of the history of black folks. Black people in slavery -- we learned to read and write in some of the worst conditions around, where the slave master would take us into little dark dungeons so he wouldn't get caught.

So we know that the resources may be lacking; we have to work on that. We have re-prioritized what we're doing with dollars down here.

But we know that commitment-- You're not coming from the Eli Broad Institute; you weren't shipped in here with Cerf and all of those folks. You come from our community, so we have high expectations.

And this Committee will support you where we can.

Thank you very much.

We're going to expedite now. I'm going to ask Melanie Schulz to come up; and she will bring up some of the folks we have here. Melanie, so I have a lot of people here, so you're going to have to limit their testimony; because I have other people, and we want to get them out of here.

Okay; Melanie Schulz, just put your name on record; you're the Director of Government Relations, New Jersey Association of Schools (*sic*).

M E L A N I E S C H U L Z: Good afternoon, Senator Rice, and members of the Committee.

My name is Melanie Schulz; and on behalf of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, I would like to thank you for inviting our voice to your table today to discuss New Jersey school monitoring laws and regulations.

I want to take some time during my testimony today to talk about the development of school district monitoring, and how we got to the New Jersey QSAC process.

The Joint Committee on the Public Schools has a long history of discussing school monitoring. This Committee has been written into the statutes for the purpose of having legislative responsibility regarding notice from the Executive Branch when the State Board of Education issues an administrative order to establish a school district under full intervention, as well as timely updates on the status of those districts from the Commissioner of Education.

In 1991, then-New Jersey Governor Jim Florio signed a law to strengthen the school district monitoring system, as well as the performance standards for evaluating public schools.

In addition, the new law created a Task Force on Educational Assessment and Monitoring; and that group of 17, appointed by Commissioner of Education Dr. John Ellis, worked for about eight months to create the monitoring process that directly preceded the creation of NJ QSAC.

During this time, monitoring was actually suspended for two years. And at that time, both Jersey City and Paterson were in State takeover.

When the new process was implemented, school districts had to have verified achievement on indicators for student performance, governance, program reviews, and analysis of data through an on-site visit. There were various levels of certification, and this process also laid the groundwork for the eventual adoption of State standards for curriculum.

And the first set of curriculum standards were adopted in 1996, after much review.

While that monitoring law was implemented for over 10 years, in the early 2000s it became apparent that the statute needed updating. Senator Rice, you were the primary sponsor of this effort, in 2004, along with Senator Tom Kean, Jr.

NJQSAC was a truly bipartisan effort, passing the Senate 40-0, and the Assembly 73-4-2. So you can see that it had overwhelming support.

While these statutes and all the amended versions are well-intended and based on good effort, the consequences in the field always manifest themselves in a truly burdensome and time-consuming process.

In this 21st century, technology has advanced to the point where school districts should not be so overburdened. Access to data should be seamless between districts and the New Jersey Department of Education. School districts provide massive amounts of information and data to the Department of Ed annually, and that should be readily and remotely available to New Jersey QSAC reviewers.

I would ask that this legislative body support a review of the technology landscape at the NJDOE, and how information is passed and accessed between districts and the Department.

My members are here today to give you an up-close view of how their time and that of their faculty is diminished from the instructional day when they undergo a QSAC evaluation.

Thank you for allowing us to present on this vital topic.

With me today are five Superintendents; they are going to come up in two groups.

First, we'll have Shauna DeMarco, who is the Superintendent of Tenafly; Dr. Adam Fried, Superintendent of Harrington Park School District; and Dr. Brian Gatens, who is the Superintendent in the Emerson School District.

And they will be followed by Michael Harris, who is the Superintendent in Southampton; and Joseph Langowski, Superintendent in Lumberton.

Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Once again, state your name, and titles, and where you're from -- who you represent, for the record, please.

And I hate to do this to you -- because it's been a long morning, and you've been waiting -- but you have a lot of folks from your group. So if you could limit the testimony and get right to the points, please?

Thank you.

A D A M D. F R I E D, Ed.D.: Absolutely.

Good afternoon -- it was actually *good morning*; just so you know, it actually says *good morning* (laughter) -- to the members of the Committee.

My name is Dr. Adam Fried, and I am the Superintendent of the Harrington Park School District; and I am also the President of the Bergen County Association of School Administrators.

I'd like to thank you for holding today's hearing, and for offering Bergen County the opportunity to offer our testimony.

For background purposes, the BCASA represents the Superintendents of Schools, as well as the central office personnel that work on behalf of Bergen County's 133,000 students and over 1 million residents. We take great pride in that work that we do, and we are proud to offer some historical references, as well as suggestions and guidance, to the Committee as they undertake this incredibly serious work.

Over the last several years, the BCASA, in cooperation with representation from the NJDOE, convened a series of think tanks and meetings with school leaders and critical stakeholders from Bergen and Passaic counties. The mission was to come together and work in creating a better User Manual that meets the vision of QSAC, while looking forward to how we, as an Association, can support districts in this rigorous model.

As an Association, we felt that it was our duty not to come to the Department of Education with complaints and circumstances, but to join them in creating a User Manual that honors the tremendous work being done throughout the State of New Jersey, while recognizing the need to create a system of accountability across all of our stakeholders.

In the spring of 2017 we compiled a 16-page letter outlining areas of concerns that was shared with the DOE. We suggested that working together we could help create an open dialogue between the two groups in the spirit of collegiality and for the betterment of the children we serve on a daily basis.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2017, robust and rich conversations allowed not only districts, but the NJDOE, to understand and mutually agree on areas of concern, as well as areas in need of greater depth of understanding for all who were involved.

It's fair to say that as district leaders we had hoped that the time and effort put into the work would be shown in a newly revised manual, and create a new paradigm where the DOE and the districts work hand-in-hand in creating a continuum of growth that is rigorous and obtainable.

This past summer, the BCASA and PCASA met with then Interim Commissioner Repollet and his transition team to discuss our concerns. We were appreciative of his willingness and openness during that meeting to work with our concerns that are surrounded this current User Manual.

Sadly, what we have seen and learned is that there are still significant concerns and a lack of genuine understanding in relation to the manual set forth in its current state.

As leaders of our schools we are strongly advising to this Committee that there should be a slowdown of the implementation of the QSAC User Manual, thereby honoring the work that's been done previously; as well as allowing us to fully implement the pilot, which would result in vast data which could then be analyzed and reviewed, and create a more seamless implementation and, of course, greater success.

As Bergen County, we again are willing to step forward and help in the creation of this pilot program, across multiple districts, that will allow the DOE, and this Committee, to make the best possible decisions for the children and the districts we serve.

I leave you with a quote -- as a history teacher myself, all right? -- from Teddy, Teddy Roosevelt, my absolute favorite. "Nothing in this

world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty. No kind of life is worth leading if it is always an easy life.”

Bergen County is ready to serve and live a strenuous life for the betterment of the children of New Jersey.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you.

Next.

S H A U N A C. D e M A R C O: Yes, I am Shauna DeMarco; I’m Superintendent of Tenafly Public Schools.

I echo Dr. Fried’s gratitude to you for conducting this hearing. We sincerely appreciate your attention on this matter that is extremely significant to the education of New Jersey’s students.

I also serve as the BCASA Legislative Representative to the NJASA, and was a proud participant in the meetings conducted over the past few years regarding QSAC.

As one who has moved from one district type to another, my experience and insight is rather unique.

I served as the former Superintendent of Lyndhurst, a district that was placed on a District Improvement Plan in the summer of 2015, following our 2013-2014 performance scores, which fell just short of the 80 percent requirement. I swiftly became familiar with the QSAC process and the amount of time, manpower, and attention it required as we underwent routine and frequent visits and reviews throughout each school year, for which we had to prepare both qualitatively and quantitatively.

I also became very familiar with the frustrations associated with knowing that no opportunity for passing QSAC would present itself until PARCC scores were, in fact, accepted. So for the three years that followed,

we, like many other districts, were relegated to what became known as *QSAC purgatory*.

Regardless of how hard our teachers worked, how many changes we made to enhance programming and improve instructional strategies, those performance numbers were not going to change; thus we had no chance of passing QSAC.

Now I find myself in a high-performing District which, because of its student achievement scores, has been waived of the QSAC process for many, many years. And now we are preparing for a process that is unfamiliar to most of the District's stakeholders, and with a manual that remains quite monstrous, unclear, and not user-friendly.

The concerns we presented in February of 2018 -- which we share with you in this handout of the exact letter -- were grounded in the overwhelming emphasis placed on standardized test scores, the subjective measures to assess the quality of Curriculum and Instruction, the lack of reliability in a random sampling of an indicator's requirements, and the general sense that the New Jersey QSAC regulations were detached from the reality of what a high-quality and successful district looks like. These concerns and questions remain despite tremendous efforts to receive answers and clarity.

In one of your handouts, the results of our analysis serve as examples of just how much time we dedicated to this cause. For example, look at the differences between small and large districts. What constitutes the sampling size of material in a small district versus a large district? If only 10 files were examined in a small district, the impact of one or two

errors would be tremendous. But in a larger district, with a much greater sampling, there is more room for errors with less negative impact.

And we must remember that, for many indicators, earning less than 95 percent in a sampling results in zero points.

Speaking of achievement, it is also difficult to overlook the indicators' impact upon schools when considering student growth. We measure and connect student growth to teachers in K-8 schools, yet do not do so in grades 9 through 12. Therefore, this measure of achievement, based on one test in one specified area, does not apply to high school districts, but it does impact those districts falling in the K-6, K-8, and K-12 divisions.

Further, it should be noted that the implementation of this process will result in schools that pass New Jersey QSAC but still, indeed, struggle in multiple areas. And alongside that, we do have concerns about the inter-rater reliability of QSAC evaluations across the counties. What measures have been put into place to make certain that one county's QSAC visit aligns with the work of a team in a different county? We recognize the subjective nature of any such process, but truly believe that granting more time, collaboration, and attention to it will result in clarifying language throughout the manual that will greatly reduce the subjectivity of this process.

SENATOR RICE: Okay, thank you very much.

Next.

BRIAN P. GATENS, Ed.D.: Dr. Brian Gatens, Superintendent of Schools, Emerson Public School District.

Please don't mistake the intentions of the BCASA. We are open and welcome to the oversight of qualified outside evaluators. We are very proud of the work that we do, and look forward to opportunities to show it off to State representatives.

What we are not open to is an illogical, detached, compliance-driven, and subjective system that, aside from consuming valuable district resources, will continue to offer inaccurate and unreliable information about our schools.

As Dr. Fried mentioned, over a series of meetings in the presence of NJDOE representatives, we acted as committed leaders for our districts, professionally articulating our questions, respectfully requesting clarification and more specific direction, and repeatedly inquiring about the inequities discovered in our analysis of the process during its pre-proposal review.

All of this was for naught, as it resulted in no changes, no clarifying information, no response to demonstrated consideration; nothing. And so we persevered, doing our best to prepare for a process' expectations that we still, to this very day, do not fully understand, nor are we able to get direct answers to our concerns due to their complexity and vagueness.

In closing, you will find in your packets a 2019 QSAC schedule of the Bergen County Office. This alone appears to illustrate exactly how intrusive this process is on so many levels, and why, in its current state, it is ineffective. Can we truly believe that one team visit to a district for one day is expected to result in a determination as to the quality of the district? Or is it for compliance purposes only? And if for compliance, let's remember

that we are one of the highest performing states in the country. Can we really believe that this is not about compliance?

This is not a message to send to New Jersey's districts, students, parents, and Boards of Education. And if we are striving for high quality, then we cannot expect the county educational teams to assess this factor, while adhering to the calendar requirements laid out in front of you.

Members of the Committee, please press pause in this process. Work directly with us, and other stakeholders from around the state, and all those closest to the day-to-day reality of our schools, so that together we can develop and implement an evaluation system that not only identifies areas of need, but also recognizes the value that New Jersey's schools bring to all of our state's children.

Dr. Fried's mantra, as he says often, is, "Let's get to work." And the BCASA demonstrates their agreement through the work that is done in Bergen County Districts each and every day.

Thank you for granting us, and all of New Jersey Superintendents, the opportunity to collaborate with you in determining equitable, reliable, and quality-based indicators which accurately measure our educational success in the state.

I thank you for your time today.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you, also, very much.

You need to make certain that we get copies of your testimony that we can share with the Commissioner and his team.

Do members have questions?

Senator.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: Real quick -- you guys are the first people to come up here in, kind of, a unified way and outline real concerns.

We've heard a lot of praise, and I've heard some-- You can see that the QSAC system has improved; it's just not there yet? Because we went from the 300 indicators to 104 indicators. Is there some concession that it's improved, and just not enough? -- I guess is my first question.

DR. FRIED: Sure; so let me answer that.

There's a process, and there's that manual that we're speaking directly at.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: Yes.

DR. FRIED: And as educators, like you heard me say, we don't want to come with just a circumstance, right? Like this isn't working; we need more of this, this, and this.

What we were saying is, we found -- and you can see this in your files that you have -- we found the areas of concern that will represent not just small K-8s, but K-12 -- large districts.

We've outlined areas that if improved would then allow a single accountability system to be a seamless implementation across the entire State of New Jersey. That's another thing; we have it on, actually, as micro as you're going to get -- where when we spoke to them, we said, "Let's talk about personnel files. Tell us the seven things every personnel file needs in the State of New Jersey." We can't figure that out to this day.

How do you prepare for a test if you don't know what's going to be on it? That's a very difficult thing, regardless of being high-achieving or a district that needs to improve.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: When did you have these discussions with the Department?

DR. FRIED: We started-- When this first arrived, we were the first as a group -- as NJASA and BCASA. We first arrived in spring of 2017. We met throughout the summer. When I say *met*, we brought Superintendents and key stakeholders in throughout the summer, into the fall; had large-scale meetings and think tanks to address these deep concerns. We are a group that loves the deep dive, right? We love to be forensically audited, right? That's what we tried to do with this, so that it doesn't matter where you're from. We want to make sure that they're successful.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: I appreciate that. And look, the fact that you came to the table with solutions is -- that's a wonderful thing. I appreciate it.

So this transcended Administration bounds. We started in the previous Administration, and then we went into this one. To give some credit to this Administration, it takes a little time.

DR. FRIED: Yes.

SENATOR O'SCANLON: So I'm very interested in hearing from you as you go through this next process. I'm assuming that -- we heard this morning, there's receptiveness. So I would hope that they would embrace your suggestions now, and certainly get a response.

It's unfortunate, but I guess not all that surprising, that in a transition from one Administration to another -- it bothers me that you didn't get a response. That's a problem. But okay; let's chalk that up to a transition.

Now it's time to make this work, and for them to hear you.

So, through the Chair, I know this Committee is interested in hearing the response you get, and making sure it happens; and I am, individually, as well. So let's keep those lines of communication going to make sure that this process works as efficiently and to the benefit of as many students as possible.

So you have people who are hearing; use us now to keep the pressure on.

But thank you very much for being here -- for your input.

DR. FRIED: Thank you.

DR. GATENS: Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: So let me just say, also, that I like to think that this Administration is more open. I know something about the politics of it, which I guess people don't like to hear on record. They just came into office; and there are still people this Administration is trying to put in place who are not on board yet. And that's given the politics; that has nothing to do with you.

So what we want to do is, first of all, we need to make sure you send us your testimony, if we're going to help you, in writing; and your recommendations. And then we're going to direct the staff to get that information to the Commissioner's Office; but we're going to also direct -- ask the Commissioner's Office to sit down and give you more quality time to go over those issues you have, okay?

We got that?

Okay; all right.

DR. FRIED: Thank you, sir.

DR. GATENS: Thank you, sir.

SENATOR RICE: So with that being said, Melanie, let the other three people up so we can keep moving this process. It's getting a little late in the day, and I have people, you know, who we have to hear from.

Go ahead; you can pick your order.

MICHAEL L. HARRIS: Good afternoon, Chairperson Rice, and members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to present some perspective on QSAC.

My name is Michael Harris; I am the Superintendent of Schools in Southampton Township. We are located in Burlington County. We're a K to 8 District, with about 710 students currently enrolled.

The insight I'm offering you is perspective of a district that participated in the Department's pilot program last year for the Personnel section of the DPRs. And we are currently undergoing the process this year.

So I'm really going to keep my comments to what we're seeing in the process, and some recommendations on how it can be further enhanced.

One of the benefits pertaining to QSAC is it enabled our School District to enhance our understanding and practices pertaining to AchieveNJ, which is a very important aspect in the Personnel DPR. Specifically, due to participation in the Personnel DPR pilot process, our District enhanced the link between teacher evaluation, the development of Student Growth Objectives, and development of professional development plans. So that was all a very positive outcome for us.

Conversely, at the time we were submitting documentation for the Personnel DPR, we had not yet finalized teacher evaluations from the previous school year because the Student Growth Percentiles for teachers had not been released. This continues to be an issue, as SGPs were issued to districts in early November and we are just now concluding the evaluation process. That's really a different discussion for AchieveNJ, but it does impact QSAC.

I would like to report that we recently went through the process of doing our QSAC District Steering Committee process. We formulated our team in early September, and met in October to complete the self-assessment. It was a labor-intensive process for our administrative team, as we invested a full-day meeting to conduct our preliminary review of each DPR and the indicators.

This process was completed shortly after the Department released the QSAC User's Manual, but was highly beneficial in preparing for the Steering Committee to meet and complete the self-assessment. But a lot of time was invested.

With respect to the QSAC User's Manual, we would like to commend the Department for the effort that was invested in developing this resource. It is a great concept; however, as we have been working through the process this year, we have found that there are a number of revisions that need to be effected to make it more user-friendly. There needs to be more specificity and clarity pertaining to documentation to be provided via the uploads and information that will be reviewed onsite.

Over the years, the number of indicators, as you are aware, for the District Performance Reviews has been reduced, and this has helped

place a focus on the most critical aspects of the monitoring process. However, it is recommended that the Department continue to review the DPRs, and where possible reduce the number of indicators.

I would like to comment that the decision to award partial points for district performance on the Instruction and Program District Performance Review is a definite improvement to the process; a big enhancement. It used to be an all-or-nothing type scenario.

What Southampton has learned through the Personnel DPR pilot, and completing the process this year, is how labor- and time-intensive it is to identify and upload documentation to support attainment of the DPR indicators. The revised process essentially requires districts to create an electronic monitoring box. Documents must be scanned, given the proper naming convention, and then uploaded individually to the software application in *New Jersey Homeroom*.

In addition, we are finding that some of the documentation is information that has been submitted to the Department, and if their technology was enhanced and the Department reviewers could readily access that information, then this documentation could be verified without districts having to upload additional documentation.

Just to give you an example: Thus far, Southampton has invested three full days in preparing and uploading documentation, and we still have not completed the process. We're still working on it.

It is critically important that the Department and the Legislature appreciate how intensive the QSAC process is. Completion of the process does enable districts to review their district procedures, self-reflect, and enhance their operations. However, make no mistake that

when it's done properly it is time consuming, and requires district administrators to divert time from serving as instructional leaders and the management and operations of their school buildings.

With this in mind, it is strongly recommended that the QSAC monitoring cycle -- some consideration be given to revising the cycle, enabling districts that are high-performing districts to have a waiver, like they did in the past; or come up with a revised system where, if you're a high-performing district in the next cycle, it's less of a process; it's an abbreviated process.

As an example, when Southampton last underwent a full QSAC monitoring six years ago, we were identified as a *high-performing district*. We received the waiver the following three years. I took a look at our -- the review of our DPR scores for this current monitoring cycle, and they're going to be almost identical to what we scored six years ago. So the question is, do districts that are performing well, or meeting the standards -- do you need to do a full, intensive QSAC review each time?

I would like to acknowledge and commend the Department personnel who worked with us on the Personnel Pilot DPR last year, and our County Office personnel this year. In particular, we would like to commend the Burlington County Office of Education, Executive County Superintendent Daryl Minus-Vincent, County Business Administrator Charles Muller, and Educational Specialist Mr. Joe Seaman, who have been incredibly collaborative and responsive to addressing our questions and concerns.

So just to summarize -- perceived QSAC benefit: It definitely enables districts to review critical processes, enhance procedures, and ensure compliance with mandates and regulations.

Some of the challenges: The process is labor- and time-intensive; it's a three-year monitoring cycle for districts that are high-performing districts; the number of DPR indicators have been reduced, but further review and reduction are needed; the QSAC User's Manual is a great concept, but requires revisions to streamline and enhance clarity; and uploads for supporting DPR documentation are very time consuming and labor intensive.

So some specific recommendations for the Committee and for the Department: Please give consideration to re-establishing a waiver or create an abbreviated process for high-performing districts; review and reduce the number of DPR indicators -- some may be combined.

Review and revise the QSAC User's Manual. Eliminate -- I got very specific here -- eliminate the term *this indicator is monitored remotely*, and replace it with one of the following: The indicator will be monitored onsite; the district will upload supporting documentation, or NJDOE will review documentation submitted electronically via required NJDOE reports. The present language can be very confusing at times when you're looking at the User's Manual.

Two final points: Maximize the review of DPR supporting documentation available, via reports submitted to the Department or review on site; and minimize the documentation upload to *New Jersey Homeroom*, because it is very time consuming.

And finally, please work with the -- please try to provide more resources to the Department in terms of technology. If you can enhance their ability, from a technology perspective, it's going to make it a lot easier for them to work through the process with school districts.

Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you.

Next.

J O S E P H L A N G O W S K I: Good afternoon.

I'm Joe Langowski, the Superintendent of Lumberton, in Burlington County.

I appear today to share my experiences in my 19 years as a public school Administrator; and I have served as a Principal, Assistant Superintendent, and Superintendent.

I'd like to start my comments by stating that the single most valuable commodity that any of us possess is time. We have a fixed amount each day; and the way that we manage our time has a direct impact on the student achievement that takes place in our classrooms, our schools, our districts, and our state. In fact, Hyrum Smith, who is an expert on productivity and time management, has written about a *time famine* in this country. Perhaps nowhere is this more prevalent than in school leadership.

We have an opportunity through the review of the QSAC process, and a collective responsibility to simplify it. I know you have heard a lot of other testimony today, so I will condense my comments because of time constraints, and share that I think the BCASA model -- they've thought through the weeds on this, and I would encourage the Committee

to think about simplifying this process, and I stand willing to assist the Department or this Committee in any way.

Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you very much.

Any questions from legislators? (no response)

Okay; all right.

All right; just make sure -- do we have copies of your testimony?

ALL: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: Okay. I'm going to instruct the former director of this Committee to inform your Association that they bring testimony when they come, for those who did not; she should know better, okay? (laughter)

Thank you very much.

Okay, next we really have to move through this, because I know that my members have to go; some have left already.

So I want to bring up Sharon Kregel, Policy and Outreach Director, Education Law Center. I also want to bring up Rosie Grant, the Executive Director of the Paterson Education Fund. At the same time, I want to-- Well, is NJEA here?

UNIDENTIFIED MEMBER OF AUDIENCE: (off mike) Yes.

SENATOR RICE: NJEA, would you come on up; you don't look like Sean, but that's all right. (laughter)

S H A R O N K R E N G E L: Thank you, Senator Rice, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to talk about QSAC.

You have my full comments; and I am going to condense too, because I know it has gotten late.

But basically, ELC wants to recommend to the Legislature two major changes in the QSAC statutory framework, based on our involvement in enacting the law back when; and then, trying to address issues that have arisen over the years in which it has been in place.

So the State district takeover provisions, which were enacted in 1989, were incorporated into QSAC as the ultimate sanction for continued poor performance in the areas of QSAC monitoring. The takeover provisions were also revised to put in place requirements for districts under partial or full State takeover to regain control of their school systems.

In enacting QSAC, the Legislature did not intend the takeover provisions to be used as a vehicle for allowing the Executive, through the DOE, to impose its preferred set of education reforms on districts under State operation. Rather, the takeover mechanism in the QSAC framework was intended to allow the State to intervene and fix identified problems and exit as quickly as possible.

So we know that didn't happen, right? In the case of Newark, Jersey City, and Paterson, State intervention lasted for decades, and only now is coming to an end. And State takeover in Camden has continued for over half a decade now, with no end in sight.

It's also important to note that the four districts that have been subjected to State takeover serve very high concentrations of low-income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities. These districts are almost exclusively African American and Latino. As a result of State takeover, voters, taxpayers, and parents in these communities have

effectively been disenfranchised and disconnected from the operation of their neighborhood schools for literally decades.

Further, QSAC's inclusion of Curriculum and Instruction as a component subject to the monitoring regime is a major factor for State takeover becoming a means of permanent, long-term State control of districts, because it's extremely difficult for many districts to achieve satisfactory performance in the Curriculum and Instruction component of QSAC.

So to address these concerns, ELC recommends that the Legislature take the following actions.

First, is to repeal the State takeover provisions of QSAC entirely. State takeover as a means for educational improvement has proven to be completely ineffectual. State takeover is also obsolete. Since 1987, several new tools have been put in place to address fiscal and other problems in local districts. The Fiscal Accountability Law was enacted over a decade ago to allow for the appointment of a State Fiscal Monitor with power to override local boards of education and fix broken budgets.

We also recommend the elimination of the Curriculum and Instruction component from the QSAC framework. QSAC is, in essence, a compliance monitoring mechanism; it's not a strategy to support educational improvements in schools and districts.

Further, because high-need districts are often unable to meet the QSAC benchmarks for satisfactory performance on this component, QSAC perpetuates the message of *failing schools*, which is counterproductive to building strong, inclusive efforts to improve outcomes in under-performing school districts. In fact, Newark, Jersey City, and Paterson had

to be given waivers by the DOE because performance benchmarks in Curriculum and Instruction were unattainable for these districts, and that's true for many other high-need districts as well.

Also, identification of under-performing schools and improvement efforts are required separately under New Jersey's ESSA plan, the DOE rules for school improvement to implement the Federal school improvement mandates, and DOE rules for programs to improve performance in districts classified as *high needs*.

This Committee would also do a huge service by digging in to examine and analyze how to build DOE capacity to provide high-quality assistance to support school improvement efforts all around the state.

The Committee should engage with representatives from Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, and Camden about their experiences under State takeover, and with the Regional Achievement Centers to evaluate which efforts by the DOE were helpful in terms of school improvement, and which were unhelpful or even counterproductive. And that will help, going forward.

So, in a nutshell, the time has come to put an end to the improper use of full State intervention, including maintaining control for extended periods to further the preferred education policies and reforms of a given Administration, and the disenfranchisement of local communities. A streamlined and improved QSAC may well serve as a useful school district accountability system, but district takeover has no place in the law or in the State's arsenal for school improvement.

Thanks very much for your time. And if you have any questions, please let me know.

SENATOR RICE: Any questions from members? (no response)
Do we have a copy of your testimony?

MS. KRENGEL: You do; yes, you have the full testimony.

SENATOR RICE: Okay; next, why don't we go to the young lady?

While we're doing that, just have-- I'd like to have NTU President John Abeigon; Tom Puryear, NAACP; and James Harris to be on board. After they finish speaking, you're coming up.

After that, we're going to have Betsy Ginsburg; also the New Jersey School Boards Association is here. And Save Our Schools; they're here? Okay.

Okay; go ahead, yes.

R O S I E G R A N T: Good afternoon, Chairman Rice, members of the Committee; and a special greeting to Assemblyman Wimberly.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

I'll start with the element of QSAC which I believe is the most invasive and the most problematic. As you've heard, that is State takeover.

Takeover did not work for Paterson; it did not work for Jersey City; it did not work for Newark. I don't know that it will work for Camden.

We've had some progress over that time period; but any progress we've had in Paterson, I think, was despite takeover. It was because of the people there committed to the children of Paterson.

You'll see in my chart, when you received my written testimony, that we have had seven State Superintendents in Paterson. They served under 13 Commissioners of Education and 6 Governors while

we've been under State takeover, each with different expectations, different plans, and different ideas about what will work for Paterson children.

So we spent many, many years changing, and not necessarily in the right direction.

Our latest Superintendent, Eileen Shafter, has been doing all her initiatives in collaboration with the community. She was the community's choice, and we're grateful for that as we move into local control.

Our first Superintendent under State takeover introduced *Paradigm*, which was a program that only offered English and mathematics to kids in elementary schools. We lost a whole generation of kids who got to high school never having had science, social studies, technology, arts, music, etc. This is what takeover has done to our kids. You can't recoup that; that's an entire generation.

Fourteen years into a five-year takeover, QSAC was passed in 2005. Although it did not eliminate takeover, we hoped that it would be our means to return to local control. Under QSAC, the State can return control, as you know, when districts score 80 percent of the indicators in any component. There has been substantial evidence that our District scored the 80 percent, and yet those components were not returned.

In the end, there's a clause that says, "At the discretion of the Commissioner of Education," in QSAC. So everything is dependent, and that became the only real determinant for many years, even with passing the QSAC scores. There was a Governor who said, "Not over my dead body," a phrase that would certainly influence and curtail any

Commissioner's discretion since, as we know the Commissioner serves at the pleasure of the Governor.

I would like to recommend that this clause be eliminated -- no disrespect to our current Commissioner -- but with clear standards for regaining control based solely on achieving the benchmarks that are set in the law or the regulations.

Instead of takeover, I would recommend targeted intervention, much like the way ESSA intervention is proposed. The DOE has already started doing that in their guidelines -- implementation of best practices chosen to meet the specific needs of the schools and the students in the affected district. And wherever possible, these should be aligned to ESSA.

The Instruction and Program goals as currently written are ineffective in determining progress. It was good to see this morning -- we learned today together -- that the DOE has shifted that, and now they're looking at student growth. This is what was done for every one of the three districts that returned because, as written, QSAC was impossible to meet and they had to get waivers in order to meet -- use a growth measure, rather than hard scores.

Finally, the entire process is time-consuming and requires a massive effort from several levels of district and school staff. Please consider a streamlined process that makes use of all the other data that districts are already submitting to the DOE. Such an assessment should apply to all schools that receive public dollars, including charter and Renaissance schools.

As currently applied, QSAC helps to perpetuate separate and unequal in our school districts.

Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Excuse me; can you make sure you leave testimony with us?

MS. GRANT: I will; I have them here.

Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Next.

S E A N W. H A D L E Y, Esq.: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the Committee.

And I also want to thank the Co-Chairs for the invitation to come and speak with you today.

And I want to just reiterate. You have a copy of my testimony; and I've condensed my hundreds of pages into one page (laughter), so you'll be very pleased, given the hour, with the brevity.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Yes, we're grateful, we're grateful.

MR. HADLEY: And I just want to reiterate that we have several educators on the panel and our members' view of QSAC is with one simple metric: Does it improve student learning at the end of this whole process?

And over the years, as many people have already discussed, we've had concerns; and we've shared that with the Legislature and we've shared it with the Department of Ed, and many of the concerns you've already heard this morning and into this afternoon. And I just want to reiterate that we have also expressed those concerns; we have also seen the problem of a check-the-box mentality dominating the process. We have been very concerned about there being a lack of collaboration, because we

believe that a collaborative approach is what really drives our public education system. And if we are always in conflict and looking at it like a compliance mentality, then we're going to be, you know, in a tougher position to maintain excellence in our public schools. And that's where our members want to see this process end up -- in that type of collaborate approach.

We've been very encouraged by the outreach from the Department. We seem to be moving in the right direction, with the conversations that we've had and some of the changes that have already been made. And we really want to see, kind of, where we end up, especially in this, kind of, transitional year with the new system.

So that doesn't mean we haven't had our concerns; and that we haven't -- and we will remain diligent in seeing how this process continues to make sure that, you know, these problems really are a thing of the past, and not the future.

So all the things you've heard about today, we've also heard from our members -- that it hasn't always been implemented fairly or uniformly. We've had many concerns about the takeover issue, and that there be a clear pathway for districts to get out. And again, we're appreciative of the steps that have been made to help that happen now.

But we need to remain diligent on that, and, you know, we are also-- I want to reiterate -- this has already been discussed, you know, with the Committee -- but we want to reiterate that we do believe that charter schools should be subject to QSAC, or an equivalent monitoring system. But QSAC is the one that we have; that's the one that applies to all public schools. So all public schools -- which charters are public schools -- should

be included, and that's been our position for a very long time. And that's certainly something that the Legislature can take on in any amendments to the QSAC legislation.

So the one other thing I'll mention -- because Assemblywoman Egan Jones did bring this up, about the Federal law -- we are encouraged that the recent changes to QSAC do include stakeholder engagement and ensuring that the districts comply with that. Because we believe, under the Every Student Succeeds Act, ESSA, that the stakeholder engagement piece brings in our community members. Bringing everybody in that community to help the public education system move forward is a good approach, and the schools should be engaged with it. We're happy that it's in there.

And we want to, again, stay focused, make sure that these changes continue; that we're building upon the improvements that we're already seeing.

And we really appreciate, Mr. Chairman, you bringing this Committee here to talk about this issue; and keep the process moving forward, and keep our eyes on the ball to make sure this is something that we'll all agree is a better process at the end of this transition time.

So with that, I'll be happy to take any questions; and I want to thank you for giving us the opportunity for talk about our position on QSAC.

SENATOR RICE: Any questions from the members? (no response)

Okay; let me just indicate to you that we're going to have another hearing on charter. There are those of us who agree. I mean, we can't tell the taxpayers we're spending their dollars in one year, and get

accountability one way; and then spend another year and get accountability in another way.

The only reason that's happening -- once again, for the record, to keep integrity and substance in it -- is the politics and the political relationships of the KIPS and all the big organizations, etc. And now they're mobilizing, politically too; I get that, I don't have a problem with that. But it has to be a real objective and serious discussion as to accountability. You don't look at one thing one way and say, "It's okay," when it comes to dollars and cents; and it's not okay -- the other side of it, etc.

So we're going to have that discussion, okay?

Assemblyman Wimberly.

ASSEMBLYMAN WIMBERLY: Just a comment, Senator.

And I know it's getting late in the hour.

I just want to commend you guys for the work that you do -- from the Law Center to, you know, Rosie and Linda back there. Because we need those advocates who are not attached politically to a situation who continue to fight for the bottom line -- our children.

So thank you very much.

MS. GRANT: Thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Okay; with that being said, bring the other on-deck folks up; you know who you are.

If I have to repeat that -- James Harris, Tom Puryear, NAACP; NTU, John M. Abeigon, Newark Teachers Union.

And next coming up will be, after them, the New Jersey School Boards Association; the Garden State Coalition, Betsy Ginsburg; and Save Our Schools, right?

Okay, why don't we start with NTU, and get the education perspective that you've lived with all these years.

JOHN M. ABEIGON: All right.

My name is John Abeigon; I'm a Newark resident, a life-long Newark resident.

I came out of the Newark Public School System. I became an educator; I am on leave of service from the classroom for union service.

Ideologically, the NTU has generally, as most labor organizations, a Democratic slant; but we have supported, on many occasions, Assemblyman Wolfe, Assemblyman Kean, and Representative Frelinghuysen -- in the past, when our causes coincide.

What I am here to tell you today-- And I'm going to move myself from some of the written testimony, which you have in front of you, -- because I've been hearing a lot about things that we've had in common here -- not only in Newark, but also in some of our suburban and our rural areas -- about the Department of Education not getting back to them regarding some of their issues. And that's because we believe that the Department of Education here in Trenton has been taken over, basically, by a corporate charter cartel that was put in place by former Commissioner of Education Chris Cerf.

And what has happened in the Newark Public Schools -- if you believe the corporate charter industry to be a racket, which we do -- then what has happened in the last 10 years at the Newark Public Schools has

been a continuing racketeer-influenced, criminal organization. Crimes have been committed there that are criminal in nature, fiscally and/or educationally.

We commend Senator O'Scanlon because we used many of his arguments when we petitioned the Department of Education several years ago to hold back and stop the growth of corporate charters in the City of Newark because of their fiscally parasitic nature on the traditional public schools. The Department of Education saw fit to honor those lobbying efforts from certain districts; they chose to ignore the same cries when they came from the Newark Public Schools.

The crime scene of which I'm speaking has basically been outlined in a news article; and there's more to come.

SENATOR RICE: So, excuse me, John.

MR. ABEIGON: Yes.

SENATOR RICE: You're going to have to connect this to QSAC, to see where the impact is.

MR. ABEIGON: Well, I'm leaning in that direction, because I'm wondering where was QSAC during all of this? And I would say that my argument is that QSAC was basically placed on the backburner. Or if you have an incident where, if you're going to Newark and you're asking the District for data about attendance counselors and attendance -- well, if they haven't had any, because they fired them in 2012, because Newark's Superintendent, Chris Cerf, formerly the Commissioner of Education, asked a waiver of the law which requires attendance counselors.

So you have to take a look at the data. If you're asking the District, which is basically the State, to monitor itself, they're going to paint

a very beautiful picture. The Newark Public Schools spent \$2 million -- that we later found out that Superintendent Chris Cerf asked for and received from the Newark Charter School Fund -- to promote a beautiful pamphlet describing how he had complied with everything in QSAC, and how he was leaving the District in a very rosy, rosy position.

Well, we're finding out now-- And we argued then, we argued back in March, when the keys to the Newark Public Schools were returned to Superintendent Roger León, that we didn't want the keys just yet. We wanted an audit first. In this state, you can't buy a home without an inspection; you can't buy a home without a background check, a home inspection. There's a whole-- You know, when you go to a closing, you're going to be there a whole day, okay? You can't buy a car without a Carfax and Lemon Law protections in this state. A District was returned to us in shambles. And we ask ourselves, "How was that possible? How did we have the Department of Justice investigations going on?" Was none of this reported to this Department of Education by former Commissioner of Education -- at the time, Superintendent of the Newark Public Schools Chris Cerf? If none of this was reported, then we have to ask about transparency, validation, either at the County level or at the Department level.

You have Civil Rights complaints. You have the Newark Public Schools-- Who has the gall to tell the IRS that they are going to ignore the mandate that you offered per diem aides and clerks in a school district the right to opt into the Affordable Care Act? In 2013, that's exactly what they did, and they're facing a \$13 million fine. In 2014-2015, they did the same thing.

SENATOR RICE: So let me ask a question.

So technically, what--

MR. ABEIGON: If that was not-- I'm sorry, Senator, I don't mean to interrupt. But you're law enforcement, and there are educators on here as well. But if Chris Cerf did not present that in an audit to the District or to the State, that that financial liability was incumbent upon the District, well, then, two things happened. One, he broke the law; and, two, you guys now have to pay that. Because as I tell my daughter when she comes to me with a parking ticket, I say, "You got the ticket, you have to pay."

SENATOR RICE: So to connect -- if I hear you correctly -- what you're saying is, if we're going to look at QSAC in these districts throughout the state, and we're going to be talking about accountability and indicators -- how we're going to get people to do better -- then we have to look at allegations when they come forward. Because if, in fact, we don't look at the allegations coming forward, and the money is taken away from the District -- whether it's mismanaged or corruption -- then we can't really be successful in improving, because the indicators are never going to be where they should be; because the dollars are not going back to the students -- following the child to provide the kind of education to get the things up. Is that what I'm hearing you say?

MR. ABEIGON: That's exactly what you're hearing me say.

SENATOR RICE: Okay. So just for the record, the one thing that we need to make certain -- and the transcript will reflect -- is what was said earlier in testimony: that we have to take seriously allegations coming from these various districts, whether it's a small district-- Because I know,

as legislators, some of us have had, maybe, one letter or two letters from small districts, wealthy districts, and poor districts, and those in between; and we'll send them in, and that was the last heard. And then we come back and say, "School districts are failing; we're mismanaging dollars," when, in fact, no one is tracking the dollars based on the hue and cry of the people and the taxpayers, etc.

So I just wanted to make sure the record was clear so that people can see the relationship between what you were saying and QSAC, because I think that's very important.

MR. ABEIGON: Well, learning from QSAC--

SENATOR RICE: And just kind of wrap it up, John, because I have one more group--

MR. ABEIGON: Yes; learning is important, but consequences are also important.

And what I don't want to see happen in Newark is basically what -- you're going to turn around and you're going to say, "Well, we know that these things happen." However, because QSAC didn't have any bite in it, there's going to be no consequences. And that's the wrong thing -- message to send to teachers and students.

SENATOR RICE: Okay; thank you very much.

And we have your testimony, too.

So why don't we go to NAACP first, James, because they've known us a long time; and I know you were President of the State Conference of the NAACP, so it's kind of correlating. I know you now represent the Black Educators.

So why don't we go NAACP, then we come over here, okay?

T O M P U R Y E A R: Thank you, Senator Rice.

You know me as the President of the Oranges and Maplewood NAACP. However, I'm here this afternoon because neither our State Conference President, Richard Smith, nor our Education Chairperson, Adrienne Sanders, could make it.

As someone said earlier, we wanted to approach things from a micro level. There are six concerns that we have in regards to Amistad; in regards to QSAC itself.

There are two curriculums that have impact in the area of Social Studies, which is our first concern; one is the Holocaust Curriculum, and also Amistad. Amistad was created in 2002. However, Holocaust Curriculum has more impact and is being implemented by more school districts than the Amistad Curriculum; and so we have concerns about that.

And under the Social Studies Curriculum, the New Jersey State Conference of the NAACP strongly recommends that the QSAC policies promote the implementation and the monitoring of Amistad and the Holocaust Curriculums. Currently, the Department of Education does not have an effective process of monitoring the implementation of the specified curriculum.

As such, our organization recommends protocols be established to address this concern. A possible recommendation would be the following, and I quote, "The Amistad Commission mandates that curricula in kindergarten through grade 12 include the teaching of the African Slave Trade, enslavement in America, the vestiges of enslavement in the United States, and the contributions of African Americans in the development of the United States; and the Holocaust Commission mandates that curricula

in kindergarten through grade 12 address issues of bias, prejudice, and bigotry, including bullying, through the teaching of the Holocaust and genocide.

“Should a school district not comply with either of these mandates, the said school district would lose all points in the area of Social Studies -- as far as the QSAC monitoring itself -- which, therefore, would then require the submission of a corrective plan to address the academic shortfalls.”

The concern that we have is that the Amistad curriculum is over 15 years old and has not been implemented. And members throughout New Jersey in our organization are very concerned about why it is not being implemented.

Our second concern, which would be removing political considerations from the QSAC process.

There's a perception that the Department of Education does not address all school districts equally when their individual or collective QSAC scores are below the specified standard, which is 80 percent; or when a district under State control achieves passing scores, yet is not able to be relieved of State control because the Commissioner of Education is the final determinate in the process, regardless of the QSAC scores generated.

Likewise, there are concerns that some school districts are given a pass when their QSAC indicators are insufficient; however, for political reasons, the Department does not adhere to the appropriate remedies, solutions, or policies mandated by QSAC State and/or Federal guidelines. An example of this would be -- the Lakewood School District would be an example of this situation.

Thirdly, on the Governance. It is unknown if all school districts that have Title I status adhere to the Advisory Board process mandated by the Federal statutes. QSAC protocols should monitor and report on the implementation of all required Federal mandates.

Fourth: Under the Fiscal Plans, District's Fiscal Plans should be monitored and promoted in order to assure that formerly Abbott school districts are able to have the building resources necessary to have quality instruction available for all students.

And five, the implementation of ESSA plans and protocols. Although the Department of Education recently re-adopted the QSAC regulations in November of last year that specified the aligning and simplifying of the State's system of accountability, including the ESSA, there is a perception that currently school districts that have been specified as *in status* are not receiving the appropriate academic assistance mandated by ESSA. If correct, the specified alignment between QSAC and ESSA must be promoted in order to assure that districts building corrective plans are implemented as mandated.

And lastly, English as a Second Language. Our state has a growing population of students whose native language is not English. A greater emphasis on addressing the educational and social needs of students whose native language is not English should be achieved.

I thank you for the opportunity to present.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you very much for staying within the time and being succinct. That's good, and we have the testimony to share with the Commissioner.

Mr. Harris, New Jersey Association of Black Educators.

JAMES E. HARRIS: Thank you; good afternoon to Senator Rice and members of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools.

The New Jersey Association of Black Educators thanks you, as the Joint Committee on the Public Schools, for allowing the New Jersey Association of Black Educators an opportunity to comment on the New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum, QSAC.

We are especially thankful to Senator Rice and Assemblywoman Mila Jasey for your leadership and dedication, for inviting a broad base of diverse opinions about education in the State of New Jersey.

NJABE would like to also thank the Commissioner of Education, Lamont Repollet, for proposing changes and improvements to the QSAC regulations.

NJABE is always concerned about the New Jersey constitutional mandate that the State is required and responsible to provide a thorough and efficient, racially integrated public education. New Jersey has not met its responsibility because many schools are not proving the constitutional mandate because of racial discrimination, and because New Jersey is so racially segregated.

NJABE recommends the following: Number one, the New Jersey Amistad Law must be part of the New Jersey QSAC. It is the law, and the Department of Education must support the New Jersey Amistad Commission's efforts to insure that all stakeholders are provided with guidance and professional training so all children in New Jersey are provided with knowledge about the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and the contributions of African Americans are infused into the history of the United States of America.

Since QSAC has a three-year cycle -- it was six years; now it's a three years cycle -- for review, and because the Amistad Law has been so widely ignored and not fully implemented, NJABE requests that an audit be conducted, and that all districts found not in compliance should be required to develop a corrective action plan as soon as possible.

Second, NJABE believes that all charter schools and Renaissance schools should be held to the same provisions of QSAC as all traditional public schools. Public funds should not be provided to any educational enterprises unless and until there is a system for public accountability and review. NJABE requests that a high priority be given to audit and evaluate the use of public funds for educational programs and activities in Camden and in Garfield.

Number three: NJABE is convinced that QSAC has allowed racial discrimination in the process. This must end now. We do not believe that Newark, Jersey City, and Paterson schools were alone in non-compliance with QSAC standards. We believe there has been greater emphasis in finding discrepancies in school districts with populations and political leadership that is of African ancestry and Hispanic background, as well as urban and poor.

Number four: New Jersey QSAC should be more intensive in reviewing and making recommendations for improving district performance of affirmative action and equal opportunities in the areas of personnel and business operations, as well as practices related to minority contracts and vendors. Affirmative action, also, is the law of the land; and therefore, should be evaluated to determine if each school district provides more than paper documents that claim that a district is, in fact, making good faith

efforts to recruit, hire, and promote people of African ancestry and other racially and ethnically underrepresented diverse personnel; and to award contracts to companies that are owned by people of African ancestry.

Five: There should be a requirement that the QSAC process, progress, and results should be made public as soon as the final report is made available to boards of education. There is a lag time in the report and the public having access to it.

And finally, number six: It is important to assess the impact of QSAC on the morale and educational outcomes of classroom teachers and other educators. Many teachers are feeling overwhelmed and frustrated by certain practices that require paperwork that distracts from their enthusiasm and attitude about teaching.

I thank you for the opportunity. And as you probably know, I am a graduate of South Side High School in Newark, New Jersey, the school that, I believe, Senator Rice graduated from, Sharpe James graduated from, Marion Bolden graduated from-- (laughter)

SENATOR RICE: We got it.

MR. HARRIS: --and Ed Koch graduated from. We're very proud Bulldogs. But it saddens me to say that, under QSAC, that high school that has a capacity for over 1,200 students now has a population of almost 500. And if we do not get some type of sense to this whole process of measuring growth, I'm fearful that our school may suffer the same as the Castle in Camden, which was to be torn down or repurposed for something else.

We have great pride; the school has a great legacy. And I think with the proper leadership and monitoring from this body, it can return to its years of greatness. The children deserve no less.

SENATOR RICE: We want to thank all three of you for your comments.

We're going to share your information with the Commissioner. He'll be getting back to us, because we're going to direct that that happens.

In terms of responses to those issues -- what we got this morning, the positive side of QSAC, and we recognize change is being made. And as Senator O'Scanlon said earlier, we know that, sometimes, change takes a little bit more time when you're in transition like this. And then you have outside political fights taking place that people read about, so you can't stay totally focused.

But we do want some answers to the downside of what we're hearing, as to what direction the Department is moving in to try to find solutions and abate those kinds of concerns as well, okay? And we do understand the relationships; so we don't want this to get lost, John, between accountability of dollars, okay? Not just dollars that are mismanaged, because somebody forgot to put something in the ledger or was incompetent. But also those dollars that we hear, over and over, from some of our colleagues, that appears -- alleged to be misappropriated because of corruption, if you will, or relationships.

So we get that; and there's a direct correlation between if QSAC is going to work as a process to enhance education and measure it out; then the resources have to be there. And if we're going to talk about

QSAC building capacity, capacity is oftentimes the dollars and cents that are not going to where they should go; and supposed to be used for.

So we get it, okay?

I want to thank you very much.

Let's bring up our last team, the New Jersey School Boards Association, Garden State, and Save Our Schools. And we apologize, in terms of the lateness.

And I want to thank the members who stayed, etc. But it's an important meeting, because we haven't had one on this; and it's also important we hear from you.

Yes; Ms. Ginsburg, you can start.

B E T S Y G I N S B U R G: Good afternoon, Senator Rice, and members of the Committee.

You have valiantly sat through much testimony, which I will not go into; I will not repeat.

I am Betsy Ginsburg from the Garden State Coalition of Schools, and we represent over 100 districts, all over the State of New Jersey.

We concur with many of the testimonies that you heard today. The QSAC-- And we participated in the process, along with our colleagues from other organizations, that led to the current QSAC manual, the current QSAC iteration.

We believe that there still needs to be streamlining; we believe the process is onerous to districts. And to Senator O'Scanlon's point about resources, and scarce resources -- we have to conserve the scarce resources that we have in schools. We can best do that by streamlining QSAC.

And because I have brought someone here today, I would like to swap out with her. I have brought Winnie Boswell, who is Director of Curriculum and Technology in Glen Ridge. She is preparing for this latest iteration of QSAC right now. She remembers the first iteration, which took 40 boxes of documents in Glen Ridge; many more elsewhere.

But I would like to, now, introduce her.

W I N N I E B O S W E L L: Thank you for allowing me to testify today.

My background is, I was a high school Chemistry teacher. Finally, we've broken the Social Studies mold here. (laughter)

It's been great, though, from my perspective, to see how government works. This is my first time in anything like this, so thank you for this opportunity. I'm going to go back and talk to kids about it tomorrow.

I am now the Director of Curriculum and Technology, and I'm the person who's delegated to prepare all the documentation, by the previous Superintendents who you heard talk about it.

So you have a copy of my testimony; I just wanted to highlight a few areas of concern, or as a suggestion to improve.

We got the QSAC manual -- which I'm all about seeing the items -- but I have the 136-page QSAC manual right here with me. It's kind of my Bible right now, to get all this stuff prepared. We did get it in late August, and we are one of the cohorts so lucky to be selected to be the first run of QSAC.

So it's kind of -- one of the problems is, we got the manual in late August, and now we have to prepare everything, and they start the

reviews in January. So it wasn't a lot of time in turnaround, to get the information and then find everything and prepare it.

Number two: There is a little bit of an all-or-nothing approach to the points that get awarded. You get awarded so many points, and you have to get 80 percent or better. So one specific example that I'm going to give you about all-or-nothing with the points is the arts area: music, art, theater, and dance. These areas must be taught K to 12, and you have to prove it with your curriculum and with your teachers. It's all-or-nothing; it's four points for the arts. You either get all the points, or you get zero points.

So for Glen Ridge, we are going to get zero points for the arts, because I do not have a dance-certified teacher. My Physical Education teachers -- they teach square dancing; don't you guys remember when you had to learn that square dancing? (laughter) -- so that's done in P.E. We do offer that to kids, and kids have that opportunity; but because it is not a certified dance teacher, I'm going to lose all the points. Even though I have a pretty comprehensive arts education program, K to 12, I'm going to get zero points for that area.

I also don't employ a full-time theater-certified teacher, so -- because of the dance and theater. Even though we have a great community theater program -- they do drama, but it's taught by an English teacher, and not a certified theater teacher. So I feel that that is punitive, even though we have curriculums in those areas, we have a comprehensive program, we sell out our musicals -- it doesn't matter. You get zero points.

And I'm from the type of community that is always watching and, "We got zero points?" It's punitive and a little draconian that we don't get the points for that.

Another area is the Special Education requirements. The last time they did QSAC, they asked for teacher lesson plans. And teacher lesson plans include the standard -- the activity, the assessment; and also the lesson plans will have what students are in that section and what accommodations and modifications you're going to do for those students. They've changed the Curriculum and Instruction section to where you have to have modifications and accommodations in your curriculum. Now, that's never been done that way. I was at a meeting in Essex County of all the districts in Essex County, and nobody does it that way.

So I have a couple of hundred different curriculums in all the areas -- Social Studies, Math, Science, Language Arts -- all the areas that I now have to annotate with accommodations and modifications for each curriculum. Kindergarten Language Arts, 1st grade Language Arts -- I mean, you can see that this is onerous; and I have to do it or I lose all the points in the Curriculum and Instruction section, because those accommodations and modifications aren't listed.

So I offer the different perspective, because I'm kind of on the frontlines here. I'm having to assemble all this documentation, and now I have to annotate this documentation. Even though my teachers definitely provide those modifications and accommodations -- because it's required by law, and it's noted in the lesson plans -- we've been told that that is not sufficient documentation, and I will lose all the points if I do not do that.

So I will spend weeks going through and editing curriculum just to make the QSAC thing.

Just an aside -- the Amistad Curriculum and the Holocaust Curriculum -- those are required Social Studies elements. So if you can't prove and identify those, you will lose the points in Social Studies.

So, thank you.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you.

Next.

JULIE BORST: Good afternoon.

My name is Julie Borst; I'm the Executive Director of Save Our Schools NJ Community Organizing.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and for hanging in here for four hours for us, to hear us speak. (laughter) I appreciate that very much.

So you have my testimony in front of you. I just want to touch on a couple of things.

And I will play off you, actually, regarding Special Ed, because I am also a Special Ed advocate. And so, for two seconds, I want to put that hat on and just say that accommodations should not be to the curriculum; it should be for the students. And so if QSAC is looking at it that way, they kind of have it backwards

And, you know, the law is very specific about how those accommodations are supposed to happen. So even if they have -- if she is noting accommodation for curriculum for one student, that may not actually apply to anybody else; just saying.

So a couple of things -- so I was really glad that Assemblyman Wimberly had brought up charter schools, because my testimony is primarily about that.

So you heard from Superintendents about how onerous this process can possibly be; but I'd also like to point out that charter schools are not, in fact, judged the same way that public schools are. And as an organization that is very concerned about school funding, and about public dollars and where they go, and the accountability and transparency for those, one of the things that is very important to us is actually to have charters move to the QSAC process.

Now, I know that charter folks will say, "Well, you know," they don't have to do school the same way the public schools do; and therefore, they shouldn't be judged in the same way. But I would argue that if we're going to be comparing apples to apples, that they have to be judged in the same way; and that any rigorous accountability process should apply to everybody, and does not necessarily have to get in the way of still being innovative, as they are supposed to be.

I would say-- So one of the things -- and let me just highlight this very quickly -- so QSAC has twice the number of indicators than the charter and performance framework, and they encompass five areas. For QSAC, it's Instruction and Program, Fiscal Governance, Operations, and Personnel indicators; while the charter framework just has three: Academic, Financial, and Organizational. And those are very broad. If you take a look at the rubric what happens in QSAC, versus the charter framework, the language gets extremely specific on the public schools side, and not so much on the charter school side.

It seems like there is way more leeway on the charter school side here. And even though they finally attached a number to those things, as opposed to just saying, “Yes, you did it; you’re almost there,” versus “You’re not there” -- and that’s probably helpful a little bit -- the fact that it’s not really specific in the charter side doesn’t seem to be fair, especially since we’re talking about public money -- primarily public money going there.

And then I would also point out too for things related to curriculum; and there was a lot discussion about that today. So on the public school side, there are nine indicators for each piece of curriculum for all subjects, right? So all those things that were talking about. And on the charter school side, there are only three which, really, barely scratches the surface, right?

And so I think that if we’re going to be talking about judging public schools, we need to come up with some framework that covers everybody.

And I would also say, too, that the charters rely very heavily on standardized test measurement. That, to me, is a problem for a couple of reasons; but not the least of which is that we know that if you’re going to be basing everything on a standardized test score, that that automatically narrows what those children are learning. And at a time where education is obviously at a premium, the last thing we want is further narrowing of curriculum for all students. And we also know that standardized tests are biased, based on ethnicity and wealth, or relative wealth.

And the last thing I would like to say is that we are very thrilled to see the Amistad and the Holocaust curriculum not only being

championed by our new Education Commissioner, but also the schools will be judged on whether or not they have those. Those are obviously incredibly important things to be taught in this day, in this time in our country -- that all children need to understand what our world history is and what our own history in the United States is. And I would argue that this is probably the most important curriculum and instruction that children could have at this time.

So thank you very much for your time. I appreciate it very much.

SENATOR RICE: Thank you.

Next.

MICHAEL VRANCIK: Mr. Chairman, I'll be very brief.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

There is one point that I want to make, and it has to do with the Governance portion of QSAC.

Specifically, when a school board member is found to have violated some provisions of the School Ethics Act, the way QSAC works -- the whole board is analyzed. In other words, they lower their Governance score. In the context of QSAC overall, that means that the district score is reduced.

We think that since the School Ethics Commission makes recommendations, and the Governor has the authority to, in fact, as Assemblyman Wimberly suggested earlier, remove members from their seats on a board, that that should be sufficient. And there shouldn't be a reduction in the Governance score for the board because, oftentimes, what one individual member does can't be controlled by other board members.

That being said, there was a comment made earlier on this morning by the Department that there is an annual self-evaluation required at the district level. I believe that, at one point, there was a self-evaluation for the board required, but that was deleted from their requirements. It may be that something like that being reinstated would go a long way to addressing some of the issues that might cause individual board members to fall out of favor with the School Ethics Commission.

And that's pretty much my comment.

SENATOR RICE: Well, let me thank you, the three of you. And once again, you know, in these processes, somebody starts and somebody ends. What I try to do is I try to remember at the next meeting; when the same people come, I try to get them up here and get them down there.

But I think the testimony sequentially made a lot of sense; the way it flowed and the way it's ending.

We're going to ask that the transcriber and OLS do the best they can to expedite these transcripts. I'm asking staff, once again, to make sure that all of the information you have in writing gets to the Commissioner right away, and the transcripts when they are ready.

But also I'm going to ask the staff to go through the transcripts and the written communications that we receive and to pick out all of those things and make them the bullet points, for our Committee, of recommendations that were being recommended; but also the problems. Put the problems first. For example, someone said a problem is not having this in place, or what have you. We need to know that problem, and then we need to know recommendations.

And then we're going to, through writing -- we're going to commit it to writing; once you do that, share it with the Committee. Then we're going to ask that you prepare a letter for our edification, for the Chairs to look at, to the Commissioner, asking the Commissioner to report back to this Committee as to how they intend to address those problem areas that were raised, and how they intend to address the recommendations. So we can kind of get a balance of where we're going. There's going to be some give-and-take; I'm almost sure of that. But at least our Committee will have a record, and we'll know what we may have to do through legislation, if it's necessary, versus regulations, okay?

Let me thank everybody very much. Let me thank the Committee members for their patience.

Do either of you want to have any closing comments at all?

SENATOR O'SCANLON: No, it was very constructive; and I like your point of attack, going forward.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: No, thank you very much.

Thank you for your testimony. I hated to hear about losing all the points for the lack of one certified person, when you're doing a decent program. That troubles me immensely.

MS. BOSWELL: It does us too.

SENATOR RICE: Jim, let me just say this -- earlier today, the Commissioner testified -- and I backed him up by saying it made sense -- that we started to give credit for improvement. But then they ended up saying we're taking away points. It didn't make any sense to me.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN EGAN JONES: Nope; didn't hear that.

SENATOR RICE: When we talk about QSAC, we said earlier today, for the record, that the concern we had when we put together QSAC was that it was 80 and above, and something below. But there was no, really, credit being given for improvement -- so if you went from 40 to 60 in three months.

Now we come in here -- the opposite is happening. And you're taking away something over here, while you are giving something over here. It's a contradiction, okay?

Jim, you can say what you have to say. The meeting is--

MR. HARRIS: (off mike) Yes, I just want to say, Senator, that Ms. Marion Bolden, the former Superintendent of the City of Newark, did, in fact, want to provide testimony; but because of a funeral, she didn't make it.

SENATOR RICE: Yes, we have it for the record, okay?

MR. HARRIS: (off mike) And we also have a statement that I would like to be submitted by Ms. Lorraine Miller, who is from Camden Public Schools and the New Jersey Association of Black Educators.

SENATOR RICE: Camden Public Schools? Okay. Just provide it here.

And this Committee is now adjourned.

Thank you.

(MEETING CONCLUDED)